

# THE WHISTLEBLOWER

A Whistleblower Anonymous Publication

March 1993

## NO, MINISTER!

Call to end the Sir Humphrey Appleby Rule

• By John McNicol

*A Whistleblower who uncovered mismanagement at senior level within a Federal Government department contacted Whistleblowers Anonymous after discovering a massive cover-up taking place. It was obvious, he alleged that the Departmental head knew of the situation.*

"Darcy" had worked in Canberra for twelve years, having been transferred from an interstate office, he and his wife had seen their two children grow up in a leafy Canberra suburb within walking distance of his office.

As he kissed his wife goodbye, one morning, he was unaware of the events that lay ahead. He was respected by his colleagues and as he walked along the corridor to his office, he was warmly greeted by a hand-wave and a cheery "Good Morning."

Within an hour into his "IN" tray came a file which was to alter not only his day, but his whole life.

There was some requisition forms which required his authorisation so that payment could be made. Being a competent and efficient operator, he went checking through files, for some items were not clearly identified. What he came across led him to stretch across his desk to the telephone. "Yes, I agree with you" said the Canberra store manager, "I wondered why that item was needed. In these hard times, our assistants do not worry too much about purchases from government departments. The money is assured", he said.

Darcy checked some more, and strange items, more like household purchases emerged, there was even a requisition for a privately owned vehicle part listed.

By lunch-time, the items were into six figures, the fact that it was taxpayers money appeared not to have concerned those that made the purchases.

He promptly went with evidence to a supervisor, who was rather busy at the time and told him to call back later to discuss the matter.

Darcy, back in his office went through some other files which had to do with a contract for re-carpeting of an office block. The measurements were set out and the contractor who had checked and quoted on the job was given the tender.

On checking through the records of the first time the office block had been carpeted, it became evident that through some mysterious set of circumstances the floor had expanded.

It then became evident that "kick-backs" became part of the measuring and tendering process.

What developed revealed a cover-up situation, Darcy had blown-the-whistle on the team that he was working for and public service situation ethics then came into play.

He was sent to bureaucratic Siberia, in the new relocation he was given menial tasks to do. The retaliatory discharge process was set in motion, the stress on his family and the nervous condition which Darcy developed, made him search for assistance. For three months he carried around with him my telephone number, then he finally made the call which gave to him the knowledge that there were others facing the same bureaucratic malaise he was experiencing.

There is no way that those in the senior executive service of the Australian Public Service can claim ignorance of situations similar to what Darcy experienced, it is

rife throughout government departments.

Every Permanent Head should be given a sign to place on their desks "The buck stops here". In fact, it doesn't, under a convention of the Westminster System of Government, it is the Minister who is held responsible for the conduct of his or her Department.

The person who should be totally responsible is the Permanent Head, as a former Departmental Head once told me, Ministers come and go but we Permanent Heads go on forever. That being the case, they should take full responsibility for the actions which officers under their control initiate.

Whistleblowers Anonymous, has abundant evidence of cover-ups, documents going missing, asset registers being unchecked, credit cards that are issued to individual public servants being misused.

There is no reliable empirical data to indicate whether it is \$4 billion or \$13 billion that is lost through fraud on the Commonwealth. Even the Auditor-General is at a loss to give a clear estimate.

In his Annual Report for 1991-1992, he wrote, "The mounting costs to the Australian taxpayers of some prime examples of non-Commonwealth public-sector entrepreneurial zeal should in themselves have stopped such attempts at avoiding proper and effective parliamentary scrutiny in the Commonwealth. But sadly this has not been the case".

The Auditor-General went on in his report, to say, "despite continuing warnings during the year about the effects of inadequate audit and

review of the management of some bodies in public sectors, I have found little understanding in some areas of the Commonwealth about the importance of public audit of public bodies and have had to report twice to the Parliament about potential erosion of public accountability".

Much of the fault rests with the Sir Humphrey Applebys of the Public Service who are responsible for the 150,000 Commonwealth workforce. The 40,000 middle-management are particularly protected, with no imposition from above and no criticism from beneath.

Risk management strategies, which involves less checking of individual financial transactions should be more rigorously evaluated by those responsible.

