



Oversight of the Office of the Queensland Ombudsman

Report No. 40, 56th Parliament
Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee
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Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee

Chair	Mr Peter Russo MP, Member for Toohey
Deputy Chair	Mr James Lister MP, Member for Southern Downs
Members	Mr Stephen Andrew MP, Member for Mirani
	Mr Jim McDonald MP, Member for Lockyer
	Mrs Melissa McMahon MP, Member for Macalister
	Ms Corrine McMillan MP, Member for Mansfield

Committee Secretariat

Telephone	+61 7 3553 6641
Fax	+61 7 3553 6699
Email	lacsc@parliament.qld.gov.au
Technical Scrutiny Secretariat	+61 7 3553 6601
Committee Web Page	www.parliament.qld.gov.au/lacsc

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Abbreviations

Annual Report	Queensland Ombudsman Annual Report 2017-18
BDM	Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages
committee	Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee
department	Department of Justice and Attorney-General
FTE	Full-time equivalent
Office	Office of the Queensland Ombudsman
Ombudsman / Queensland Ombudsman	Mr Phil Clarke
Ombudsman Act	<i>Ombudsman Act 2001</i>
OOJ	Outside jurisdiction / out of jurisdiction
PID	Public interest disclosure
PID Act	<i>Public Interest Disclosure Act 2010</i>
public meeting	A public meeting held on 25 February 2019 between the committee and the Office of the Queensland Ombudsman
QCL	Queensland Complaints Landscape
RAPA	Registration and Preliminary Assessment team
strategic review	A strategic review of the Office of the Queensland Ombudsman completed in January 2018 by Ms Simone Webbe

Chair's foreword

The Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee has oversight responsibilities for the Queensland Ombudsman. This report provides information regarding the performance by the Queensland Ombudsman of his functions under the *Ombudsman Act 2001*.

The committee met with the Queensland Ombudsman, Mr Phil Clarke, and his staff on 25 February 2019. The committee also reviewed the Queensland Ombudsman's Annual Report 2017-18 which was tabled on 28 September 2018.

On behalf of the committee, I thank the Queensland Ombudsman and his staff who assisted the committee throughout the course of its oversight of the Queensland Ombudsman's Office for the 2017-18 financial year period. I also thank the Parliamentary Service staff.

I commend this report to the House.



Peter Russo MP
Chair

Recommendation

The committee recommends the House notes the contents of this report.

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1 Introduction

1.1 This report

The Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee (committee) prepared this report as part of its statutory oversight responsibility for the Queensland Ombudsman, with primary focus on the 2017-18 financial year.

1.2 Role of the committee

The Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee (committee) is a portfolio committee of the Legislative Assembly that commenced on 15 February 2018 under the *Parliament of Queensland Act 2001* and the Standing Rules and Orders of the Legislative Assembly.¹ The committee's areas of responsibility are Justice and Attorney-General, Police and Corrective Services, and Fire and Emergency Services. The committee has oversight responsibility for bodies including the Office of the Queensland Ombudsman.²

1.3 Purpose and functions of the Queensland Ombudsman

The Office of the Queensland Ombudsman (Office) was established in 1974 to investigate the administrative actions of Queensland government agencies, local councils and universities.

Under the *Ombudsman Act 2001* (the Ombudsman Act), the Ombudsman has dual roles:

- to provide a fair, independent and timely investigative service for people who believe that they have been adversely affected by the decisions of a public agency, and
- to help public agencies improve their decision-making and administrative practice.

The majority of investigations arise from complaints received, but the Ombudsman also conducts own-initiative investigations.³

The Ombudsman Act provides the following functions of the Ombudsman:

- (a) to investigate administrative actions of agencies –
 - (i) on reference from the Legislative Assembly or a statutory committee of the Legislative Assembly; or
 - (ii) on a complaint; or
 - (iii) on the Ombudsman's own initiative; and
- (b) to consider the administrative practices and procedures of an agency whose actions are being investigated and to make recommendations to the agency –
 - (i) about appropriate ways of addressing the effects of inappropriate administrative actions; or
 - (ii) for the improvement of the practices and procedures; and
- (c) to consider the administrative practices and procedures of agencies generally and to make recommendations or provide information or other help to the agencies for the improvement of the practices and procedures; and
- (d) the other functions conferred on the Ombudsman under the Ombudsman Act or any other Act.⁴

¹ *Parliament of Queensland Act 2001*, s 88 and Standing Order 194.

