

*"All that is needed for evil to prosper is for people of good will to do nothing"*—Edmund Burke

# *The*



# *Whistle*

No. 122, April 2025

Newsletter of Whistleblowers Australia (ISSN 2205-0280)



## Articles

### HR is not your friend.

Feliks Perera, Michael Cole  
and Brian Martin

MANY LARGE ORGANISATIONS have a unit called Human Resources, more commonly known as HR. It might have some other name, like People Operations, Workforce Development or Human Capital Management.



Whatever it's called, its purpose is to handle personnel matters, for example recruitment, onboarding, complaint handling, compliance with employment law, performance reviews and workforce planning. It sounds worthwhile, and much HR work is routine and unobjectionable.



However, in workplace conflicts, HR usually takes the side of management against an individual worker — that could be you!

When you're having problems at work, you may be sent to HR to sort them out. Or maybe you go on your own initiative, expecting assistance. You should be wary and prepare carefully.

Workers in HR may be well-intentioned, but when managers are out to get you, HR's role is to control you or, if necessary, get rid of you.

#### The ambush

You're called into a meeting with the boss, not expecting anything more than a routine discussion. Lo and behold, an HR representative is present. This is an

ambush. Don't stay. Ask for a formal meeting with HR and walk out. If pressured to stay, say you're feeling ill and have to leave.



Another sort of ambush is when you meet the boss and unexpectedly receive a tongue-lashing. Some workers are stunned and sit through it all. It's better to leave as soon as possible. Don't tolerate abuse.

If you suspect an ambush, take along a witness — a colleague, a union representative, a friend. A witness can deter abusive attacks.

#### Advice when meeting HR

HR may have received specific instructions from your manager about what action is expected. You can ask HR about the purpose of the meeting and who asked that it be arranged, but don't expect a useful answer.

If possible, get your union lawyer or representative to accompany you.

Remain calm and polite, and never raise your voice. If you become angry or abusive, no matter how well justified, this will be used against you. Stay confident and always operate in a low-key manner. Answer questions and allegations confidently, stating what you know and have observed.

You are entitled to have accusations or claims particularised — they must be stated exactly, in short sentences, in a document, so you can answer them. If you're invited to reply to a long-winded document or statement or, for example, a record of interview with a colleague — don't do it. Ask for any claims to be laid out succinctly (bluntly and shortly) in writing for you to answer. Arrange a further appointment and politely leave.

Only answer specified, detailed, and actual claims. Do not answer a general claim like "You are not a team player" or "Some workers are complaining about your attitude." Instead, request documentary evidence for any such

claim. Also request written documentation if you're asked, "What do you say to this statement by your colleague?" Say you are happy to discuss those situations after documentation is provided.



You are entitled to reply to HR claims in writing. This is a safer option. Any little thing you say in a verbal interview might be used against you. Just hand over your written reply (to the specific claims) at the start of the meeting. If invited to add to your statement, don't do it. Just say the written statement is your complete response and you have nothing to add.

Do not answer any question arising from a document you have not been provided a copy to keep. Receiving copies of witness statements is a matter of procedural fairness, and you can ask about relevant regulations. If your request for copies is refused, advise HR that you will seek outside advice on the matter.



Never refer to legal matters at this point. Employers know that few employees have the resources to pursue a court case. HR might say, "If you're

unhappy, take legal action.” Don’t respond to such provocations.

Decline to answer questions on your dealings with lawyers. HR may press you on this as they often fear the legal consequences of their actions, which could jeopardise their jobs. Bluntly state that such questions are not for discussion.

Most interviews take place during working hours. Politely refuse to answer phone calls from HR or management after hours or on weekends.

Take pen and paper and advise the interviewer that you will be taking down your own notes of the interview. Record the names of the persons in the room and their positions in the organisation. Take lots of notes — do not rush. Ask whether you will receive a copy of the interview for your information. Recording on mobile phones may not be allowed even though you have the right to make a record of the interview. You may have to resort to making handwritten notes.



There is no legal requirement to sign any HR document even if there is a place for signatures. If they insist, say you will obtain outside advice first.

Have a good understanding of your employment contract and the company policy and procedures on matters dealing with internal corruption, bullying, reprisals, harassment, etc., and the specific issues raised by HR.

Make sure that HR personnel do not use harsh language or tone of voice to intimidate you. Interrupt the speaker and state that you will not tolerate intimidation.

Before you leave the interview, make sure that you and HR are clear on what was discussed at the interview. If any instructions are given, insist that such instructions be in writing. Do not accept verbal instructions as they can be easily misconstrued.

After you leave, write a brief summary of what happened, especially any agreements reached, check it with

your witness and send a copy to HR saying you will assume they accept it as accurate unless you hear otherwise. Write a more detailed version for your own files, and give copies to your lawyer and a trusted colleague or friend.

### Discuss with colleagues?

You may feel like discussing your situation, including your HR interview, with colleagues. Be careful. Some co-workers sound sympathetic but will act against you behind your back, even reporting to the boss. Even your casual comments may be used against you, especially if you reveal vulnerabilities. On the other hand, a truly trustworthy co-worker can be a valuable ally, providing advice and support. This is most likely when the two of you are being targeted by the same manager for the same reason.

Good luck! Actually, don’t rely on luck. Prepare carefully, liaise with your supporters, document everything and keep calm.

Feliks Perera is treasurer and Michael Cole and Brian Martin are vice presidents of Whistleblowers Australia.

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## Gaslighting whistleblowers

Brian Martin

HELEN was a conscientious employee in a large government department. After she reported some suspicious financial irregularities to her boss, things changed. Her boss told her that her work was substandard and asked whether she was having problems at home. Her co-workers started avoiding her and whispering about her. This caused her to doubt her own competency and sense of right and wrong. She started to think she was going mad. Then her boss instructed her to see a psychiatrist.

Helen was subject to a process called gaslighting, in which others conspire to make her doubt her sense of reality. This happens to some whistleblowers though certainly not all.

Jean Lennane, the first president of Whistleblowers Australia, was a psychiatrist who lost her government job in the late 1980s after she spoke out about cuts to mental health services.

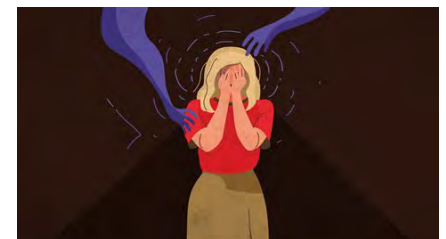
Jean was a whistleblower who knew exactly what was happening.



Sometimes, distressed individuals were referred to Jean for psychiatric evaluation. After hearing their stories, she said to some of them, “You’re not crazy. You’re a whistleblower.” This was powerful validation of their sanity.

These days, with much more media attention to whistleblowing, targeted workers are more likely to understand that experiencing sudden hostility at work is due to their threat to corrupt operations, not to mental problems. Yet for workers like Helen it can still be difficult to maintain mental balance. And workers are still referred to psychiatrists as a method of humiliation and as a pretext for getting rid of them.

The idea of gaslighting seems relevant to whistleblowers. I decided to check out some writing about it, and came across an insightful article by Paige Sweet titled “The sociology of gaslighting,” published in 2019 in the prestigious *American Sociological Review*. She describes gaslighting as “a type of psychological abuse aimed at making victims seem or feel ‘crazy’, creating a ‘surreal’ interpersonal environment.” That certainly fits what happens to many whistleblowers, whether or not the attempt at crazy-making is successful.



Sweet doesn’t mention whistleblowers. Her focus is on intimate personal relationships, especially abusive and violent ones. In such relationships, women are especially vulnerable due to gender stereotypes about men and women. One of them is the association between femininity and irrationality: women are assumed to be more



emotional and less rational. Women are also more vulnerable due to system-wide inequalities between men and women.

