



Speech By
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MEMBER FOR MAIWAR

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JUSTICE, INTEGRITY AND COMMUNITY SAFETY COMMITTEE

Report, Motion to Take Note

 **Mr BERKMAN** (Maiwar—Grn) (3.27 pm): I rise to make a few comments on the Justice, Integrity and Community Safety Committee's oversight report in relation to the Office of the Information Commissioner. Even before participating in the committee's oversight hearings, it was clear to everyone here—at least it should have been—that the Office of the Information Commissioner does incredibly important work, and I will at the outset express my thanks to the commissioner and to all the staff at the commission for that work.

We have learnt some really valuable lessons in Queensland in recent years about the importance of transparency and integrity in government, and no doubt the findings of the Coaldrake review and the recommendations that remain to be implemented will provide some challenges. We are a long way from where we should be.

For the most part, the statistics in the report indicate that the OIC is doing an excellent job. Most of the timelines, key targets and performance indicators that it has been working towards have been met. The report also notes that the OIC has been dealing with some big changes, particularly this year. I note that most of the changes the Information Privacy and Other Legislation Amendment Act introduced commenced at the beginning of the current financial year. That was a big tranche of work.

Perhaps most importantly though, I want to highlight the point the OIC has made about the gradual increase in demand for its services. While they are meeting their KPIs almost across the board, one notable exception is around external reviews and particularly the number of external review applications that are on hand—that is, to be finalised. They exceeded their target for the number of applications to be completed within 12 months and they noted that 'this number does not meet performance expectations, but reflects the increasing demand on the OIC's modest resources'. That is a vitally important point for us as a parliament to reflect on. Their annual report highlighted the year-on-year increase in demand for various services, including inquiry services.

The external review function of OIC is one that I want to focus on specifically because in my experience, both in this role and before I was elected to this place, basically anything of value that comes out of a right-to-information application will be blocked at the first hurdle. I do not know how many times I have received a notice which says, 'We will release some of the documents,' but it comes with blocks of pages or half pages that are completely redacted so that any of the information that the applicant might be interested in is not released to them. We invariably find ourselves going to the Information Commissioner. By and large, I will advise people to skip over the internal review because if they want to stand any chance of getting information released by most departments it will come through the OIC. External review is vital.

The parliament would also be aware that this committee has some role in what recommendations or requests OIC and other statutory bodies might make around their funding. That is a separate matter that the committee has dealt with. I do not intend to reveal any confidential information that the

committee considered or recommendations that might have been made, but I will say that if a body like the OIC tells the parliament that it requires more resources to do the work it is tasked with then we should listen. We need to ensure that these bodies can not just meet but exceed their timelines on every possible occasion.

Their work is vital. It will never be done, I would suggest. We have heard examples put forward by other speakers in this debate of information that is still being kept under lock and key. There are really important examples of that that I will point to as well. There is the advice from the independent expert panel that has, supposedly at least, backed up the government's baseless Adult Crime, Adult Time and other youth justice proposals. How about the study on pill testing? CheQpoint was having their work investigated and there was a report prepared by UQ. That is still being hidden from us. What about the lease conditions on the Queen's Wharf proposal across the road? All of these things are being hidden from Queenslanders and they should not be.

(Time expired)