



PARLIAMENTARY CRIME AND CORRUPTION COMMITTEE

Members present:

Mr ML Furner MP—Chair
Mr GJ Butcher 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 L Manderson—Committee Secretary
Ms H Radunz—Assistant Committee Secretary

MEETING WITH THE CRIME AND CORRUPTION COMMISSION

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

Wednesday, 12 February 2025

Brisbane

WEDNESDAY, 12 FEBRUARY 2025

The committee met at 2.00 pm.

CHAIR: Good afternoon, everyone. The committee will now commence the public hearing with the Crime and Corruption Commission. The proceedings are being recorded by Hansard and broadcast live on the parliament's 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 their mobile phones are turned off or switched to silent mode.

Members are to note they have been provided with a secretariat briefing, a copy of the CCC's public report for the period from 1 July 2024 to 31 December 2024, and the transcript of the last public meeting with the CCC on 30 August 2024. 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 July 2024 to 31 December 2024.

Mr BUTCHER: I so move.

CHAIR: All those in favour? Those against? That is carried.

BARBOUR, Mr Bruce, Chairperson, Crime and Corruption Commission

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

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

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

McMILLAN, Ms Kathryn, Deputy Chairperson, Crime and Corruption Commission

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

WEBBE, Ms Simone, Ordinary Commissioner, Crime and Corruption Commission

CHAIR: The committee will now commence its public discussions with the Crime and Corruption Commission. I welcome everyone. Thank you for joining us today. Congratulations to Mr Capper on your appointment to the position of Senior Executive Officer (Corruption), which I know you have been acting in for some time. Mr Barbour, would you like to make a brief opening statement?

Mr Barbour: Good afternoon, Chair. Thank you for your introduction. We are pleased to appear before this newly constituted Parliamentary Crime and Corruption Committee, and we look forward to a positive and productive relationship. We hope that these meetings give the committee a greater understanding of our activities and confidence in how we are working to achieve our vision for the Queensland community of safe communities supported by fair and ethical institutions.

We know that Queenslanders are concerned by the impact of serious crime and corruption on their communities. That is why these meetings are very important for us. They allow us to speak through the committee to the public. They enable us to keep you and the public informed about the CCC's focus, activities and results. Most importantly, they encourage open and transparent discussion of important issues. We welcome your questions and, wherever possible, we will provide as much information as we can about our activities. However, as I am sure you are aware, the nature of our work will not always enable us to talk publicly about it. As an agency, we must balance transparency and the public's right to information against the need to protect the integrity of our investigations and the privacy of individuals. Therefore, in the public sessions of our meetings, our position in many cases may be to not confirm or comment on any particular complaint, investigation or matter which is before the courts.

Meeting with the Crime and Corruption Commission

I am pleased to present the commission's report for the period 1 July to 31 December 2024. As you will see, the public report sets out in detail our performance and activities for the reporting period, but I would like to focus on some key activities that we undertook during this time. During the reporting period, the crime division finalised a major crime investigation involving suspected money laundering and drug trafficking. It resulted in 26 people being charged with more than 109 offences and seizures of over \$500,000 in cash, 20 kilograms of methamphetamine and half a tonne of cannabis.

As well as undertaking our own investigations, the CCC also works in cooperation with other agencies, including the Queensland Police Service, in responding to serious crimes that involve potential or actual loss of life or serious injuries. During the reporting period, our work in this area involved holding hearings in relation to offences including homicide, extortion, theft and violence. We also used our hearing powers to assist the QPS to finalise three investigations into crimes against children and vulnerable people.

Through our operations, we collect and analyse intelligence data about the activities of organised crime groups, their participants and facilitators. We then share these with other law enforcement agencies for their information and action. During the reporting period we made 108 intelligence disclosures to law enforcement. Our proceeds of crime team obtained restraining orders to the value of over \$5.04 million and a total of \$6.28 million was returned to the state as forfeited property.

