

PRESS FREEDOM UNDER THREAT: DON'T PRIVATISE THE ASIC DATABASE

To Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull

Each and every day, we are on the front lines exposing shady corporate affairs.

We scrutinise the world's richest, most powerful corporations. We hunt down the multinational tax dodgers who funnel billions of dollars offshore each year. We work to expose the shell companies who exploit, traffic, launder, embezzle and bribe.

That's why your decision to sell off Australia's corporate database to a private monopoly operator has left us with no choice but to speak out. **Putting the corporate database under corporate control threatens our ability to investigate illicit and unethical behaviour.**

Australia's corporate database contains over ten million records of financial data from over two million corporations.

The charges levied by your government to access these public records are already some of the highest in the world. We routinely run out of money to purchase financial statements to properly investigate a particular company or industry.

In New Zealand and the United Kingdom, this critical public information is free.

The cost of accessing this public information is *already* a significant barrier to proper corporate accountability. Privatisation will see this barrier entrenched and new barriers may be erected.

This stands in opposition to the principle of freedom of access to public information, which oils the wheels of our democracy.

The public owns the information stored in the ASIC registry and, in funding ASIC with their tax dollars, has already paid for it.

We call on the Prime Minister and all political leaders to use ASIC to make a commitment to corporate transparency and the well-established benefits of free public company records; to work to reduce the current barriers to access, rather than erect new ones.

Signed by

Adam Gartrell, National Political Correspondent, Sun Herald & Sunday Age
Adele Ferguson, Investigative Reporter, Fairfax
Amanda Bryan, Editor, Food & Drink Business
Andrew Robertson, Reporter, The Business at ABC TV
Andrew Webster, Video News Editor, The Age
Anne Miller, Editor, South Burnett Online
Anthony Klan, Investigative Reporter, The Australian
Artie Stevens, News Director, Australian Independent Radio News
Ben Schneiders, Investigative Reporter, The Age
Ben Stone, Managing Editor, Blitz Publications
Bernard Kellerman, Deputy Editor, Banking Day
Bill West, Sports Writer, Midland Express
Bojun Chiswell, Freelancer
Brendan Savage, Video Journalist, Ten Eyewitness News
Bruce Belbin, Editor, Railway Digest
Calla Wahlquist, Reporter, Guardian Australia
Cameron Atfield, Journalist, Brisbane Times
Campbell Phillips, Editor, Wild Magazine
Candice Barnes, Producer, 6PR
Carol Neist, Arts Writer, Freelancer
Carolyn Boyd, Business, Property and Profile Writer, Freelancer
Cassandra Briedis, Journalist, Prime7 News
Charles Pauka, Editor, Transport and Logistics News
Chris Graham, Publisher/Editor, New Matilda
Chris Vedelago, Investigative Reporter, The Age
Conor Duffy, 730 Report, ABC
Dan Box, Crime Reporter, The Australian
David Donovan, Managing Editor, Independent Australia
Dean Sewell, Photojournalist, Freelancer
Dennis Atkins, National Affairs Editor, The Courier Mail
Dinesh Malhotra, Managing Editor, Bharat Times
Donald Knowler, Environmental Reporter, Freelancer
Eden Gillespie, Print Editor, Blitz Magazine
Emily Stewart, Business Reporter, ABC National Business Reporting team
Erik Jensen, Editor, The Saturday Paper
Eugenia Pavlopoulou, Online News Editor, Ethnic Publications
Eva Wiland, Editor, Thomson Reuters
Fiona Hudson, FOI Editor, Herald Sun
Geoff Vivian, The Great Southern Weekender
Georgia Wilkins, Business Reporter, Fairfax
Gina McColl, Investigative Reporter, The Age
Greg Miskelly, NSW State Coverage Producer, ABC

Guy Menzies-Saunders, Foreign Liaison, Seven News
Hannah Pollak, Business Columnist, Sydney Morning Herald/The Age
Hannah Thompson, Producer, ABC
Ian Rogers, Managing Editor, Banking Day
Ian Davis, Chief Executive, Inside Publishers
Janice De Rose, Senior Journalist, Camden Haven Courier
Jayne Stinson, Court Reporter, Seven News
Jess Hill, Investigative Journalist, Freelancer
Joanne McCarthy, Senior Reporter, Newcastle Herald
John Kelly, Australian Independent Media Network
Julie Lincoln, Photojournalist, Freelancer
Justine Parker, Finance Reporter, ABC News
Kath Ziesing, Editor, Australian Defence Magazine
Kathy McLeish, ABC News
Kym Bergmann, Editor, Asia Pacific Defence Reporter
Leigh Dayton, Freelancer
Lisa Martin, Political Reporter, AAP
Liz Hobday, Reporter, ABC News
Marcus Strom, Science Editor, SMH & Board Member, MEAA
Mark Colvin, PM, ABC
Margot Foster, Freelancer
Melody Kemp, Environmental Reporter, Freelancer
Michael Bachelard, Investigations Editor, The Age
Michael Carey, Day Editor/COS, NITV News
Michael West, Business Reporter, Freelancer
Muriel Porter, Freelancer
Nick McKenzie, Investigative Reporter, The Age & Four Corners
Olga Galacho, Business Writer, Freelancer
Owen Jacques, Online News Editor, APN
Paddy Manning, Business Reporter, Freelancer
Paul Lekakis, Journalist, The New Daily
Paul Sullivan, Editor, Pex Publications
Paul Syvret, Assistant Editor, Courier Mail
Peter Lewis, Editorial Cartoonist, Newcastle Herald
Rudi Maxwell, Editor, The Koori Mail
Simon Holt, Editor In Chief, Brisbane Times
Simon Johanson, Business Reporter, Fairfax Media
Steven Kiernan, Editor, CRN
Susan Lannin, Business Reporter, ABC
Tim Stoney, Freelancer
Wayne Flower, Herald Sun
Zoe Carter, Managing Director, OUTinPerth