



JUSTICE, INTEGRITY AND COMMUNITY SAFETY COMMITTEE

Members present:

Mr MA Hunt MP—Chair
Mr MC Berkman MP
Mr RD Field MP
Ms ND Marr MP
Ms MF McMahon MP
Mr PS Russo MP

Staff present:

Ms F Denny—Committee Secretary
Ms H Radunz—Assistant Committee Secretary

PUBLIC HEARING—OVERSIGHT OF THE OFFICE OF THE INFORMATION COMMISSIONER

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

Wednesday, 25 March 2026

Brisbane

WEDNESDAY, 25 MARCH 2026

The committee met at 9.30 am.

KUMMROW, Ms Joanne, Information Commissioner, Office of the Information Commissioner Queensland

WHITE, Mr Alexander, Privacy Commissioner, Office of the Information Commissioner Queensland

WINSON, Ms Stephanie, Right to Information Commissioner, Office of the Information Commissioner Queensland

CHAIR: Good morning. I invite you to make an opening statement to the committee before we move to questions.

Ms Kummrow: Good morning, Chair and committee members. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before the committee to speak to the Office of the Information Commissioner's annual report for 2024-25. The OIC is an independent statutory body and part of Queensland's integrity framework. As Information Commissioner my functions are set out under the Information Privacy Act 2009 and Right to Information Act 2009, focusing on promoting and overseeing the community's right to access government-held information and the protection of personal information held by Queensland government agencies. I am supported in this work by the Privacy Commissioner and the Right to Information Commissioner and a dedicated team equivalent to approximately 51 full-time employees.

The 2024-25 financial year was a period of significant operational achievement and sustained high demand for the OIC's services. With the commencement of the IPOLA reforms to the IP and RTI Acts, 2024-25 was a period in which the OIC focused on ensuring the smooth implementation by agencies of the reforms. We conducted a broad range of engagements and activities, including developing and publishing numerous guides and resources for agencies and delivered 64 training sessions to over 4,250 public sector participants. Our inquiry service responded to 5,847 inquiries from members of the community and agency staff. We received 643 external review applications and finalised 645 of those, with that gap involving matters carried over from the previous year. Of these, 89 involved a formal written decision and 506 were informally resolved or closed administratively.

In relation to privacy complaints, 168 were received, with 16 referred to QCAT. This number of privacy complaints received was our highest to date. We received 53 voluntary privacy data breach notifications from agencies, up from 41 in the previous financial year. Since the commencement of the mandatory notification of data breach scheme on 1 July last year, my office has received 27 mandatory notifications to date and 23 voluntary notifications. The majority of privacy data breach notifications involved human error—namely, where an email with personal information is addressed to the wrong recipient or has the wrong document attached. In 2024-25 the OIC conducted five regulatory RTI and privacy related audits, including two follow-up audits with reports tabled in parliament. Each of the agencies audited accepted recommendations made by the Information Commissioner. The committee is also aware that I commenced a review into the privacy practices of the Queensland Police Service in December 2024 and my report was tabled in this parliament in December 2025 with 19 recommendations that the OIC is continuing to monitor through ongoing engagement with QPS.

In collaboration with staff, the OIC developed a new strategic plan. Our 2025-2029 strategic plan sets out our values, vision and purpose which drive how we deliver our functions, including strengthening our focus on community engagement and broader outcome focused objectives to increase the sector's understanding and capability in information access and privacy protection.

From an organisational perspective, I would like to highlight a number of transformation initiatives commenced in the last financial year with the goal of OIC being a modern, responsive and innovative public sector organisation. A significant focus is the implementation of a new whole-of-enterprise system and digital tools to modernise the way we work. This investment has allowed us to build an online portal through which agencies can report privacy data breaches and monitor privacy and RTI

matters with OIC. It will also enhance our reporting abilities and allow us to monitor emerging trends so we can make data-driven decisions to better target our support and education functions, stakeholder engagement and regulatory functions.

Another strategic project commenced in 2024-25 and due to be completed in the coming weeks is a new website. Our current website was developed in 2014 so we thought it was time for an upgrade. This new website will serve as a key communication tool for the OIC and provide a digital platform through which the community and agencies can more easily access our services, information and resources. We continue to invest also in the professional development and capability of our people so they can meet the challenges and embrace the opportunities of working within and regulating a rapidly evolving information and technology landscape in the public sector.

Finally, we are focused on building organisational resilience by strengthening financial management and governance, risk management, work health and safety and business continuity planning.