Turning now to the work of the corruption division, I would like first to take a little bit of time to talk about our complaints assessment process and the work we are doing there, and then to give you a brief overview of our investigations during the reporting period. As the committee, I am sure, is aware, our jurisdiction is very broad and diverse. It includes more than 250 units of public administration including state government departments, the Queensland Police Service, local governments, government owned corporations, universities, prisons, courts, tribunals and elected officials. We receive complaints of corruption from members of the public and we receive notifications of corruption from public officials. Our current focus is on the priority corruption areas of excessive force against a young person, including in watch houses and detention centres; police responses to domestic and family violence and police perpetrated domestic and family violence; complex procurement, including major infrastructure and development projects; corruption in recruitment involving senior executive positions or above; use of confidential information to facilitate a serious offence; corruption in grant funding, regulation and licensing; and corruption by elected officials.

The CCC investigates only the most serious or systemic corruption referrals itself. It refers some others to relevant public sector agencies to deal with, in line with the devolution principle which is set out in the Crime and Corruption Act.

For the period 1 July to 31 December 2024, we received 2,570 complaints and notifications and we assessed 2,889. I think it is important to briefly reflect and advise you of some of the challenges we have experienced with increasing numbers of complaints and notifications of corruption over the last 18 months. Notwithstanding that increase, I am confident that recent changes to our operating model will see a more timely assessment of complaints and notifications of corruption, but in the 2023-24 financial year the number of complaints and notifications we received increased by 28 per cent. The significance of this is demonstrated by the fact that this was the highest percentage increase in complaints received across any Australian integrity agency that year. So far this financial year, complaint numbers have increased a further 17 per cent, compared to the same period last year.

Assessment of corrupt conduct complaints and notifications is a highly specialised skill, requiring in-depth knowledge of the Crime and Corruption Act and the operation of the public sector in Queensland, and our assessment work is extremely important, so we invest considerable time and effort in ensuring our staff are trained and equipped to deal with high volumes of confidential information, have the skills to analyse that information and apply it to the definition of 'corruption', then to also identify what additional but limited information they may need in order to make a timely assessment decision. As a result of this, our staff are seen as being extremely valuable. They are highly sought after by other agencies for their own ethical standards units and, as a consequence, we have experienced significant staff turnover in the past 24 months. We are pleased to say that that pace of turnover has markedly reduced in the last four to six months and we are in a relatively stable state.

To try to manage these increases in complaints and notifications throughout 2024, we have instituted some changes. I am pleased, as I said before, to note that we are seeing some positive results. We have significantly reduced the number of total matters under active assessment in the Brisbane

last six months from 518 to 301, a decrease of 41 per cent. The most significant decrease has been in relation to complaints and notifications which will not be investigated by the CCC, referred back to other agencies under our devolution principle. Last year we reduced the number of these matters under assessment from 609 to 125, a reduction of 79 per cent. This data, in a more complete picture, is presented to you and is available in the report. What I do want to stress, though, is our continuing commitment to improving our practices. We expect it to take some further time to fully realise the benefits of the changes made and to improve the timeliness of our complaint and notification processes.

As at 31 December, we were progressing 39 corruption investigations. During the reporting period, we finalised 16 corruption investigations which included the following outcomes: a brief of evidence relating to fraud was referred to the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions for advice as to the suitability of a criminal prosecution; allegations of misuse of authority were referred to an agency for consideration of disciplinary action; and 11 matters were finalised which covered allegations of corrupt conduct relating to misuse of office, failure of duty, misappropriation of resources, drug related offences and misuse of information and sexual offences. Those matters were not substantiated as a result of investigations.

We are continuing to implement the recommendations of the Fitzgerald-Wilson commission of inquiry into the commission. As at 31 December last year, we had implemented 19 of those recommendations in full and made significant progress in 11 others.

In August 2024, the Crime and Corruption Amendment Act was passed by parliament. Most of the amendments will consolidate the provisions in chapters 3 and 4 of the Crime and Corruption Act that govern crime division and corruption division investigations, and we have commenced preparations to implement these legislative changes.

We continue to engage with government regarding the need for legislative change to our public reporting powers. I have met with the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for Integrity to discuss this and other issues, and officers from the commission have engaged with officers of the Department of Justice. We anticipate that consultation will continue with a view to amending legislation being introduced into parliament in the near future.

