



PARLIAMENTARY CRIME AND CORRUPTION COMMITTEE

Members present:

Hon. ML Furner MP—Chair
Hon. MAJ Scanlon MP
Mr MA Hunt MP
Mr JJ McDonald MP
Ms JC Pugh MP
Mr RA Stevens MP (via teleconference)
Hon. AJ Stoker MP

Staff present:

Ms H Radunz—Assistant Committee Secretary
Ms C Reissis—Senior Committee Support Officer

MEETING WITH THE CRIME AND CORRUPTION COMMISSION

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

Tuesday, 19 August 2025

Brisbane

TUESDAY, 19 AUGUST 2025

The committee met at 10.32 am.

CHAIR: Good morning, everyone. The committee will now commence its public meeting with the Crime and Corruption Commission. The proceedings are being recorded by Hansard and broadcast live on the parliamentary website. I take this opportunity to remind those participating to ensure they turn their microphone on before speaking and off once they are finished to ensure they can be heard clearly and proceedings are accurately captured for broadcast and transcript purposes. I also remind those present to ensure that any mobile phones are turned off or switched to silent mode. We do have a change in membership. I welcome the Hon. Meaghan Scanlon MP, member for Gaven, to substitute for member of the committee the Hon. Glenn Butcher, member for Gladstone.

Members are to note they have been provided with a secretariat briefing, a copy of the CCC's public report for the period 1 April 2025 to 30 June 2025, and the transcript of the last public meeting with the CCC on 13 May 2025. The proposed resolution is that the committee authorises the publication of the Crime and Corruption Commission's public report to the committee for the period 1 April 2025 to 30 June 2025. Deputy Chair, you are happy to move that. All those in favour? Carried.

BARBOUR, Mr Bruce, Chairperson, Crime and Corruption Commission

CAPPER, Mr Craig, Senior Executive Officer (Corruption), Crime and Corruption Commission

DARCH, Ms Helen OAM, Ordinary Commissioner, Crime and Corruption Commission

DOWLING, Mr Peter AM, Ordinary Commissioner, Crime and Corruption Commission

LODER, Ms Sharon, Senior Executive Officer (Crime), Crime and Corruption Commission

O'FARRELL, Ms Jen, Chief Executive Officer, Crime and Corruption Commission

CHAIR: The committee will now commence its public discussion with the Crime and Corruption Commission. Welcome, everyone. Thank you for joining us today. Before we commence, I would like to congratulate both Mr Barbour and Ms O'Farrell on their reappointments for a further three-year term. We look forward to continuing to engage with you across the duration of your further terms. Mr Barbour, would you like to make a brief opening statement?

Mr Barbour: Thank you, Chair. Thank you for those congratulations. We are pleased to present the Crime and Corruption Commission's report for the period 1 April to 30 June 2025. The public report sets out in detail our performance and activities for the reporting period, but I would like to highlight some of the work that we undertook during this time.

Operationally during the reporting period, the crime division finalised an investigation into the production and trafficking of dangerous drugs and the supply of substances to other criminal networks for the purpose of producing dangerous drugs. It also progressed an investigation in relation to alleged money laundering involving a professional facilitator and involving the use of beneficial trusts to obscure alleged criminally derived assets. Our hearing powers were used to assist Queensland police investigations into matters including homicides and the possession, creation and distribution of child exploitation material.

In relation to proceeds of crime, at the end of the reporting period the CCC had obtained eight restraining orders, to the value of \$5.6 million, as well as seven confiscations of property by the state, to the value of \$6.4 million, relating to illicit markets. An additional \$11.1 million was confiscated by the state during 2024-25. This significant matter involved a fraud in connection with a false claim made to the Queensland government department for reimbursement to a farming enterprise in rural Queensland under the Murray-Darling Basin Healthy HeadWaters program.

Turning now to the work of the corruption division, during the reporting period the corruption division received 1,230 complaints, notifications and matters identified as falling within our jurisdiction. Of these, 129 were triaged as serious, systemic and/or of strategic importance. In the same period, 105 of the serious, systemic and/or strategic matters were assessed. During the period, a total of 1,215 matters were fully assessed. Of these, four were retained for CCC investigation, 12 were referred to the UPA subject to monitoring, 63 were referred to the UPA subject to outcome advice, 730 were referred to UPAs with no outcome advice required to the CCC, and 406 were assessed as requiring no further action.

During the reporting period the corruption division finalised 15 investigations, and I will briefly describe just a few of those. Three investigations resulted in briefs of evidence being referred to the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions for advice as to the suitability of criminal prosecution. These matters related to various possible charges including fraud, official corruption, misconduct in relation to public office and fraudulent falsification of records. One investigation was finalised in relation to misuse of authority and was referred to the UPA subject to monitoring, and 10 of the finalised investigations did not substantiate any allegations of corrupt conduct. As at 30 June, the corruption division was progressing 22 investigations and monitoring 53.

