




Speech By
Jonty Bush

MEMBER FOR COOPER

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LEGAL AFFAIRS AND SAFETY COMMITTEE

Report, Motion to Take Note

 **Ms BUSH** (Cooper—ALP) (3.20 pm): I rise to make a contribution to report No. 18, *Oversight of the Office of the Information Commissioner*. The Legal Affairs and Safety Committee has oversight responsibility for the Information Commissioner under section 88 of the Parliament of Queensland Act and schedule 6 of the standing orders. This report presents a summary of the Legal Affairs and Safety Committee's oversight of the OIC for the 2019-20 financial year period. The committee reviewed the annual report of the Office of the Information Commissioner and also held public hearings with representatives from the OIC on 30 August. The OIC is an independent statutory body established under the Right to Information Act 2009 and the Information Privacy Act 2009 with the aim of promoting access to government-held information and protecting people's personal information held by the public sector.

The Queensland government has made a commitment to provide access to information held by the government unless, on balance, it is contrary to the public interests to provide that information. The values of transparency and accountability of course are paramount. Right to information legislation aims to make more information available, provide equal access to information across all sectors of the community and provide appropriate protection for individuals' privacy. The OIC's functions include giving information and help to agencies and members of the public on matters relevant to the RTI Act, conducting reviews into personal information-handling practices of certain entities, investigating and reviewing decisions of agencies and ministers, and reviewing and reporting on agencies in relation to the operation of the RTI Act and the IP Act. I am not going to unpack all of the committee's functions because I know they have been discussed here. Suffice to say, it is monitoring and reporting et al.

I turn now to the performance and outcomes of the OIC during the annual reporting period and how those themes have developed through 2020-21. During the public hearings we heard how the OIC has experienced a year-on-year increase in demand for its services over the past five years, with a record 787 external review applications in 2019-20. The OIC has also received record inquiries and an increase in privacy complaints and I applaud that it is working internally and with stakeholders to consider how it might find efficiencies in managing those.

The committee heard of the OIC's commitment to privacy by design and the push model of right to information, with the formal access application process as a last resort. The aim of this is to reduce the unnecessary applications coming through so people have better access to information and that resources are freed up to deal with applications and reviews in a more efficient manner. As a former public servant, I am well aware of the push model of right to information and have to say that the process of designing processes to administratively release information leads to greater efficiencies and, most importantly, greater customer service.

The other area of work which continues to evolve is the COVIDSafe app that the OIC undertook along with the OAIC and the federal commissioner. The COVIDSafe app again, as we have heard from others, was not particularly beneficial. However, we did hear that as an app it did help pave the way for

some of the check-in apps that have been developed by the states and territories and the public acceptance and trust of those apps. The privacy practices and data security practices around the development of the app have been and will be used to inform further development of the Check In app as it evolves and is extended.

I thank the Information Commissioner, the Right to Information Commissioner, the Privacy Commissioner and other staff of the OIC who assisted the committee with fulfilling its oversight responsibilities. Finally, I want to acknowledge the work of Mr Philip Green who, during this reporting period, finished up as Privacy Commissioner. During the six years that he served he did play a really important role in strengthening Queensland's national and international connections which are so critically important if we want to address the information security and privacy issues of the future, including malware. Thanks to the other committee members, in particular our chair, the member for Toohey, and the secretariat. I commend the report to the House.