I spoke a little longer than I normally would—thank you for indulging me—but I thought, as it was our first meeting and given that we were dealing with a six-month period, it would be helpful to focus on some of those issues. That is my opening remarks and we are very happy to assist the committee with answers to any questions.

CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Barbour. I think it is pertinent that you provided that detailed, concise summary of the report given the membership of the committee, including me as the new chair of the committee. I have a couple of questions, if I may start. You did go into detail about the organised crime and major crime investigations into drug trafficking, but I was interested in the report with respect to the 3D printing of firearms. If you are in a position to publicly unpack some more of that I would be appreciative, and I am sure the committee would be as well.

Mr Barbour: We are limited, I think, in what we can say, unfortunately, on that matter. For any current operational matter or matter of that kind, if we could answer any questions that you have in the private session that would be great.

CHAIR: Given. Thank you. It is interesting to note the increase of 28 per cent in terms of investigations, and congratulations on the work the CCC has been doing with respect to that. That clearly demonstrates, no doubt, the concerted effort the CCC has made in terms of seeing a result in that; would that be correct?

Mr Barbour: Look, I think so. Certainly our analysis of the increase does not demonstrate any particular theme or indicator as to why the increase has happened. Importantly—for both good reasons and bad—the CCC is regularly in the news and, as a result, people become aware of it. We certainly do a lot of work in terms of trying to get information out to the public, notwithstanding some of our present limitations. We do look at the data regularly. We try to look for not only themes but also particular issues that might be identified so that we can utilise that information in our corruption prevention area and feed it back to agencies.

CHAIR: In your opening statement you spoke of the pressures put on staff with regard to the skills required and issues associated with increasing retention. You explained that this concern seemed to have plateaued now. What sort of retention measures did you put in place to bring about that change?

Mr Barbour: Importantly, staff within the intake and assessment area were actively engaged in the process of reviewing how we might be able to do the work better. As our staff are well trained and well experienced, we will always run the risk that they will be sought after across the broader public sector. As the Commonwealth increases its footprint in relation to areas—for example, the creation of the National Anti-Corruption Commission—there will be a need for experienced officers to fill new positions.

In terms of our specific work, as I said, we are seeing stability at the moment. We are making sure that we engage effectively with the staff to ensure any problems or issues are identified pretty quickly. I do not want to speak too strongly about it, because in six months time we might be in another position where we see some movement. It is certainly a credit to the staff that they have been able to work through such an incredible increase in the amount of work—together with reforming the way in which they do that work—and provide the outcomes that we have. Statistically, we are not meeting our measurements at the moment, but I think there is a very good reason.

Ms O'Farrell: There were some particular strategies that we employed around how we staff, how we induct and how we test the suitability of people for that role. In our recruitment processes, the range of capabilities, or the roles undertaken in that area, include phone intake. It is a highly stressful job at times, with particularly vulnerable people at the end of the telephone. For a role that does that sort of work, we employed testing procedures in our recruitment process so that not only could we assess a person's capability but also they had a real-life experience of what they might be getting into. This helps them to self-determine whether the role is for them. That is one intervention.

Our onboarding, induction and training and development processes also fundamentally changed. There is a lot more front-ending of intense training and development before we let the intake and assessment officers loose on real files. They are mentored and buddied up with more senior assessment officers. We introduced assurance processes as well so that we can detect early particular issues that might need more training, development or intervention to give assessment officers a lot more confidence early on in their tenure with the CCC in doing the work they do. We have changed a variety of things specifically related to the resourcing of the unit.

CHAIR: Thank you, Ms O'Farrell. Conversely—using the example of a police officer coming into the CCC and then returning to the QPS once their tenure has concluded—is there any exit process?

Ms O'Farrell: Yes. We have an off-boarding process for any commission officer who is separating for any reason from the commission. That is a voluntary process. They are offered an opportunity to fill in a survey or have an exit interview. The numbers are down in relation to the people who are taking up that opportunity. That is a really good data point for us, so we are working on strategies to encourage participation in that process. That process is in place.

