




Speech By  
**Peter Russo**  
**MEMBER FOR TOOHEY**

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Record of Proceedings, 1 December 2022

## LEGAL AFFAIRS AND SAFETY COMMITTEE

### Report, Motion to Take Note

 **Mr RUSSO** (Toohey—ALP) (3.07 pm): I move—

That the House take note of the Legal Affairs and Safety Committee Report No. 35, 57th Parliament, *Oversight of the Office of the Queensland Ombudsman*, tabled on 9 September 2022.

Under the Ombudsman Act 2001, the committee's functions are: to monitor and review the performance of the Ombudsman and of its functions; report to the Assembly on any matter concerning the Ombudsman, its function or the performance of the functions that the committee considers should be drawn to the Assembly's attention; examine each annual report tabled in the Assembly under the act and, if appropriate, to comment about any aspects of the report; and report to the Assembly any changes to the functions, structures and procedures of the Office of the Ombudsman the committee considers desirable for the more effective operation of the act.

As a committee we reviewed the Queensland Ombudsman's annual report for 2020-21, which was tabled on 27 September 2021, and held a public hearing with representatives from the Queensland Ombudsman on 9 May 2022. The committee's recommendation was that the Legislative Assembly note the contents of the report. In order to fulfil our oversight of the Queensland Ombudsman, we held a public hearing where we met with representatives from the Office of the Queensland Ombudsman and heard evidence from Anthony Reilly, the Queensland Ombudsman; Ms Angela Pyke, Deputy Ombudsman; Ms Louise Rosemann, Principal Adviser, Public Interest Disclosure; and Ms Leanne Robertson, Director of Corporate Services.

During 2021, the Office of the Queensland Ombudsman received and investigated complaints about state government departments and statutory authorities, local councils and public universities. The 2020-21 annual report showed the Office of the Queensland Ombudsman received 10,758 inquiries of which 7,051 were treated as complaints and 1,066 were investigated. There were 3,857 premature complaints where the matter had not first been raised with the agency. In these matters, the office directly referred 630 complaints to the agency and provided referral advice for the remaining 3,227 complaints.

The Ombudsman explained how the office's administrative improvement program includes an integrated, multilayered strategy that provides a range of supports and resources for improving administrative processes. As part of this strategy, the *Good Decisions* video was released in October 2021 and has been viewed over 1,850 times as at 5 May 2022. The Good Decisions checklist was published in September 2021 and has been downloaded over 1,000 times as of May 2022.

The COVID-19 disruptions and restrictions contributed to a reduction in the number of training participants able to access training in this year, with 97 training sessions delivered to 1,718 public sector officers which, in comparison, is less than the training outcomes provided in recent years. In response to the limitations placed on face-to-face training, the office responded by redeveloping training services so they could be delivered online. The Ombudsman explained how regional engagement was enhanced

through online training and that in many aspects online training was more accessible for people in regional areas. Online training provided an opportunity for participants to engage from across the state, which resulted in real benefits for organisations, especially those that are decentralised.

The office conducted five own initiative investigations and published the following: *Fire ants report: timeliness of responses to notifications of suspected fire ant activity*; and *Casebook 2020: helping agencies to improve decision-making*, a collection of investigative case studies. Case studies are published as a tool for shared learning that help build greater knowledge in agencies to improve decision-making and administrative processes.

During the reporting period there were 1,766 public interest disclosures reported, which was similar in number to the preceding year. PIDs resulting in corrupt conduct was the most commonly reported type of wrongdoing.