

Speaking points - Commissioner McKechnie AO KC

Corruption and Crime Commission 20th anniversary event

We are justly celebrating 20 years of this anti-corruption and police misconduct Commission.

I want to go somewhat further back in time, nearly 3,000 years ago.

The prophet, Micah, writing about 750 BCE complained that about the leaders of Jerusalem: *Its rulers give judgment for a bribe; its priests teach for a price; its prophets give oracles for money* (Micah 4.11).

Corruption is a global problem. The UN Secretary General has estimated the annual cost of international corruption is US 3.6 trillion in bribes and stolen money.

The UN has recognised the dangers of corruption. Sustainable development Goal 16 is *peace, justice, and strong institutions*. Target no 5 under that goal is *substantially reduce corruption and bribery in all their forms*.

Our Commission is relatively small in size. Its jurisdiction extends over 150,000 public officers from the Premier to a probationary constable.

Twenty years ago, when the Commission was enacted, the State population was 1.9 million people. It is presently 2.9 million people and about to hit 3 million.

The need to provide resources and law enforcement has grown accordingly and that provides opportunities for corrupt conduct. Government invests \$39 billion in infrastructure and services.

As a state we have strengthened our corruption controls by such Acts as the Procurement Act and changes to the Local Government Act and Electoral Act. The State has agencies that value their independence to further mitigate misconduct risk.

Why is an anti-corruption agency important?

The Commonwealth Attorney General's Office states that corruption undermines democracy and the rule of law as well as distorting market forces and paving the way for organised crime and terrorism.

Transparency International speaks of the effect of corruption in a similar way:

Corruption erodes trust, weakens democracy, hampers economic development, and further exacerbates inequality, poverty, social division and the environmental crisis.

Everyone in this room is engaged in fighting corruption. We are both astute and lucky to have a police force and public service largely free of corruption. But we must be ever vigilant.

The politician Edmund Burke, speaking in the UK Parliament 300 years ago warned:

When bad men combine, the good must associate; else they will fall, one by one, an unpitied sacrifice in a contemptible struggle.

Each one of us has a duty to associate together and stand against corruption and misconduct in all its forms.