At our last meeting I advised that the CCC was working on its corruption position statement and associated improvements to our assessment models. The position statement and our new assessment models clearly describe our approach to achieving our purposes and how we deliver services to reduce corruption in the public sector. They help us to focus our resources on monitoring and investigating only the most serious and systemic corruption, and they guide how we support the public sector through our prevention functions. I am pleased to advise that the work on the position statement and the assessment models is now finalised.

Also in our last meeting I advised the committee of the launch of our Corruption Perceptions Survey. The survey was available to the Queensland community and staff of public sector departments, hospital and health services, and local councils across Queensland. We received over 10,000 completed surveys from some 3,000 community members and over 7,000 public sector employees. We made the results public through our website on 29 July. Some of the key findings include: most respondents believe that corruption is a problem in Queensland; about half of the employees responded that their workplace is vulnerable to corruption; respondents have a high level of trust and confidence in the work of the CCC and they believe that having an independent anti-corruption agency like the CCC is important; and respondents expressed a strong intention to report corruption if they witnessed it, and most would feel comfortable lodging a complaint to the CCC.

The survey findings also provide insights into areas where we consider change or improvements. Many respondents were concerned about potential backlash if they made a complaint. Of the employees who had recently reported corruption to any agency, few were satisfied with the outcome of their report or the process involved. Respondents would like to see the CCC take greater action against corruption and provide further education about corruption and increase the visibility of the CCC's findings. The CCC will use these results to guide our prevention and engagement activities through the rest of this year and beyond, and we plan to conduct this survey every three years.

Taking up a point raised in the survey findings—that the community would like to have greater visibility of CCC findings—I am pleased to say that the legislation to restore the CCC's ability to report publicly and make statements about corruption matters came into effect on 19 May, during our reporting period. This is an essential piece of legislation for the CCC and, as the committee is aware, it is a result of a long period of consultation and engagement with government. I am also pleased to say that all previous reports and public statements by the CCC and its predecessor organisations which were obliged to be removed from our website are now back online and available to the public once more.

We are now putting new processes in place for our reporting regime. These will include new safeguards for affected individuals and expanded procedural fairness program and guidelines for deciding when and how to issue reports and public statements. We are also preparing for other changes to the Crime and Corruption Act that will come into effect from 31 August. Some of these are technical amendments to legislative provisions which I am happy to expand on, but I will briefly outline some that will be more publicly visible.

From 31 August, the CCC must obtain advice from the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions before laying charges for corruption offences. There is a memorandum of understanding that has been in place between the CCC and the DPP since August 2023 for that purpose, and the MOU will be placed on our website. Qualified journalist privilege, or shield laws, will apply to all

functions of the CCC, based on the existing framework of the Evidence Act 1977. This means that there is a presumption a journalist is not required to comply with the CCC requirement to produce a document or information to answer a question if that would disclose the identity of an informant.

There are changes to qualifications required for appointment as an ordinary commissioner. They now specify that at least two of the ordinary commissioners must have a demonstrated interest and ability in community affairs, public administration or organisational leadership, and commissioners will now be given one single non-renewable appointment of not more than seven years.

I also, in closing, extend the apologies of the deputy chairperson, Ms McMillan, and also ordinary commissioner Ms Webbe, both of whom were unavailable to attend today. They asked that I pass on their apologies to the committee. Those are my opening remarks. I am very happy to answer any questions, thank you.

Mrs STOKER: Thank you, Mr Barbour. I want to ask a question about the inclusion of the confiscation recovery ratio in the strategic plan. I thought it was interesting that this is a new measure of performance that is being tracked in that plan. I want to know why you have included that, how you are measuring it and why it matters.

Mr Barbour: As the committee would be aware, we are constantly looking at our performance indicators and how we measure the success or otherwise of our work, and it is a new measure. I will ask Ms Loder to explain some of the background to it and what we are trying to specifically achieve as a result of it.

Ms Loder: A similar measure has been used by the Australian Federal Police for its Commonwealth confiscation performance measures. Ours is a little different but the same—that is, that the cost of recovery is not greater than what is actually recovered for the state. It is on our performance measures as a measure of effectiveness, but it is probably also a measure of efficiency in that regard. It is the only benchmark we have from another agency that is comparable, so it was thought to be a measure that was suitable for a service delivery statement.