Mrs STOKER: Welcome, everybody. I see that the CCC has an awareness of the ways that people engaging in criminal activity are using cryptocurrencies and other digital mechanisms for avoiding anti-money-laundering laws and other ways of detecting crime. Has the digital asset specialist been recruited? If so, when and what has been their impact on investigations?

Mr Barbour: Yes, they have been recruited. I think they were recruited earlier this year after a considerable amount of work in relation to the project. Ms Loder can indicate in a bit more detail what they are currently engaged in.

Ms Loder: The individual was recruited from 1 January. Their main role is to continue to assist to develop our governance frameworks, our policies and procedures. We are currently working on finalising the digital assets chapter for our operations manual. It has been quite challenging but we are almost there. There is also a subject matter expert, so they are able to assist our operational staff in identifying digital asset credentials and artefacts in investigations or in digital devices that are seized. They are currently working on some of our investigations and supporting our proceeds of crime investigations as well as our crime investigations.

Mrs STOKER: There is a reference in your report to the digitisation program. Obviously, there are benefits for efficiency, staff access and so on. I wonder what is going on on the cybersecurity front in relation to that digitisation program and how you are making sure the CCC does not become a target or a risk by having that digital footprint?

Ms O'Farrell: I can say that we have a very strong focus on it. I can give some particular details in the private session about what we do and the results of some recent testing. For our organisation, with the data assets that we hold in relation to confidential information, it is always a particular priority for us. Just for a bit of history, some years ago it was the No. 1 very high risk on our risk register as

a result of all of the data being held on premise. Over the last few years we have moved to mitigate that risk through storing our data not only in the cloud but also offsite, in multiple centres that have the highest rating possible for the security of data.

In relation to standards: standards, much to my concern at times, change. We measure ourselves against the Essential Eight every year. We have an information security management system that is audited every year and we do multiple IT audits every year. As you would expect, the standards change, so we are constantly having to climb the ladder. We hit a maturity level and then we have to hit an extra maturity level. The standard changed last year, so we are in the process of working toward meeting an even higher standard level for the Essential Eight.

It is a focus for us every day. We report on that to our audit and risk committee each quarter, at every meeting, and it is certainly a focus that we will never lose sight of, because the data is just so important and highly confidential. It is a real focus for us.

Mrs STOKER: I might ask more when we get to the private session but I appreciate your answer. Thank you.

Ms PUGH: Your opening address was an excellent overview of all of the work you have been undertaking so I think it was time well spent. You referenced that the legislation that is being worked on for your public reporting powers would be ready in the near future. What does the 'near future' look like? Are we talking this year or the next six months? Do you have a timeline attached to that?

Mr Barbour: As you were a member on the previous committee, you would have heard me say that it is a matter I wanted to have resolved as quickly as possible.

Ms PUGH: Indeed.

Mr Barbour: I have been saying that since September 2023. I am very optimistic. Certainly, we are moving in the right direction. The meetings I have had with the Attorney have been very positive in terms of discussing issues around amendments. I would think the 'near future' probably means in the next sitting of parliament. That would be my expectation, but that is speculation on my part. I think things are sufficiently advanced that that might be a reasonable and appropriate indicator.

Ms PUGH: Thank you. You might want to address this in the private session as well, but are you happy to talk about some of the additional amendments? You have previously foreshadowed some of the additional things you would like to see. Is there anything you have changed your position on since September 2023 or is there anything you would like to see included?

Mr Barbour: I think it is best to talk about that in the private meeting, given that negotiations are still underway in relation to that. My view, as expressed previously with the committee and through public meetings, has been that I think it is in the best interests of everybody, and certainly in the public interest, to have amendments that are very clear, that are relatively brief, that are not particularly complex and that will not lead to litigation which would thwart the publication of important reports that we prepare. There was a bill introduced previously by the government when in opposition which succeeded in doing that. That was introduced in October 2023. That may well provide a good basis for the kinds of amendments that we could see in the future.

Ms PUGH: Great, thank you. My next question follows on from the member for Oodgeroo in a slightly different vein. We have talked before about social media footprints—I appreciate that you may want to answer this in the private session—but with the advent of TikTok, different social media and now DeepSeek, is there anything you can say in the public session for those following along at home who might be interested to hear about your work in that space, from both a staff perspective and an investigation perspective? I appreciate that some of it might not be suitable for public consumption.

