



QUEENSLAND PARLIAMENT **COMMITTEES**

Oversight of the Queensland Ombudsman

Justice, Integrity and Community Safety Committee



Report No. 18

58th Parliament, August 2025

Justice, Integrity and Community Safety Committee

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All references and webpages are current at the time of publishing.

Acknowledgements

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Chair's Foreword

The Justice, Integrity and Community Safety Committee (committee) has oversight responsibilities for the Queensland Ombudsman. This report presents a summary of the committee's oversight of the Office of the Queensland Ombudsman for the 2023-24 financial year.

The committee reviewed the Queensland Ombudsman's Annual Report 2023-24, which was tabled on 20 September 2024, and held a public hearing with the Queensland Ombudsman, the Deputy Ombudsman and the Executive Director of Corporate Services on 19 February 2025.

I congratulate the Office of the Queensland Ombudsman on its 50th anniversary. During this time, the Ombudsman has assisted thousands of Queenslanders navigate disputes with public agencies. This is a significant milestone which should be celebrated.

On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank the Ombudsman and his staff for their assistance with the committee's oversight for the 2023-24 reporting period. I also extend my thanks to the Parliamentary Service staff for their work on this report.

I commend this report to the House.



Marty Hunt MP

Chair

Recommendations

Recommendation 1 18

That the House notes the contents of this report.

Glossary

Annual report	The annual report of the Queensland Ombudsman for the 2023-24 financial period tabled on 20 September 2024
Auslan	Australian Sign Language
Committee	Justice, Integrity and Community Safety Committee
HHS	Hospital and health service
IDS Act	<i>Inspector of Detention Services Act 2022</i>
Office	Office of the Queensland Ombudsman
OHO	Office of the Health Ombudsman
Ombudsman	Queensland Ombudsman, Mr Anthony Reilly
Ombudsman Act	<i>Ombudsman Act 2001</i>
PID(s)	public interest disclosure(s)
PID Act	<i>Public Interest Disclosure Act 2010</i>
PIDANT	Public Interest Disclosure Agency Network Training
Public hearing	The public hearing held with the Office of the Queensland Ombudsman on 19 February 2025
QRIDA	Queensland Rural and Industry Development Authority
Standing Orders	Standing Rules and Orders of the Legislative Assembly (Queensland)

1. Introduction

1.1. Role of the committee

The Justice, Integrity and Community Safety Committee (committee) is a portfolio committee of the Legislative Assembly which commenced on 13 February 2024 under the *Parliament of Queensland Act 2001* and the Standing Rules and Orders of the Legislative Assembly (Standing Orders).¹

The committee's primary areas of responsibility are:²

Attorney-General,
Justice and Integrity

Police and
Emergency Services

Youth Justice,
Victim Support
and Corrective Services

1.2. Committee oversight



The committee's oversight responsibilities include monitoring and reviewing the performance and examining reports of the Ombudsman and the Inspector of Detention Services, and reporting to the Legislative Assembly where required.

The committee prepared this report as part of its statutory oversight of the Queensland Ombudsman with a primary focus on the 2023–24 financial year. The committee's oversight functions, include:

- monitoring and reviewing the performance by the Ombudsman of their functions under the *Ombudsman Act 2001* (Ombudsman Act)³
- monitoring and reviewing the performance by the Inspector of Detention Services of their functions under the *Inspection of Detention Services Act 2022* (IDS Act)⁴
- reporting to the Legislative Assembly on any matter that the committee considers should be drawn to the attention of the Legislative Assembly, including any changes to the functions, structures and procedures of the Ombudsman that the committee considers desirable for more effective operation⁵
- examining the annual report of the Office of the Queensland Ombudsman (Office) and any report tabled under the IDS Act and, if appropriate, commenting on any aspect of the report⁶
- being consulted on, and approving, the selection process, appointment and matters relating to the appointment⁷ of the Ombudsman and Inspector of Detention Services⁸

¹ *Parliament of Queensland Act 2001*, s 88; Standing Orders, s 194.

² Standing Orders, s 194 and schedule 6.

³ Ombudsman Act, s 89(a).

⁴ Ombudsman Act, s 89(b).