² The committee also has oversight responsibility for the Electoral Commissioner, the Information Commissioner and the Queensland Family and Child Commission: Standing Rules and Orders, Schedule 6.

³ Queensland Ombudsman, *Annual Report 2017-2018*, p 8.

⁴ Ombudsman Act, s 12.

The Ombudsman 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 his functions under the Ombudsman Act, or the priority given to investigations.⁵

The Ombudsman may investigate administrative actions of agencies and an administrative action despite a provision in any Act to the effect that the action is final or cannot be appealed against, challenged, reviewed, quashed or called in to question.⁶

The Ombudsman must not question the merits of a decision, including a policy decision, made by a minister or Cabinet, or a decision that the Ombudsman is satisfied has been taken for implementing a decision made by Cabinet.⁷

The Ombudsman must not investigate administrative action taken by any of the following:

- a tribunal, or a member of a tribunal, in the performance of the tribunal's deliberative functions
- a person acting as legal adviser to the State or as counsel for the State in any legal proceedings
- a member of the police service, if the action may be, or has been, investigated under the *Crime and Corruption Act 2001*
- a police officer, if the officer is liable to disciplinary action, or has been disciplined under the *Police Service Administration Act 1990*
- the Auditor-General
- a mediator at a mediation session under the *Dispute Resolution Centres Act 1990*
- a person in a capacity as a conciliator under the *Health Rights Commission Act 1991* or the repealed *Health Quality and Complaints Commission Act 2006*
- the Information Commissioner in the performance of the Commissioner's functions under the *Right to Information Act 2009*.⁸

1.4 Committee's responsibilities regarding the Queensland Ombudsman

In addition to the jurisdiction conferred by the *Parliament of Queensland Act 2001*, the Ombudsman Act provides that the committee is required to:

- monitor and review the performance by the Ombudsman of the Ombudsman's functions under the Ombudsman Act
- report to the Legislative Assembly on any matter concerning the Ombudsman, the Ombudsman's functions or the performance of the Ombudsman's functions that the committee considers should be drawn to the Legislative Assembly's attention
- examine each annual report of the Office tabled in the Legislative Assembly under the Act and, if appropriate, to comment on any aspect of the report
- report to the Legislative Assembly any changes to the functions, structures and procedures of the Office the committee considers desirable for the more effective operation of the Ombudsman Act

⁵ Ombudsman Act, s 13.

⁶ Ombudsman Act, s 14.

⁷ Ombudsman Act, s 16(1).

⁸ Ombudsman Act, s 16(2)(a)-(h). Also note there are other exceptions under the *Government Owned Corporations Act 1993*.

- any other functions conferred on the committee by the Ombudsman Act.⁹

1.5 Strategic review of the Queensland Ombudsman

The Ombudsman Act provides that a strategic review of the Office must be conducted at least every seven years and that the review must include a review of the Ombudsman's functions and the performance of the functions to assess whether they are being performed economically, effectively and efficiently.¹⁰

The most recent strategic review was completed in January 2018 by Ms Simone Webbe (strategic review). The 2018 Strategic Review Report was tabled by the Attorney-General on 15 February 2018. The committee tabled its *Report No. 25 – Inquiry into the Strategic Review of the Office of the Queensland Ombudsman* on 20 November 2018.¹¹

⁹ Ombudsman Act, s 89.

¹⁰ Ombudsman Act, s 83(2) and (9).

¹¹ Ombudsman Act, s 85(7).

2 Oversight of the Ombudsman

2.1 The committee's process

In conducting its oversight functions of the Ombudsman, the committee adopted the following process:

- examined the 2017-18 Annual Report
- held a public meeting with representatives from the Office on 25 February 2019 (public meeting) (see Appendix A).

At the public meeting, the committee met with the Queensland Ombudsman, Mr Phil Clarke, and the following officers:

- Mrs Angela Pyke, Deputy Ombudsman
- Ms Leanne Robertson, Director, Corporate Services Unit, and
- Ms Louise Rosemann, Principal Advisor, Public Interest Disclosures.

The transcript of the public meeting and the response received from the Ombudsman to the question on notice are available on the committee's website.

