

DEAR MINISTERS,

The Hon. Anthony Albanese MP, Prime Minister
The Hon. Mark Dreyfus KC MP, Attorney-General
The Hon. Richard Marles MP, Minister for Defence
Senator the Hon. Katy Gallagher, Minister for the Public Service

Australia is a better place when wrongdoing is exposed and wrongdoers are held accountable. In that task, whistleblowers and public interest journalism play essential roles. So many of the major injustices of recent decades have been brought to light thanks to whistleblowers and journalists working hand in hand. Transparency brings justice – positive change comes when brave individuals speak up.

But right now, two Australian whistleblowers are on trial. Richard Boyle spoke up about wrongdoing at the tax office after raising the issue internally; David McBride is accused of leaking information that helped journalists expose suspected war crimes committed by Australian forces in Afghanistan. Their actions triggered accountability – both fuelled vital public interest journalism later vindicated by independent inquiries. But Boyle and McBride are on trial. They face jail time for helping reporters tell the truth about wrongdoing. McBride will be the first person on trial in relation to Australia's war crimes in Afghanistan – the whistleblower, not an alleged war criminal.

Your government has affirmed its commitment to press freedom, transparency and accountability, by establishing the National Anti-Corruption Commission, convening a press freedom round table and moving forward with reforms to whistleblower protections, surveillance laws and secrecy offences. That commitment is laudable – but these prosecutions send a loud contrary message.

Prime Minister, you have previously said 'the idea that there should be a prosecution of a whistleblower, for what's a shameful part of Australia's history, is simply wrong.' We couldn't agree more.

WE CALL ON YOU TO END THE PROSECUTION OF WHISTLEBLOWERS AND FIX THE LAW TO ENSURE WHISTLEBLOWERS ARE PROTECTED, NOT PUNISHED.

SIGNED,



Accountability Roundtable | Afghanistan Human Rights and Democracy Organization | Alliance Against Political Prosecutions | Amnesty International Australia | Australasian Centre for Corporate Responsibility | Australian Conservation Foundation | Australian Democracy Network | Australian Lawyers Alliance | Blueprint for Free Speech | Bob Brown Foundation | Centre for Free Expression (Canada) | Centre for Public Integrity | Digital Rights Watch | Environment Centre NT | Environmental Justice Australia | GetUp! | Greenpeace Australia Pacific | Government Accountability Project (United States) | Liberty Victoria | Medical Association for Prevention of War | National Justice Project | NSW Council for Civil Liberties | Protect (United Kingdom) | Rawadari | Refugee Advice & Casework Service | The Signals Network | Uniting Church in Australia (Synod of Victoria and Tasmania) | Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service | Whistleblowers Australia | 350 Australia | Andrew Quilty – Photojournalist | The Hon. Anthony Whealy KC – Former Judge, Supreme Court of NSW Court of Appeal | Azadah M Raz Mohammad – Lawyer | Ben Doherty – Journalist | Besmellah Rezaee – Lawyer | Bob Brown – Former Senator | Cameron Stewart – Journalist | David Hardaker – Journalist | The Hon. David Harper AM KC – Former Judge, Supreme Court of Victoria's Court of Appeal | Diana Sayed – Lawyer | Ed Santow – Former Australian Human Rights Commissioner | Erik Jensen – Editor | Professor David Lewis | Gerard Ryle – Director, International Consortium of Investigative Journalists | Guido Strack – Founding Chairman, Whistleblower-Netzwerk Germany | Hedley Thomas – Journalist | Howard Whitton – Ethics Specialist | James Shelton – Foreign Bribery Whistleblower | Jamie Walker – Journalist | Jennifer Robinson – Barrister | Jessie Taylor – Barrister | Kerry O'Brien – Journalist | Laura Tingle – Journalist | The Hon. Margaret White AO – Former Judge, Supreme Court of Queensland's Court of Appeal | Michael Cole - Westmead Hospital Whistleblower | Michael McKenna – Journalist | Mujib Abid – Salaam Center for Dialogue | Adjunct Professor Nicholas Cowdery AO KC FAAL – Former New South Wales Director of Public Prosecutions | Nick McKenzie – Journalist | Rex Patrick - Former Senator | The Hon. Stephen Charles AO KC – Former Judge, Supreme Court of Victoria's Court of Appeal | Toni Hoffman AM – Queensland Health Whistleblower | Zarlisht Sarwari – Researcher | Zohal Azra – Lawyer

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