Before closing, I would like to highlight the dedicated and hardworking staff of the OIC. I thank them for their personal commitment and professionalism in carrying out their busy roles and their commitment to serving the public with integrity and impartiality, ensuring fair access to information and privacy rights and protections are upheld. I would also like to acknowledge those agencies and stakeholders who collaborated with OIC during 2024-25, in particular through their engagement with the IPOLA reforms and dedicated efforts to implement changes in their agency to new requirements under the IP and RTI acts. Finally, I wish to highlight the important work of agency officers across the state and the way in which they undertake their responsibilities under the RTI and IP acts with integrity and impartiality. Chair, thank you again for the opportunity to provide an opening statement. Along with my colleagues, Commissioners White and Winson, we welcome questions from the committee.

CHAIR: Thank you, Commissioner. I thank you for your attendance here today before the committee and thank you and your staff for the wonderful work you do in this space. I wanted to focus on data breaches and security. In your message on page 1 of your report you note the public concern about data breaches growing and the IPOLA reforms reflecting that concern, placing a greater responsibility on the public sector to lawfully collect, handle, store and use information. I also noted your participation in three key privacy forums, I think internationally as well; is that right? There were three key privacy forums that you attended. I wonder what might have come out of those in terms of your learnings from other jurisdictions and what might have been implemented here in Queensland around those data and privacy issues.

Ms Kummrow: Thank you, Chair. I will commence and then hand over to the Privacy Commissioner for any follow-up responses. The international conference that I attended was in relation to freedom of information, right to information. That was a separate conference with members of the Asia Pacific Privacy Authorities and the Global Privacy Assembly. We attend those conferences online. I think Queensland quite rightfully should be proud of implementing a mandatory notification of data breach scheme. We are the third jurisdiction in Australia and the second state to do so. Other jurisdictions have notification schemes.

The purpose of the notification scheme is really to create an awareness and provide for transparency and accountability for agencies so they are aware of notifications, data breaches and reporting those to a regulator. Our role is certainly really to count those as they come to us, but, like other jurisdictions, we are very keen to ensure there is appropriate training and support for agencies to really build a strong culture of privacy protection in Queensland and so too around the world. That is where we see real efforts being made, privacy and data security being everybody's responsibility—not just the privacy officer or records manager down the hallway. Those international events that we participate in are an opportunity to speak to the Queensland reforms in this regard, which have been received positively, and share insights. As I said, raising awareness and those accountability mechanisms we think are important steps forward. I will hand over to Commissioner White.

Mr White: I am happy to speak to this point. In previous roles I have been very involved in the international collaboration between regulators. There are several benefits that we receive from being involved in those forums. The first is being able to exchange the craft of regulation—what are best practices in terms of conducting an investigation or making a request or auditing an information system: what does that look like? We can share lessons that other perhaps-further-along offices may be able to share.

The second aspect is this idea that they may have been exposed to a type of noncompliance that has not been experienced yet by an entity—just by chance it has not happened yet here and so they have gotten a leg up in terms of being able to address those concerns and we can take

pre-emptive action to try to prevent that from happening here. I would also point out that in our modern, interconnected world quite often the harm that is experienced here in Queensland actually originated somewhere else. In order to effectively address that harm and protect Queenslanders we need to engage with our colleagues who do have authority in those jurisdictions.

Mr RUSSO: With the IPOLA Act commencing in July 2025—I know you have touched on some of this in your opening statement—are you able to provide details of the measures the office took in preparation for those reforms commencing?

Ms Kummrow: We stood up a project team in order to develop a program of resources and training and, indeed, a plan forward for implementation. I think those changes were the most significant in Queensland since the commencement of the new legislation in 2009. For a small office such as ours that was a mighty task but certainly a welcome one and welcome reforms. That project team was ably assisted by a number of experts—SMEs, as we call them: subject matter experts—within the OIC who informed guidelines, information and newsletters.

I mentioned the training that was attended by over 4,000 public sector officers across the state. It might be opportune to say that those IPOLA reforms and that project team provided OIC with a great opportunity and insight into the need and desire for greater training by agencies and that training we provide, obviously for free, I think has an economic benefit in that you do not then have agencies going out and seeking private sector organisations providing that training. It also sharpened our focus on training and education and engagement. That project wound up in the end of June last year and was really a year-long project. We are continuing some of that project with the local government sector coming on board on the mandatory notification of data breach scheme from 1 July this year. We call that part of a phase 2.