2.2 Oversight meeting with the Ombudsman

In his opening statement during the public meeting, the Ombudsman commented on the Office's position as at the end of December 2018 in terms of aspects of timeliness and other matters, such as rectification work done by the Office.¹²

The Ombudsman also provided an update on the strategic review:

In relation to the strategic review, the committee finalised its report late last year. I would report to the committee at this point in time that, of the 72 recommendations made in the report, 36 are either complete or ongoing. In other words, they did not require a substantial change to what we did in the office, so we continued to support them. Above and beyond those 36 there are a further six where I have recently written to the Attorney-General. They are those recommendations requiring legislative reform and seeking the Attorney's support for progressing legislative amendment. The Attorney wrote back to me and said that she would give it consideration, so I anticipate progress at some stage in the future. Three of the recommendations are on hold at the moment and the other 33 are in progress. I hope to report substantial progress to the committee either in the annual report or at our next opportunity to speak.¹³

The Ombudsman also advised the committee that an 'initial budget submission had been made through the State budget process'. Due to the process being cabinet-in-confidence, the Ombudsman could not provide details at this stage other than to report that the budget 'is in line with the strategic review recommendations which were made'.¹⁴

Questions from the committee during the public meeting focused on:

- the proportion of investigations which applied to local government matters
- how the Ombudsman successfully maintains timeliness in the management of complaints
- the current volume of public interest disclosures and reasons for this high volume

¹² Public meeting transcript, Brisbane, 25 February 2019, p 1.

¹³ Public meeting transcript, Brisbane, 25 February 2019, p 2.

¹⁴ Public meeting transcript, Brisbane, 25 February 2019, p 2.

- the types of work undertaken by the Office with corrective services institutions
- the area of child safety complaints
- recent trends and concerns
- general budgetary matters.¹⁵

¹⁵ Public meeting transcript, Brisbane, 25 February 2019, pp 2-8.

3 Review of Annual Report 2017-2018

3.1 Annual Report

The Queensland Ombudsman's Annual Report 2017-18 (Annual Report) was tabled on 28 September 2018.

The Annual Report assessed the Office's financial and non-financial performance against the objectives set out in the 2015-19 Strategic Plan and 2017-18 Service Delivery Statements. The Annual Report meets reporting obligations under the Act and the *Financial Accountability Act 2009* and highlights key achievements of the Office.¹⁶

3.1.1 The Ombudsman's report

The Ombudsman reported that, for the 2017-18 financial year:

- 10,990 Queenslanders contacted the Office for advice, assistance or complaint resolution.
- 2,823 of the contacts were matters outside jurisdiction, a decrease of 17% largely due to the new website, online complaint form and automated telephone redirection service. The Office provided advice to assist people with navigating the complaint processes.
- 7,244 complaints were finalised during the year, with 80% finalised within 10 days of receipt and 95% finalised within 30 days.
- It took an average of 10.3 days to finalise a complaint down from 13.3 days in 2016-17.
- The Office completed 1,344 investigations.
- 100% of the 296 investigation recommendations made by the Office were accepted by the respective agencies.
- The Office released 2 public reports:
 - *The Cairns Regional Council councillor conflicts of interest report: An investigation into the way in which councillors at Cairns Regional Council deal with conflicts of interest*
 - *The Indigenous birth registration report: An investigation into the under-registration of Indigenous births in Queensland.*
- 156 training sessions were delivered to 2,579 public sector officers, with 70 of the sessions delivered in regional Queensland.
- Subscriptions to the Office's newsletter increased by 13% from 2016-17 to 6,288.
- Officers visited 22 regional centres as part of the Regional Services Program.
- 66 community organisations participated in Queensland Complaints Landscape (QCL) workshops.
- 127,963 people visited the Office's website, an increase of 37% from 2016-17.
- 802 public interest disclosures (PIDs) were reported to the Office.
- The Office delivered 15 PID training sessions to 302 officers.
- The Office developed a new strategic plan for 2018-2022.¹⁷

¹⁶ Queensland Ombudsman, *Annual Report 2017-18*, inside cover page.

¹⁷ Queensland Ombudsman, *Annual Report 2017-18*, pp 11-13, 28-29, 35.