⁵ Ombudsman Act, s 89(c).

⁶ Ombudsman Act, s 89(d),(e).

⁷ Ombudsman Act, ss 62(5), 62(6).

⁸ Ombudsman Act, ss 59, 62.

- being consulted on, and agreeing to,⁹ any motion for an address to the Governor on the suspension or removal of the Ombudsman and the Inspector of Detention Services¹⁰
- being consulted on, and approving, the appointment of the reviewer for the strategic review of the office of the Ombudsman and the terms of reference for review¹¹
- tabling the report of the strategic reviewer¹² and the Ombudsman's annual report¹³
- considering the strategic review report¹⁴
- considering funding proposals from the Ombudsman, preparing a report in respect of the proposal with Treasury and providing the Minister with a report regarding the approval of proposal.¹⁵

1.3. Overview of the Ombudsman



The role of the Ombudsman is to investigate actions and decision of agencies, improve the quality of decision-making and administrative practices in agencies, and review the management of public interest disclosures.

The Ombudsman is an independent statutory office holder established under the Ombudsman Act.¹⁶ The role of the Ombudsman is to:

- investigate grievances/complaints about government agencies
- improve the quality of decision-making and administrative practice in government agencies
- review the management of public interest disclosures
- promote the humane treatment and prevention of harm of detainees.¹⁷

The Ombudsman is accountable to parliament, not the government of the day and as such, cannot be directed on how to perform the Ombudsman's functions under the Ombudsman Act or the priority they give to investigations.¹⁸

Functions under the Ombudsman Act:

The Ombudsman has various functions pursuant to the Ombudsman Act, including to:

- investigate administrative actions of agencies (on referral from the Legislative Assembly or a parliamentary committee, a complaint or on the Ombudsman's own initiative)
- consider the administrative practices and procedures of an agency whose actions are being investigated and make recommendations to the agency about

⁹ Ombudsman Act, s 68(3).

¹⁰ Ombudsman Act, ss 67-68.

¹¹ Ombudsman Act, ss 83(7), 83(8).

¹² Ombudsman Act, s 85(6).

¹³ Ombudsman Act, s 87.

¹⁴ Ombudsman Act, s 85(7); *Parliament of Queensland Act 2001*, s 92(2), (3).

¹⁵ Ombudsman Act, ss 85A-85F, 85C(3).

¹⁶ Ombudsman Act, ss 11.

¹⁷ See the Queensland Ombudsman website (Role of the Ombudsman).

¹⁸ Ombudsman Act, ss 13, 19.

appropriate ways of addressing inappropriate administrative actions or the improvement of the practices and procedures

- consider the administrative practices and procedures of agencies generally, and to make recommendations or provide advice, training, information or other help to the agencies about ways of improving the quality of administrative practices and procedures
- provide advice, training, information or other help to agencies, in particular cases, about ways of improving the quality of administrative practices and procedures
- other functions conferred on the Ombudsman under the Ombudsman Act.¹⁹

Functions under the *Public Interest Disclosure Act 2010*

The Ombudsman has various functions pursuant to the *Public Interest Disclosure Act 2010* (PID Act), including to:

- monitor and review the management of public interest disclosures²⁰
- perform an educational and advisory role to agencies²¹
- make standards about the way public sector entities are to deal with public interest disclosures.²²

1.4. Overview of the Inspector of Detention Services



The role of the Inspector of Detention Services is to promote the humane treatment of detainees and the prevention of harm through reviews, inspections and independent reporting.

The Ombudsman was appointed as the Inspector of Detention Services – a new, additional role – on 9 December 2022. However, the IDS Act did not fully commence until 1 July 2023.²³

The functions of the Inspector of Detention Services include:

- to review or monitor a detention service at any time
- to inspect a place of detention (including a youth detention centre and secure facility)
- to prepare and publish standards in relation to carrying out inspections
- to report to the Assembly on:
 - each review carried out by the inspector
 - each inspection specified to take place at a certain time carried out by the inspector
 - other inspections carried out by the inspector, as the inspector considers appropriate

¹⁹ Ombudsman Act, ss 12-12A

²⁰ PID Act, ss 59(a)-(b).

