

A synthesis of whistleblowing and access to information

Complimentary to, and overlapping with whistleblowing that should be morally permissible, justifiable and required, some practical requirements are recommended before blowing the whistle outside your institution, because external whistleblowing does not carry well with institutions.

It can negatively affects their profit margins, share price, and benefit their competitors in the short term. It most likely embarrasses top management, the board of directors and your colleagues.

If your whistleblowing means reporting on organised crime, it is especially dangerous. Possible risks include intimidation, threats and even murder. Detection is especially dangerous if the people you are implicating are politically well connected.

We have cases in Namibia of some police files that disappeared, or were destroyed during suspicious accidents and/or during staged fires, and allegations of murder. These dangers are for real.

THEORY VS PRACTICE

The Anti-Corruption Act, Act 8 of 2003, protects whistleblowers in theory but not in practise.

This is partly due to the small fraternity of the Namibian society, the small number and size of the institutions and the small number of people dealing



JOHAN COETZEE

with specific areas of work.

We do not have legislation that makes it a public right to access information about public sector institutions such as in the United States of America, and more critical, also not legislation that protects and or rewards whistleblowers financially for the risks associated with intimidation, harassment and losing their jobs. However, indications are that a Whistleblower Protection Bill will be tabled in parliament during the second quarter of 2016.

At the launch of the film titled *Access to Information for Development* on 19 April 2016, funded with support from the British High Commission, the Minister of Information and Communication Technology's response to the likelihood of having an Access to Information Bill was positive. This Bill has been an outstanding issue which the Access to Information Coalition (ACTION), a group consisting of representatives from the media, the Institute of Public Policy Research, community based organisations and academics, have been campaigning for for years.

jcoetzee@nust.na

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