Mrs STOKER: You said you were using a similar but not identical measure to what the AFP is using. Can you just tease out for me what the differences are so that we can assess the extent to which the two are comparable?

Ms Loder: They call it something different. The name escapes me at the moment, but it is slightly different. I think it has to do with the cost base. Our cost base is the cost to the commission. The DPP provides the legal services, so we do not have a cost for that. I guess it is a bit different in that regard. I think there are a couple of other costs that the AFP may factor into theirs, but I can get back to you on what that is.

Mrs STOKER: If you would not mind taking that on notice and providing a little more of the detail around how we can understand those as comparable or not comparable, that would be very helpful.

Ms Loder: Yes.

Ms SCANLON: Mr Barbour, I refer to observations in the CCC's report titled *An investigation into allegations relating to the appointment of a school principal* in July 2020. In its introduction the CCC said—

Best practice human resource management requires public sector recruitment and selection processes in Queensland to be fair and transparent, and that those appointed to take part in a selection panel conduct themselves in a way that promotes public confidence in public administration.

It also requires that the Queensland public sector recruitment processes are not undermined, or seen to be undermined, by political influence.

Is this still the position of the Crime and Corruption Commission?

Mr Barbour: Procedures which relate to recruitment are extremely important. In the CCC's view, competitive, transparent and merit-based recruitment processes are essential for the credibility of office holders in senior positions. That is endorsed, as I understand it, by the Public Sector Commission guidelines and by the Public Sector Commission directions that relate to these issues. Our position in relation to that has not changed.

Ms SCANLON: I refer to recommendations from your 2021 report into the appointment of a previous Under Treasurer which was tabled in the parliament. You would note that recommendation 1 of the report recommended that the government 'considers changing the current process to

increase transparency, certainty and fairness, and remove any political influence or perception of political influence' in relation to appointments. I appreciate the answer you just provided, but can you confirm that is still the position of the Crime and Corruption Commission?

Mr Barbour: I would just refer to my previous answer, which I think answers that question.

Ms SCANLON: Mr Barbour, in relation to Public Service appointments, recommendation 2 of your 2021 report recommends that—

Mr HUNT: Chair, point of order: this is becoming cross-examination. I thought we were going to have questions from everyone today. I think the member for Gaven has had a fair go here.

CHAIR: I will provide latitude with respect to the chair's position with regard to adequate time. We can always extend time if necessary.

Ms SCANLON: Mr Barbour, recommendation 2 of your 2021 report recommends that, in relation to a Public Service appointment, 'a statement of reasons should document why the panel's recommendation was not accepted'. Is this still the position of the Crime and Corruption Commission?

Mr Barbour: It is difficult to answer in generalities in relation to that particular question. The reason I say that is that it depends on the nature of the appointment. Those recommendations relate to particular issues that were the subject of reports. As you would understand, there are appointments that are made under approved processes that do not require those particular recruitment steps to be undertaken.

Mr HUNT: My question relates to your public perception survey. I was drilling down into some of the data this morning. The website is very good in relation to the data you can access. This was outsourced to a survey agency.

Mr Barbour: Yes.

Mr HUNT: What company was it?

Mr Barbour: EY Sweeney.

Mr HUNT: When I drilled down to QPS employees, 45 per cent said yes or agreed to 'corruption is a problem in the Queensland Police Service'. It is not a random survey. To a certain extent, it is a survey of those motivated to complete it. Noting that you wish to conduct this survey ongoing, is there a better methodology to get a more random sample to perhaps better inform actual attitudes right across the service rather than just those motivated to complete the survey? Do you understand what I am getting at?

Mr Barbour: Yes, it is interesting. Just to put things into context, a total of 16,218 people started the survey but only 10,059 actually completed it. Even with a voluntary survey, you get what you could call survey fatigue in the completion of it. I think the methodology and requirements that underpin whether you have a survey which is more broadly introduced, whether it is voluntary or compulsory—there are pluses and minuses in terms of any discussion of that. I think the challenge for us with this particular survey as far as QPS is concerned is that the response rate was quite low. Although we have been assured by EY Sweeney that it was of a sufficient number to be statistically relevant for us to place weight on the results of the survey from QPS, it was disappointing that so few people completed the survey within the QPS. We extended the time. The Premier did a video encouraging people within the public sector to complete the survey. I think the lessons learned from this and further discussions within our research area and amongst senior staff will look to what improvements we can make next time around.

Mr HUNT: Do you know how long it takes to do that survey? How big was it? Was the expectation to sit there and do it? I note the very few responses from the QPS, who I know are very busy people.

Mr Barbour: It was a fairly comprehensive survey. I do not remember the exact time, but I think it was in the order of about 10 minutes.

Ms O'Farrell: Fifteen to 20.