²¹ PID Act, s 59(c).

²² PID Act, s 60.

²³ Queensland Ombudsman, *Annual Report 2022-23*, pp ii, 16.

- to report to the Assembly on any matter relating to the functions of the inspector if, in the inspector's opinion, it is in the interest of any person or in the public interest to do so
- to include in any report to the Assembly advice or recommendations the inspector considers appropriate about a detention service or place of detention
- any other functions conferred on the inspector under the IDS Act or any other Act.²⁴

1.5. Queensland Ombudsman and terms of appointment



Anthony Reilly was appointed as Ombudsman in July 2020, and as Inspector of Detention Services in December 2022.

Mr Anthony Reilly holds the office of the Ombudsman, having been first appointed by the Governor in Council on 10 July 2020 for a 3-year term. He commenced duties as the Inspector of Detention Services on 9 December 2022. Mr Reilly was reappointed in these roles for a further 3-year term to 9 July 2026.²⁵

Under section 61 of the Ombudsman Act, the Ombudsman can hold office for a term of not more than 5 years (unless the Ombudsman resigns or is removed from office). The Ombudsman can be reappointed for additional terms but cannot hold office for more than 10 years in total.²⁶

To appoint a person as the Ombudsman and the Inspector of Detention Services, the Minister is required to:

- advertise nationally for applications from suitably qualified persons
- consult with the committee about the selection process
- obtain approval from the committee for the person's appointment.²⁷

The Minister is also required to obtain the approval of the committee on the reappointment of a person as Ombudsman and the Inspector of Detention Services.²⁸

Mr Reilly would be eligible for reappointment (for up to 4 years) at the conclusion of his current term as Ombudsman and Inspector of Detention Services on 9 July 2026.

1.6. Strategic review of the Ombudsman

The Ombudsman Act requires a strategic review to be conducted to assess whether the Ombudsman's functions are being performed economically, effectively and efficiently (among other factors as determined by the terms of reference).²⁹

The review must be conducted by an appropriately qualified person. The Minister must obtain the approval of the committee prior to making a recommendation to the Governor

²⁴ IDS Act, s 8.

²⁵ Mr Reilly was appointed for a term of 3 years from 10 July 2020 to and including 9 July 2023. Queensland Ombudsman, *Annual Report 2022-23*, p 21.

²⁶ Ombudsman Act, s 61.

²⁷ Ombudsman Act, s 59. (2).

²⁸ Ombudsman Act, s 59(1)(c).

²⁹ Ombudsman Act, s 83.



in Council regarding the appointment of a reviewer or the terms of reference for a strategic review.³⁰

Under the Ombudsman Act, a strategic review of the Office is required to be conducted every 5 years. However, prior to 1 March 2023, the strategic review of the Office was required to be conducted every 7 years,³¹ and this time period continues to apply to the next strategic review.³² The 5-year period provides consistency ‘with the strategic review timeframes for other Queensland integrity bodies’.³³

The report on the most recent strategic review was tabled on 15 February 2018. The predecessor committee tabled *Report No. 25, 56th Parliament – Inquiry into the Strategic Review of the Office of the Queensland Ombudsman* on 20 November 2018.³⁴ The next strategic review of the Office is expected to be conducted this year.

1.7. The committee’s oversight process

In conducting its oversight of the Office, the committee undertook the following activities:

 <p>Examined the Queensland Ombudsman 2023-24 Annual Report (see section 2 of this report)</p>	 <p>Held a public hearing on 19 February 2025 (see section 3 of this report)</p>
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The following representatives from the Office participated in the public hearing on 19 February 2025 (public hearing):

<p>Anthony Reilly Queensland Ombudsman and Inspector of Detention Services</p>	<p>Angela Pyke Deputy Ombudsman</p>	<p>Leanne Robertson Executive Director, Corporate Strategy</p>
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The transcript of the public hearing is available on the committee’s webpage.

2. 2023-24 Annual report

2.1. Overview

 <p>Last year marked the 50th anniversary of the Ombudsman. The annual report highlighted that the key principles guiding the Ombudsman since inception are still applicable today.</p>

In 2024, the Office celebrated its 50th anniversary. The Ombudsman reported that while the delivery of the Ombudsman’s services has changed, and its functions have expanded,

³⁰ Ombudsman Act, s 83.