Mr Barbour: It is certainly an issue that is always under active consideration. I will ask the CEO to respond.

Ms O'Farrell: I can speak to the staffing side of the house, not the investigation side of the house.

Ms PUGH: Yes, of course.

Ms O'Farrell: As the member would be aware, but for the benefit of the committee, we have instituted practices in our vetting approach that requires staff, where they have a public profile, to advise us of that public profile of their social media. We have no right of access to their private profile if it is private. We have a policy around social media usage in relation to the CCC's social media but also around—it is not a policy, per se, but it is covered in the code of conduct around appropriate commentary on your own social media in relation to work matters. Obviously, with generational change and probably cost-of-living pressures as well, quite often people have secondary

employment. Some of that secondary employment can take the form of influencer income leveraged off the use of social media platforms. If an employee of the commission is wanting to maintain secondary employment, they need to get the approval of a delegate. That is quite a senior delegate within the commission. Obviously, an assessment of conflicts of interest—or the potential to have conflicts of interest—with their primary employment, being that of the CCC, is taken into account and a decision is made based on various matters including primarily conflicts.

Ms PUGH: What social media platforms is the CCC on or what digital platforms?

Ms O'Farrell: We are on Facebook—I do not think we have very many followers; we have about a thousand-odd—we are on LinkedIn and there is a YouTube account.

Ms PUGH: There is no TikTok account?

Ms O'Farrell: There is definitely no TikTok and there would not be any appetite for us to join TikTok. In relation to DeepSeek, which I think you mentioned, we have an AI policy in the commission on the use of artificial intelligence. There is a process involved in getting approval to actually access any AI and use it for work purposes.

Mr STEVENS: My question is to Mr Barbour. A complaint I have received was, basically, that when a complainant referred a matter through to the CCC—and, as you said, if you are not prepared to deal with it you refer it back to other agencies to deal with it—the complaint was referred back to the agency that he was actually complaining about. How do you differentiate who should be dealing with different matters when you have a complaint about a particular area that the overseeing body is then in charge of?

Mr Barbour: There is a range of decisions that might be taken when we receive a complaint and it has gone through an assessment process. As I mentioned earlier, if it is considered to be serious and significant and it meets those areas of particular interest we have identified then we will look at that and consider whether or not we should investigate the matter ourselves. If we think there is the possibility of corrupt conduct, we can also make a decision to monitor the investigation of a matter if it is referred back to a UPA, or we might decide that we refer it back but with no further action required in terms of notifying us of outcomes.

From a policy perspective, we always consider whether or not a matter ought be referred back to an agency depending on the subject matter of the complaint, and obviously different issues are raised, particularly if it is a public interest disclosure, for example. However, fundamentally, I think it is the responsibility of agencies to ensure that their own systems and their response to complaints are as effective as possible. In those circumstances, most government departments of any size now have specialist areas that deal with these matters, and in relation to the larger departments we also have liaison officers who work with the commission. Without knowing the specifics obviously of the matter—and we would not discuss that in a public meeting in any event—I cannot give you any further advice other than that general practice that we adopt in relation to matters.

Mr STEVENS: Further, I think you mentioned there were 2,500 complaints and about 2,800 investigations—300 more than the complaints that were initiated. What type of mediums give you the imprimatur to go ahead with an investigation?

Mr Barbour: They are just the number of matters in and the number of matters assessed. The reason that 300-odd matters were assessed in addition to the numbers in is that they would have carried over from the previous reporting period or from an earlier part of the year. Often the figures do not correlate perfectly because the period of assessment is obviously going to cross over different periods of time.

Mr McDONALD: With regard to the programs that you run and investigations that you do, it would be remiss of me to not ask a question on behalf of my businesses who complain to me regularly about illicit tobacco. Has the commission done any work on illicit tobacco, the impact it is having on business and its links to organised crime?

