

## Kieran Pender on the war on journalists and whistleblowers

*'It is seldom that liberty of any kind is lost all at once.'*

**David Hume, 1742**

Earlier this week, in an impressive show of solidarity, major newspapers across the country published redacted front covers and strong statements from Australia's Right to Know media coalition. The stark covers may be a taste of things to come if the federal government succeeds in intimidating whistleblowers and journalists.

In his timely article in our November issue ([online now](#)), Australian lawyer Kieran Pender examines the the AFP raids, recent attacks on whistleblowers and FOI, and the erosion of government transparency. More than 2,300 years ago Aristotle warned that 'transgression creeps in unperceived and at last ruins the state'. Are we seeing the intensification of that creepage, that ruination?'

As Kieran Pender writes, 'The only winners are those who wish to cloak government operations in a shroud of secrecy.' Now it's up to us as writers and journalists – and citizens – to reject these punitive, censorious impulses of government.

**Extract:** 'The erosion of government transparency as a result of political action and inaction in distinct but related spheres has led Australian society into hot water. As the federal government has overhauled official secrecy laws, failed to provide robust protection for whistleblowers, cracked down on public servant free speech, and frustrated Freedom of Information laws, democratic accountability has suffered.'

**Kieran Pender** is an Australian writer and legal researcher based in London. He is a visiting fellow at The Australian National University's Centre for International and Public Law, and a frequent contributor to *The Guardian*, *Monocle* and *Australian Book Review*. He has reported from four continents and spoken at the United Nations, European Parliament and OECD.

**Kieran Pender is available for interview from London.**

[Read his commentary online now.](#)



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