The Auditor-General's Report No.15 which had to do with the Department of Defence was according to informants not treated seriously by senior officers in that Department. The Department's rely on the Minister to defend their position in Parliament, while they provide the 'Yes Minister' answers.

A matter that threatened lives of a group of public servants, was according to one Deputy Secretary not a matter covered under Occupational Health & Safety regulations. When it was drawn to his attention, he simply shrugged his shoulders. If even the matter was brought up in Question Time, no doubt he would provide the Minister with a suitable reply.

There appears to be a growing number of senior Commonwealth officers who not only seek power

but are corrupted by it. They will be willing to intentionally cause matters to be covered up and to victimise and harass a whistleblower, in pursuit of power.

Perhaps Disraeli was aware of such people in his day, when he wrote, "Government do not govern, but merely control the machinery of Government being themselves controlled by the hidden hand. He went on to say, "The world is governed by very different persons from what those believe who are not behind the scenes".

The Public Service situations ethics attitude allows for fraud and unethical behaviour to foster and is based on power which eventually corrupts.

The Auditor-General in his 1991-1992 Report has suggested the contracting out of Departmental audit work to private enterprise. This must not be allowed to happen.

What happens if a large firm of auditors were to undertake the audit of the Department of Defence and one of their other clients happens to be carrying out contract work for that Department? — with the tendering processes and such like, it has to be seen as a conflict of interest.

The Australian National Audit Office by making such a proposal are admitting defeat in their attempt at making Government Departments accountable. One can also envisage a mass hiring of ANAO staff by private enterprise.

The answer must surely rest in making the Sir Humphrey Applebys more accountable and ending their rule of the public sector once and for all.

## THINGS WE HEAR

• By John McNicol

Whistleblowing is defined in the US Whistleblower Protection Act, 1989, as occurring when a present or former employee discloses information "which the employee reasonably believes evidences a violation of any law, rule, or regulation, or gross mismanagement, a gross waste of funds, an abuse of authority, or a substantial and specific danger to public health or safety".

Abraham Lincoln once stated, "No nation, can long remain half slave and half free". The freedom of the press is a guarantee of our liberty. In Australia, the right to freedom of expression is residual and exists only so far as it has not been restricted by statute or common law. The same applies to the public's right to know. It appears that in this day and age our freedom(s) has to be reconquered.

As Thomas Paine said, "The choicest gift of God to men is the gift to reason".

The first lines of Alvin Toffler's "Future Shock", written in 1970, were prophetic. "In the three short decades between now and the twenty-first century, millions of ordinary psychologically normal people will face an abrupt collision with the future". Toffler was not covering up anything, he was exposing the problems we now face. No organisation, however large like the 150,000 workforce employed by the Australian Public Service are immune from change. Out of that number 40,000 are in the middle-management area and unless properly supervised they will continue to be untouchable, having no imposition from above and no criticism from beneath. Whistleblowing in the workplace should not be a difficulty for the Public Service, but their greatest potential strength-when properly managed.

A leaked document read, "You would need to have regard to repercussions in the electorate; the Australian public is notoriously conservative, whatever its political affiliations. The Government's policy might best be achieved by a strategy of hastening slowly — gradually broadening the standards of imported material so that public opinion can be developed to embrace the principles embodied in the policy". In other words, brainwash the population.

Whistleblowers Anonymous has a Research committee under the Chairmanship of Keith Potter of Melbourne. It seeks to research proposed whistleblower protection legislation, specific whistleblowing cases and other areas of interest. It is worth remembering that parliament legislates, within law, by the will of the people. The parliament is elected only to serve.

When I was a boy in the North of Scotland, our local MP was Sir Archibald Sinclair, a member of Churchill's wartime cabinet. I never forgot he wrote to my father and signed his letter "I remain, your humble and obedient servant".

How many modern day parliamentarians would sign a letter with the same sentiments today?

National Conference  
National Library — Canberra  
March 27 - 28 1993

Whistleblowers  
Anonymous  
P.O.Box 1466, Tuggeranong  
ACT 2900

# WHO'S WHO

• Photographs by Dr G.C.Howe



**Dr Jean Lennane**, is a well known NSW Psychiatrist. She has blown-the-whistle on a number of medical issues, particularly when it relates to patients. She is secretary of the Psychiatric section of the New South Wales branch of the AMA. She is a recognised authority on matters relating to alcoholism and published an authoritative work on the subject last in 1992.