Mr Barbour: It is certainly an area of interest for us. I am very happy to have Ms Loder brief you in a bit more detail in the private session. As you would understand, activities in relation to that area are likely to be matters that we cannot discuss in a public forum. Certainly it is an area of interest for us.

Mr McDONALD: It is certainly having millions of dollars of impact on individual businesses. With regard to the question that the member for Mermaid Beach asked—my background was in the Police Service; I understand the professional practices and process there—can you talk to the committee about the benefits to the organisation of referring those matters back in terms of capacity building, accountability and responsibility?

Mr Barbour: I think in principle and in general that is exactly right. I think ideally any agency, whether it is QPS or another area of public administration, benefits from having effective systems in place to deal with matters that are raised about conduct within its own organisation. That, of course, is predicated on the basis that they have effective systems and that they deal with matters appropriately. That is certainly not the case at the moment in all cases with the QPS. There are significant issues there, and we can potentially talk about some of those in the private meeting if it is of interest to the committee.

However, we are working actively with agencies to improve their capacity and ability to deal with matters effectively. Our corruption prevention and engagement program and our corruption strategy are focused on that as being one of the very significant planks to try to assist agencies to improve their ability to deal with those matters. As a general principle, you are absolutely right: were we to deal with all matters or if all matters were being dealt with external to agencies, it would be very difficult for them to improve systems and deal with things effectively.

Mr McDONALD: In relation to the processes—and I know the former government put in place a proposal about a clearing house—have you met with the new Attorney-General with regard to that project?

Mr Barbour: I have met with the new Attorney-General but we have not discussed in any detail the clearing house. There is a clearing-house project underway and we have received updates in relation to this; the most recent one was in January. I have some reservations about the clearing house which I have expressed previously, both at estimates and before this committee. The recommendation for a clearing house coming out of the Coaldrake review was not based on a great deal of evidence and in practice it is extremely difficult to achieve.

Having said that, I think there is absolutely scope for improvements in the system and for there to be perhaps better clarity around the way in which service delivery complaints are handled. My reservations are primarily relating to integrity agencies such as the CCC, the Ombudsman's office, the Office of the Independent Assessor and so forth. I think those entities being brought into a clearing house presents some very fundamental problems and challenges which I am not sure are easily overcome. To the extent of discussions, I have not had any detailed discussions with the government about that. Indeed, I am not even sure whether it is a matter of particular interest to the current government.

Mr BUTCHER: Mr Barbour, the public report highlighted, as you said in your opening statement, an increase in complaints of 17 per cent over the reporting period. Can you talk us through the measures that you have implemented to get them through in a timely manner? Secondly, I noted you said earlier that 30 days is the limit when you are referring back to those organisations. In your report it says it is 73 days compared to that 30-day target. I am interested in what is being done about that to try to achieve those targets and also what has been happening in line with supporting those organisations in terms of the challenges they are facing and getting those reports done in time?

Mr Barbour: There are a number of different issues encapsulated in your question and I think it might traverse both our assessment procedures and intake and also our monitoring functions and the timelines relating to monitoring. In terms of changes to intake and assessment, there have been some fairly significant changes. Ms O'Farrell spoke earlier about some of the recruitment processes and how we have improved them. We have also changed some of the steps in relation to how matters are assessed and in what way they are assessed. The best example I can give you which has led to some significant improvements in timelines is that previously we identified from a complaint every single allegation that could be articulated within the particular complaint. We would put those into our system and we would try to make assessments in relation to each one. We do not do that now. We identify the principal allegation under which all the others effectively sit and that has reduced the timeline taken to deal with those matters significantly.

In terms of decision-making, we have reduced the number of matters that need to go up to particularly the executive leadership team, for example, and we have allocated to both the executive director in that area and directors greater responsibility in terms of making decisions, particularly in matters that do not fit the serious and systemic criteria. They are a couple of examples of how we have done that.

Certainly, though, one of the consequences of the increase, which I mentioned in the opening and which we have flagged in our report, is that we are not meeting our normal performance measurement in terms of timelines. We are improving, and I think the next report to the committee should show a further improvement there. We have a way to go. I think what is extraordinary is that

as a result of these changes we have been able to deal with that increase. We have been able to change procedure to make it more efficient and I think as a result we have not seen any diminution in terms of the quality of decision-making or the assessment processes.