## GASLIGHTING

### THE NARCISSIST'S FAVORITE TOOL

Sweet interviewed dozens of US women who were survivors of domestic abuse, seeking to find common features in their experiences. She presumed, correctly, that domestic abuse would be associated with gaslighting. Here's what she found.

When I asked women about their partners' abusive tactics, they often described being called a "crazy bitch." This phrase came up so frequently, I began to think of it as the literal discourse of gaslighting. In gaslighting dynamics, the idea that women are saturated with emotion and incapable of reason is mobilized into a pattern of insults that chip away at women's realities. (p. 861)

The evidence shows that gaslighting is linked to insidious patterns of control, in which women are denied mobility, access to their social networks, and institutional help. (p. 862)

One of the obstacles to breaking free of a gaslighting partner is what Sweet calls "institutional vulnerabilities." She tells of three main institutions: the immigration system, the legal system and the mental health system. Abusers of undocumented immigrants to the US made threats and manufactured stories about exposure and deportation, to heighten their insecurity. Black women did not fare well with police and courts where they had less credibility and were presumed to be aggressive. Abusers used the stigma of mental illness to make their partners seem to be crazy. Sweet summarises:

... mental health and legal systems are sites where the harms of gaslighting may be exacerbated. Inventing stories about infidelities, insisting that women are "crazy" and overly emotional, and manipulating memo-

ries are more damaging when executed in institutions where women already experience fear, diminished autonomy, and lack of credibility. (868)

How does Sweet's theory of gaslighting relate to whistleblowers? On the surface, there are important divergences. Whistleblowers are not in an intimate relationship with their abusers. Instead, typically, they are employees in a workplace with many co-workers, and not usually in a tight relationship with their boss. Another difference is that while Sweet's study focused on women as targets, many whistleblower targets are men, and they are less easily stigmatised by stereotypes associated with femininity.



Nevertheless, there are parallels. Most whistleblowers are conscientious employees who believe in the ideals espoused by their organisations. They speak out when they see a deviation from those ideals. In a sense, these sorts of whistleblowers are in a tight connection with the organisational ideal, one that makes them vulnerable. Cynical workers are less likely to speak out and hence less likely to suffer reprisals.

Conscientious employees who are attacked for doing the right thing are especially vulnerable to gaslighting. They assume the world is just and that exposing corruption is praiseworthy. When they experience reprisals for speaking out, their assumptions are overturned. For an honest worker to be portrayed as the one in the wrong is often disorienting. Without independent validation, it can make a whistleblower doubt their reality.

Another parallel is in institutional vulnerabilities. Many, perhaps most, whistleblowers raise their concerns through official channels. Often, first, the boss, then higher management, ombudsmen, auditors-general, anti-corruption bodies, parliamentarians and

the like. The trouble is that these avenues often fail to help and, in quite a few cases, make things worse. For those who believe that justice can be found somewhere in the system, this can be deeply disturbing. It may not be gaslighting in the usual sense, but it is a frontal challenge to their previous sense of reality.



What can workers learn from Sweet's analysis of gaslighting? First, it is risky to take an organisation's self-description too seriously. It may not be caring, respectful, efficient, responsible or any of the other labels used to sell the organisation to its workers and outsiders. Being a bit cynical can be a survival mechanism.



Second, the vulnerability of the outspoken worker is made worse by the failures of internal processes and outside agencies. To survive and make a difference, it is important to find allies that support the issue you're raising, such as journalists, campaigners and other whistleblowers. It might be said that, to the extent that people believe the system works to protect those who speak out in the public interest, they are being gaslit. Beware!

Brian Martin is editor of *The Whistle*.

### Whistleblower persecutions

#### The cost of ignoring those who dare speak out

Tony Watson

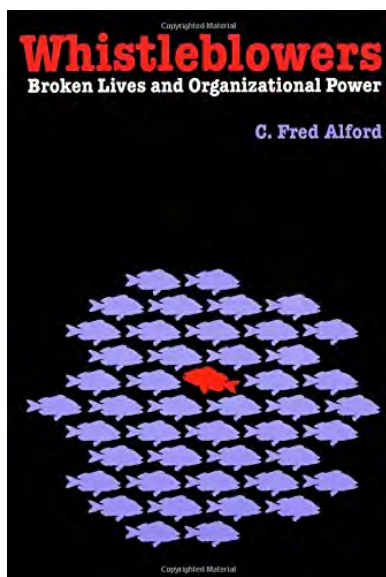
Michael West Media, 10 March 2025

Whistleblowers everywhere act for reasons of conscience and integrity. They are vital to protect our society against corruption and power abuse, yet they are often persecuted for speaking out. Whistleblower **Tony Watson** reports from experience.

WHISTLEBLOWERS are compelled to speak out, most often against their own organisation, in order to maintain their self-respect. “How could I keep my head up, and look people in the eye, if I kept quiet?”

But it is that very sense of self-respect that is targeted and hurt by the retaliations of the organisation they expose. It is precisely why humiliation makes such an effective tool. Driven by their own moral compass, whistleblowers are portrayed as unstable, money-seeking grubs.

C. Fred Alford, in his book *Whistleblowers: Broken Lives and Organisational Power*, calls this the “nuts and sluts” strategy: The key organisational strategy is to transform an act of whistleblowing from an issue of policy and principle into an act of private disobedience and psychological disturbance.



As well as gaslighting, shunning, marginalising and ostracism, there are rumours, questioning the employee’s performance, threats, harassment, reprimands, demotions, forced transfers, assignment to trivial duties, dismissal and blacklisting. The fate of a whistleblower is unattractive and lonely.

As a society, we sense that whistleblowing matters and that the cost of ignoring whistleblowers could be huge. All too often, when there is a scandal or disaster, it transpires that it could have been avoided or mitigated if someone who knew of it spoke up, or if their message had been heeded when they did speak up.

#### The cost of whistleblowing

Timely, then, is a report by the UK Whistleblowing Charity Protect, released early February. The charity’s report, “The Cost of Whistleblowing,” analyses three UK disasters that unfolded largely after whistleblowers had raised concerns. They are the Post Office Horizon Scandal, the multiple deaths of babies at the Countess of Chester Hospital, and the collapse of construction giant Carillion.

Most whistleblower scandals share a basic timeline. Financial costs are incurred before and after someone blows the whistle and fall into three broad categories: Unavoidable, Avoidable, and Fallout. Unavoidable Costs precede the whistleblower and are incurred irrespective of any action by the company. These costs are not included in the figures below. Avoidable Costs are incurred because the whistleblower is ignored.

Fallout Costs follow the scandal becoming public and are associated with investigating the failings that caused it.

In all three instances, the figures are large. £178m for the Post Office Scandal; £39m for the Hospital Scandal; and £209m for the Carillion Collapse. In the case of the Post Office, aside from the financial costs, ignoring the whistleblowers resulted in wrecked lives, false convictions, and suicides. In the Hospital Scandal, seven babies were killed.

MWM has published a series of stories about whistleblowers in

Australia.

#### Robodebt

We could add and then analyse our own scandals to this sorry list. Robodebt is a good example. Several staff raised concerns about the unlawful and unfair nature of the scheme, as aired in the Royal Commission. But none triggered the necessary responses and legal protections.



As Royal Commissioner Catherine Holmes observed in her final Report:

“The disastrous effects of Robodebt became apparent soon after it moved, in September 2016, from the last part of the limited release, involving around 1000 recipients, to sending out 20,000 notifications per week. In December 2016 and January 2017 the media, traditional and social, were saturated with articles about people who had had demonstrably wrong debts raised against them, and in many instances heard of it first when contacted by debt collectors.

“The human impacts of Robodebt were being reported: families struggling to make ends meet receiving a debt notice at Christmas, young people being driven to despair by demands for payment, and, horribly, an account of a young man’s suicide...

