Dear Prime Minister Scott Morrison

Confidence and trust in government and public institutions is at an all-time low. When this confidence and trust is diminished, pessimism, divisiveness and conflict increase; and social cohesiveness is harmed. As a result, the economy and the welfare of all Australians suffers. Ultimately, as international experience has shown, democracy itself is threatened and may be irreparably damaged. Governments ignore at their peril demands by citizens to combat corruption with vigor.

A major cause of the current deterioration in trust is the suspicion that corruption permeates many governmental decisions and actions. Corruption, broadly understood in this context, occurs when those in public office place private interests over the public good. The avoidance of corruption is an essential organising principle of our representative democracy.

Secrecy is at the core of corrupt conduct. Electronic communications and advanced developments in IT provide formidable means of concealing misconduct, which is difficult and expensive to combat. Those involved in large-scale corruption are usually well-organised, experienced, astute and wealthy. A well-funded and properly resourced national anti-corruption agency, with overall jurisdiction to investigate all public decisions and conduct, and with appropriate powers and protections, is needed to combat them. The price of freedom, and freedom includes living in a society free from corruption, is eternal vigilance.

Existing federal integrity agencies lack the necessary jurisdiction, powers and know-how to investigate properly the impartiality and bona-fides of decisions made by, and conduct of, the federal government and public sector.

A National Integrity Commission is urgently needed to fill the gaps in our integrity system and restore trust in our democracy.

The National Integrity Committee has outlined a benchmark for designing a model integrity commission. It must have a broad jurisdiction and strong investigative powers, including public hearings, in order to adequately investigate and expose corruption and misconduct.

We urge you to immediately establish a strong, effective and independent National Integrity Commission.

The Hon Sir Gerard Brennan AC QC
Former Chief Justice, High Court of Australia

The Hon Jane Mathews AO
Former judge, Federal Court of Australia; former judge, Supreme Court of NSW

The Hon David Ipp AO QC
Former Commissioner, NSW ICAC; former judge NSW Court of Appeal

The Hon Anthony Whealy QC
Former judge, NSW Court of Appeal

The Hon Paul Stein AM QC
Former judge, NSW Court of Appeal

The Hon Peter McClellan AM QC
Former judge, NSW Court of Appeal

The Hon Murray Tobias AM QC
Former judge, NSW Court of Appeal

The Hon Marcia Neave AO
Former judge, Victorian Court of Appeal

The Hon Bernard Bongiorno AO
Former judge, Victorian Court of Appeal

The Hon James Thomas AM QC
Former judge, Queensland Court of Appeal

The Hon Margaret White AO
Former judge, Queensland Court of Appeal

The Hon Mary Gaunt QC
Former judge, High Court of Australia

The Hon Jeffrey Miles AO
Former Chief Justice of ACT; former judge, Supreme Court of NSW

The Hon Stephen Charles AO QC
Former judge, Victorian Court of Appeal

The Hon David Harper AM QC
Former judge, Victorian Court of Appeal

The Hon Geoff Davies AO QC
Former judge, Queensland Court of Appeal

The Hon Henric Nicholas AC
Former judge, Supreme Court of NSW

The Hon Bill Windeyer AM
Former judge, Supreme Court of NSW

The Hon David Kirby QC
Former judge, Supreme Court of NSW

The Hon John McKechnie QC
WA CCC Commissioner; former judge Supreme Court of WA

The Hon Chris Stellet QC
Former judge, Supreme Court of WA

The Hon Peter Lyons QC
Former judge, Supreme Court of Queensland

The Hon Tony Fitzgerald AC QC
Former judge, Federal Court of Australia; former President, Queensland Court of Appeal

The Hon Margaret McMurdo AC
Former President, Queensland Court of Appeal

The Hon Alan Wilson QC
Former Judge, Supreme Court of Queensland

The Hon Geoffrey Miller QC
Former judge, Supreme Court of WA

The Hon Betty King QC
Former judge, Supreme Court of Victoria

The Hon Wayne Haylen QC
Former judge, NSW Industrial Court

Judge Philip Nase
Former Queensland CMC Commissioner; former judge District Court of Queensland

Judge Greg Woods QC
Former judge, District Court of NSW

Judge Stuart Campbell
Former judge, County Court of Victoria

Judge Sarah Bradley
Former judge, District Court of Queensland

Judge John Robertson
Former judge, District Court of Queensland

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