**Bill Toomer** was a senior Quarantine officer when he blew-the-whistle on May 24, 1973 by ppp signing a fumigation order, which led him to become Australia's best known whistleblower.

He has faced no less than 11 Public Service Inquiries. A recent article by Tony Hewett of the Sydney Morning Herald (March 6, 1993) has put together the Toomer Affair. Bill is still seeking justice.



**Keith Potter**, a former Appeals Chairman (Promotions) has been one of Bill Toomer's ardent supporters. Keith has been involved in dealing with thousands of cases involving public servants, and in his retirement is still active in seeking to assist whistleblowers. He heads Whistleblowers Anonymous Research Committee.



We also welcome Professor Kim Sawyer of Melbourne, whose guidance in a number of areas will be much appreciated.

## STRATEGY FOR SURVIVAL

Whistleblowers seeking to survive are recommended to:

- \* Keep a diary of events
- \* Retain copies of documents on a file
- \* Discuss your situation with your family
- \* Seek to work within the system
- \* Try the informal approach, then if that fails, a written report to

management, if that fails talk to WBA

- \* Seek to maintain friendship with colleagues
- \* In any interview you may be called to attend make certain you have a witness
- \* Keep in touch with Whistleblowers Anonymous

## CONFIDENTIALITY

Whistleblowers Anonymous provide a confidential service. No names,

addresses or telephone numbers are released without the approval of the

From 'The Business Australian'

## When the worker becomes a victim of restructuring

TOO many Australians are being turned into invalids by their bosses. Increasingly, we're seeing psychopathic administrative methods being used to achieve restructuring in organisations where employees can't be easily dismissed.

And this trick of making workers sick and recycling them as superannuation pensioners is costing us all far too much for it to continue.

When an administrator turns up the heat on an employee, hoping he'll get the hint and resign, sometimes the process goes horribly wrong, with tragic consequences. The employee whose work is always faultless is now being told every day that his output is not good enough, his standard's too low, or he'll be chipped for a minute late in an office where the

boss is never on time, etc.

Unfortunately, in too many cases, the employee being targeted does not realise the motivation behind this negative feedback he's getting all of a sudden.

If the boss would be honest and say, "Look, I'm just persecuting you so you'll resign and I can replace you with someone I really want", the employee wouldn't waste his time and effort trying to please an unpleasable boss.

However, we have unions to protect us from being bullied by bosses, so the Sergeant Bilko and Machiavellis in the top office can't be honest, or the employee would appeal to his fellow workers for support. So the reason for the fault-finding is kept secret, and the aim of

the exercise, to get the worker to resign, is strenuously denied.

The boss may even go out of his way to pretend he wants to help this suddenly incompetent person to lift his game. Of course, this help is designed to prove fruitless, although the worker doesn't know it. The boss expects the worker will finally come to the conclusion he's just not good in the industry, and quietly go somewhere else.

What happens instead, is that the no-win situation the targeted employee finds himself in uncovers a previous vulnerability from past experiences, often in early childhood. The boss who can't be appeased begins to resemble a parent with whom some hurt was never resolved, and an

anxiety state develops from the re-opening of old, deep conflicts.

The employee's family doesn't understand what's going on. Their fears for him increase his own fears. About this time, the worker consults a doctor for symptoms of illness caused by stress.

However, because the basic origins of the stress making this man sick are hidden and denied by the people causing the problem, it may take 12 to 18 months to discover the real cause.

Sometimes the real cause isn't discovered for many years. Meanwhile, we have a person genuinely ill who wasn't ill before. Too often this person is superannuated out.

However, after his retirement on medical grounds, the worker makes a remarkable

recovery. As we would predict, not having to go to work and have his mind bent regularly frees him from his major source of stress.

If he's receiving a superannuation pension, he's beginning to look so well he arouses our suspicions he's just a bludger and a conman and was never really sick.

He begins to say the same things to himself, setting up further no-win cycles of guilt.

I don't expect the psychopathic administrators will identify themselves, but we in the medical profession and the people running superannuation funds have a good idea who they are.

Dr William Wilkie Psychiatrist Brisbane

Dr Wilkie is a member of Whistleblowers Anonymous.