“What was, in fact, clear was that there were a number of senior departmental officers who did not understand the online compliance system or its effects. To compound that problem, when people like [whistleblower] Ms Taylor raised legitimate concerns, which in substance reflected the reality of what was occurring to those subject to the system, they were, effectively, ignored.”



## The whistleblower's creed

Viktor Frankl's words have become the whistleblower's creed: "What is to give light must endure the burning." But it should not be so.

Whistleblower stories can be depressing: their experiences are traumatic, their treatment by big corporates is grossly unfair, and their efforts are often in vain. And yet, there are a few hopeful signs. First, whistleblowers and the role they play are getting more airtime. Naming a problem is an important step in addressing it.

Second, although disillusioningly slow, the Government has promised better whistleblower protections. Even symbolic political promises can reflect underlying societal expectations. And just last week, four independents, Andrew Wilkie, Helen Haines, Jacqui Lambie and David Pocock, introduced a Bill into Parliament to establish a Whistleblower Protection Authority.

Third, more whistleblowers and their supporters are sharing their stories. Across the globe, there are organisations springing up to help and support whistleblowers, such as the Human Rights Law Centre.

The sharing of information and experiences and offers of support are indicative of a better future.

It can't come soon enough.



Tony Watson

Tony Watson is a whistleblower and former partner and tax specialist with Greenwood's & Herbert Smith Freehills. Watson exposed Lendlease for a \$300m retirement village tax scam and is now fighting Lendlease for compensation in the Federal Court.

## The cost of blowing the whistle? Everything

Dave Ross

*The Australian*, 24 March 2025

HIS HOME, career, friends, family, as well as most of his money — for whistleblower Tony Watson the costs of raising Lendlease's \$300m alleged "tax dodge" have been immense.

He says it didn't have to be this way, but attempts to protect whistleblowers have failed.

He says courts allow well resourced and committed companies to exhaust opponents in years of costly litigation.

Mr Watson, a former stalwart of Lendlease's tax advisers Greenwood's and Freehills for more than 20 years, says the fight to prove he was dumped for blowing the whistle has cost him nearly everything.

As the veteran tax lawyer and one-time trustee of Lendlease founder Dick Dusseldorp's estate faces his fourth year in the Federal Court, Mr Watson says his fighting funds are running out.

Mr Watson said he had just received his latest legal bill in an ordeal that has already cost the 64-year-old an enormous amount of money, as well as his former home on the water and his career.

For Mr Watson, the first strike from blowing the whistle was being dumped from Greenwood's and Freehills in 2016, after agitating against Lendlease's tax treatment of a series of deals, including its \$192m takeover of the Primelife retirement group, the Jem project in Singapore and the development of the Sydney International Convention precinct.

"You've been there (Greenwood's and Freehills) your whole life, you thought you were good, and then all of a sudden you're dismissed," Mr Watson said.

"There's the financial costs, the kids went to private schools, we had a big house, a big mortgage, and then you're gone mentally and emotionally you're not your best, and you've got to turn that around and pick yourself up." At issue are the country's whistleblowing laws, which the High Court found do not apply to historical issues before their introduction in 2019, and the massive financial mismatch in power

and wealth between litigants and huge companies.

But Mr Watson didn't think his fight to show he was dumped for blowing the whistle would be this hard.

The Australian Taxation Office has already taken to Lendlease with a bat over the first of its three deals to sell a stake in its Primelife retirement business.

Last March the ATO slapped Lendlease with a \$112m tax bill, years after beginning a review of the group's tax plans.



Lendlease could now see a tax bill in excess of \$300m over the same matters Mr Watson blew the whistle on.

Mr Watson notes he delayed his court fight to 2022, knowing the ATO was running the ruler over Lendlease.

But since then Mr Watson's case has ground its way through the Federal Court, helped along by a detour to the High Court and moves by Lendlease and lawyers for Greenwood's and Freehills, now owned by PwC Australia, who have fought every step of the way.

Ironically, Mr Watson notes, PwC were the advisers to Lendlease who recommended the property giant cook up its tax schemes.

PwC has now faced years of turmoil after the firm's aggressive tax culture was revealed by a marathon investigation by the ATO and the Tax Practitioners Board.

The firm's former head of international tax, Peter, was banned after breaching multiple confidentiality deeds, sharing secret government tax plans with others in the firm to produce new tax strategies for clients.

"Lendlease and PwC have taken every point and argued every proposition and failed to accept even the most basic propositions to make sure this case costs as much as it can," Mr Watson said.

Mr Watson said that although PwC and Lendlease were entitled to fight the

case, it called into question how anyone could blow the whistle and win.

“Justice is supposed to be cost-effective, speedy and efficient,” he said. Mr Watson’s case has been overseen by Justice Elizabeth Raper since June 2022. He has been before the courts at least 20 times since, and will appear again on Monday, before a trial set down for June.

To fund his fight Mr Watson borrowed cash before later selling the family home on Sydney’s George’s River.

Lendlease chief Tony Lombardo recently sold his six-bedroom Elizabeth Bay mansion on Sydney Harbour for \$13m, after snapping up the 510sq m block for \$8.5m.



Tony Lombardo

Mr Watson said his family had supported him through the fight. “Family has been remarkably wonderful — I’ve never been luckier,” Mr Watson said.

But colleagues and friends abandoned him, he said, naming a string of former work mates at Greenwoods and Freehills who haven’t spoken to him since he was frozen out.

Mr Watson is now seeking to raise funds to pay lawyers and continue the fight. The veteran tax lawyer warns Australia’s laws are not working and governments have ignored recommendations to level the playing field. He’s not alone.

Two top lawyers at Super Retail Group, Rebeca Farrell and Amelia Berczelly, attempted to sue their former employer, claiming they were victimised after discovering an alleged affair between the company’s boss Anthony

Heraghty and the then head of human resources Jane Kelly.

The pair alleged Super Retail Group had agreed to a payout deal before reneging. ANZ whistleblower Etienne Alexiou’s case against the banking major over his dismissal has entered its fifth year.



Etienne Alexiou

Mr Alexiou believes he was dumped by ANZ in a bid by the bank to placate regulators over an illegal trading scheme, claiming he had sworn on Bloomberg chats.

Instead of pinning the blame on the key figures behind the market manipulation scheme, Mr Alexiou alleges he and a string of other figures in ANZ were kicked out and their careers permanently damaged.

Mr Alexiou told *The Australian* that fighting a whistleblower action, particularly against a bank of ANZ’s size, was “daunting and imposes a significant monetary and personal burden.”

“My former employer is a well-resourced bank which has approached my proceedings aggressively and has put every issue in dispute,” he said.

Several other ANZ traders who had brought cases against the bank have settled, including Melbourne markets figure Andrew Graham, who walked away with only a contribution to his legal costs.

Mr Alexiou said every whistleblower case suffered from “information asymmetry,” with ANZ repeatedly clashing with his lawyers over attempts to access information while also attempting to extract documents and details from his camp.

“Even though there have been recent improvements in the law, the central challenge remains proving that the reason for action against you was because you were a whistleblower,” Mr Alexiou said.

Parliament has previously contemplated the creation of a whistleblower protection authority, while a 2019 review also called for an assessment of the case for setting up a similar body.

Labor Senator Deborah O’Neill said whistleblowers paid a heavy personal cost for speaking out. “Whistleblowers risk everything to expose the truth. Without them, corruption and wrongdoing thrives in the shadows,” she said. “A society that values accountability must protect those who shine a light on injustice, not punish them for their courage,” she added.

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## Unfinished business for Australia’s corruption watchdog

Australia Institute, 24 January 2025

THE NATIONAL ANTI-CORRUPTION COMMISSION (NACC) is the independent body that detects, investigates and reports on serious or systemic corruption in the Australian Government. Four reforms would increase confidence in the NACC and help it expose corruption.