³¹ Integrity and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2022 (IOLA Act), s 61.

³² Ombudsman Act, s 113.

³³ IOLA Act, explanatory notes, p 15.

³⁴ Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee, 56th Parliament, Report No. 25, 56th Parliament – *Inquiry into the Strategic Review of the Office of the Queensland Ombudsman*, November 2018.

the key principles that have guided the Office since its inception - such as the importance of all complaints - remain applicable today.³⁵

Establishment of the Inspector of Detention Services

The Ombudsman advised that his functions as the Inspector of Detention Services under the IDS Act fully commenced on 1 July 2023 and, during the reporting period, the Office has:

- recruited a new inspection team to assist in the carrying out of these new functions
- published inspection standards for youth detention centres and prisons
- inspected prisons, youth detention centres and watchhouses.³⁶

The Ombudsman noted that the first reports of the inspections of various prisons, youth detention centres and watchhouses will be released in the next financial year (2024-25).³⁷

Improvement to public administration

The Ombudsman highlighted the resources distributed by the Office for the purpose of helping agencies improve their administration through 'guides, checklists, newsletters, videos, training, officer networks and advisory services'.³⁸ The Office continues to engage with the public sector regarding the operation of the PID Act and provides information sessions for various officers.³⁹

Response to complaints about public administration

The Office continued to investigate complaints in respect of the conduct of public entities in a 'timely effective and independent' way.⁴⁰ In particular, the Ombudsman reported the Office had:

- responded to 11,479 contacts, received 6,295 complaints and finalised 1,047 investigations
- made 178 recommendations for improvement.

Of the recommendations made by the Office that were responded to prior to the end of the reporting period, 177 were accepted by the relevant agencies.⁴¹ Notably, in respect of the Ombudsman's report into prison overcrowding that was published in February 2024, the Ombudsman advised that all 7 recommendations for improvement were accepted by Queensland Corrective Services.⁴²

³⁵ Queensland Ombudsman, Annual Report 2023-24, p 1.

³⁶ Queensland Ombudsman, Annual Report 2023-24, p 1.

³⁷ Queensland Ombudsman, Annual Report 2023-24, p 1.

³⁸ Queensland Ombudsman, Annual Report 2023-24, pp 1-2.

³⁹ Queensland Ombudsman, Annual Report 2023-24, p 2.

⁴⁰ Queensland Ombudsman, Annual Report 2023-24, p 2.

⁴¹ Queensland Ombudsman, Annual Report 2023-24, p 2.

⁴² Queensland Ombudsman, Annual Report 2023-24, p 2.

Inclusive services

The Ombudsman demonstrated the Office's commitment to providing accessible services through:

- the provision of wide-ranging information on the Ombudsman's website about how to make a complaint including through the use of 'easy read' documents
- the use of multi-language translations and Australian Sign Language (Auslan) interpretation of information on the Ombudsman's website
- visiting with local governments and community organisations throughout remote and regional Queensland
- the participation in various community events including South Bank TAFE Open Day and NAIDOC Family Day in Musgrave Park.⁴³

Provision of an accountable, sustainable and capable organisation

The Office continues to be guided by its vision (as outlined in its *Strategic Plan 2023-2027*) of 'Fair and accountable public administration in Queensland'.⁴⁴

The Ombudsman listed the following key initiatives which align with this vision:

- supporting an engaged workforce of officers within the Office
- transitioning to cloud-based and flexible IT services
- the continued operation of the independent Audit Committee which provides independent assurance and assistance to the Office
- engagement with the committee via its oversight functions (in particular, the public hearing held on 29 April 2024).⁴⁵

Future work

The Ombudsman provided an update on the following upcoming work of the Office:

- New provisions of the Ombudsman Act commenced on 15 September 2024, expanding the jurisdiction of the Office to initiate investigations of government services provided by non-government entities.⁴⁶ The Ombudsman advised that additional funding has been received to undertake this new function and the Office's preparations are 'well progressed'.⁴⁷
- Additional funding was received to support the work of inspecting new youth detention centres, including the Wacol Youth Remand Facility, Woodford Youth Detention Centre and future planned centres.⁴⁸

⁴³ Queensland Ombudsman, Annual Report 2023-24, p 2.