Mr BUTCHER: Say one of these investigations being finalised is over 73 days—and obviously that is the median—is there a mechanism by which you would go back to them and say, 'Where is the report? What's happening?' What drives that to come back to 30 days?

Mr Barbour: Absolutely. Our monitoring area is an area where we have also introduced significant change. We used to have two different types of monitoring processes in place. We have changed that now to a single type of monitoring. We have done that so we can actually evaluate for each matter what the appropriate level of engagement is with the UPA. As you rightly identify, some are very experienced in dealing with matters; others are not, and there may be a range of reasons they are not able to meet particular timelines that are set. We actively work with and engage with the agency. We seek regular updates and reports, but there are, in fact, times when certain circumstances are quite legitimate and they are not able to deal with things.

If I can give you an example—a hypothetical example—where you have a subject officer who is identified in a particular matter and that subject officer is on extended leave and/or is seeking to litigate particular issues, it immediately puts a delay on the capacity of the agency to do an investigation. In those sorts of circumstances we expect them to be providing us with regular updates about what is happening and we regularly engage, but those kinds of instances will mean that the averaging of the figures tends to sometimes blow out.

Mr HUNT: The commission of inquiry report had some commentary around use of seconded police officers and institutional capture risks and things like that. Can you give me an understanding of the use of seconded police officers today as opposed to prior to that report coming out—how many you have, whether they have maximum tenures and how that is all handled?

Mr Barbour: Sure. I will start off and then I will pass over to the CEO in relation to that. I guess there are a number of elements to your question. The first is that we have already started a program of reducing the number of seconded police officers in our corruption investigations area, which was what was targeted by the commission of inquiry. They recognised in that report—and we certainly agree—that that is a process that is going to take some time, and we recognise that we are part way through that reform process. We have a total, I think at the moment, of about 65—

Ms O'Farrell: Seventy-nine.

Mr Barbour:—79 seconded officers, but the vast majority of those do not work in corruption investigations, which was the target area of the commission of inquiry. The bulk of them are in operations support providing surveillance, witness protection services and those kinds of things.

We have recently had a change to processes in relation to the secondment, and the CEO can discuss those with you. The role within the corruption investigations area is seconded officers performing their role as part of a multifunctional team. What we have also done, in recognition of the comments that were made by the commission of inquiry and recommendations, is separate out our corruption legal area. Lawyers used to be embedded in the teams and that is not the case anymore. We have a separate corruption legal area, and lawyers within that area provide assistance and support to the teams on an as-needs basis, but they are not allocated to particular teams so that they do not have a situation where they are consistently involved with the same people and same investigators. Do you want to add to that?

Ms O'Farrell: I will just add we have an MOU with the Queensland Police Service and a secondment policy and a concept of operations, and we differentiate between our investigator cohort from the QPS and the specialised surveillance and witness protection officers that we second as well. The maximum tenure is five years for an investigator being seconded and the maximum tenure for the specialists is eight years, and we have a different process for bringing a seconded officer in the investigator cohort than the specialist operators. For the specialist operations staff we have a one-to-one swap process, so if we have a physical surveillance officer where their tenure is expiring we will do a swap with someone from the QPS and they will come in and the PSU officer will go to the PSU unit in QPS.

Just after Christmas we signed a new secondment agreement with the QPS and what that means is that it is a competitive process. To come into the commission as a seconded officer you need to apply and you can now apply for promotion into the CCC, so it is not a lateral transfer or an acting opportunity. In the past we would have seconded officers who would come in acting at a higher

rank, but they do not maintain that higher rank when they leave. That is a detriment to them because they have served for five years at the higher rank. Now they can come in on promotion and then maintain that rank at the end of their secondment.

Mr STEVENS: An area of interest to me is that 30 per cent to 40 per cent of your staffing, as per your report, are in seconded positions and returning after five years. What controls and protections are there on the privileged information they would have gathered when they return to their normal QPS service?

