




Speech By
Peter Russo
MEMBER FOR TOOHEY

Record of Proceedings, 22 August 2019

LEGAL AFFAIRS AND COMMUNITY SAFETY COMMITTEE

Report, Motion to Take Note

 **Mr RUSSO** (Toohey—ALP) (3.49 pm): I move—

That the House take note of the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee report No. 40 titled *Oversight of the Office of the Queensland Ombudsman* tabled on 4 July 2019.

I rise to speak to the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee's oversight report on the Office of the Queensland Ombudsman. The committee is required to monitor and review the Ombudsman's performance of his statutory functions and examine each annual report of the Ombudsman's office. The committee must also report to the House about any changes to the functions, structures and procedures of the office that the committee considers desirable. The report provides information regarding the Ombudsman's performance of his functions and the committee's examination of the Ombudsman's office annual report 2017-18.

In conducting its oversight the committee held a public meeting with the Ombudsman, Mr Phil Clarke, and his officers on 25 February 2019. At that meeting the committee took advice from Mr Clarke about matters such as how many investigations apply to local government matters, how the Ombudsman manages complaints, the volume of public interest disclosures and the work undertaken by the office with corrective services institutions. The transcript is available on the committee's web page.

The key performance indicators are highlighted in the report, but I think it is important that I refer to them. The actual average time to complete assessments was reported as four days, which exceeded the target time of 10 days. The proportion of complaints reviewed where the original decision was upheld was 91 per cent against a target of 80 per cent. The percentage of investigations resulting in public agency rectification actions was 20 per cent against a target of 10 per cent. The proportion of recommendations or agreed action accepted by agencies was 100 per cent against a target of 90 per cent. The proportion of training participants who reported that training would assist the decision-making was 98 per cent against a target of 80 per cent. The growth in subscriptions to Ombudsman publications was 13 per cent against a target of five per cent.

The annual report noted little change in the number of persons contacting the office. In 2017-18 there were 10,990 people compared with 10,954 people in 2016-17. Of the 10,990 contacts received in 2017-18, 7,197 were complaints, which is an increase of four per cent on the 6,923 complaints received in the previous year and 2,823 were matters outside jurisdiction, which is a 17 per cent decrease on the previous year, which was a seven per cent decline on the 2015-16 year. Eight hundred and forty-three were general inquiries, 103 were requests for a review of an Ombudsman decision and 24 were PIDs.

The decrease in outside jurisdiction matters reflects the office's continued focus on implementing efficiencies to deal with OOJ matters while still providing people with the necessary advice and practical assistance to navigate the complaint landscape and find the appropriate avenue for resolution of their

matter. The annual report points to two key initiatives, being the recorded message telephone service and the office's refreshed website, which have assisted the office to deal with OoJ matters. The annual report notes that 29,303 people accessed the office's OoJ web pages. On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank Mr Clarke and his staff for assisting the committee with its oversight. I commend the report to the House.