Mr Barbour: It was not a long period of time for such an important topic. One of the challenges with something like this is that you often only have one opportunity, so you want to try to get as much data as you possibly can to feed into your thinking about future practice.

CHAIR: Of late, including during estimates, there has been public commentary around the current mayor of Townsville with regard to his conduct. I note the recent comments of the Premier, who was quoted in the *Townsville Bulletin*—

I'm hopeful [the report will be handed down in time] if it's not, we'll address that and we'll be upfront with everyone.

Can you give some indication when that report might be possible prior to 21 November 2025?

Mr Barbour: Firstly, can I just say that question presumes there is going to be a report. Can I defer answering anything to do with that specific matter—which is ongoing, as the committee is aware, and which we have provided a summary of—until the private session, Chair? At that time I will be very happy to provide as much detail as I can about where we are at currently.

CHAIR: I will with respect to that part. Before I conclude, is it the practice that reports are handed down to individuals prior to them being made public?

Mr Barbour: No. As the committee would be aware, recent amendments to the reporting powers of the commission require us to undergo a range of steps if we decide to make a public report. There are a number of factors that we must have regard to prior to making a decision about whether to prepare a public report and issue one or not. Those matters would be live for any investigation, so it is impossible to answer that question because it will depend entirely on the nature of the issues that are in play in a particular investigation and what must be considered about whether you can or you cannot report.

CHAIR: Just so I am clear, there has been no draft or consideration provided by the CCC to the government or any minister?

Mr Barbour: I am happy to answer questions about that matter in detail during the private session, Chair.

Mr STEVENS: Mr Barbour, there were 1,200-odd corruption matters assessed during that reporting period and you advised four were retained by the CCC for investigation. You mentioned a short time ago there are 22 other investigations currently; is that correct? Could you advise where the differentiation is in terms of those commitments to those investigations, please?

Mr Barbour: Certainly. The number four is the number of matters retained for investigation which came from complaints or referrals that were made during this reporting period, so from April to the end of June. The total number of investigations currently underway would include matters that were made the subject of investigation and were continuing prior to those four being added to them, so there is a constantly shifting number. As matters are finalised they are not referred to anymore and as matters are initiated they are added on, so that is where the 22 comes from.

Mr STEVENS: You mentioned on 31 August there is a new regime in place where the CCC has to seek an opinion from the DPP before proceeding with a prosecution. If the DPP provides information that does not support proceeding with a matter, is there still the option for the CCC to proceed of its own accord, ignoring DPP advice?

Mr Barbour: No, it would not be permissible under the current legislation. Although the provisions formally come into play on 31 August, we have in fact been adopting this procedure with the DPP under an MOU since August 2023. In that time, almost two years, we have forwarded 15 matters to the DPP for consideration of whether or not they agree with views that we have put forward to them that we believe charges may be appropriate in particular matters. Unfortunately, despite a turnaround time contemplated in the MOU of 10 weeks, the vast majority of matters that went to the DPP have not been returned in that timeframe and we have many matters still with them that we are yet to receive advice on.

Mr STEVENS: How do we address that matter of the DPP providing timely advice?

Mr Barbour: I have met recently with the DPP and we talked about this. He is also concerned about the fact they are not meeting their timelines. It is regrettable, given they were given considerable additional resources to deal with this extra work. Certainly some of the matters are complex, but in my view they would not be beyond the capacity or experience of the DPP to deal with expeditiously. Beyond talking to the DPP directly, there is an obligation on us under the legislation to report to this committee and also to the Attorney-General about the efficacy and effectiveness of the MOU and these procedures, and we will be doing that.

Mr McDONALD: My question relates to 'intersection of illicit markets and major crime investigations—efficient and effective'. I have asked questions a number of times about tobacco and illicit tobacco products. Obviously, Health is a lead agency in investigating these tobacco products, but I am really interested in the CCC's work around any connections to organised crime. In Fernvale

I had two innocent businesses burned because of the firebombing of an illicit business by, I would suspect, organised crime or similar. That is very personal to my area, and I know of others that are happening. What can you share with the committee in the public session regarding the work and the focus in that area to make sure we are getting on top of those things?

Mr Barbour: I think certainly it would be best to deal with much of that in more detail in the private session, but I will hand over to Ms Loder, who can give you a very brief and general overview of what we are doing.

Ms Loder: We have recently concluded one referred investigation from the QPS where they have utilised our hearing powers to look at a particular arson of a tobacco shop. We are seeing tobacco in two of our CCC-led investigations, which are referred to in more detail in our private report. Those concern one of the professional money-laundering syndicates. A substantial portion of those funds are believed to come from illicit tobacco—and other sources, but certainly illicit tobacco. I can answer the question the deputy chair asked before.

