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Lifting the lid on whistle-blowing

Paul Chadwick (PC), Julian Morrow, Guy Pearse, Norman Swan, Marion Wilkinson

It is a fundamental liberal assumption that the truth will set you free. And yet telling the uncomfortable truth often does a lot of immediate damage to people and groups, nor is it always obvious how the greater good is served. Did the exposure of Watergate, the archetype of modern whistle-blowing, do much more than teach politicians to be more careful about what they say on tape?

You have all told stories that powerful people had wanted to keep hidden. Choose a favourite case study and draw out the message for us. Why did the story need to be told? Did telling it achieve good ends, and at what cost?

The larger issues are likely to include

- The potential for damage to the whistle-blowers within institutions;
- The risk that a journalist might pursue such a story for selfish, even distorting, ends;
- The civic need for corporate and governmental spin (organised fraud or hypocrisy) to be exposed;
- The kinds of collateral benefit and damage that come from whistle-blowing.

Also, are there trends in the law or the economics of media that make it harder to tell truth to and about power these days? What protections do whistle-blowers have or need? What sort of a future does whistle-blowing have?