⁴⁴ Queensland Ombudsman, Annual Report 2023-24, p 3.

⁴⁵ Queensland Ombudsman, Annual Report 2023-24, p 3.

⁴⁶ Ombudsman Act, s 12A.

⁴⁷ Queensland Ombudsman, Annual Report 2023-24, p 3.

⁴⁸ Queensland Ombudsman, Annual Report 2023-24, p 3.

- Work will continue on renovations to the Office's premises at 53 Albert Street, Brisbane CBD.⁴⁹

2.2. Investigating complaints



The Office responded to 11,479 contacts received including 6,295 complaints. Over 1,000 investigations were finalised, and 178 recommendations were made to agencies.

During 2023-24:

- The Office responded to 11,479 contacts (compared to 11,837 in 2022-23).⁵⁰
- Out of those contacts received, 6,295 were complaints⁵¹ and 6,287 complaints were finalised during the reporting period.⁵²
- The average time to complete a preliminary assessment of a complaint was 7.8 days (which was within the target of 10 days).⁵³ This was greater than the average time in 2022-23 which was 4.6 days.⁵⁴
- 1,049 investigations were finalised (compared to 1,124 in 2022-23).⁵⁵
- 1,047 complaints were referred for investigation and 2 investigations were initiated at the Ombudsman's own initiative.⁵⁶
- The Office made 178 recommendations to improve administrative actions of agencies and of the recommendations responded to, 97% were accepted by agencies.⁵⁷
- Most of the recommendations asked agencies to:
 - review a decision (35%)
 - provide a better explanation or reasons for a decision (21%)
 - improve a policy or procedure (20%)
 - change a decision (11%)
 - expedite an action (6%).⁵⁸
- Timeliness of completion of investigations was near target (actual 89% against a target of 90%).⁵⁹ The average time to close an investigation was 57.5 days.⁶⁰

⁴⁹ Queensland Ombudsman, Annual Report 2023-24, p 3.

⁵⁰ Queensland Ombudsman, Annual Report 2023-24, p 5.

⁵¹ Queensland Ombudsman, Annual Report 2023-24, p 6.

⁵² Queensland Ombudsman, Annual Report 2023-24, p 8.

⁵³ Queensland Ombudsman, Annual Report 2023-24, pp 5, 9.

⁵⁴ Queensland Ombudsman, Annual Report 2023-24, p 5.

⁵⁵ Queensland Ombudsman, Annual Report 2023-24, p 5; Queensland Ombudsman, Annual Report 2022-23, p 5.

⁵⁶ Queensland Ombudsman, Annual Report 2023-24, p 10.

⁵⁷ Queensland Ombudsman, Annual Report 2023-24, p 5.

⁵⁸ Queensland Ombudsman, Annual Report 2023-24, p 11.

⁵⁹ Queensland Ombudsman, Annual Report 2023-24, p 5.

⁶⁰ Queensland Ombudsman, Annual Report 2023-24, p 11.

- Complaints by sector for 2023-24 were state agencies (68.8%), local councils (27.1%), public universities (3.9%) and other (0.1%).⁶¹
- 1,302 cases were assessed as involving a human rights element (which was an increase from 1,075 cases in the previous year).⁶²
- Timeliness to finalise complaints was reported to be 'commensurate with the previous year' being 67.5% within 10 days, 88.5% within 30 days and 99.8% within 12 months.⁶³

Accessibility

- Contact via telephone is still the most common way for people to contact the Office accounting for approximately 50% of first contacts (including the Prisoner PhoneLink service).⁶⁴
- 43% of visitors to the Ombudsman's website used mobile phones or tablets to access the website.⁶⁵
- Complaints via online complaint forms accounted for approximately 40% of complaints.⁶⁶
- 18,685 people were directed to a webpage about matters out of the Office's jurisdiction from the online complaint form, and 79,145 people directly accessed Office webpages about out of jurisdiction matters. Of these, 48,829 people linked to another complaint body's website.⁶⁷
- In respect of its website, the Ombudsman:
 - used the ReachDeck tool to read webpages aloud to help people requiring online reading support and provide translations to languages other than English
 - provided videos that translate a selection of pages into Auslan.⁶⁸
- The Office also used the National Relay Service, being a phone service for people who are deaf or have a hearing or speech impairment.⁶⁹
- Of the cases that provided demographic information:
 - 27% identified as being Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander
 - 16% identified as having a special need
 - 11% identified as having a home language other than English
 - 37% were based outside of south-east Queensland.⁷⁰