Mrs STOKER: Thank you, that would be lovely.

Ms Loder: The AFP call it a return on investment; we call it a cost-recovery ratio. Now that I can remember their term, the reason for the difference is that we did not want to give the impression that an objective of proceeds of crime was a profit centre for the government. I am not suggesting that is what the AFP are projecting, but that is certainly something that we were conscious of in terms of looking at that ratio. Their cost base is very similar but, as I said before, we have not included the DPP resources in our cost base as yet. We only trialled the ratio—not as an SDS—last year and it has been officially in as an SDS figure this year. That may be something we can do in the future and, of course, we have a recommendation in the report that we published last year about the CCC managing all aspects of the civil confiscation regime. That will be easier to assess if that occurs.

The cost base is the criminal assets taskforce that the Commonwealth have. That is a multi-agency taskforce made up of several Commonwealth agencies. It also includes litigators, which I believe are in-house; they are not supplied by the DPP, so they are lawyers employed by the AFP. Both ratios do not explicitly include the cost of the Public Trustee in Queensland as opposed to AFSA, which performs a similar role for the Commonwealth. However, the return—what we call the benefit they also call a benefit; that is, costs recovered—are net of those costs of that third-party agency which manages the assets.

Ms SCANLON: Mr Barbour, I refer to media reports regarding the appointment of the Chief Health Officer, and I table a number of media articles for the benefit of the committee and the commission. Media reports stated—

Mrs STOKER: Point of order, Chair: could the committee member perhaps direct us to where in the CCC's report this arises, because its relevance is not obvious to me. Perhaps I have missed the relevant section of the report, but if we could be directed to questions about the report that would be useful, I think.

Ms PUGH: Point of order, Chair: it has never been the practice of this committee, in all the time have been on it, to only ask questions about things contained in the public report. This is a committee with a wideranging ambit and I think the member's question is entirely relevant.

CHAIR: That is correct. Section 4 of the Crime and Corruption Act places an obligation on the CCC to respond to the principles of the act with regard to these type of questions. I will allow the question to continue.

Ms SCANLON: Thank you, Chair. Mr Barbour, media reports stated 'Senior government ministers intervened to scuttle the appointment of leading doctor Krispin Hajkowicz as Queensland's next chief health officer' and that health minister Tim Nicholls had approved the appointment but 'it is understood senior ministers intervened'. This is after a recruitment panel had recommended Dr Hajkowicz and he had already been informed of the outcome. My question is: are the reported actions of the LNP government consistent or inconsistent with the CCC's position and recommendations that recruitment processes in the Public Service are not undermined or seen to be undermined by political influence?

Mr HUNT: Point of order, Chair: the member is referring to a media article suggesting certain things but it is not substantiated. I ask that she substantiate the statements being made before the witnesses comment on them. Just reading from a newspaper suggesting—

CHAIR: This has been in the public domain for some period of time.

Mr HUNT: My point of order is that it is not substantiated.

CHAIR: I will allow Mr Barbour to respond in accordance with his ability to respond to the question, thank you.

Mr McDONALD: Point of order, Chair: there is a clear imputation in the member's question and I ask that she be required to reword it.

CHAIR: I do not believe that there is. Mr Barbour?

Mr Barbour: Thank you for the question. I am afraid that I have learned over many years not to place a great deal of weight on what is often reported in newspapers and media articles. I have no personal knowledge of those matters and I do not believe it would be appropriate for me to make any comment in relation to matters which may in the fullness of time end up coming to the CCC and which I will need to consider independently and objectively.

Ms SCANLON: Thank you, Mr Barbour. I appreciate this. It is the opposition's understanding that the position of the Chief Health Officer is a deputy director-general position and, as such, pursuant to section 52 of the Hospital and Health Boards Act, is employed as a Public Service officer or as a health service employee. It is understood that Governor in Council is not involved and it is the director-general who appoints that position. Mr Barbour—

Mr HUNT: Point of order, Chair—

Ms PUGH: She has not even finished the question.

CHAIR: Just allow the question and then we will take your point.

Mr HUNT: It is to do with the preamble of the question. The member is making several statements, not asking a question.

CHAIR: I am going to allow the question. Please continue, member for Gaven.

Ms SCANLON: Mr Barbour, I put this to you: after an independent selection panel had concluded and recommended an individual to the role, would the CCC be concerned about a director-general rescinding an employment offer—either verbal or written—as a result of political interference?

Mr Barbour: Once again, it is entirely hypothetical and I am not in a position to answer. Until such time as facts are before me or a complaint is before me, I am not in a position to answer such questions.