### Allowing public hearings whenever in the public interest

The NACC can only hold public hearings in “exceptional circumstances” and when “it is in the public interest to do so.” The Hon Robert Redlich was the head of the Victorian anti-corruption watchdog, which is also only permitted to hold public hearings in “exceptional circumstances.” Redlich argues there is no need “to require ‘exceptional circumstances’.”

The NACC should instead be



allowed to hold public hearings whenever it is in the public interest, regardless of whether the circumstances are exceptional or not. Public hearings would build trust and allow the commission to demonstrate that it is investigating corruption effectively and appropriately. They would also discourage corruption by showing the consequences for such behaviour.

Two in three Australians (67%) agree the NACC should be able to hold public hearings whenever they are in the public interest.

### Implementing a whistleblower protection authority

The NACC can initiate investigations in response to referrals from whistleblowers. Therefore, it is essential that whistleblowers are able to speak up without fear of reprisal. While the NACC includes some protections, more are needed to give whistleblowers the confidence to speak out.

A bipartisan joint parliamentary committee recommended a whistleblower protection authority in 2017, and it was a 2019 election commitment from Labor. The original legislation for the NACC, proposed by independent MPs Cathy McGowan and Helen Haines, also included a whistleblower protection authority, but it was not included in the final legislation the Albanese Government took to Parliament.

The government should set up an independent whistleblower protection authority.

### Making the oversight committee balanced

The NACC is overseen by a parliamentary committee. The Government selects the commissioner and deputy commissioner of the NACC, but its choice is approved or rejected by a parliamentary committee. However, because the government has half the committee seats, plus the casting vote of the chair, the same party that selects the commissioner and deputy commissioner has the numbers to approve them even if every other committee member is opposed.

As the NACC is responsible for investigating the government of the day, this could erode public trust in the independence of the NACC's commissioners.

To ensure that no one party has

majority control, the committee should be able to select any member as chair, or the role should rotate between committee members.



### Broadening the inspector's remit

Because the NACC has such broad powers, there is an independent inspector who investigates complaints made about its conduct or activities. The inspector's powers are focused on ensuring the NACC itself complies with the laws and behaves fairly. The inspector should also oversee the performance of the NACC, including how long its inquiries take and whether its actions align with its objectives.

## Whistleblower protection or suppression?

C4 Center  
*Aliron*, 28 February 2025

OVER THE PAST DECADE, several multi-billion ringgit [currency] scandals have come to light in Malaysia, the most notable one being the 1MDB scandal.

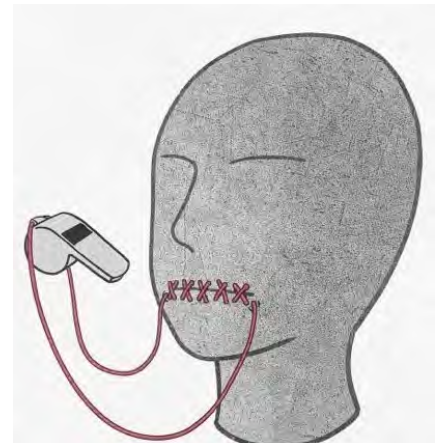


What many of these cases have in common is the misuse of public institutions and funds, highlighting the vulnerability of government to corruption and abuse of power.

In this, whistleblowers — especially from the civil service — play a crucial role in anti-corruption efforts by sharing evidence of crime and cooperating with law enforcement.

Unfortunately, the existing legal framework for whistleblower protec-

tion in Malaysia — governed by the Whistleblower Protection Act 2010 (WPA) — is severely inadequate.



The threat faced by civil service whistleblowers is particularly acute due to the introduction of Section 203A of the Penal Code, which came into force in 2014. Essentially, this law criminalises the disclosure of information obtained in the performance of public duty.

The broad scope of this law deters would-be whistleblowers in the civil service from coming forward and revealing first-hand knowledge of government corruption and abuse of power.

C4 Center's "Whistleblower Protection or Suppression?" report explores the difficult relationship between Section 203A of the Penal Code and the WPA.

As will be explored fully in the case studies in this report, it is argued that Section 203A effectively creates legal and practical barriers for whistleblowers to access the protections afforded under the WPA 2010.

The section is frequently used by law enforcement agencies as an intimidation tactic to inculcate a culture of secrecy and instil fear within the civil service and even private sector individuals, casting doubt on the enforcement of anti-corruption laws in Malaysia.

The vague wording of the section makes potential whistleblowers uncertain of their entitlement to legal protection, which further deters them from disclosing instances of corruption.

A comparative study of similar laws from different jurisdictions reveals that mitigating factors are absent in confining the application of Section 203A to its specific purpose.

In huge contrast with our Common-



wealth counterparts, Malaysia has a lack of legislative commitment in striking a fair balance between withholding information to protect legitimate interests and encouraging disclosure of information to fight corruption and uphold the public's right to know.

To address these challenges, this report recommends the following:

- Repeal of Section 203A of the Penal Code
- Amend the WPA
- Enact a right-to-information law
- Amend the Official Secrets Act 1972

When viewed against the backdrop that corruption in Malaysia is endemic, the significance of the whistleblower's role in exposing corruption and assisting law enforcement agencies only becomes more obvious.

After ten years of Section 203A, it is high time for Parliament and the government to take initiatives to enhance whistleblower protections as a crucial step in fighting corruption at all levels of society in Malaysia.

Aliran is a reform movement in Malaysia promoting justice, freedom and solidarity.



It calculated the costs associated with the Carillion scandal — in which the UK's second-largest construction company was plunged into compulsory liquidation in January 2018, despite the Cabinet Office having no indication it was not in sound financial health six months earlier — at £209m. Carillion held around 420 public sector contracts when it went under.

The report notes that warnings about improper accounting practices from a member of staff, Emma Mercer, had little effect. Her repeated warnings were ignored, except for the company's auditors, KPMG, being told to re-audit its own work, "effectively marking [its] own homework." And when Mercer became Carillion's finance director in September 2017 — having raised concerns about its finances in spring that year — the company's "fate as a soon-to-be ex-construction giant had already been sealed," the report says.

A select committee report into the collapse found Carillion's board and executive members were "uninterested in hearing inconvenient truths about the business model they were pursuing," the report notes.

The scandal led to just over £192m in avoidable costs to government — £148m paid by the Cabinet Office to help finance the costs of liquidation, £42m spent on terminating PFI contracts, and just over £2m in unemployment benefits following job losses.

There was also a further £17m of what Protect calls "fallout costs" of rectifying failures that happened over the course of the scandal, including those that could have been avoided had whistleblowers' warnings been heeded.

The bulk of this, £16m, was the cost of delays to public buildings, mostly hospitals. It also includes the 20% premium paid by public bodies — mainly for schools and local authorities — for the company's services post-liquidation, which added up to £1.75m; just over £100,000 spent on a National

Audit Office investigation; and £60,000 spent on the Brydon review into the quality and effectiveness of audit in the wake of the scandal.

The cost of ignoring whistleblowers in the Horizon scandal, meanwhile, added up to around £178m.

The report notes that precisely when the Post Office learned of errors with the Horizon software, which created accounting shortfalls that led to 736 sub-postmasters being prosecuted for theft, fraud and false accounting between 1999 and 2015. However, it adds that Fujitsu, which developed the software, knew of bugs in 1999 thanks to anonymous whistleblowers in its own development team; and the Post Office later ignored multiple warnings from sub-postmasters and others.

"Those who might have held either Fujitsu or the Post Office to account went unheard. Those with technical expertise at Fujitsu were ignored when speaking about risks when Horizon was built, and the Post Office was too busy prosecuting sub-postmasters to listen to their concerns about the system overall," the report says.



