

Patron, Sir Don McKinnon

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Transparency International New Zealand

Protect our Whistleblowers

Transparency International New Zealand (TINZ) calls for better whistleblower protection.

"Whistleblowers - and their protection - are important to preserving New Zealand's reputation," says TINZ Director, David McNeill. "We expect this to be a poignant issue during the election season."

The recent fraud case at the Ministry of Transport highlights the ineffectiveness in existing whistleblowing practice - a senior executive stole over \$700,000 before she was caught and jailed and the then CEO lost his new position as Auditor-General. Multiple whistleblowers in this case were unfairly treated and effectively squeezed out by the fraudster.

This case highlights the need to improve protection for whistleblowers and the need for accountability and transparency in the public service. It is important to recognise the personal cost whistleblowers face and protect them from discrimination and recrimination. Instead they should be rewarded and celebrated for their honesty, integrity and bravery on behalf of all New Zealanders. We all observe issues of lack probity in our daily lives, and should have the courage - and support - to say "that's not right".

The TINZ [*Integrity Plus 2013 New Zealand National Integrity System Assessment*](#) provided this warning:

"In the context where individual chief executives carry the main responsibility for the integrity of their organisations, the ability of staff to speak out about wrongdoing is an important safeguard. But the key legal instrument for this purpose is not working well. The *Protected Disclosures Act (2000)* seems to have had little impact. State Services Commission's Integrity and Conduct Surveys have shown that awareness about this Act is low. Few people seek the

Act's protection. A significant number of whistleblowers encounter inaction, and believe they are at risk of retaliation.”

We call on parliament to:

- Release Sir Maarten Wevers' report into the Auditor-General's behavior while CEO at the Ministry to help the public understand the environment that fostered fraud and the obstacles faced by whistleblowers
- Strengthen the Protected Disclosures Act (2000) to support and protect whistleblowers.

We rely on our representatives to make sound decisions on our behalf. In cases like this where there is doubt, they must make strenuous efforts to keep the public informed.

Fraud and corruption is prevented when there is transparency and accountability at all levels of government and society.

Transparency around poor decisions and behaviour is essential to our shared learning on ways to prevent future occurrences.

Background information for journalists

1. Media contact:

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2. Transparency International

Transparency International is a global civil society coalition leading the fight against corruption. It compiles a number of measures of different aspects of corruption including the Corruption Perceptions Index, the Global Corruption Barometer, and the Bribe Payers Index. Information on Transparency International can be found at www.transparency.org and detailed information on the Corruption Perceptions Index can be found at www.transparency.org/cpi.

3. About TINZ

Transparency International New Zealand (TINZ) is the local chapter of the global organisation - <http://www.transparency.org.nz/>. TINZ works to actively promote the highest levels of transparency, accountability, integrity and public participation in government and civil society in New Zealand and the Pacific Islands.

Transparency International New Zealand provides a free [Anti-Corruption Training Tool](http://transparency.org.nz/Anti-Corruption-Training) (transparency.org.nz/Anti-Corruption-Training) designed by leading experts in the field, and enables organisations to provide training for their personnel. This was developed in partnership with the Serious Fraud Office and BusinessNZ

Transparency International New Zealand published the [Integrity Plus 2013 New Zealand National Integrity System Assessment](#) and is actively engaged in the implementation of its recommendations.

4. **About the Protected Disclosures Act**

This [page from the Ombudsman's website](#) provides information about whistleblowing under the Protected Disclosures Act.