# NEW PRESIDENT

When John McNicol founded Whistleblowers Anonymous in 1991, one of the first persons he sought out to assist in the setting up of the organisation was Dr Jean Lennane. They had done battle together in 1988, in the fight to stop the closure of Psychiatric institutions in New South Wales. Jean is one of the most caring people in the medical field, and her own personal experience as a whistleblower uniquely makes her the appropriate person to head the organisation, says John McNicol. She commands the confidence of the Board of Management and has a visionary outlook which will ensure the organisation's role in the future. Two new Vice-Presidents have been elected, Bill Toomer the longest serving whistleblower, still fighting for justice. The other is Vince Neary of Syd-

ney who is also Treasurer.

Vince who is employed with the NSW State Rail Authority has blown-the-whistle on alleged wrong doing within the Authority. His engineering background has enabled him to record accurately the events leading up to his exposure on "Current Affair" of the wrongdoing. Like Bill Toomer, Vince a proud Irishman seeks justice.

Four new members have joined the Board of Management, bringing special areas of expertise to the organisation's efforts to have set in place whistleblower protection legislation. They are Dr Brian Martin of Wollongong University, Dr Patricia Wood of the A.C.T. who has a distinguished career in the nursing profession. Dr Shirley Phillips of Victoria and ppp Isla McGregor of Tasmania.

Dr Brian Martin is a world authority on Intel-

lectual Suppression and along with Shirley and Isla has set up a network for academics who are engaged in the fight against suppression in academia.

Other members of the Board of Management include, Ian Buchanen of Canberra, Geoffrey Carpenter of Adelaide, Dr Chris Howe of Newcastle, Trevor Jarman of Shepparton, Keith Potter of Melbourne, Barry Scott of Hobart, George Turner of NSW, Ross Twine and David Morris of WA.

Dr Chris Howe of Newcastle has been actively engaged in exposing wrongdoing both in matters relating to medicine, banking and other areas. Bruce Hamilton of NSW has been active in highlighting wrongdoing in the area of banking and finance.

Others giving assistance to the Board of Management are Christina Schwerin of Victoria, Jenny Marsh of NSW

and Duncan Fardon of NSW.

The Board of Management appreciate the assistance given by leaders in the field of medicine, law and politics.

During 1991-1992, no less than 19 parliamentarians sent whistleblowers to WBA, some were recommended by government and non-government agencies.

The assistance given by Ms Julie Pagonis, National Industrial Officer of the Public Sector Union has been much appreciated.

Within the Australian Public Service there are many senior public servants anxious to see greater accountability and whistleblower protection legislation introduced.

Dr Bill de Maria of the University of Queensland has set out a Bibliography on Whistleblowing as well as U.S. case studies.

## MEMBERSHIP

In fairness to everyone, those seeking assistance from Whistleblowers Anonymous are expected to become members, the fee being \$20. Where a person is facing hardship, they should make this known at the time of seeking advice. No one within WBA receives any salary or gratuity.

## BECOME A SUPPORTER

You do not need to be a whistleblower to become a supporter.

## HOW WE ARE MANAGED

Whistleblowers Anonymous is being incorporated under the Australian Securities Commission rulings as a non-profit making body, once finalised, members will be advised.

## CASE HISTORIES

The following are some cases currently being helped by WBA:

- \* Directors of company concerned over shareholders being wrongly advised.
- \* Former councillors seeking to obtain justice over rorts
- \* Immigration irregularities
- \* Environmental cover-ups by officials
- \* Procurement rorts with kick-backs
- \* Misuse of government credit cards
- \* Property scandals
- \* Overseas investment rorts
- \* Financial scandals in Universities

These are a few of hundreds of cases.

## CASES WON.

While it is not possible to list all the successful cases, we mention two.

John McNicol received a letter from Jim Holmes of Telecom dated 26 February in which he said, "You will be interested to know that the investigations into alleged travelling allowance fraud, have reached a stage where a Telecom employee (CO6) was arrested by the NSW police on 11 February 1993 and charged with a number of offences. Documentation relating to further possible offences is being forwarded to police".

Another case involving a NSW schoolteacher who was being victimised by being sent 139 Kms from her home, is being relocated after the National Director approached the Educational authorities.