Protestors outside the Post Office Horizon IT inquiry in December 2022.  
Photo: PA Images/Alamy Stock Photo

The avoidable costs of the scandal included the £4,362,814 it cost central government to imprison 236 sub-postmasters over the course of the scandal; and £7,634,044 spent by the Post Office on prosecution, its internal working group dedicated to "managing" the concerns raised by sub-postmasters, and consultancy, including by forensic accountants Second Sight.

There were also massive "fallout costs" of £173,604,451 to central government, including £138m in compensation payments; the £21,939,014 it cost to run the public inquiry; and £11.6m in legal costs.

The fallout cost the Post Office nearly £257m in legal costs and £58m

## Ignoring whistleblowers costs government hundreds of millions of pounds, analysis finds

**Whistleblowing charity Protect calls for urgent reform after examining Carillion, Horizon and Lucy Letby scandals**

Beckie Smith

*Civil Service World*, 4 February 2025

IGNORING WHISTLEBLOWERS has cost the taxpayer hundreds of millions of pounds, new analysis has found, with the cost of three recent scandals alone pegged at £426m.

A report published today by the whistleblowing charity Protect has laid bare the cost of failing to act when whistleblowers speak up.

It looked at three major scandals in recent years: the Post Office IT Horizon scandal; the Lucy Letby scandal; and the 2018 collapse of the outsourcing giant Carillion.

in compensation, the report adds.

The report also examines the case of Lucy Letby, who was convicted in August 2023 of murdering seven babies and attempting to murder six others while working as a nurse at the Countess of Chester Hospital.

This case incurred £2,725,533 in unavoidable costs spent by central government on the prosecution, defence and investigation, and in compensation; as well as the estimated £47,220 the hospital paid Letby in 2015.

The £9.4m in avoidable costs to government included more than £7m spent by the Home Office on Operation Hummingbird, the Cheshire Constabulary investigation into Letby; and prosecution costs. The fallout costs to government stood at £29.7m, two-thirds of which went on the Thirwell Inquiry into the scandal and the remainder on compensation and associated litigation.

"The whistleblowers in Letby's case were persistent, yet the executive viewed the concerns as obstructive and personal towards Letby leading to an overly cautious approach to the concerns. Had they been listened to, a lot of fallout costs and the cost of a lengthy public inquiry could have been avoided but, most importantly, lives could have been saved," the report says.

## LET'S FIX UK WHISTLEBLOWING LAW



### A "compelling and urgent argument" for reform

The report calls for a series of major reforms to improve how whistleblowing is handled, beginning with a duty on employers to investigate whistleblowing concerns. "This is vital to closing the accountability gap," the report says.

Secondly, Protect has called on the government to expand the range of people in the workplace who qualify for whistleblowing protection. "Anyone who may suffer retaliation for raising

public interest concerns in the workplace should know that the law stands by them," it says.

The report also says central government should "reframe" whistleblowing by giving the policy lead to the Cabinet Office rather than focusing solely on employment rights.

"Whistleblowing affects every sector and every government department and its value to upholding standards in public life, and holding the powerful to account should not be underestimated," the report says.

Other recommendations include requiring all boards to appoint a whistleblowing champion; new standards, "backed by statute if necessary," that ensure that whistleblowers know what to expect when they go to regulators; and for government to implement the findings of public inquiries.

"We hope this paper provides a compelling and urgent argument to government for why things need to change," the report says.

Protect said it had focused on the three cases for its analysis "to illustrate the range and scale of costs that ignoring whistleblowing can give rise to." The three cases focus on a public sector employer (NHS); a publicly owned but privately run employer (Post Office); and a private sector employer which contracted with the public sector.

But it said there were a number of other scandals it could have looked at to highlight the same issues, including the Grenfell Tower tragedy and the Infected Blood scandal.

"Indeed, there will be many other cases which have not received similar public attention and yet have caused significant costs to the taxpayer," the report said.

Protect chief executive Elizabeth Gardiner said: "Whistleblowing failures come at a high price — to the whistleblower, to the employer and, too often to the taxpayer. It is central government that is left picking up the pieces of avoidable scandals.

"At a time when public finances are under pressure, the government cannot afford the cost of avoidable harm in the public sector. Yet employers are still not listening to and investigating whistleblower concerns and are failing to create cultures where whistleblowers can speak up safely and effectively."

## Mark Klein, AT&T whistleblower

Cindy Cohn and Corynne McSherry  
EFF, 12 March 2025

THE Electronic Frontier Foundation is deeply saddened to learn of the passing of Mark Klein, a bona fide hero who risked civil liability and criminal prosecution to help expose a massive spying program that violated the rights of millions of Americans.



Mark didn't set out to change the world. For 22 years, he was a telecommunications technician for AT&T, most of that in San Francisco. But he always had a strong sense of right and wrong and a commitment to privacy.

When the *New York Times* reported in late 2005 that the NSA was engaging in spying inside the U.S., Mark realized that he had witnessed how it was happening. He also realized that the President was not telling Americans the truth about the program. And, though newly retired, he knew that he had to do something. He showed up at EFF's front door in early 2006 with a simple question: "Do you folks care about privacy?"

We did. And what Mark told us changed everything. Through his work, Mark had learned that the National Security Agency (NSA) had installed a secret, secure room at AT&T's central office in San Francisco, called Room 641A. Mark was assigned to connect



circuits carrying Internet data to optical “splitters” that sat just outside of the secret NSA room but were hardwired into it. Those splitters—as well as similar ones in cities around the U.S.—made a copy of all data going through those circuits and delivered it into the secret room.



A photo of the NSA-controlled “secret room” in the AT&T facility in San Francisco (Credit: Mark Klein)

Mark not only saw how it works, he had the documents to prove it. He brought us over a hundred pages of authenticated AT&T schematic diagrams and tables. Mark also shared this information with major media outlets, numerous Congressional staffers, and at least two senators personally. One, Senator Chris Dodd, took the floor of the Senate to acknowledge Mark as the great American hero he was.

We used Mark’s evidence to bring two lawsuits against the NSA spying that he uncovered. The first was *Hepting v. AT&T* and the second was *Jewel v. NSA*. Mark also came with us to Washington D.C. to push for an end to the spying and demand accountability for it happening in secret for so many years. He wrote an account of his experience called *Wiring Up the Big Brother Machine ... And Fighting It*.



Archival EFF graphic promoting Mark Klein's DC tour

Mark stood up and told the truth at great personal risk to himself and his family. AT&T threatened to sue him, although it wisely decided not to do so.

While we were able to use his evidence to make some change, both EFF and Mark were ultimately let down by Congress and the Courts, which have refused to take the steps necessary to end the mass spying even after Edward Snowden provided even more evidence of it in 2013.

But Mark certainly inspired all of us at EFF, and he helped inspire and inform hundreds of thousands of ordinary Americans to demand an end to illegal mass surveillance. While we have not yet seen the success in ending the spying that we all have hoped for, his bravery helped to usher in numerous reforms so far.

And the fight is not over. The law, called Section 702, that now authorizes the continued surveillance that Mark first revealed, expires in early 2026. EFF and others will continue to push for continued reforms and, ultimately, for the illegal spying to end entirely.

Mark’s legacy lives on in our continuing fights to reform surveillance and honor the Fourth Amendment’s promise of protecting personal privacy. We are forever grateful to him for having the courage to stand up and will do our best to honor that legacy by continuing the fight.

## A dangerous time to attack whistleblowers

Freedom of the Press Foundation  
31 January 2025

### Trump attacks oversight, Dems attack whistleblowers

After Trump’s mass firing of inspectors general to silence internal whistleblowing, our Daniel Ellsberg Chair on Government Secrecy, Lauren Harper, explained that whistleblowers would be left with no choice but to go to the press. She wrote that Congress should reform the Espionage Act so they can do so without fear of retribution.