3.1.2 Key performance indicators

The Annual Report noted the actual performance of the Office against the targets set under the Queensland Ombudsman Strategic Plan 2015-19. Of note:

- the actual average time to complete assessments was reported as 4 days which exceeded the target time of 10 days
- the proportion of complaints reviewed where the original decision was upheld was 91% against a target of 80%
- the percentage of investigations resulting in public agency rectification actions was 20% against a target of 10%
- the proportion of recommendations or agreed action accepted by agencies was 100% against a target of 90%
- the proportion of training participants who reported that training would assist the decision-making was 98% against a target of 80%
- the growth in subscriptions to Ombudsman publications was 13% against a target of 5%.¹⁸

3.1.3 Public contact with the Office

The Annual Report noted little change in the number of persons contacting the Office (10,990 people in 2017-18 compared with 10,954 people in 2016-17).¹⁹

Of the 10,990 contacts received in 2017-18:

- 7,197 were complaints (an increase of 4% on the 6,923 complaints received in the previous year)²⁰
- 2,823 were matters outside jurisdiction (a 17% decrease on the previous year which was a 7% decline on 2015-16)²¹
- 843 were general enquiries
- 103 were requests for a review of an Ombudsman decision
- 24 were PIDs.²²

The decrease in outside jurisdiction (OOJ) matters:

*... reflects the Office's continued focus on implementing efficiencies to deal with OOJ matters while still providing people with the necessary advice and practical assistance to navigate the complaint landscape and find the appropriate avenue for resolution of their matter.*²³

The Annual Report points to two key initiatives, being the recorded-message telephone service and the Office's refreshed website, which have assisted the Office to deal with OOJ matters.²⁴ The Annual Report notes that 29,303 people accessed the Office's OOJ webpages.²⁵

¹⁸ Queensland Ombudsman, *Annual Report 2017-18*, p 14.

¹⁹ Queensland Ombudsman, *Annual Report 2017-18*, p 17 and Queensland Ombudsman, *Annual Report 2016-17*, p 20.

²⁰ Queensland Ombudsman, *Annual Report 2017-18*, p 20.

²¹ Queensland Ombudsman, *Annual Report 2017-18*, p 17.

²² Queensland Ombudsman, *Annual Report 2016-17*, p 17.

²³ Queensland Ombudsman, *Annual Report 2017-18*, p 17.

²⁴ Queensland Ombudsman, *Annual Report 2017-18*, p 17.

²⁵ Queensland Ombudsman, *Annual Report 2017-18*, p 17.

3.1.4 Complaints received

Of the 7,197 complaints received:

- 67% were about State government agencies, including departments and statutory authorities (4,844 complaints)
- 28% were about local councils (2,017 complaints)
- 5% were about public universities (329 complaints)
- less than 1% were about other or unknown entities (7 complaints).²⁶

3.1.4.1 Complaints received about State agencies (including departments and statutory authorities)

The total number of complaints received about State agencies in 2017-18, including departments and statutory authorities, was 4,844 (a 4% increase from 4,651 in 2016-17).

Overall, there was little change in the total number of complaints received about State government departments in 2017-18 (a 2% increase in the number of complaints). ‘Significant shifts’ noted were that Child and Family Services received 91 more complaints (24% growth), whilst Queensland Corrective Services received 112 fewer complaints than in 2016-17, and the Office of State Revenue received 54 fewer complaints than in 2016-17.²⁷

There was however a 14% increase in the number of complaints received about statutory authorities in 2017-18 compared with the previous year. The most number of complaints were received in relation to the Public Trustee (21% of complaints). The number of complaints about the Public Trustee increased by 17% in 2017-18 (205 complaints), bringing the total number of complaints to the 2015-16 level (213 complaints) after there had been a decline in the number of complaints by 17% in 2016-17 (176 complaints). Complaints about TAFE Queensland increased by 20% and the Office of the Health Ombudsman increased by 15%.²⁸

3.1.4.2 Complaints received about local councils

In 2017-18 there were 2,017 complaints about local councils (a 13% increase from 2016-17).²⁹

The Annual Report noted that ‘[g]iven the relatively small number of complaints received within each category, trends can fluctuate from one year to the next’.³⁰ However, the Annual Report highlighted the following ‘significant changes’:

- environmental management complaints increased by 53% with more than half of the complaints received in this category relating to noise or animal welfare issues
- the continued increase in the number of development and building control complaints being 9% in 2017-18 following an 18% increase from the previous year.³¹

3.1.4.3 Complaints received about universities

The Office received 329 complaints about public universities (a 4% increase from 2016-17). The Annual Report noted the main areas of complaints were about student grievances, decisions to exclude

²⁶ Queensland Ombudsman, *Annual Report 2017-18*, p 20.

²⁷ Queensland Ombudsman, *Annual Report 2017-18*, p 21.

