



## **Australian Public Sector Anti-Corruption Conference**

### **Opening address**

**Wednesday, 30 October 2019**

### **Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre**

- Good morning.
- I would like to begin by acknowledging the traditional owners of the land on which we meet.
- I pay my respects to their elders past, present and emerging, and extend that respect to any Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders present.
- Thank you Commissioner Redlich for the warm introduction.
- It is a pleasure to be here this morning to open the seventh biennial Australian Public Sector Anti-Corruption Conference and welcome you as delegates.
- I would like to thank and commend IBAC and its partners for organising the Conference.
- This is the first time the Conference is being held in Victoria and hosted by IBAC.
- The hosting of the Conference in Victoria is a testament to the excellence of IBAC's work under Commissioner Redlich's leadership and its unwavering commitment to public integrity and anti-corruption.
- Strong public institutions are the bedrock of our democracy.
- Public institutions must have, and be seen to have, integrity.

- If the community cannot rely on public institutions to be robust, fair, impartial, transparent and free from corruption, community confidence in those institutions will collapse.
- In recent years, the community's trust in public institutions has been shaken.
- We have seen Royal Commissions, news stories and heated public debate about the state of our public institutions.
- So it is imperative that as a community we directly address any behaviours or practices that fall below the standard required.
- That is the only way to build and maintain trust.
- The courts play a unique role with respect to trust and integrity.
- They are the final umpire – the ultimate decision-maker for matters involving integrity or corruption which attract legal penalties, or for which legal recourse is available.
- The judges who deal with those matters, indeed all matters, take oaths to discharge the duties of their office according to law and to the best of their knowledge and ability without fear, favour or affection.
- I have taken such an oath.
- But judges are not always immune from the temptations that corruption can present.
- I recall a few years ago a chance discussion I had when I was travelling in the Northern Territory.
- I was talking to a young couple from overseas who were on their honeymoon. They asked me what I did for work. It turned out that their parents happened to be judges.
- They asked me, quite matter-of-factly, how I dealt with bribery and ensured my personal safety.

- To them, it was a natural and obvious question to ask a judge.
- I didn't know quite how to respond, because it is not something I am confronted with in the work that I do.
- I know this is not the case in other parts of the world.
- Sometimes, the best way to understand the importance of something is to imagine a world without it.
- That day in the Northern Territory, I saw what a world without integrity or safeguards against corruption looked like.
- That is why I am here today.
- When I was invited to speak to you, I immediately said yes – it was my instinct to do so.
- There were three main reasons for that.
- First, it is easy to take the importance of integrity for granted, and fall into the trap of thinking that corruption does not exist in Australia, that it is not something that affects us as we go about our work.
- But, as you are acutely aware, a culture of integrity is only built, and corruption is only kept in check, through constant vigilance and the strength of our systems of accountability.
- Second, people can find the concepts of integrity and corruption difficult to relate to.
- Corruption is a huge word. It can sound accusatory to some.
- It can also sound disproportionate to others – those people who see corruption as Watergate, rather than something less than that.

- It is often the small things we cannot see that can grow and create a culture where integrity is no longer front of mind, fostering an environment for fraud and corruption to take hold.
- I am interested in how we motivate people to take the issue seriously.
- How do we effect real cultural change and take policies 'off the page' and into practice?
- It is not enough to have policies and systems in place if no one knows about them, or people refuse to think that they apply to them, or if their managers and leaders ignore or flout them.
- The courts now have an *Integrity at Work* program.
- Court Services Victoria - an independent statutory body corporate which provides services and facilities to Victoria's courts, the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal, the Victorian Judicial Commission and the Judicial College of Victoria - has developed a program to help people understand what integrity means, and to shape and create a workplace culture of high ethical and professional standards.
- As the Chair of Courts Council which governs Court Services Victoria, I was pleased to support the introduction of that program.
- I see it as part of my role as the Chief Justice of Victoria - and a workplace leader - to set an example for the many people who work in or otherwise support Victorian courts and tribunals.
- You all have a critical role in creating a culture where people ask '*why*'. A culture where people look deeper, make their own enquiries, keep their eyes and ears open, and question, question, question.
- A culture where people feel safe enough to report improper conduct.
- The third reason I am here is because I am a passionate advocate for wellbeing in general, and wellbeing in the workplace in particular.
- We often talk about the need to create healthy and safe workplaces.

- But they don't create themselves, and it doesn't take much for people to disengage from their roles if they feel that their workplace lacks integrity or if they feel vulnerable or powerless in the face of corrupt practices.
- Many of you attending this Conference will know what that looks like - it can happen within a team or it can impact an entire organisation, undermining its standing in the community, eroding trust at every level, and making people want to leave.
- Going to work each day in an environment like this can be a very isolating and negative experience.
- A healthy workplace has sound corporate governance, education, awareness and support programs, accountable, open and transparent practices and strong leadership.
- A safe workplace has people who value honesty, use their power responsibly, avoid and report improper conduct, and strive to earn and sustain trust.
- Healthy workplaces foster staff wellbeing.
- This leads to better outcomes for individuals and organisations.
- When I look out at this room I see delegates from a wide range of backgrounds, including government, not-for-profit and academia.
- Some of you have even come from overseas.
- It is inspiring and reassuring to see so many of you here.
- Your presence gives me confidence for the future of our public institutions.
- Over the next two days, you will hear from a range of speakers, who will focus on preventing, exposing and responding to corrupt conduct and risks in public institutions.

- You will attend plenary sessions, discussion panels and workshops that focus on research, trends, case studies and new methods for preventing, investigating and exposing corruption.
- This will be an invaluable opportunity to hear from leaders in their field.
- But in my experience, the conversation you strike up with someone after a session can prove as valuable as the session itself.
- I hope you find the Conference enriching and thought-provoking.
- The work each and every one of you is doing matters.
- Even the things that might at first seem small, contribute to maintaining our democracy.
- I encourage you to keep that in mind over the next two days.
- I would now like to welcome the Conference master of ceremonies to the lectern, Professor Gill Callister.
- Professor Callister is the Associate Dean at the Australia and New Zealand School of Governance, and 2019 Public Service Medal recipient.
- She has dedicated her career to improving public policy and service delivery.
- From 2015 to 2018, she served as Secretary of the Victorian Department of Education and Training, and prior to this was the Secretary of the Victorian Department of Human Services, from 2009 to 2014, where she led policy, legislative and service delivery reform.
- Professor Callister is the most recent past President of the Institute of Public Administration Australia, Victoria, and her leadership in public policy was recognised in 2013 when she was named in the Australian Financial Review's 100 Women of Influence, and received a Sir James

Wolfensohn Public Service Scholarship to attend Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government.

- In October 2014, she was awarded the IPAA National Fellowship award and a Monash University Fellowship and in 2017 was named as one of the top 50 women in the Victorian public service.
- Thank you and please join me in welcoming Professor Callister.

**The Honourable Chief Justice Anne Ferguson  
Chief Justice, Supreme Court of Victoria**