

Jon Cocks ... Submission to CIC ... what is corruption?

Having read the Commonwealth Integrity Commission consultation paper, I find myself in broad agreement with its principles, but I remain concerned that there is doubt over the actual definition of *corruption*.

Firstly, it can refer to *distortion*, as in altering the structure and/or meaning of someone's words, and the context in which they were spoken. Words taken from context can be abused in order to incriminate the user. Political argument comes to mind. I can imagine that examples of distortion might emerge from time to time in parliamentary debate. Journalists have been known to alter meaning by omission or context.

I would eliminate *distortion* from any definition of corruption, when seeking clarity on the role of the CIC, unless politicians deliberately distort the words of others in State documents. In that case, I would include *distortion, with the intention to mislead for illegal purposes*, as a part of the definition of *corruption*.

Immorality, depravity, perversion, debasement, vice and *degeneracy* are all corrupted states of mind that can lead to actions that might be described as any, or all, of wicked, depraved, dissolute, debauched or decadent. If a sitting MHR engaged in any of these in a public forum, with or without a minor, the media would lead the charge to hoist the offender on his/her own petard.

Taxpayers don't pay Parliamentary salaries to elected members, to see them fall sort of acceptable social norms, like publicly failing to abide by marital vows. Former MHR Jamie Briggs indulged in a minor form of immorality in Hong Kong, when viewing *corruption* through this lens, and he paid the price for it.

I would include *immorality* and its more extreme versions above, in an agreed definition of how the CIC defines *corruption*.

Finally, *corruption* can refer to *dishonesty* and its litter of disreputable offshoots: *exploitation, sleaze, bribery, fraud, venality* and *vice*. Clearly, none of us constituents are prepared to tolerate *dishonesty* in our elected members.

By clarifying *corruption* in this way, we might argue that Bronwyn Bishop was guilty of exploiting the taxpayer when infamously hiring the helicopter. Likewise, Fraser Anning exploited the taxpayers' dollar in flying from Queensland to Melbourne to attend a rally of highly questionable value to the national political conversation. He may also have been guilty of distorting to mislead, in his justification of what many saw as an ill-advised junket, mostly it seems for his own interest.

In summary, I would urge CIC to consider *corruption* in a parliamentary context as:

- *Dishonesty*, a breach of parliamentary transparency, or exploitation for personal gain or interest of any kind
- *Immoral* behaviour of any kind
- *Distortion, with the intention to mislead*.