²⁸ Queensland Ombudsman, *Annual Report 2017-18*, p 25.

²⁹ Queensland Ombudsman, *Annual Report 2017-18*, p 26.

³⁰ Queensland Ombudsman, *Annual Report 2017-18*, p 26.

³¹ Queensland Ombudsman, *Annual Report 2017-18*, p 26.

students, assessment matters and enrolment decisions. After a two year decline in student grievance complaints, this year there was a 27% increase in student grievance complaints.³²

3.1.4.4 Complaint processing times

In 2017-18, it took an average of 10.3 days to finalise a complaint compared with 13.3 days in 2016-17. Notably, 80% of complaints were finalised within 10 days during 2017-18 compared with 69% in 2016-17.³³

The average time taken to finalise an investigation was:

- 53.4 days in 2014-15
- 48.1 days in 2015-16
- 46.5 days in 2016-17
- 45 days in 2017-18.³⁴

The Annual Report attributes the improvement in timeliness to ‘efficiencies in finalising straightforward investigations along with the continued implementation of an expedited merit assessment process that streamlines practices for simpler cases’.³⁵

The Office can also directly refer a premature complaint to an agency with the consent of the complainant. In 2017-18, the Office directly referred 1,327 premature complaints (1,715 in 2016-17). The Annual Report attributes the 23% decline ‘to improved practices in the assessment of matters suitable for direct referral’. The Annual Report explained how direct referrals save client’s time, provide added convenience, respond to expectations and add value to the complaint management framework.³⁶

3.1.4.5 Feedback from stakeholders

The annual client survey which had been postponed in 2016-17 due to budgetary constraints, was resumed in 2017-18 focussing on clients with complaints finalised by the Registration and Preliminary Assessment team (RAPA).³⁷ The Annual Report noted that the results this year were ‘broadly in line with the previous RAPA survey’ with 67% of clients satisfied with the service provided by RAPA.³⁸

3.1.4.6 Investigations finalised

In 2017-18, 1,344 investigations were finalised (a 4.5% decline on the 1,407 investigations finalised in 2016-17).³⁹

Of the 1,344 investigations finalised, 262 resulted in a total or partial rectification (an increase from 232 rectifications in 2016-17 and 209 rectifications in 2015-16).⁴⁰ The proportion of investigations resulting in rectifications increased to 19.5% of all investigations from 16.5% in the previous year.⁴¹

³² Queensland Ombudsman, *Annual Report 2017-18*, p 27.

³³ Queensland Ombudsman, *Annual Report 2017-18*, pp 28-29.

³⁴ Queensland Ombudsman, *Annual Report 2017-18*, p 28.

³⁵ Queensland Ombudsman, *Annual Report 2017-18*, p 28.

³⁶ Queensland Ombudsman, *Annual Report 2017-18*, p 31.

³⁷ Queensland Ombudsman, *Annual Report 2017-18*, p 32.

³⁸ Queensland Ombudsman, *Annual Report 2017-18*, p 32.

³⁹ Queensland Ombudsman, *Annual Report 2017-18*, p 34.

⁴⁰ Queensland Ombudsman, *Annual Report 2016-17*, p 35 and Queensland Ombudsman, *Annual Report 2017-18*, p 34.

⁴¹ Queensland Ombudsman, *Annual Report 2017-18*, p 35.

The Annual Report noted that in 2017-18, the Office made 296 investigative recommendations compared with 306 in 2016-17 and 329 in 2015-16.⁴²

3.1.4.7 Oversighting the management of child safety complaints

The Office has had a more significant and immediate role in oversighting the management of child safety complaints within agencies responsible for delivering services to children and young people, since the closure of the Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian in 2014.⁴³

The Office received 421 complaints relating to child safety services in 2017-18 compared with 358 complaints received in 2016-17.⁴⁴

3.1.4.8 Corrective services and youth justice complaints and inspections

The Office received 726 complaints about the actions and decisions of Queensland Corrective Services with 34% of the complaints related to offender management issues, for example, transfers between correctional centres, accommodation, parole and access to programs.⁴⁵ The Office received 40 complaints about the actions and decisions of youth justice services during 2017-18. The main areas of complaint included access to property or buy-ups, access to services and staff conduct.⁴⁶

3.1.5 Public Reports

As noted above, during 2017-18, the Office published the following two major reports:⁴⁷