# AUSTRALIAN FEDERAL POLICE RAIDS COMMISSIONER RESPONDS

Two Australian newspaper offices were 'raided' by the Australian Federal Police in search of documents. The AFP Commissioner, Mr R. McAulay wrote to both newspapers setting out the reasons for the visit of the police to their offices.

In his letter he made mention of the media making heroes out of whistleblowers. John McNicol wrote in reply inviting the Commissioner to attend the National Conference in March.

In his reply the Commissioner had to decline the invitation due to his being on annual leave. We are printing the whole of Commissioner McAulay's letter, for it sets out the distinction which exists between the whistleblower and the person who deliberately traffics leaked documents.



## Office of the Commissioner of Police

11 February 1993  
Mr John McNicol  
Whistleblowers Anonymous  
PO Box 1466  
TUGGERANONG ACT 2900

G.P.O.Box 401  
Canberra  
A.C.T. 2601  
Telephone  
(06) 249 7444



## Whistleblowers are no heroes

• From John McNicol, President, Whistleblowers Anonymous

I refer to the letter from the commissioner of the Australian Federal Police, Mr R McAulay (2/2)

The Commissioner speaks of consciences being pricked but does not say whose conscience.

He speaks of the media making heroes out of whistleblowers but gives no examples. I have yet to come across one whistleblower who thinks of themselves in this way.

A person only becomes a whistleblower after they have sought to have their complaint dealt with through various official avenues at their disposal. This applies to members of law enforcement agencies as well as to others.

Let it not be forgotten, were it not for the media we would never have learned of what went on in Queensland or in Western Australia.

My committee is extending to Mr McAulay an opportunity to address our national conference at the National Library, Canberra on 28 March. There he will meet genuine whistleblowers, the unsung heroes, and be able to go through their files which will be on display.

If anything, the commissioner has highlighted the need for whistleblower protection legislation.

John McNicol  
Tuggeranong, ACT

### THE WHISTLEBLOWER

The Whistleblower, will become a monthly newspaper as from April. It will contain articles of interest, case histories, information to assist whistleblowers both in public and private sectors. To obtain your copy and subscription details write to: The Whistleblower P.O.Box 1466 Tuggeranong, ACT. 2900

### AUSTRALIA'S MOST WANTED

Whistleblowers Anonymous are seeking the assistance of those in the legal profession prepared to give a few hours of their time to assist in providing advice to whistleblowers.

We are also seeking the assistance of members of the public who are interested in becoming involved in the setting up of branches throughout Australia. We are seeking honest members of the public who have a sense of the need for greater accountability. If you would like to assist write to:

Whistleblowers Anonymous  
P.O.Box 1466  
Tuggeranong, ACT. 2900  
Telephone (06) 231 3097  
Membership and donations should be sent to:  
Mr Vince Neary  
27 Catalpa Crescent  
Turrumurra, NSW. 2074

Dear Sir

Thank you for your letter of 6 February 1993 in which you invited me to speak at a conference on 28 March 1993. I will be on annual leave and away at that time and will therefore not be able to attend. In any event I am not prepared at this stage to contribute to the debate.

Notwithstanding that I have no objection to the contents of this letter being made available to those people who will attend your forthcoming conference.

In my recent letter to the newspapers I used the term "whistleblower" only because the newspapers themselves had suggested that the execution of search warrants on certain persons and premises was for the purpose of intimidating "whistleblowers". As pointed out in your correspondence "whistleblowing" refers to employees exposing corruption within their own organisation. The document which we sought to retrieve had absolutely nothing to do with exposing corruption within the organisation from which the documents originated. To the contrary our investigations were directed against activities by people who would in fact be legitimate targets for whistleblowers. The people upon whom the warrants were executed were aware, or should have been, of this.

In regard to these specific transactions I can say no more because by the time you receive my letter the general circumstances of these police enquiries may have become subjudice.

Let me direct your attention to the recent findings of the NSW Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) concerning the illegal trafficking in confidential government information. Regrettably this enquiry exposed very extensive corrupt practices by some police officers and others. As a result of these disclosures there has been, quite justifiably, demands from the community that authorities ought to do all they can to prevent this trafficking.