Senate Democrats had a different response. They attacked Tulsi Gabbard — Trump’s pick for director of national intelligence — for refusing to call whistleblower and Freedom of the Press Foundation (FPF) board member Edward Snowden a traitor, cutting her off when she attempted to explain that his revelations exposed illegal surveillance under a domestic spying law that

a court found unconstitutional just last week. Our Senior Advocacy Adviser Caitlin Vogus wrote about why now is a particularly dangerous time to signal hostility to whistleblowers.

We also joined Defending Rights & Dissent and others in an open letter explaining that, while there are legitimate reasons to oppose Gabbard’s nomination, her past criticism of domestic surveillance isn’t one of them.



Democratic Senator Mark Warner greets Director of National Intelligence nominee Tulsi Gabbard at her January 30 confirmation hearing.  
AP Photo/John McDonnell

### A perfect setup to punish journalism

And speaking of Democrats shooting themselves in the foot ...

We’ve said before that by extracting a guilty plea to Espionage Act violations from WikiLeaks publisher Julian Assange, the Biden administration set up its successor to punish journalists who expose government secrets. But President Donald Trump’s also got oligarchs to protect.

Not to worry — former President Joe Biden handed him a roadmap to censoring corporate secrets too, by prosecuting Florida journalist Tim Burke under computer crime laws for exposing Fox News outtakes of Ye’s unaired, anti-semitic rant to Tucker Carlson. Our Director of Advocacy Seth Stern explains in *Lawfare*.

Our executive director, Trevor Timm, also went on *The Daily Beast*’s podcast “The New Abnormal” to talk more about the Biden administration’s press freedom failures.

### Patel would mark a new low for FBI

In a 2023 podcast interview, Kash Patel threatened to “come after the people in the media” and target them “criminally or civilly.” We joined a letter calling on senators to ask Patel about his plans to prosecute journalists at his confirmation hearing for FBI director, among other things.

Press-specific issues didn’t get the



attention we would've liked at the hearing, but Patel did try to walk back his comments about weaponizing the FBI against Trump's perceived enemies. We don't believe him, and we oppose his confirmation as FBI director — as should anyone who values press freedom. We said in a statement that “Senators who vote for Patel's confirmation will be to blame if and when he supersedes the FBI's sordid history of targeting journalists, protesters, academics, and activists.”

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## **An orchestra of whistleblowers: guarding democracy against tyranny**

Leno Rose

*Impacto*, 22 January 2025

OVER THE YEARS, government employees have stepped forward as whistleblowers, exposing truths hidden by their agencies and superiors. These revelations often carried personal risks but were made because the stakes involved the well-being of an entire nation.

The release of the Pentagon Papers exposed the grim reality of the Vietnam War, revealing how the Pentagon concealed the truth alongside the bodies of countless soldiers from both sides, as well as innocent Vietnamese civilians. During the Watergate scandal, the informant known as “Deep Throat”—an alias borrowed from a popular adult film of the time—provided reporters Woodward and Bernstein with critical information on the Nixon administration's criminal activities, ultimately leading to Nixon's resignation.

While some whistleblowers achieve lasting recognition, many face immense challenges after coming forward. No administration welcomes being exposed, whether figuratively “caught with their pants down” or exposed by less savory means.

Today, with Donald Trump reelected amid accusations of lawbreaking, and a Supreme Court that appears complicit, there is an urgent need for whistleblowers. Trump's return to power seems to neutralize serious legal challenges that would have toppled most public officials.



Magdaleno (‘Leno’) Rose-Avila

The Republican Party, once the self-proclaimed “law-and-order party,” has devolved into what some view as a dangerous cult. American voters, it seems, have been deceived again. History will likely record this era as a time when many pledged allegiance to a demagogue, abandoned Christian principles, and dismantled the very laws and policies meant to safeguard the nation—all while pushing for schools to teach the Bible and ignoring its teachings.

The hope now lies in an orchestra of whistleblowers—a chorus of voices across all levels of government who prioritize their love for democracy over party loyalty. These individuals may represent the last remaining guardrails of a democracy teetering on life support.

Activists suggest government employees use voice-activated recorders to capture illegal actions or un-American statements during meetings. Without recording devices, employees should document incidents immediately, share their observations with at least one trusted colleague, and record the names of witnesses or collaborators.

High-ranking officials and cabinet members are likely to break numerous laws, targeting perceived enemies and redirecting critical resources to fund divisive and harmful agendas. Whistleblowers must seek out trustworthy reporters willing to protect their sources, even at great personal risk. Along with verbal testimony, providing documents will be crucial to lend credibility to these revelations.

Reports suggest that this administra-

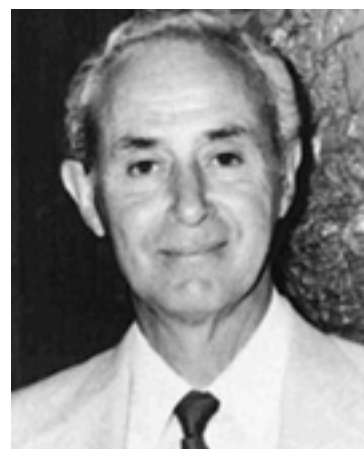
tion is already preparing measures to suppress whistleblowing, such as banning cell phones from sensitive meetings. However, modern technology offers alternatives, with transmitters disguised as pens, earrings, belt buckles, or even embedded in clothing. Whistleblowers must act decisively, documenting unlawful activities to preserve the rule of law.

The initial whistleblowers may feel like small rafts adrift in a dark sea of lies and hatred. But over time, these solitary vessels can unite into a diverse “flotilla” of truth, undeniable in its strength.

Hackers are reportedly working to uncover and document government misconduct, introducing worms into systems at all levels of administration. Their efforts, coupled with investigative journalism, hold the potential to expose the erosion of democracy both domestically and globally.

As someone with government experience abroad, I have witnessed firsthand how lies and misinformation are perpetuated at official meetings. Rational individuals often remain silent and complicit in their inaction.

During my tenure as Peace Corps Country Director in Guatemala under the Carter administration, I confronted Ambassador Frank Ortiz for his failure to address human rights abuses. Ortiz ignored the massacre of indigenous leaders and students by elite Guatemalan forces during a peaceful takeover of the Spanish Embassy—a tragedy that claimed the life of Rigoberta Menchú's father.



Frank V. Ortiz Jr

I quietly blew the whistle when Ortiz sought another ambassadorship, ensuring he did not receive the position.

While my actions did not make headlines, they contributed to holding a misguided official accountable.

Whistleblowing is not about revenge or personal gain—it is about providing guardrails to ensure leaders honor the rule of law. Every level of government and business must be held accountable. By raising our voices, we can preserve the integrity of our democracy and safeguard the principles upon which it was founded.

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## A new group aims to protect whistleblowers in the Trump era

Billy Perrigo  
*Time*, 21 January 2025

THE WORLD needs whistleblowers, perhaps now more than ever. But whistleblowing has never been more dangerous.

Jennifer Gibson has seen this problem develop up close. As a whistleblower lawyer based in the UK, she has represented concerned insiders in the national security and tech worlds for more than a decade. She's represented family members of civilians killed by Pentagon drone strikes, and executives from top tech companies who've turned against their billionaire bosses.

