



Speech By
Melissa McMahon

MEMBER FOR MACALISTER

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LEGAL AFFAIRS AND COMMUNITY SAFETY COMMITTEE

Report, Motion to Take Note

 **Mrs McMAHON** (Macalister—ALP) (3.17 pm): I move—

That the House take note of the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee report No. 25 titled *Inquiry into the strategic review of the Office of the Queensland Ombudsman* tabled on 20 November 2018.

I rise to contribute to the debate on the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee report No. 25 titled *Inquiry into the strategic review of the Office of the Queensland Ombudsman*. The Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee is charged with the oversight of the Office of the Queensland Ombudsman and it is a requirement of the Ombudsman Act for a strategic review of the office to occur at least every seven years by an appointed independent reviewer.

In September 2017, Ms Simone Webbe was appointed to the role and the strategic review report was tabled here in the parliament in January 2018. Since that time, the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee conducted an inquiry calling for submissions in response to the report and inviting the reviewer and the Ombudsman to public hearings. The strategic review of the Office of the Queensland Ombudsman was overwhelmingly positive. It found that the Ombudsman's role and functions—

remain essential, and well-served, elements in the Queensland accountability and integrity system.

and that it—

has delivered ongoing success against its Service Delivery Statement performance measures, meeting and exceeding all its targets measuring efficiency and effectiveness in dealing with complaints.

Nonetheless, the reviewer outlined 72 recommendations. However, the number of recommendations should not be seen as a reflection on the functioning of the Ombudsman. During the public hearing the reviewer stated—

Please do not be confused from the number that the system needs to be fixed.

...

My recommendations are merely to ... enhance the efficiency, effectiveness and economy of the—

office. This is because it is 'operating at such a sophisticated level' and that there should be a focus to—

improve the proactivity of his office in pursuing his second role of improving quality of public sector administration ...

There are two particular recommendations that I would like to make comment on here today. The first is recommendation 20—legislative amendments to enable the Office of the Queensland Ombudsman and Queensland Audit Office to share complaints and investigation data and other systemic information in confidence. In practice this recommendation means that there would be a

reduction in the duplication of work done by two extremely busy organisations. For example, in 2016-17 the Auditor-General produced three reports that covered the same areas as reports by the Ombudsman. The sharing of information will increase efficiency and communication between operations.

The second is recommendation 48, where the Ombudsman is encouraged to develop a shared learning strategy to connect agencies and common issues learned from investigative outcomes. I would like to lend my support to such an initiative. The sharing of corporate knowledge is a sign of a truly mature organisation. Investigations and reviews by organisations like the Office of the Queensland Ombudsman will always highlight issues in one organisational system that could easily transfer to another organisation if there were a mechanism for the findings of one investigation to be known by others. This is a great way for organisations to identify areas to develop for their own efficiencies, pre-empting any larger scale system reviews. Queenslanders should be confident in the functioning of the Office of the Queensland Ombudsman. The reviewer reported that after five successive years in which the office dealt with all complaints within 12 months, no backlog of complaints is the new norm. This is a tremendous achievement for the leadership, management and all staff of the office, and their sustained and continual improvements to achieve this outcome are to be commended.

The Ombudsman has commenced consideration and implementation of a number of the review's recommendations, and the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee will continue to monitor the response to all recommendations.