1. *The Cairns Regional Council councillor conflicts of interest report: An investigation into the way in which councillors at Cairns Regional Council deal with conflicts of interest*

This report was released on 24 October 2017. It recommended that the Cairns Regional Council change its practices to comply with the *Local Government Act 2009*. It also recommended that the Department of Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning advise the government on necessary amendments to the *Local Government Act 2009* to clearly set out what is required to be disclosed by councillors in relation to conflicts of interest, including the amount and timing of electoral donations. The Cairns Regional Council accepted and implemented these recommendations.⁴⁸

2. *The Indigenous birth registration report: An investigation into the under-registration of Indigenous births in Queensland*

This report was tabled in the Queensland Parliament on 15 June 2018. The investigation found that the processes used by the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages (BDM), in the Department of Justice and Attorney-General (department) may be contributing to lower registration rates of Indigenous births in Queensland. The Office reported that approximately 15-18% of births to Indigenous mothers were not registered compared to 1.8% for births to non-Indigenous mothers. The Ombudsman found that 'BDM had taken inefficient action to remedy the disparity between registration of Indigenous and non-Indigenous births, which he considered both unreasonable and improperly discriminatory'.⁴⁹ The investigation also found the current level of coordination between Queensland Government agencies was inadequate. The Ombudsman recommended a

⁴² Queensland Ombudsman, *Annual Report 2017-18*, p 35.

⁴³ Queensland Ombudsman, *Annual Report 2017-18*, p 50.

⁴⁴ Queensland Ombudsman, *Annual Report 2017-18*, p 50.

⁴⁵ Queensland Ombudsman, *Annual Report 2017-18*, p 54.

⁴⁶ Queensland Ombudsman, *Annual Report 2017-18*, p 57.

⁴⁷ These reports are available online from the Queensland Ombudsman's website.

⁴⁸ Queensland Ombudsman, *Annual Report 2017-18*, p 59.

⁴⁹ Queensland Ombudsman, *Annual Report 2017-18*, p 60.

cross-agency strategy be developed to increase the Indigenous birth registration rate to the same rate as non-Indigenous births. The department accepted all of the Ombudsman's recommendations.⁵⁰

3.1.6 Training

There was increased demand for the Office's training programs during 2017-18 when compared with the previous year, and back in line with 2015-16 levels as shown in the table below:⁵¹

Year	Training sessions delivered	Number of public sector officers trained	Sessions held in regional Queensland
2017-18	156	2,579	70
2016-17	105	1,591	42
2015-16	162	2,616	60

In relation to the increase in demand for training services over the last twelve months, the Annual Report noted:

Training delivery is dependent on client demand. Demand for training, particularly for agency group sessions, was significantly higher compared to 2016-17.

*This increase in agency sessions was primarily the result of ongoing improved engagement with agencies and officers, plus promotion of training and greater availability of tailored sessions.*⁵²

3.1.7 Publications

To assist public agencies and the community, the Office produces a range of resources, including brochures, posters, training program guides and the five *Perspective* newsletters (*State Perspective*, *Local Perspective*, *Legal Perspective*, *Corrections Perspective* and *Community Perspective*). Subscription rates of the *Perspective* publications increased by 13% in 2017-18 bringing the total number of subscribers to 6,288.⁵³

3.1.8 Public interest disclosures

The Office is the oversight agency for the *Public Interest Disclosure Act 2010* (PID Act). A total of 802 PIDs were reported which was similar to the number reported the previous year. Most PIDs were about corrupt conduct (73.6%). A majority of PIDs were reported by State government departments. Over 78% of PIDs reported were made by an internal discloser such as an employee with the proportion of PIDs made by an employee of another public sector entity increasing significantly to 68 from 21 in 2016-17. There was a 'substantial decline' in the number of PIDs made by members of the public from 49 in 2016-17 to 27 in 2017-18.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Queensland Ombudsman, *Annual Report 2017-18*, p 60.

⁵¹ Queensland Ombudsman, *Annual Report 2017-18*, p 62 and Queensland Ombudsman, *Annual Report 2016-17*, p 51.

⁵² Queensland Ombudsman, *Annual Report 2017-18*, p 62.

⁵³ Queensland Ombudsman, *Annual Report 2017-18*, p 63.

⁵⁴ Queensland Ombudsman, *Annual Report 2017-18*, pp 64-67.

