



WHY CORRUPTION MATTERS: HOW IT AFFECTS YOU

Corruption in law enforcement agencies impacts everyone – not just the individuals and agencies involved. This document explains how preventing corruption can benefit everyone.

Corruption in law enforcement agencies

Unless there are appropriate counter-measures in place, there is particular risk of corruption arising in law enforcement agencies.

Law enforcement agencies and their staff are at risk of being compromised by criminals. Through their duties, they may have opportunities to use their authority or access to gain benefits for themselves or other people. They may be well-versed in detection and investigation methods, and therefore skilled at countering them.

Impacts of corruption

When a member of a law enforcement agency engages in corrupt conduct, there are serious and far-reaching impacts:

The individual

Potential impacts for the individual include:

- criminal prosecution
- loss of job, demotion or other sanction
- damage to personal relationships, and
- loss of official entitlements such as superannuation.

The agency

Potential impacts for the agency include:

- damage to reputation and credibility leading to a loss of public trust and confidence
- loss of resources or sensitive information
- damage to operations and activities, and
- decreased morale and productivity among staff.

The community

Potential impacts for the community include:

- less funds available for the delivery of public goods and services
- enabling other criminal activity, including by organised crime, and
- risks to public health and safety and to the environment.

The Australian Government

Potential impacts of corruption for the Australian Government include:

- loss of public trust and confidence
- undermining the integrity of government services, and
- loss of resources or sensitive information.

Corruption impacts all Australians. The harm caused by corruption-enabled border crime can be particularly significant.

Case study: Operation Zeus

[Operation Zeus](#) uncovered evidence that an Australian Border Force (ABF) Officer received a bribe and aided and abetted in the importation of tobacco products.

The Integrity Commissioner made one finding of corrupt conduct against the ABF Officer, finding the ABF Officer abused his office by conducting unauthorised searches of ABF systems to provide that information to a criminal syndicate to facilitate the importation of illicit tobacco products.

This corruption had a range of impacts:

[The individual](#)

During the investigation, the ABF Officer who engaged in corrupt conduct was suspended without pay and their employment was later terminated.

In addition, they were sentenced to imprisonment and ordered to forfeit \$1.8 million in property and assets to the Commonwealth.

[The agency](#)

The corrupt conduct was facilitated by the loss of sensitive information and interfered with the agency's ability to effectively detect and prevent the importation of the illicit tobacco products.

[The community](#)

The corrupt conduct assisted a criminal syndicate by facilitating the importation of undeclared tobacco into Australia. This poses risks to public health and safety and reduces the funds made available through tax for the delivery of goods and services.

[The Australian Government](#)

The corrupt conduct undermined the integrity of government information and services, potentially undermining public confidence and trust.

We all have a role to play

Detecting, investigating and preventing corruption is key to ensuring public trust and confidence in the Australian Government and our law enforcement agencies.

[ACLEI](#)

ACLEI's purpose is to make it more difficult for corruption in designated law enforcement agencies to occur or remain undetected.

Our role is to detect, investigate and prevent corruption. We do this by:

- receiving and assessing notifications and referrals of alleged corrupt conduct,
- conducting investigations into serious and systemic corrupt conduct,
- supporting others to conduct their own investigations, and
- preventing corruption through engagement, support and identification of vulnerabilities.

You can support this work in a range of ways.

[Law enforcement officers](#)

Acting with honesty, transparency and integrity is vital for all public servants in order to ensure Australians have trust and confidence in Australian government.

Law enforcement officers can help prevent corruption by knowing their roles and responsibilities as members of their agencies.

Always act in accordance with your agency's internal policies as well as the [APS code of conduct](#) (or your agency's specific code of conduct).

Think about situations where your integrity might be challenged and how you would respond. If you are not sure about the right action to take in a particular situation, ask for advice and support.

What to do if you suspect corrupt conduct

Law enforcement agencies

If you suspect corrupt conduct within a *designated law enforcement agency* you can report this to ACLEI. Contact us via email at contact@aclei.gov.au or use the reporting forms on the ACLEI [website](#).

The *designated law enforcement agencies* are:

- Australian Competition and Consumer Commission
- Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission
- Australian Federal Police (including ACT Policing)
- Australian Prudential Regulation Authority
- Australian Securities and Investments Commission
- Australian Taxation Office
- Australian Transaction Reports and Analysis Centre (AUSTRAC)
- Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment
- Department of Home Affairs (including the Australian Border Force)
- Office of the Special Investigator

Other agencies

If you suspect corrupt conduct within an agency that is not a designated law enforcement agency, refer to the agency's website for information about how to report this behaviour.

If you are a current or former public official, you might also consider making a [Public Interest Disclosure](#) (PID) under the PID scheme, overseen by the Commonwealth Ombudsman.