Ms MARR: I am still trying to work out how the fax machine works. I am a little behind with technology. Can you update the committee on the outcomes of your participation in the AI trial and QChat? It is all very new for most of us. If you could give us some feedback on that, that would be great.

Ms Kummrow: In order to regulate in this space and support agencies, it is important that we are kind of in the sandpit as well. I think Queensland is the only state that I am aware of that has developed a tool such as this AI tool, QChat. I am not on the payroll for the developers or the department, but I have to tell you that I am truly impressed by it. We have been relatively early adopters with undertaking, as you said, a trial. It has not been rolled out across the office. It is being adopted by members of staff who have a curiosity for AI. Not everybody is an adopter or a fan of it. Like any new technology, it is really important to make sure that you are using it properly and not inserting personal information. We have found great benefits and, I think, a real uplift in efficiencies in relation to preparing briefing notes for myself. In our annual report I might have had 900 words, which is very typical for me and I need to reduce that down. QChat provides an opportunity for me to do that. I have written it, but it is just a really exciting tool. Like I said, I think, like us, other agencies within Queensland will be adopting it.

In recent regional engagement that I have had with local government and hospitals, they are very keen to understand AI. Tools like that that have been developed for the Queensland government public sector provide us with a great sandpit that we can practice in. As I said, it is still early days. We have not rolled it out completely but there are those who have adopted it in the office and we are known as 'QChatters'.

Ms MARR: We have to start somewhere so with them is fine.

Ms Kummrow: I encourage you to have a play.

Ms McMAHON: There were reports earlier this year of Queensland Health information from Townsville being shared. I would imagine there is an investigation into that. Can you outline what the role of the Information Commissioner might be during either the investigation or subsequent recommendations that come out of an investigation like that involving personal medical records? Obviously the Health Ombudsman has a role. When we are looking at system issues within a Queensland department, can you advise what the office role in that investigation might look like?

Ms Kummrow: Certainly. That highlights our regulatory function so it is the pointier end of our toolkit. Investigations and issues come to us potentially through the media, potentially through a privacy complaint or an RTI external review that comes through to us. We will examine the issues. We will often conduct preliminary inquiries, engage with the agency and try to seek further information to understand whether our regulatory functions should be engaged.

A lot of matters come to light. It is not all that probably should or can proceed to an investigation given our resources and our size. Where a matter, as set out in our regulatory policy, which we have also published, is serious or has significant impact or has broader ramifications for the public sector or a particular sector like local government or the health and hospital sector, those are areas that we are interested in exploring. With investigations, we want to make sure we can have good solid impact in relation to the expenditure of our resources to examine those. I hope I have answered your question. You were not asking about that particular matter; it was more a general question?

Ms McMAHON: No, I understand that, assuming there is an investigation, it would still be ongoing. Obviously a lot of organisations become involved in a particular incident like that where your role kind of ties in with the Department of Health as well as, say, the Health Ombudsman or Ahpra or things like that.

Ms Kummrow: Certainly. Our preliminary inquiries would involve considering whether anyone else is investigating, whether a matter might involve the CCC or the Office of the Health Ombudsman and so on. We would make some inquiries with those agencies. As regulators, we do not all want to be investigating the same thing at the same time so we are very thoughtful and mindful of who should go first and, as I said, who is best placed in some cases to investigate.

Mr FIELD: In your opening statement you said that the new website is coming online soon.

Ms Kummrow: Yes.

Mr FIELD: How long has that process taken from the start to when it comes online? More importantly as we all know, has it ended up being on budget or have there been cost blowouts in its design and getting it up and running?

Ms Kummrow: It is still under development but is soon to be launched, I think in mid-May, after Privacy Awareness Week, which is in early May. We are on budget for that. We are asking it to do quite a few things. Members of the public can make a privacy complaint through that website. They can lodge an external review. Agencies can conduct their business with us, which will be quite an improvement. We also have a new function that is coming on board that we will be able to facilitate through the new website, which is the annual reporting for agencies in relation to their administration of the information privacy and RTI acts, which is currently undertaken by the Department of Justice. It is a part of those IPOLA reforms. It is a delayed commencement. We will take on that function from the start of next financial year.

It is on time. I always like things quicker than I can get them—I think the staff will be laughing back at the office—but good things take time and we like to do things properly. I am very excited and I hope the committee will enjoy having a look at the website. Our website is full of amazing resources but since 2014 it has become a repository, really, for documents. As I think the Integrity Commissioner referred to during her evidence, you need to be able to access websites from your mobile phone when you are on the No. 60 bus or the train so we are making sure that OIC fits in a world and the community that expects high-quality digital services.

