

# Oz pushes for federal integrity body after languishing in index

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**Connor Foley (The Jakarta Post)**

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Australia has matched its lowest score in the global corruption rankings for the second year running, while the rest of the Central Indo-Pacific region also lags behind.

Transparency International's annual Corruption Perceptions Index placed Australia 13th globally for 2018 after experiencing a steady decline since its best ranking of seventh in 2012 – furthering nation-wide talks to form a federal integrity commission.



Griffith University showed two-thirds of Australia supported the establishment of a federal anticorruption body, with 43 percent agreeing strongly and only 10 percent in strong opposition.

The calls come amid growing mistrust of politicians with 85 percent of Australians now judging at least “some” federal politicians to be corrupt – a 9 percent increase since 2016.

The percentage was even higher among those who had worked in government. More than two-thirds said they witnessed or suspected an official of making a decision favoring groups who gave political donations or support in the past year.

In a media release, Transparency International CEO Serena Lilywhite said since falling out of the top 10 in the rankings, Australia had failed to adequately respond to the downtrend.

“Australia has not done enough to inject much-needed accountability and transparency into our politics,” she said.

“Now is the time, without delay and political wrangling, for our Federal Parliament to come together and create a well-resourced, nationally coordinated pro-integrity framework, with an emphasis on prevention alongside strong investigative powers.”

Despite Australia’s setbacks, it remains well ahead of all neighboring states in the Central Indo-Pacific region except New Zealand, which remained second in the global rankings behind Denmark.

Indonesia ranked 89th overall with a score of 38, which despite a one-point increase is still below the Asia-Pacific average of 44. Other rankings included 128th for Papua New Guinea, 70th for the Solomon Islands and 64th for Vanuatu.

With almost all countries in the region below the global average, it stressed the need for joint state efforts to combat corruption.

Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade has prompted this by increasing funding to Indonesia and the South Pacific as part of its anticorruption framework.

It will inject US\$40 million from 2017 to 2022 to the Australia-Indonesia Partnership for Justice Phase 2, which boosts Indonesia's own resources in transparency, accountability and anticorruption measures.

– *The writer is an intern at The Jakarta Post under the ACICIS program.*

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