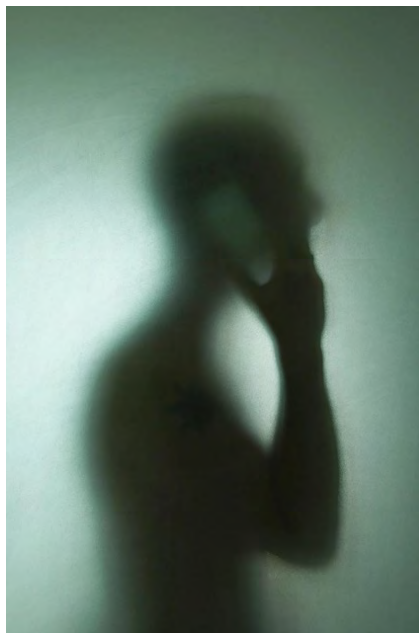


Jennifer Gibson

But for today's whistleblowers, Gibson says, both the stakes and the risks are higher than ever. President Trump has returned to the White House and wasted no time using the might of the state to retaliate against perceived enemies. This time, Trump boasts the support of many of Silicon Valley's richest moguls, including Elon Musk

and Mark Zuckerberg, who have overhauled their social-media platforms to his benefit. Meanwhile, tech companies are racing to build AI "superintelligence," a technology that could turbocharge surveillance and military capabilities. Politics and technology are converging in an environment ripe for abuses of power.

Gibson is at the forefront of a group of lawyers trying to make it safer for conscientious employees to speak out. She's the co-founder of Psst, a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization founded in September and designed to "collectivize" whistleblowing.



On Monday, to coincide with Trump's inauguration, Psst launched what it calls the "safe": a secure, online deposit box where tech or government insiders can share concerns of potential wrongdoing. Users can choose to speak with a pro-bono lawyer immediately, anonymously if they prefer. Or they can ask Psst's lawyers to do nothing with their information unless another person turns up with similar concerns. If that second party emerges, and both give their consent, Psst is able to match the two together to discuss the issue, and potentially begin a lawsuit.

Gibson says the aim is to overcome the "first mover problem" in whistleblowing: that even if several insiders privately share the same concerns, they may never find out about each other, because nobody wants to risk everything by being the first to speak up.

"The chances are, if you're a tech worker concerned about what the company is doing, others are concerned as well," Gibson says. "But nobody wants to be first."

Psst's model doesn't negate all the dangers of whistleblowing. Even if multiple insiders share concerns through its "safe," they still face the prospect of retaliation if they eventually speak out. The safe is end-to-end encrypted, but a lawyer has access to the decryption key; an adversary could sue Psst in an attempt to obtain it. Because it's browser-based, Psst's safe is marginally more vulnerable to attack than an app like Signal. And while information stored in the safe is protected by legal privilege, that's only a protection against entities who respect legal norms. Gibson acknowledges the limitations, but argues the status quo is even riskier. "We need new and creative ways of making it easier and safer for a larger number of people to collectively speak out," she says. If we continue to rely on the shrinking group of people willing to blow up their careers to disclose wrongdoing, she adds, "we're going to be in a lot of trouble, because there aren't going to be enough of them."

In her previous role at the whistleblower protection group The Signals Network, Gibson worked on providing independent legal and psychosocial support to Daniel Motaung, a Meta whistleblower who first shared his story in *Time*. Before turning her focus to the tech industry, Gibson spent 10 years at the UK-based human-rights group Reprieve, where her title was "Head of Extrajudicial Killings." She focused on U.S. military drone strikes in the war on terror, which reports indicate had a higher civilian death rate than Washington publicly admitted. "I spent 10 years watching national security whistleblowers risk everything and suffer significant harm for disclosing information that the American public, and quite frankly the world, had a right to know," Gibson says. "In my opinion, we as civil society failed to really protect the whistleblowers who came forward. We tried to get accountability for the abuses based on the information they disclosed—and many of them went to jail with very little media attention."

Gibson also noticed that in cases

where whistleblowers came forward as a group, they tended to fare better than when they did so alone. Speaking out against a powerful entity can be profoundly isolating; many of your former colleagues stop talking to you. One of Psst's first cases is representing a group of former Microsoft employees who disclosed that the tech giant was pitching its AI to oil companies at the same time as it was also touting its ability to decarbonize the economy. "The benefit of that being a group of whistleblowers was the company can't immediately identify who the information came from, so they can't go after one individual," Gibson says. "When you're with a collective, even if you're remaining anonymous, there are a handful of people you can reach out to and talk to. You're in it together."

Psst's safe is based on Hushline, a tool designed by the nonprofit Science & Design Inc., as a simpler way for sources to reach out to journalists and lawyers. It's a one-way conversation system, essentially functioning as a tip-line. Micah Lee, an engineer on Hushline, says that the tool fills a gap in the market for an encrypted yet accessible central clearinghouse for sensitive information. "It still fills an important need for the type of thing that Psst wants to do," he says. "[But] it's filling a space that has some security and usability tradeoffs."



Micah Lee

For follow-up conversations, users will have to move over to an encrypted messaging app like Signal, which is marginally safer because users don't have to trust the server that a website is hosted on, nor that your own browser hasn't been compromised.

For now, Psst's algorithm for detecting matches is fairly simple. Users will be able to select details about their industry, employer, and the subject of their concerns from several drop-down

boxes. Then Psst lawyers, operating under legal privilege, check to see if there is a match with others. Gibson expects the system's capabilities to evolve. She's sketched out a blueprint for another version that could use closed, secure large language models to perform the matching automatically. In theory, this could allow whistleblowers to share information with the knowledge that it would only ever be read by a human lawyer in the case that a different person had shared similar concerns. "The idea is to remove me from the process so that even I don't see it unless there's a match," Gibson says.

At the same time, technological advancements have made it easier for governments and tech companies to clamp down on whistleblowing by siloing information, installing monitoring software on employees' phones and computers, and using AI to check for anomalous behaviors. Psst's success will depend on whether tech and government insiders trust it enough in this environment to begin depositing tips. Even if the system works as intended, whistleblowers will need extraordinary courage to come forward. With tech and government power colliding, and with AI especially getting more and more powerful, the stakes couldn't be higher. "We need to understand what is happening inside of these frontier AI labs," Gibson says. "And we need people inside those companies to feel protected if they feel like they need to speak out."

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## My whistleblower journey

Vanessa Sivadge

*The Christian Post*, 6 February 2025

MY JOURNEY into the controversial world of radical gender ideology began when I made the decision to expose Texas Children's Hospital for illegally using Medicaid dollars for cross-sex hormone treatments and transgender procedures on minors.

I became a pediatric nurse because I wanted to help children and in 2018, I accepted my dream job as a nurse at the largest and most prestigious children's hospital in the United States in Houston.

Several years later in 2021, I found myself in a new role in the endocrine

clinic seeing young patients confused about their sex, and I immediately had concerns. Children were being manipulated into believing that they were born into the wrong body, and affirmed in their delusion by being lied to that they could medically and socially transition into the opposite sex. Parents were convinced that initiating their confused child onto the conveyor belt of pharmaceutical and medical interventions would be life-saving. They were told their option for their little girl was that she could become a boy, or she would commit suicide.

As a Christian and as a healthcare professional, I knew this view was wrong. It not only contradicted biological reality, but reality but would ultimately result in the permanent sterility and surgical mutilation of vulnerable children who were made in the image bearers of God.

I also knew I couldn't remain silent.

In 2024, I worked with journalist Christopher Rufo to shine a light on the unethical and illegal practices I uncovered at Texas Children's Hospital. I came forward publicly to reveal that the hospital had used taxpayer funds to illegally fund sex change treatments and procedures, in violation of Texas law. This revelation came after numerous public statements in which the hospital denied the existence of its transgender medicine program, going as far as to remove all traces of it online.

When I came forward anonymously to corroborate Dr. Haim's anonymous whistleblower testimony revealing the existence of this sex change program at Texas Children's Hospital, I never imagined the ripple effect this would have, the positive impact on Texas policy, and the unexpected retaliation from the Biden DOJ [Department of Justice].