Ms O'Farrell: Like any officer leaving the commission, a seconded police officer is treated no differently in relation to their obligation to maintain the confidential information that they obtain in the commission during their tenure. There is a provision in the CC Act—213—which provides that legal obligation to maintain confidentiality, and it is actually relevant to anyone who deals with the commission and its confidential information that that provision applies to. On entry they sign an agreement that they are aware of section 213 and they agree to comply with it, and on exit they are reminded of their section 213 and they sign another agreement to demonstrate their awareness of the obligation.

Mr Barbour: Can I just say in general that I think it is important to note that the seconded officers perform critical roles at the CCC. They provide an extraordinarily valuable input to our work and they are very valued, and certainly we are committed to meeting the recommendations of the commission of inquiry in terms of our corruption investigations area, but I think it is important for us to recognise the contribution that the police officers make and to state very publicly that they are a very valued and important part of the organisation.

Mr HUNT: Just as a quick clarifying question, on page 7 of your report with regard to the budget in terms of employee expenses. Do they come under that at all—the QPS—or is that separate?

Ms O'Farrell: No, they do. The way we do it is that we are invoiced by the QPS, so we do not actually process the payroll for the QPS seconded officers. We are issued with an invoice and we pay it monthly.

Mr HUNT: Thanks.

CHAIR: I have some questions around workplace strategies in terms of how you deal with workers compensation and the health and wellbeing of some of your officers. No doubt there would be times when officers would be in arduous situations and long periods of engagement. How do you manage those types of scenarios? I do not have my fingers on the actual part of the report with regard to your current status on workers compensation numbers, so could you also identify that, thank you?

Ms O'Farrell: Yes, certainly. As you say, commission officers do engage in a variety of high-risk and very stressful situations quite often. They are trained to do that very effectively, but that does not mean that they will not suffer at times. We have a very strong focus on ensuring that their safety and their wellbeing are the highest priority. We have zero tolerance for any compromise to that but we do know that it can happen, but we certainly do our level best. We have a variety of strategies in place to assist officers to manage their wellbeing and their safety.

Firstly, I will answer the question about workers compensation. We do not have very many workers compensation claims that are made against the commission related to commission work. We certainly have had some. Some have been upheld; most are not. Some that have been upheld do relate to prolonged exposure for police, so it is not necessarily that it is the exposure at the commission but over a period of time in policing it has presented itself while the officer is at the commission.

Our statistics around workers compensation and the liability do not present to me any great concerns about any additional needs for us to improve our systems. We have over the years, notwithstanding that, improved our systems. For a variety of identified positions we have a requirement for psychological assessment. The requirement is to offer that. It is not strictly necessary for a person to undergo that, but we certainly strongly encourage them to do so. We have trained a lot of our staff in mental health first aid. That is for their own benefit, for them to assist their colleagues and also to take a welfare approach to those they come in contact with in their dealings with their work, so complainants, witnesses, subject officers. We recently received our accreditation as a mental health first-aid workplace, and to get that accreditation we needed to demonstrate this strong commitment to the welfare and safety of our people. We have training and development, we have peer support officers and we have employment assistance schemes. All of the pillars that you would expect an agency that undertakes high-risk and high-stress activities to have we have in place.

It is difficult work. Our people do have issues at times. As an executive leadership team and right through the organisation I think, generally speaking, we are a caring and supportive workplace with a variety of flexibility in-built into our workplace practices to assist people to manage the stressors of not only their personal lives but also their work at the commission.

CHAIR: Thank you. I take on board your point with regard to an officer carrying, if I can use that term, a stress related illness from the QPS into the CCC. Where would I find the current status in terms of officers who may have been on WorkCover over the period of the last 12 months?

Ms O'Farrell: The QPS will hold the WorkCover information for QPS officers. Those claims do not come to the CCC; they go to the QPS. If the officer is at the CCC we might provide some information about their role at the CCC and what they do and so forth, but those claims in relation to QPS officers are managed by the QPS.

CHAIR: Thank you for that. As there are no further questions, that concludes the public hearing. I thank the officers from the CCC for your information. We will now move into our private meeting. Thank you.

The committee adjourned at 2.57 pm.