



Speech By  
**Stephen Andrew**


**MEMBER FOR MIRANI**

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Record of Proceedings, 17 October 2019

**LEGAL AFFAIRS AND COMMUNITY SAFETY COMMITTEE**

**Report, Motion to Take Note**

 **Mr ANDREW** (Mirani—PHON) (3.17 pm): I rise as a member of the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee to speak to report No. 40, *Oversight of the Office of the Queensland Ombudsman*. This report confirms that the Queensland Ombudsman finalised 7,244 complaints and made solid progress towards reducing the average time clients are having to wait for resolution. This report also shows that the number of people visiting the Queensland Ombudsman's website rose by 37 per cent, while the effort invested into improving online systems is demonstrating positive efficiencies and providing timely and accurate self-help to clients reaching out for assistance. The value of the Queensland Ombudsman's service to the wider community is also demonstrated by the remarkable figure of 100 per cent of the 296 investigation recommendations made by the office being accepted by the respective agencies.

Looking further into the detail of this report, whilst the level of complaints received by the Ombudsman about state government departments rose marginally, the level of complaints against statutory authorities rose an alarming 14 per cent during the past year. The report lists the Public Trustee, TAFE Queensland and the Office of the Health Ombudsman as having very significant rises in the number of complaints dealt with by the Queensland Ombudsman's office. Furthermore, a 13 per cent rise in complaints against local councils should sound a very loud alarm bell. What this reports makes abundantly clear is that local governments, state departments and statutory agencies must put a renewed priority on repairing their tarnished reputations. Since 2014 the Queensland Ombudsman has assumed the oversight role formerly managed by the Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian. The case load has risen from 358 complaints in 2016-17 to 421 complaints in 2017-18. This undesirable trend suggests that the performance of the primary child safety agencies is slipping.

Furthermore, the 726 complaints received by the Ombudsman in relation to the actions of Queensland Corrective Services adds further evidence to a growing crisis within the wider justice and criminal corrections space.

The Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee report No. 40 details the Queensland Ombudsman having published two major reports: the *Cairns Regional Council councillor conflicts of interest report*, which has since led to recommendations for amendments to the Local Government Act 2009; and the *Indigenous birth registration report*, which found that 15 per cent to 18 per cent of births to Indigenous mothers were not registered and that the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages had taken inefficient action to remedy the disparity between the registration of Indigenous and non-Indigenous births.

The ongoing investment in staff training as well as public outreach from within the Office of the Queensland Ombudsman appears to be well justified. I commend the quality of the performance discharged by the Office of the Queensland Ombudsman and its 64 officers. I commend this report and its contents to the House.