Mr McDONALD: Point of order, Chair: you asked the member to ask a question before and I raised a point of order on imputations. I allowed the previous question to go through so that I was not being disruptive to the chair, but the member made clear imputations in that last question. If she is going to continue along those lines then I ask that you bring her to order in that regard and ask her to reword those questions.

CHAIR: I think we will all act in accordance with professionalism and continue—

Mr HUNT: That would be nice.

CHAIR: I beg your pardon? I will not have any reflection on the chair, thank you—

Mr HUNT: It is not a reflection on the chair—

CHAIR: Otherwise, warnings will be handed out.

Mr HUNT: I am reflecting on the member's questioning—political grandstanding.

CHAIR: You are warned, member for Nicklin. I was speaking and you were talking over the top of me. I will go to the deputy chair.

Mrs STOKER: I will cede my time to the member for Lockyer. Did you have a question, or did I misunderstand?

Mr McDONALD: No.

Mr HUNT: I will take it, if you like. My question is related to page 21 of your report and the value of criminal proceeds confiscated. There seems to be quite a spike this year. Is there any comment you can make in the public hearing in relation to any reasons for that? Also, it is noted that 2024-25 is a year-to-date figure. Is that for the full financial year? This report was after June.

Mr Barbour: If I am correct—I am sure Ms Loder will correct me if I am not—the reason there was a bit of a spike in proceeds confiscated was the significant matter that I mentioned in my opening address. Some \$11 million in relation to one single matter was the subject of a successful confiscation order. My understanding is that the figures are up to date in terms of up to 2025.

CHAIR: I refer to recommendation 68 of the commission of inquiry into Queensland Police Service responses to domestic and family violence. I note the meeting that took place with the CCC, the Attorney-General, the QPS and the Minister for Police. Are you able to advise the committee about the progress of the implementation of that particular recommendation, please?

Mr Barbour: Yes, I can. There has been no progress.

CHAIR: How many times have you met with the relevant ministers in respect of this matter?

Mr Barbour: When I say that there has been no progress, I think it is important to put into context that the report was handed down by Judge Richards in November 2022 and that recommendation was made in that report. There is still no decision made in relation to the recommendation. That is why I say there has been no progress.

I am very heartened by the fact that we had a recent meeting—that included the Attorney-General and the Minister for Police—where these issues were discussed. Importantly, the QPS and the CCC are as one in terms of recognising the need for significant improvements in relation to the police complaints system and the oversight of police complaints. There was a working party that was set up by the former government which met once. At that first meeting, not only did the QPS and the CCC agree to a way forward but also both police unions agreed to a way forward. Unfortunately, that particular issue has not progressed beyond that point. I have certainly stressed in meetings and at estimates hearings what I consider to be the significant importance that attaches to that recommendation, but to date there has really been pretty much no progress, unfortunately.

Mrs STOKER: I want to ask about the increase of complaints that you have received in the reporting period. You have said there has been an eight per cent increase in complaints. There has been an expansion of the time that it is taking to get things to completion. You have the target of 30 days and it is looking more like 56 at the present time. In your opening statement you observed that in the survey you conducted few who had made a complaint were satisfied with the response of the CCC to their complaint. Could you comment on the strategies you are taking to manage that customer perception, for want of a better term, and whether there are aspects of the technology improvements you have referred to in the report that might be applied to assist with moving those metrics?

Mr Barbour: This is a very important issue and one that we are certainly looking at and dealing with very closely. Firstly, I just confirm that the perception survey and the particular response you are referring to which I mentioned was not just in terms of the CCC; it was more broadly a view held by people who were working in public sector agencies who were making complaints within their own agencies around particular issues as well.

Mrs STOKER: That is fair—although it did relate specifically to corruption, yes?

Mr Barbour: It did, yes, but not necessarily in terms of things that have come to the CCC. We have over the past five years, and particularly in the last two years, seen an extraordinary increase in the number of complaints that are coming to us. Over the past five years, overall we have had a 55 per cent increase in the number of matters coming to us. In relation to police in particular, there has been an 86 per cent increase in the number of matters that have come to us. Like any organisation that sees its workload increase at such a great rate over a relatively short period of time, there are very significant challenges that need to be overcome in terms of dealing with them effectively and efficiently.

One of the things we have done is that in our new processes we have given priority to police complaints because of the timeframe, which is relevant in terms of the limited expiry date—the LED timeframe—which means that we have a limited timeframe in which either us or police can investigate those complaints. Depending on the timing of them and where they have come from and the particular aspects of them, there is a finite time before discipline can happen of only six months or 12 months, depending on the nature of the matter. Because of that, we have absolutely given some priority to get those police matters through to make sure that we do not inhibit the effectiveness of any investigation that might happen. We are grappling with these issues and we are looking at a whole range of different ways that we might be able to deal with them.