This organisation conducts many enquiries into leaking of or trafficking in official documents or information. In some circumstances the leaked documents relate to corruption within the institutions in which they originate. In these circumstances whistleblowing legislation might well be facilitative and in the public interest. I have no difficulty at all with that concept although I am conscious that allegations, when made by disgruntled employees, are frequently quite malicious.

If whistleblower legislation is introduced it ought to provide the censure for people who make malicious allegations. I see some difficulty in putting into place procedures which serve both sets of interests.

The ICAC findings did, in passing, address the problems which arise out of the confidential classification applied to some types of records which, when viewed objectively, contain information of which it can be argued the public has a legitimate right of access. I accept that proposition. Further I believe that unnecessary restrictions on the availability of some types of information encourages illegal trafficking.

On the other hand various institutions are the repository of extensive holdings of information which, in the proper interests of the privacy of individuals, ought not to be used for purposes other than which it has been collected and certainly ought not to be made available to the public at large, or people who have it within their power to make such information available to the public acting upon their own discretion. This philosophy is the basis for the introduction into the Commonwealth law, and the law of other jurisdictions, to protect privacy.

These comments apply to many institutions and not merely the police. However, in the case of the police there are extensive holdings of information which are essential for the effective investigation of crime and also to service legislative requirements. For example, the provision to the courts of the criminal conviction history of recidivists. Even among police officers there are legislative provisions restricting the interchange of some information which we collect lawfully. For example, judicial warrants can be obtained for the purpose of collecting evidence through the use of telecommunication intercepts and listening devices. Inevitably the use of such devices results in the quite coincidental collection of confidential conversations between people on matters totally unrelated to the suspect offence. Quite properly the law imposes very stringent restrictions on the disclosure of any information to persons not directly involved in a consequent prosecution. It also requires the destruction of all records of conversation which are irrelevant or which become irrelevant.

In the course of criminal investigations it is necessary for police to exchange information from which certain suspicions of illegal activity can be reasonably drawn. Because of the spread of organised crime across state and national boundaries it is necessary to communicate these suspicions from one law enforcement agency to another.

The analysis of such communications lead ultimately to decisions as to whether or not the suspicions justify further investigation. If additional investigations ensue ultimately a decision has to be made as to whether the enquiries exonerate the suspect or uncover sufficient evidence for prosecution.

In criminal prosecutions there is an onerous burden of proof imposed on the prosecuting authority. In the event of an acquittal a presumption of innocence, quite properly, applies.

In summary, it can be seen that at various stages of a police investigation of allegations, not infrequently originating from what might be described as whistleblowers, information is generated which can be totally prejudicial to innocent people or to people of whom the presumption of innocence applies.

The trafficking in such information as I have described above, for profit or otherwise, is regarded by the law as corrupt. Regrettably the ICAC enquiry findings exposed that such trafficking does occur even though only a minority of people engage in this unlawful trafficking.

It is in the public interest that police enquiries directed at eliminating this type of trafficking are pursued with great vigour. It has absolutely nothing to do with the victimisation or intimidation of whistleblowing. In fact the contrary is the case. These enquiries relate to the type of activity which whistleblowers ought to be encouraged to expose.

Yours faithfully

R. McAulay  
Commissioner of Police

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8 THE WEST AUSTRALIAN TUESDAY APRIL 21 1992

## PEOPLE POWER



# Honesty the only policy

- The royal commission and other inquiries have revealed a lot of abuses of authority by public service and private company individuals.
- MALCOLM QUEKETT profiles the person who has founded a group dedicated to protecting people who blow the whistle on abuses of authority by their bosses in both public service and private enterprise.

Words such as graft, fiddles, surveillance, investigation and harassment make up a big part of John McNicol's life.

As president of the Canberra based Whistleblowers Anonymous, the 64-year-old Scottish-born retired public servant regularly works 12 hour days in the name of justice.

In particular, he campaigns for those honest Australians who have come across wrongdoing — but cannot do anything with the information for fear of retribution from within their own ranks.

Mr McNicol began Whistleblowers Anonymous about a year ago after a long-held disdain for rorts was rekindled by a friend whose life had been made a misery after going public about a doctored Defence Department report.

He decided to see if there were others who shared his views — and after writing in a local newspaper was inundated with replies from people wanting to help.