⁶¹ Queensland Ombudsman, Annual Report 2023-24, p 7.

⁶² Queensland Ombudsman, Annual Report 2023-24, p 7; Queensland Ombudsman, Annual Report 2022-23, p 7.

⁶³ Queensland Ombudsman, Annual Report 2023-24, p 7.

⁶⁴ Queensland Ombudsman, Annual Report 2023-24, p 7.

⁶⁵ Queensland Ombudsman, Annual Report 2023-24, p 7.

⁶⁶ Queensland Ombudsman, Annual Report 2023-24, p 7.

⁶⁷ Queensland Ombudsman, Annual Report 2023-24, p 7.

⁶⁸ Queensland Ombudsman, Annual Report 2023-24, p 7.

⁶⁹ Queensland Ombudsman, Annual Report 2023-24, p 7.

⁷⁰ Queensland Ombudsman, Annual Report 2023-24, p 7.

COVID-19

- Complaints regarding Queensland Health almost halved in the reporting period to 541 complaints (down from 1,039 complaints in 2022-23). This was mostly due to a decrease in complaints about COVID-19 hotel quarantine fee waiver decisions, which had been the source of most of the complaints received in the previous year.⁷¹

Complaints about the Office of the Health Ombudsman

- In June 2022, the Office of the Health Ombudsman (OHO) advised the Ombudsman that it is unable to remake a decision under the *Health Ombudsman Act 2013* in reliance on section 24AA of the *Acts Interpretation Act 1954*. Accordingly, the OHO suspended its internal review function and continues to seek legislative reform to address this matter.⁷²
- Complaints received about the OHO decreased in 2023-24 to 133 from 153 complaints in 2022-23 but is still 'significantly higher' than the number of complaints received about the OHO prior to the suspension of its internal review function.⁷³

Complaints about assistance programs

- The number of complaints regarding the Queensland Rural and Industry Development Authority (QRIDA) increased to 74 in 2023-24 (compared to 24 in 2022-23). It is noted that the increase in complaints may 'reflect the high-volume schemes administered by QRIDA during the year, such as climate smart energy savers and zero emission vehicle rebates'.⁷⁴

Own initiative investigation

- In response to a report published by the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability regarding violence and abuse experienced by 2 men with disabilities, the Ombudsman commenced its own investigation under section 18(1)(b) of the Ombudsman Act. The investigation examined the powers and responsibilities of all the departments and agencies that engaged with the family.⁷⁵

2.3. Improving decision-making



The Ombudsman delivered training sessions and published various newsletters and guides to support improved decision-making of public officers.

⁷¹ Queensland Ombudsman, Annual Report 2023-24, p 12.

⁷² Queensland Ombudsman, Annual Report 2023-24, p 12.

⁷³ Queensland Ombudsman, Annual Report 2023-24, p 12.

⁷⁴ Queensland Ombudsman, Annual Report 2023-24, p 12.

⁷⁵ Queensland Ombudsman, Annual Report 2023-24, p 13.