One of the things we did recently was look at trying to benchmark our statistics against some other anti-corruption agencies around the country. There are only two that have a similar breadth of jurisdiction to us in terms of corruption complaints—in other words, including police. That is IBAC in Victoria and the Corruption and Crime Commission in Western Australia. In our benchmarking we certainly do very well against those agencies, so I am really pleased to see that. You will also see that, in terms of the total numbers, we are actually getting through more matters than we are receiving. We are really trying to ensure we give the best service we can to people, and we are really cognisant of those very important issues that you have raised.

We will continue to look at ways we can deal with matters differently, but certainly, as the committee knows from its own experience with matters raised with the committee, sometimes matters that are raised with us are extraordinarily complex and voluminous. They are not only matters that

come to us but they are circulated around a large number of other people. The process of going through these matters, assessing them effectively and making the correct decision is a time-consuming process in a lot of cases. We are certainly live to those issues and we are certainly continuing to look at the area and work very closely to ensure we see improvements in that work.

Mrs STOKER: Could I follow up on the technology and digital aspect of the question? If one of the objectives of the digital program that you have on board at present is to improve the stakeholder experience, how are the investments you are making in that space targeting improvements in the complainant or customer experience?

Mr Barbour: It is very difficult to link the two directly because one is very much a human experience rather than a digital or technological experience. The use of technology assists us in being able to better understand trends to be able to respond to particular issues to look at thematic work, but it is not going to replace our need to assess each complaint that comes in closely and carefully and for somebody on our team in our intake and assessment area to make decisions on that assessment process consistent with our corruption framework. There are value-adds but they are not necessarily in that front end. I do not know whether there is anything the CEO would like to add in relation to that.

Mrs STOKER: I would have thought it would have impacts at least on the timeframe.

Ms O'Farrell: There are a couple of things that I could add to that. The investment that we have made over the last few years around our data warehouse has allowed us to have much more business intelligence around our timeliness. We get weekly dashboards that are broken up across the different categories of serious and systemic matters, complaint service reviews and primary assessment matters. That will allow us to actually target where we need to focus where there are issues.

The other thing we have done is: because we have all of that data and it is much easier to analyse and we are drawing insights from it, we have developed now some different performance measures for different categories of complaints and different targets and timeframes. Not every complaint is treated the same, nor should it be. There are a number of complaints the vast majority of which we will always refer back to a UPA. There is little work that we need to do on those complaints in order to assess them. Our expectation is that those complaints will have a different timeframe for assessment and referral back than a matter that we might monitor or investigate ourselves, and we will spend more time working up those complaints and assessing and getting inquiries done in order to make that decision.

The investment in digital technology and the automated data warehouse, the feeds and our investment in data analysts have certainly assisted in bringing us to our current position where we can make more informed choices about particular types of complaints.

Ms SCANLON: Mr Barbour, I refer to the estimates hearing on 30 July this year which revealed that Economic Development Queensland's acting chief executive, Julian Simmonds, expressed his interest in the acting role directly with Deputy Premier Jarrod Bleijie's chief of staff, Nathan Ruhle. At the same time, political materials authorised by Mr Simmonds were being circulated for the purpose of helping the LNP. Mr Barbour, in the Crime and Corruption Commission's view, and noting the wealth of recommendations and advice the CCC has made in relation to public sector appointments, is it appropriate that an individual who is authorising political ads and a former LNP politician is provided a \$300,000-plus taxpayer-funded role after direct conversations with the LNP Deputy Premier's chief of staff?

Mr McDONALD: Point of order, Chair: there is clearly an imputation and the question is asking the chairperson for an opinion. The question would be better directed to other—

Ms PUGH: Which others?

Mr McDONALD: On the floor of the chamber.

Ms SCANLON: Point of order, Chair: the CCC's functions include preventing corrupt conduct in the public sector including educational awareness and to raise standards of integrity and conduct in the public sector. I think that question is entirely appropriate.

CHAIR: I do note that the Crime and Corruption Act, in particular section 4(1) (b), states to 'continuously improve the integrity of ... the public sector', so I will allow the question. Mr Barbour, feel free to answer that question in whatever manner you see fit.

Mr Barbour: I can really only repeat what I said in answer to an earlier question, and that is that it is my personal view and also the view of the CCC—a longstanding view—that competitive, transparent and merit-based processes should be followed for all senior appointments unless there are specific policies or positions taken in relation to specific types of roles that do not require that. As a result of our work, the Public Sector Commission has introduced directives in relation to the recruitment processes and what is required for senior appointments and, in our view, those directives should be followed.

