

BERNARD COLLAERY • Inbox.News

Press release from Mark Dreyfus QC MP June 26, 2020

Labor will seek an urgent briefing from the Government regarding today's decision of the ACT Supreme Court to hold parts of the trial of Witness K's lawyer, Bernard Collaery, in closed court.

Labor strongly supports the principle of open justice, which dictates that judicial processes should be conducted in public unless the presiding magistrate or judge determines that there are compelling reasons to close the court.

Mr Collaery, like any other Australian, has a right to a fair trial and Labor will continue to follow these proceedings very closely to ensure that Mr Collaery is not denied that fundamental right.

For reasons that still remain unclear, Christian Porter personally authorised the prosecution of Witness K and Mr Collaery. After today's decision by the ACT Supreme Court, it is more important than ever that Mr Porter provide a detailed explanation as to why these prosecutions are in the public interest.

The unexplained decision to prosecute Witness K and Mr Collaery is part of a broader shift towards more secrecy and less accountability in government. That shift began with the election of the Abbott Government seven years ago and has escalated under Prime Minister Morrison.

One of the most dramatic illustrations of the Morrison Government's addiction to secrecy, and its aversion to accountability and scrutiny, were the extraordinary police raids on the home of News Limited journalist, Annika Smethurst, and the ABC headquarters.

Concerns around the Morrison Government's attitude towards these matters are currently being examined by the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security in its [*Inquiry into the impact of the exercise of law enforcement and intelligence powers on the freedom of the press.*](#)

Labor will continue to closely scrutinise the actions of the Morrison Government to ensure that, in seeking to keep Australians safe, the Government upholds the rule of law and the rights and freedoms that define us as a democratic nation.