Australia’s anti-corruption record – are we winning or losing the war?

Thursday 21 July 2011 1 – 2.30pm

Robert Wyld Partner, Johnson Winter & Slattery, Sydney

Theatre 2 Hedley Bull Centre, College of Asia & the Pacific, ANU

Since 1999, Australia has had tough laws to criminalise conduct which involves the bribery and corruption of foreign public officials. In recent years, the enforcement of foreign corrupt practices has become a high priority for regulators in the United States, and now, from 1 July 2011, the United Kingdom. Corporations face massive fines, disgorgement of profits and potential disbarment from public procurement contracts, while individuals face imprisonment. However, Australia has had no prosecutions or convictions against companies or individuals engaging in such conduct in over a decade. Why is that?

Over the years, Australia has seen a continuing tale of corporate “impropriety” involving corporations and individuals in overseas locations. These include AWB and the UN Oil-For-Food “kickbacks” and Securency and the payment of “inducements” to secure multi-million dollar bank note printing contracts in South East Asia. Australia has an opportunity to demonstrate leadership in stamping out bribery and corruption, but has it the political will and business initiative to do so?

Mr Wyld is a partner in a large Sydney law firm. He represented four former AWB officers before the Cole Inquiry into the AWB/Oil-For-Food Inquiry and the subsequent civil and criminal investigations by the Commonwealth Taskforce. He is currently writing a chapter on Australia’s Anti-Corruption Laws to be published as part of a larger text on Global Anti-Corruption Practices.

For further information

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