Ms SCANLON: I appreciate that answer. My follow-up question is: it was obviously revealed during the estimates process that the board of Economic Development Queensland, of which John Sosso is a member, is considering directly appointing LNP aligned Julian Simmonds permanently to the \$300,000-plus taxpayer-funded role without a merit-based selection process. I appreciate your previous answer, but directly to this question, Mr Barbour, in light of Mr Simmonds's history and how he got the acting role, is it appropriate in the view of the CCC that an appointment of this nature does not go through a merit-based process?

Mr Barbour: I do not propose to speak specifically about any individual or any particular individual process. What I will say, though, is a personal reflection—that is, I was appointed acting chairperson of the CCC and I went through an open and appropriate recruitment process. I think that was extremely important because that process ensured that my staff within the organisation were able to look to a process that ensured that, hopefully, a credible and appropriate person was appointed to the role. For senior roles, the degree of credibility that someone has is extremely important for them to successfully perform the role. I think this is one plank—certainly from my view—that is necessary.

CHAIR: Thank you for your answer, Mr Barbour. As you know, other than the member for Gaven, all members of this committee were part of the process of conducting an extensive review of applicants for your position. I do appreciate your frankness and your honesty in your response.

Mr McDONALD: With regard to those 329 reports, and following on from the question that the deputy chair asked around digitisation or opportunities for improvements with that, I note you have gone through the five-year review and we are working through some areas there. Is there anything you would like to talk to us about in the public forum regarding that 329 process or any improvements?

Mr Barbour: I might hand over to the CEO to answer that, given her specific role in relation to 329s.

Ms O'Farrell: I think there is possibly another more detailed opportunity, if I can be so bold as to request one, to talk more in detail about the opportunities in terms of reform of that section. In terms of your question and its relationship with digitisation, new technology and the like, the commission is always looking at, when it observes opportunities, utilising technology to prevent risks from becoming issues, so risks materialising. As the committee is aware, humans make errors and sometimes the potential for those errors to cause harm is there, and I am specifically talking about the disclosure of confidential information, for example, which is unintended but can sometimes occur. That can occur in the form of a person having made a complaint to the commission—that fact being unintentionally sent to the wrong email address when responding to the person, for example. There are things that the commission has employed in order to mitigate the risk materialising. We have mail tips on our system that indicate that you are sending a communication external to the commission. You are required to classify the document before you send an email as either official or sensitive. The sheer fact of having to do that might trigger the need to be careful about making sure you have addressed it correctly.

There is nothing that I am aware of that will remove human error occurring. It is very much our focus on making sure that when we do make an error we apologise to the person, if we are able to get in contact with them. Sometimes we are not because they have actually given us the wrong email address. To the extent that we are able to, we apologise and we provide additional guidance or training to the individual officer if that is required. It is not always required because they may simply have made an error that day. We will always continue to look at the way that technology can assist us in reducing the errors that are made that have an impact, an adverse impact potentially, on people who deal with the commission.

CHAIR: Mr Barbour, can I take you back to your opening statement regarding the 10,000-odd surveys you had returned and those indications that most believe there is corruption within their workplaces. Is there any breakdown in terms of those agencies that those 10,000-odd respondents came from?

Mr Barbour: There was a type of breakdown, if I can put it that way. Surveys and the results of the surveys were categorised as coming from the community and coming from public sector employees, local government or QPS. There are separate reports on our website which provide very detailed information about each of those cohorts individually and also collectively. That was the breakdown. There was not a further breakdown into specific agencies within that public sector bundle. Were we to have done that as part of our process, I suspect we would not have got the 10,000 responses because people would have been less comfortable in responding if they were in any way able to be identified.

CHAIR: I think I have been on record in the past in terms of requesting information of your engagement as an organisation with the Queensland Local Government Association. Can I request in your endeavours in terms of deciding the future of those respondents the possibility of reaching out to the LGAQ for further engagement with some of those councils, please?

Mr Barbour: Certainly. The respondents in the local government sector would probably have been, in most part, individual employees of the sector in different councils. As I said, the information from the survey is very much going to be analysed and used in our further development, particularly in relation to our prevention and engagement work. That will absolutely be one of the sectors we will be doing that for.

CHAIR: I am mindful of time. There being no further questions, we will close the public section of this hearing. There is, I believe, at least one question on notice. Could we have that response before the close of business on Friday, 29 August? Okay, we have that answer, so there is no need for that. We will now move to the private meeting with the Crime and Corruption Commission.

The committee adjourned at 11.32 am.