In July of 2023, two FBI agents came to my house and asked to question me about "issues at my work." This exchange captured on our Ring camera garnered over 6 million views online in just a few days, a visible manifestation of the police state being mobilized by a radical leftist administration with no regard for the First Amendment rights of someone like me. My husband and I were stunned, momentarily paralyzed by the realization that my decision to expose the harm being done to children at the hospital had led to this moment.



These two FBI agents proceeded to inform me that I was a person of interest in a case involving “a leak of medical records,” and issued a series of threats to my career and my safety if I didn’t comply. The weeks and months following this encounter were defined by many sleepless nights and much uncertainty, but our faith and trust in a faithful and sovereign God sustained us and propelled us to go public with the wrongdoing at Texas Children’s Hospital.

In August of 2024, I was fired from the hospital in retaliation for blowing the whistle and exposing their activities.

Despite these challenges, I have no regrets. I’ve remained just as passionate about helping children, but I have realized that the best way for me to do so is by defending them from radical gender ideology and sexualization. My commitment to upholding a biblical perspective on gender and sexuality, my experience as a medical professional, and my devotion to protecting children’s health and well-being led me to found Protecting Texas Children in January 2025.

At Protecting Texas Children, we work to advocate for the safety, well-being, and future of every child in Texas. I have witnessed first-hand the dangers that exist in the lives of children around the state. From radical gender ideology being pushed in public schools to the blatant sexualization of vulnerable children; *someone* needs to take a stand for Texas kids, and that’s exactly why PTC is here.

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## Whistleblowers don’t just die

May Lin

*Scot Skip News*, 5 March 2025

WHEN A CEO DIES, thousands of news articles flood the media like monsoon rains over an arid field. But when a whistleblower dies, not even the most independent news outlets dare break the silence.

Why is that?

One after another, countless whistleblowers have died from mysterious circumstances or suicide.

Days before his death, former Boeing employee John Barnett testified

against the aerospace giant for implementing sub-standard parts and defective oxygen systems on its planes, according to *The Independent*.

Then, on March 9, 2024, Barnett was found dead with an apparent self-inflicted gunshot wound to his head, even though he had shown no previous indication of taking his own life.

According to Fox News, despite his attorneys’ demands for further investigation, the Charleston Police Department was quick to rule out Barnett’s death as a suicide.

Within months after Barnett’s death, another Boeing whistleblower was found dead from a bacterial infection.

Former quality auditor Joshua Dean had raised concerns about Spirit AeroSystems, a major Boeing supplier that was forcing employees to ignore dangerous manufacturing defects, according to NPR.

The strange part is that Dean had never gotten sick or been to the hospital even once before then. His mother said that he was an active “health nut” who worked out and watched his diet.

Yet after blowing the whistle, he somehow contracted influenza B, pneumonia, and MRSA staph infection all at once. Odd, isn’t it?

What are the chances that two Boeing whistleblowers die within three months? While it is possible that these deaths could have been a coincidence, Boeing should still be held accountable to some extent.

According to the Labor Commissioner’s Office, whistleblowers are guaranteed protection from retaliation and harassment — but these abuses often occur regardless.

Aviation is not the only industry where whistleblower protections are inadequate.

In October 2024, former artificial intelligence researcher Suchir Balaji came forward with allegations that OpenAI had violated copyright laws to train ChatGPT, according to *The Guardian*.

A month later, right when Balaji was going to take legal action against OpenAI, the 26-year-old researcher was found dead in his apartment with a gunshot wound. Backed by public media outlets like CBS, the San Francisco Medical Examiner’s Office ruled Balaji’s death out as a suicide with “no foul play.”

Other news outlets like CNN simply refused to speak out, but independent sources tell a different story.

According to *The Guardian*, Balaji’s parents refuse to believe he died by suicide, as he had never shown signs of mental illness, and no suicide note was found.

Balaji’s mother, Poornima Ramaro, demands that an FBI investigation be launched as it would be in a case that did not concern whistleblowing.

According to the *New York Post*, Ramaro was not allowed to see her son’s body and found many inconsistencies in his autopsy.

Many will dismiss this case as a conspiracy theory. There is no definitive conclusion; the stigma and backlash of being a whistleblower could have very well led to Balaji’s suicide, or he could have been murdered by OpenAI. We might never know.

Therefore, the problem does not lie in the deaths of whistleblowers themselves, but rather in how these deaths are handled.

Police are quick to rule out deaths as suicide and do not run full investigations. Ramaro said that it took the medical examiner only 40 seconds to declare Balaji’s death as a suicide, according to *The Guardian*.

Meanwhile, when the CEO of UnitedHealthcare is shot, even the FBI joins the investigation.

According to *The Guardian*, the FBI assisted the New York Police Department with out-of-town leads and offered a \$50,000 reward to whoever could find the suspect of CEO Brian Thompson’s murder.

When the suspect was found, the media made sure to humiliate him by writing articles about how he wet his pants or filmed sex tapes before arrest, instead of the resentment for the parasitic healthcare industry that drove him to kill in the first place.

As said by Edward Snowden, a former National Security Agency contractor who exposed various illegal US mass surveillance programs in 2013, “When exposing a crime is treated as committing a crime, you are being ruled by criminals.”

Whistleblowers don’t just die. Blow the whistle, pay the price.

May Lin (class of 2027) is a sophomore at Carlmont High School in her first year of journalism.

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## Whistleblowers Australia contacts

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Postal address PO Box 2017, Brighton Eventide QLD 4017

Website <http://www.whistleblowers.org.au/>

Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/Whistleblowers-Australia-Inc-172621456093012/>

### Contacts for information and advice

<https://www.whistleblowers.org.au/about/contact.html>

**Wollongong contact** Brian Martin, phone 02 4228 7860

Website <http://www.bmartin.cc/dissent/>

**Queensland contact** Feliks Perera, phone 0410 260 440,

[feliksfrommarcoola@gmail.com](mailto:feliksfrommarcoola@gmail.com)

### Queensland Whistleblowers Action Group

Website <http://www.whistleblowersqld.com.au>

Secretary: Greg McMahon, phone 07 3378 7232

### *The Whistle*

Editor: Brian Martin, [bmartin@uow.edu.au](mailto:bmartin@uow.edu.au)

Phone 02 4228 7860

Thanks to Sharon Kelsey and Lynn Simpson for proofreading.

### Previous issues of *The Whistle*

[https://www.bmartin.cc/dissent/contacts/au\\_wba/whistle.html](https://www.bmartin.cc/dissent/contacts/au_wba/whistle.html)

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## Is anyone listening?

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Can you think of a suitable caption?

Words you might use include wool, fleece and live trade.

A selection of suggestions will be printed in the next issue.

## Whistleblowers Australia membership

Membership of WBA involves an annual fee of \$25, payable to Whistleblowers Australia. Membership includes an annual subscription to *The Whistle*, and members receive discounts to seminars, invitations to briefings/ discussion groups, plus input into policy and submissions.

To subscribe to *The Whistle* but not join WBA, the annual subscription fee is \$25.

The activities of Whistleblowers Australia depend entirely on voluntary work by members and supporters. We value your ideas, time, expertise and involvement. Whistleblowers Australia is funded almost entirely from membership fees, donations and requests.

Renewing members can make your payment in one of these ways.

1. Pay Whistleblowers Australia Inc by online deposit to NAB Coolum Beach BSB 084 620 Account Number 69841 4626. Use your surname/membership as the reference.
2. Post a cheque made out to Whistleblowers Australia Inc with your name to the Secretary, WBA, PO Box 458 Sydney Markets, Sydney, NSW 2129
3. Pay by credit card using PayPal to account name [wba@whistleblowers.org.au](mailto:wba@whistleblowers.org.au). Use your surname/membership as the reference.

New members: [http://www.bmartin.cc/dissent/contacts/au\\_wba/membership.html](http://www.bmartin.cc/dissent/contacts/au_wba/membership.html)