Whistling While They Work 2: Improving managerial responses to whistleblowing in public and private sector organisations

About the project

Whistling While They Work 2 is a 3 year (2016-2018) collaborative research project led by Griffith University’s Centre for Governance & Public Policy, investigating how organisational responses to public interest whistleblowing can be improved across the public and private sectors.

It follows on the Australian Research Council Linkage Project Whistling While They Work (2005-2009), which broke new ground by surveying the importance of whistleblowing across 118 public agencies. Its datasets of 8,813 respondents made it the world’s largest whistleblowing-specific research project, per capita, leading to major developments in law, policy and practice in Australia and internationally.

WWTW2 extends and broadens this research as the first collaborative project to conduct systematic comparative research across multiple institutions with a specific focus on:

- adequacy of organisational responses to whistleblowing, in addition to whistleblowing’s incidence and significance, and the experience of whistleblowers

- organisational and managerial experience across the public, private and not-for-profit sectors, rather than treating this experience as separate or incomparable, and

- building more effective international understanding of whistleblowing by developing and applying common research methods in organisations across international boundaries (Australia and New Zealand) for the first time.

Who can participate?

Any organisation with more than 10 employees, based or with significant operations in Australia or New Zealand, is invited to participate in the project.

There is no cost to participate. General findings, lessons and best practice models from the research will also be available for free to all participating organisations.

In addition, most participating organisations will have the option of receiving an individual report on their results, benchmarking their internal disclosure procedures and whistleblowing processes against other organisations in the study, and against best practice as currently known.
Partners and supporters

The project is a collaboration of four universities -- Griffith University, University of Sydney, Australian National University and Victoria University of Wellington – plus 23 partner and supporter organisations across Australia and New Zealand, as listed on the project website: www.whistlingwhiletheywork.edu.au.

Our AUD$1.6 million in project resources are provided 60 per cent by the universities and Australian Research Council (LP150100386: ‘Protecting While They Prosper? Organisational Responses to Whistleblowing’), and 40 per cent by project partners and supporters.

What’s involved?

The project involves two major surveys:

- The threshold Survey of Organisational Processes and Procedures which is completed one per organisation, takes 20-30 minutes, and was open April to July 2016 (contact us for current availability);

- Integrity@WERQ, the major survey of the staff, managers and whistleblowing systems in participating organisations, which involves closer engagement with the research team in the period October 2016 – April 2017.

For more information, see the project website and separate information sheets, or contact the research team.

Who are the researchers?

The project’s 10 person research team is led by Professor A J Brown of Griffith University’s Centre for Governance and Public Policy, who also led WWTW1. A former senior investigator for the Commonwealth Ombudsman, he has worked and consulted in all branches and at all levels of government, and is a board-member of Transparency International Australia and Fellow of the Australian Academy of Law.

The team includes further university researchers: Paula Brough, Griffith University; Rodney Smith, University of Sydney; Kath Hall, Australian National University; Michael Macaulay, Victoria University of Wellington; and five partner researchers: Dr Eva Tsahuridu, CPA Australia; Rodney Walsh, Commonwealth Ombudsman; Chris Wheeler, NSW Ombudsman; Warren Day, Australian Securities & Investments Commission; and Chris Lloyd, NZ State Services Commission.

Participation in the project is confidential, with anonymity ensured for all participants. No individual organisation’s results will be known to anyone other than the university researchers, nor will any participating organisation be identified in any project reports, publications or findings, unless with its full prior consent.

Join us

Whistleblowing by staff and organisation members is one of the most crucial ways in which managers, regulators and society at large ensure that the right things are happening in organisations – by enabling the appropriate disclosure of concerns about things that may be going wrong.

By better identifying the factors that influence responses to whistleblowing, this research offers a clearer basis for evaluating and improving organisational procedures, and for more informed design of whistleblower protection laws. It will help organisations establish if their whistleblowing or ‘speak up’ policies meet current best practice; whether they are working; and if not, why not.

Join the project and contribute to better understanding of how the benefits of whistleblowing can be realised – for your own organisation, and for society as a whole.