




Speech By  
**Peter Russo**  
MEMBER FOR TOOHEY

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Record of Proceedings, 22 May 2024

## LEGAL AFFAIRS AND SAFETY COMMITTEE

### Report, Motion to Take Note

 **Mr RUSSO** (Toohey—ALP) (2.45 pm): I move—

That the House take note of the Legal Affairs and Safety Committee report No. 64, 57th Parliament, *Oversight of the Queensland Ombudsman*, tabled on 2 February 2024.

The Legal Affairs and Safety Committee had oversight responsibilities for the Queensland Ombudsman and this report provides information regarding the performance by the Queensland Ombudsman of his functions under the Ombudsman Act. The committee reviewed the Queensland Ombudsman's annual report 2021-22, which was tabled on 26 September 2022. The committee also held a public hearing with the Queensland Ombudsman, Mr Anthony Reilly, and his staff on 1 June 2023. The office contributes to fair and accountable public administration. Under the act, the office investigates complaints about the actions and decisions of state government departments and agencies, local councils and public universities. The office oversees the implementation of the Public Interest Disclosure Act, the PID Act, reviews the way public sector agencies deal with public interest disclosures and educates and provides advice to public sector agencies about PIDs. The act also provides that, subject to any other act or law, the Ombudsman is not subject to direction by any person about the way the Ombudsman performs their functions under the act or the priority given to investigations.

The Queensland Ombudsman tabled its 2021-22 annual report on 26 September 2022, reporting on a range of performance and service measures in its annual report, including investigating complaints; improving decision-making through engagement, training and advice; PID oversight; and financial performance and staffing. There were 10,398 contacts received by the office for advice, assistance or complaint resolution. This is down from 2020-21 when 10,758 contacts were received by the office. In 2021-22 the office delivered a program of administrative improvement initiatives to develop the quality of decision-making and administrative practices in agencies. This included delivering 175 training sessions with 3,145 public sector officers—almost double the 97 training sessions held in the previous year, with the increase attributed to the online delivery of these training programs.

In April 2022, the office published its casebook 2022—a tool for shared learning, including guidance on issues such as reasons for decisions, conducting reviews of decisions and keeping records. The committee was also pleased to note that the office further published casebook 2023 in April 2023 for shared learning to build greater knowledge in agencies. The office reported that it ended the year in a secure financial position with adequate reserve and forecast income to fulfil its statutory responsibilities for 2022-23. The office is the oversight agency for the PID Act and there were 2,092 disclosure types arising from PIDs reported to the office, an increase of 19.4 per cent from the previous year. PIDs relating to corrupt conduct were the most commonly reported type of wrongdoing, representing about 87.9 per cent.

In his opening statement at the public hearing, the Ombudsman provided an update on the new role of Inspector of Detention Services to be undertaken by the Ombudsman following the passing of the Inspector of Detention Services Act 2022 by the Legislative Assembly in late 2022. In preparation for the commencement of the remaining provisions of the act, the Ombudsman stated that he had been recruiting and establishing a team to support the new function.