Whistleblower's board of management now includes a barrister,

two doctors, a clinical psychologist and other professionals. About 500 members across Australia fund the body through an annual fee of \$20 each.

McNicol said the task has cost him about \$8000 of his own. So why is he doing it?

He said it all began in the 1960s when, working as a journalist and Baptist minister in London, he formed a group to help drug users and blew the whistle on a doctor prescribing drugs in an underground station.

He settled in Australia in 1972 and worked on the Federal Attorney-General's press staff before leaving the public service about ten years ago to run a public relations company from home.

Mr McNicol said he was not an aggrieved party himself — in fact he had a great time in the public service — but he feels for others who have suffered for standing up to be counted about corruption.

He said about 3 per cent of public servants are crooked, about 47 per cent go along with the system and will not rock the boat and 50 per cent

are scrupulously honest — it is from that pool that Whistleblowers draws.

And the list he has compiled of goings-on in companies and the public service is long. He estimated public service rorts alone cost taxpayers \$400 million a year.

He has received more than 300 complaints since last July, ranging from cheating on travelling expenses and cooking accounts to straight out fraud — including cases in WA.

And he said he has recently been contacted by several women workers at State Parliament, at least three of whom have claimed a senior MP offered them trips to the eastern states in exchange for sex.

Mr McNicol said the women fear they cannot make complaints because of a lack of confidence in the internal complaints procedures at Parliament.

He said that fear shows proposed Freedom of Information laws would be inadequate because they would exclude Parliament House workers, who might want access to documents to take complaints elsewhere.

And Mr McNicol said Whistleblowers

Anonymous has in its short life come across some disturbing cases of harassment of people who make complaints.

One person was sent to eight different psychiatrists after writing a report criticising administration in his department; whistleblowers have been placed under surveillance, investigated by "hired hands", isolated at work and hounded at home.

The cost is high, Mr McNicol said whistleblowers have lost their jobs and associated stress has destroyed marriages.

So legislative action to protect genuine whistleblowers from prosecution or reprisals from their bosses was essential.

Former WA Greens Senator Jo Vallentine introduced a whistleblowers' Bill in the Senate last year and the State Government has also promised some form of protection.

Mr McNicol said that because of the current lack of protection, he cannot pass on information to official authorities. But Whistleblowers Anonymous had good contacts and could investigate widely.

What really was needed in the long term was a change in at-

titude; for more people to view life as the whistleblowers do — with a deep sense of commitment to what is right.

Mr McNicol said there seemed to be a national aversion to whistleblowing stemming from Australia's past when it was the military and police against the underdog.

He said people should see whistleblowing not as dobbing in mates but as stopping rorts fleecing taxpayers of their money.

"Corporations and government departments are inclined to overlook rorting because it shows them up as bad managers. What we really need is a good dose of ethics," he said.

"I believe we will see a moral change, but it's got to start at the top with the legislators."

And he is starting right away as a result of the sexual harassment claims.

"We will be writing to all MPs asking questions relating to protection of public servants and we intend to publish their views afterwards," Mr McNicol said.

As for the future of Whistleblowers Anonymous? "I hope it will become a crusade to get this country back on the right course," he said.



• RORT FIGHTER:  
• John McNicol set up Whistleblowers Anonymous to make officials honest.

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**LAKE MACQUARIE**

# LUXURY

# HOUSEBOATS

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**WHERE TO FIND US**

Marmong Cove is at the northern end of Lake Macquarie. Reach us by car, or by train which stops closeby. Aeropelican aircraft from Sydney land on the eastern edge of Lake Macquarie. We can arrange a pick up from plane or train.

From the South — we are approximately 1 hour north of Hornsby. Travel to the end of the F3 Freeway — Pass through Toronto and heading north turn right on the first roundabout. Follow the signs to the Marina.

Your host: Phil Howe and staff.

## WHISTLEBLOWERS ANONYMOUS

### APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

Please register me as a member of Whistleblowers Anonymous

I am a Whistleblower

I am not a Whistleblower

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Post Code \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone No. \_\_\_\_\_

Fax No. \_\_\_\_\_

Enclosed please find my cheque for \$20 being my annual fee.

Enclosed please find donation \$

Send To: The Treasurer

Whistleblowers Anonymous

27 Catalpa Avenue

Turrumurra. NSW. 2074

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