

MEDIA RELEASE

State Sanctioned Bribes Unacceptable

Transparency International New Zealand is asking MP's to legislate to make bribes no matter how small – illegal whether paid in NZ or overseas.

The Law and Order Select Committee's report on the Organised Crime and Anti-corruption Legislation Bill continues to allow facilitation payments related to overseas transactions. Facilitation payments are small bribes and these are illegal in many jurisdictions, including in the UK under the UK Bribery Act.

Both Transparency International NZ and the Victoria University's Institute for Governance and Policy Studies made submissions to the Law and Order Select Committee on the grounds that allowing even small cases of bribery undermines New Zealand's strong reputation for being corruption free.

Transparency International New Zealand Chair Suzanne Snively, says the decision by the majority of the Select Committee not to deal with facilitation payments was a bitter blow, especially as the new legislation has been moving in such a positive direction.

"There is no dressing this up. Facilitation payments are bribes and by failing to address them, we are enshrining bribery in New Zealand Law", Suzanne Snively says.

She is calling on MPs to safeguard New Zealand's reputation as one of the world's most corruption free states by reexamining the issue as the Bill progresses to its next stage.

"The big mistake is to view these "facilitation payments" as being of little consequence," she says, "there is no such thing as harmless bribe."

For information on Transparency International go to
www.transparency.org.nz

Suzanne Snively is available for comment on : +64 21 925 689.

And attached find the TINZ submission to the Select Committee.

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