During 2023-24:

- 2,605 public officers participated in 128 training sessions and participants continued to record high levels of satisfaction with the training provided (98% reported training improved decision-making capability).⁷⁶
- 7,467 subscribers received news and updates.⁷⁷
- The Ombudsman delivered:
 - 17,460 training emails
 - 12,793 *Perspectives* e-newsletters
 - 4,552 *Community Perspective* e-newsletters
 - 448 *Inspector News* e-newsletters.⁷⁸
- The Ombudsman published a collection of outcomes achieved through its investigations, *Casebook 2024*, which was downloaded 620 times (an increase from 503 times in 2022-23). This issue ‘helps to inform the community about the work [the Office does] for all Queenslanders’.⁷⁹
- The Office released new ‘easy read’ guides for ‘people who are not familiar with English, or have learning disability or low literacy’ which explain:
 - how to make a complaint to the Ombudsman and what to expect in the complaints process
 - the Inspector of Detention Services’ role including what the Inspector does on an inspection and what happens afterwards.⁸⁰
- The Office continues to steer the quarterly Public Interest Disclosure Agency Network Training (PIDANT). This program provides training on ‘core and contemporaneous PID issues with a network of key external stakeholders and agency PID coordinators’.⁸¹
- The Office is involved in the Complaints Handler Network which is for senior complaints handlers across state and local government, with the key objective of improving the knowledge and skills of officers in managing complaints.⁸²

2.4. Inspector of Detention Services



Key achievements for the Detention Services Inspection units included publishing standards, establishing an online presence and conducting inspections.

On 22 October 2024, the Ombudsman tabled its separate annual operational report in respect of its functions as Inspector of Detention Services. Many of the matters outlined

⁷⁶ Queensland Ombudsman, Annual Report 2023-24, pp 5, 14.

⁷⁷ Queensland Ombudsman, Annual Report 2023-24, p 14.

⁷⁸ Queensland Ombudsman, Annual Report 2023-24, p 14.

⁷⁹ Queensland Ombudsman, Annual Report 2023-24, p 14; Queensland Ombudsman, Annual Report 2022-23, p 15.

⁸⁰ Queensland Ombudsman, Annual Report 2023-24, p 15.

⁸¹ Queensland Ombudsman, Annual Report 2023-24, p 15.

⁸² Queensland Ombudsman, Annual Report 2023-24, p 15.

in the Ombudsman's annual report were also reflected in (and expanded upon) in the Inspector of Detention Services annual report.

The key achievements in respect of the Ombudsman's function as Inspector of Detention Services are as follows:

- As at 30 June 2024, the Detention Services Inspection Unit has 14 full-time equivalent employees.⁸³
- In August 2023, inspection standards for Queensland prisons and Queensland youth detention centres were published by the Inspector of Detention Services.⁸⁴ The Office has also commenced the preparation of standards for watchhouses which they hope to complete in 2024-25.⁸⁵
- Since 1 July 2023, the Office has:
 - tabled 2 reports in the Assembly in respect of the Cleveland Youth Detention Centre and the Cairns and Murgon watchhouses
 - established an online presence, including an *Inspector's News* newsletter.
- In 2023-24, inspections were commenced at the Brisbane Youth Detention Centre, Cairns watchhouse, Cleveland Youth Detention Centre, Murgon watchhouse, Palen Creek Correctional Centre, Southern Queensland Correctional Centre and the West Moreton Youth Detention Centre.⁸⁶ The preparation of reports regarding these inspections is reported to be underway.⁸⁷
- The Office has also made a referral, including recommendations, to the Minister for Education and Minister for Youth Justice in accordance with section 17(5)(b) of the IDS Act regarding concerns about children being separated at the Cleveland Youth Detention Centre for extended periods in rooms without basic facilities such as a toilet, a basin with running water, a seat or a bed (and the design for similar rooms without facilities were contained in the designs for the new detention centres in Woodford and Cairns)⁸⁸
- In the next financial year (2024-25), the Inspector of Detention Services intends to:
 - finalise reports on inspections commenced in 2023-24
 - undertake required inspections of youth detention centres and make further progress towards the five-yearly review of prisons in Queensland

⁸³ Queensland Ombudsman, Annual Report 2023-24, p 16.

⁸⁴ Queensland Ombudsman, Annual Report 2023-24, p 16; Queensland Ombudsman, Inspector of Detention Services – Annual operational report 2023-24, p4.

⁸⁵ Queensland Ombudsman, Inspector of Detention Services - Annual operational report 2023-24, p 4.

⁸⁶ Queensland Ombudsman, Annual Report 2023-24, p 16; Queensland Ombudsman, Inspector of Detention Services – Annual operational report 2023-24, p 5.

