



Speech By

Russell Field

MEMBER FOR CAPALABA

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JUSTICE, INTEGRITY AND COMMUNITY SAFETY COMMITTEE

Report, Motion to Take Note

 **Mr FIELD** (Capalaba—LNP) (3.13 pm): I rise to speak to the committee's oversight of the Office of the Information Commissioner for the 2023-24 financial year. As part of the oversight process, the committee examined the Office of the Information Commissioner's 2023-24 annual report and held a public hearing on 19 February 2025. The annual report, which was tabled on 13 September 2024, provides an account of the OIC's revenue and use of public funds, an insight into the challenges and opportunities that have influenced its ability to carry out its statutory functions, and an assessment of its achievement of corporate and occupational plans.

In 2023-24, \$11.397 million was appropriated for the OIC. Total expenditure for the same period was \$9.877 million, which represented a 15.4 per cent increase from the previous year. Of this expenditure, employee expenses accounted for 76 per cent of spending. The additional expenses are the result of an increase in resources and an increase in the engagement of contractors and consultants to assist with the information management requirements.

One of the commissioner's core functions under the Right to Information Act and the Information Privacy Act is to review the decisions of agencies and ministers made under the RTI Act. In its annual report the OIC advised that in 2023-24 the OIC received 696 review applications, of which 664 were finalised, meaning a high finalisation rate of 95 per cent. Finalised applications took an average of 147 days to complete, which met the OIC's target of 150 days on average. Seventy-five per cent of the applicants who returned the OIC's satisfaction survey were satisfied with the conduct of reviews. This number exceeds the target of 70 per cent and represents a 17 per cent increase from the previous year. Furthermore, agencies reported a 93 per cent satisfaction rate with the review service, which exceeded the target of 75 per cent and marked an 86 per cent increase from 2022-23.

During the public hearing held on 19 February, the OIC noted its independence has been enhanced as a result of the Integrity and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2022. Under that act, the committee will be required to review OIC funding proposals and report to the Attorney-General on those proposals. The OIC also made note of reforms made by the Information Privacy and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2023, which included the introduction of a single set of privacy principles and a mandatory data breach notification scheme for government agencies. The OIC also highlighted Queensland's modern RTI legislation. In 2023-24, government agencies in Queensland received 16,845 RTI requests. This number, whilst lower than other states, represents how parliament considers government information to be a public resource, with formal RTI requests intended as a last resort.

A key topic discussed by the OIC during the hearing was how high-profile data breaches in recent years have made privacy a topic of concern throughout the Australian community. The OIC made specific note on how the government needs to maintain public trust in its ability to protect personal information, as it is critical to the adoption of new government digital services by the public. It is to this

end that the OIC engages in mediating privacy complaints from the public against government agencies and encourages agencies to adopt a privacy-by-design approach to new technologies and programs.

Overall, committee members and I commend the OIC on its efforts in 2023-24. I commend this report to the House.