Mr BERKMAN: I picked up on an observation in the annual report around RTI external reviews. The report notes that resource constraints are really the source of an increase in the length of time it takes to finalise external reviews, numbers of those reviews remain very high and there has been a steady increase in the number of files over 12 years old. I appreciate you can only work with the budget that you are given. Can you tell the committee any more about whether there is any budget increase that you are aware of to deal with those resource constraints and what the consequences are not just for the external review function but also for the work of the commission overall? What are the risks for the clients—the sectors you serve—if there is not adequate funding available?

Ms Kummrow: Like all public sector organisations, we are experiencing increasing and sustained demand for our services, so we are not alone in relation to that. I might add that it is over 12 months rather than 12 years for delays, for the record.

Mr BERKMAN: My apologies. Reading is not a strong suit!

Ms Kummrow: I really would be marched from my role if we were leaving it 12 years. Risks: it is delays in getting people decisions. The act is an interesting one. An agency officer has 25 days to make a decision on an RTI request. We are seeing an increase in deemed refusals from agencies so as they struggle under the weight of requests so too do we because we inherit those matters. That is in the first instance so we have to look at the documents.

Despite modernisation in so many other ways, RTI often involves page by page, line by line. It is an area that is probably really ripe for technology although with human guidance. For us, it will result in delays. We have a very dedicated staff and I genuinely mean that. It puts a pressure on them—a

burden on them. It means our interactions with community members sometimes get heightened because of that delay where they have already faced a delay with an agency and they may already have an issue with government or an agency generally or a couple of departments. All of those things are compounding pressures that you do not necessarily see in an annual report.

Our team like to do a good job, as well. They like to make sure that they are upholding people's rights under the act. We are looking and we have had to look at changing the way we work and that means we still want to deliver. We are all of those personalities in these roles where we like to do our absolute best, but we have to deliver a quality decision and balance that with volume and ensuring that there is equal access to our services. That is sometimes the tension. I hope I have answered your question. I will hand over to the RTI Commissioner who is abreast of all of these issues.

Ms Winson: Yes, I would agree. I think the biggest issue with delay in access is that it has a very direct impact on trust in government. We are seeing increasing numbers of people lacking and reducing their trust in government. The research that we have done across jurisdictions in Australia on information access is showing that an increasing number of members of the community are losing confidence in being able to access information from government. There is this perverse driver when people do not get information quickly that they make more requests so that plays into a greater level of demand.

As the commissioner has said, people get angry as well because they feel they need that information. It could be because they have proceedings on hand or they need it for mental health or a personal health situation and if they cannot get the information quickly that can impact their lives. Through our audit activity, we have been driving very strongly over some time now encouragement for public sector agencies to really think about using and leveraging the legislation for its intended purpose, which is proactive release of information and administrative access such that we are reducing the demand at the front end for formal access applications because the act was designed by parliament for formal access requests to be by exception and not the rule. Technology is unfortunately not helpful because people are informed that they have rights and they are using AI to make those demands, but sometimes that is not necessarily driving them to get informal access or proactive disclosure. We are certainly encouraging agencies to really leverage that opportunity because government remains the purveyor of factual, credible information and they generally hold information of individuals which individuals are seeking. Our report shows that the majority of requests that still come through our door are not for reports and they are not journalists; they are individual Queenslanders asking for their own information.

CHAIR: In your public awareness initiatives you note your participation in the Queensland government's Get Ready for storm season campaign. Can you expand on what that involved?

Ms Kummrow: This is a longstanding commitment that the office has had to support public awareness in storm season. We do that through our social channels and our website. We also highlight for agencies their obligations in relation to sharing of personal information and collecting personal information during those periods so that they can do that confidently and within the law.

CHAIR: What does that look like? Are you talking about the police sharing information with emergency services? What does that look like?

Ms Kummrow: That is correct, and grants and so on, but it really has a privacy focus for the office. We are not actively—it really is through our social channels and a campaign. I think when these storm seasons or natural disasters come up, it can be sometimes at that time that we ask whether we can obtain that information or share that information. We just want agencies to be able to do that without thinking too much and being up-front aware of what their responsibilities and obligations are so that they can serve the community.

CHAIR: Thank you for your time today. That ends the allocated period for this part of the hearing. We thank you for your attendance. I note that no questions were taken on notice.

The committee adjourned at 9.59 am.