In relation to the reporting of PIDs, the Annual Report noted the ‘most significant development in the performance of the Office’s PID monitoring function in 2017-18 has been the design, development and implementation of a new PID reporting database’ – known as RaPID (Report a PID).⁵⁵

On 27 February 2017, the Office tabled its report ‘Review of the *Public Interest Disclosure Act 2010* – A review pursuant to s 62 of the *Public Interest Disclosure Act 2010*’ in the Queensland Parliament. The report made 40 recommendations for changes that should be made to the PID Act. The Annual Report noted that ‘the report remains with the government for consideration of its response’.⁵⁶

3.1.9 Empowering people

During 2017-18, the Office engaged with a number of different community groups, including:

- Indigenous communities
- young people
- students
- regional Queenslanders
- the homeless
- culturally and linguistically diverse communities and refugees
- prisoners
- seniors, people with disabilities, special needs and carers.⁵⁷

The Office employed a number of engagement strategies including:

- targeted state-wide mail out of resources
- providing brochures and posters to government and community organisations on request
- producing and distributing the *Community Perspective* newsletter
- attending key community events
- delivering information sessions
- visiting regional communities
- delivering QCL presentations.⁵⁸

During 2017-18, 15 QCL presentations were delivered to various community sectors.⁵⁹

3.1.10 Online services

There was a 37% increase in the number of users visiting the Office’s website in 2017-18 (127,963 visitors) compared with 2016-17 (93,445 visitors). The website is also more user-friendly across multiple personal devices which was borne out by a 39% increase in the number of mobile device sessions in 2017-18 compared with 2016-17.⁶⁰

⁵⁵ Queensland Ombudsman, *Annual Report 2017-18*, p 69.

⁵⁶ Queensland Ombudsman, *Annual Report 2017-18*, p 72.

⁵⁷ Queensland Ombudsman, *Annual Report 2017-18*, p 73.

⁵⁸ Queensland Ombudsman, *Annual Report 2017-18*, p 73.

⁵⁹ Queensland Ombudsman, *Annual Report 2017-18*, p 73.

⁶⁰ Queensland Ombudsman, *Annual Report 2017-18*, p 76.

3.1.11 Capable and accountable organisation

As at 30 June 2018, 64 officers were employed on a full-time, part-time or casual basis equating to 57.3 full-time equivalents (FTE). The establishment for the Office is 63 FTE. Of those that work at the Office, 72% are women, 9% have a disability and 8% identify as having a language other than English. No staff identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.⁶¹

The permanent staff turnover for 2017-18 was 13% (being 8 employees) which was more than the previous year when 4 employees left the Office but less than the year before that when 11 employees left the Office.⁶²

In August 2017, the Office participated in the Queensland Public Service Commission survey known as the *Working for Queensland Survey*. The Office participation rate was 83% which was considerably higher than the whole of public sector rate of 38%. The Office was above the average benchmark for agency engagement with 61% compared to 59% for the whole of the public sector. The Office was also above the average in terms of organisational leadership with 58% compared to 53%.⁶³

The Office spent 1.5% of its salary budget on professional development activities with each employee attending on average three professional development activities during the year.⁶⁴

3.1.12 Financials

The Annual Report advised that in 2017-18 the Office reported a residual surplus of income over expenditure of \$0.172 million. The audited financial statements of the Office for 2017-18 were attached at Appendix G to the Annual Report.⁶⁵

4 Committee comment

The committee congratulates the Office on its performance in 2017-18, especially given the increased complexity of matters it routinely considers.

Recommendation

The committee recommends the House notes the contents of this report.

⁶¹ Queensland Ombudsman, *Annual Report 2017-18*, p 77.

⁶² Queensland Ombudsman, *Annual Report 2017-18*, p 77, Queensland Ombudsman, *Annual Report 2016-17*, p 58 and Queensland Ombudsman, *Annual Report 2015-16*, p 56.

⁶³ Queensland Ombudsman, *Annual Report 2017-18*, pp 77-78.

⁶⁴ Queensland Ombudsman, *Annual Report 2017-18*, p 78.

⁶⁵ Queensland Ombudsman, *Annual Report 2017-18*, p 87.

Appendix A – Officials at public meeting

Office of the Queensland Ombudsman

- Mr Phil Clarke, Queensland Ombudsman
- Mrs Angela Pyke, Deputy Queensland Ombudsman
- Mrs Leanne Robertson, Director, Corporate Services Unit
- Ms Louise Rosemann, Principal Advisor, Public Interest Disclosures