⁸⁷ Queensland Ombudsman, Annual Report 2023-24, p 17; Queensland Ombudsman, Inspector of Detention Services – Annual operational report 2023-24, p 5.

⁸⁸ Queensland Ombudsman, Inspector of Detention Services - Annual operational report 2023-24, p 6. The response of the Director-General of the Department of Youth Justice to recommendations 5-8 is in the appendix to the Annual operational report 2023-24, pp 8-10. The complete response is available in Inspector of Detention Services, *Cleveland Youth Detention Centre inspection report: focus on separation due to staff shortages*, August 2024, Appendix A.

- progress inspection standards for watchhouses⁸⁹
- develop processes for monitoring and reporting on recommendations.⁹⁰

2.5. Authority, accountability and performance

- Overall in 2023-24, 35% of clients were satisfied or very satisfied with the Office's performance across all service elements, while 55% were neutral, satisfied or very satisfied.⁹¹ This was slightly lower than that reported in the last financial year.⁹²
- In respect of complaints about the Office:
 - 10 service delivery complaints were received and assessed as serious
 - 2 complaints were assessed as human rights complaints and were partially substantiated
 - other complaints regarding the Office related to 'delays, poor customer service, a denial of natural justice, lack of feedback, unfair treatment or tone'
 - all complaints received were closed within the reporting period with 3 substantiated and 3 partially substantiated.⁹³
- In respect of requests for internal review of decisions made by the Ombudsman, in 2023-24:
 - 153 internal review requests were received (compared with 172 received in 2022-23)
 - 148 internal review requests were finalised (compared with 152 in 2022-23) with:
 - the original decision confirmed in 82 cases (compared with 93 cases in 2022-23)
 - reviews withdrawn by the complainant or declined by the Office in 56 cases (compared with 54 cases in 2022-23)
 - decisions not upheld in 10 cases (compared with 5 cases in 2022-23)
 - No significant systemic improvements were identified or implemented during the year as a result of internal reviews.⁹⁴

2.6. Financial summary

The Office ended the year in a secure financial position, with adequate reserves and forecast income to fulfil its statutory responsibilities for 2024-25.⁹⁵

⁸⁹ Queensland Ombudsman, Annual Report 2023-24, p 17; Queensland Ombudsman, Inspector of Detention Services – Annual operational report 2023-24, p 3.

⁹⁰ Queensland Ombudsman, Inspector of Detention Services - Annual operational report 2023-24, p 3.

⁹¹ Queensland Ombudsman, Annual Report 2023-24, p 26.

⁹² Queensland Ombudsman, Annual Report 2022-23, p 26.

⁹³ Queensland Ombudsman, Annual Report 2023-24, p 26.

⁹⁴ Queensland Ombudsman, Annual Report 2023-24, p 26; Queensland Ombudsman, Annual Report 2022-23, p 26.

⁹⁵ Queensland Ombudsman, Annual Report 2023-24, p 27.

The budget for the Office for 2023-24 was \$14.427 million. Total operational expenditure in 2023-24 was \$14.290 million. This represents a \$2.85 million (or 25%) increase from the previous financial year.⁹⁶

The biggest cost in delivering the Office's services was employee expenses, which, combined with payments to employment agencies, represented 80% of total expenditure.⁹⁷

2.7. Public interest disclosure oversight

When adjusted to exclude the 660 historical hospital and health service (HHS) PIDs included in the 2022-23 records, there were 2,187 PIDs reported in 2022-23, compared to 2,305 PIDs reported in 2023-24 (being a 5.4% increase).⁹⁸

Consistent with previous years, the majority of PIDs reported concerned alleged corrupt conduct (92.1% in 2022-23 and 91.3% in 2023-24).⁹⁹ The majority of PIDs (89.3%) were reported by internal employees, managers, supervisors and role reporters.¹⁰⁰ PIDs by self-identified members of the public continue to account for a very small number of disclosures (1.9%).¹⁰¹

- State government departments continued to report the highest number of PIDs, however there was a 10.5% decrease in 2023-24 compared to the last financial year.¹⁰²
- In 2023-24, there was a 45.7% increase in PIDs recorded by HHSs from 564 PIDs reported in 2022-23 (adjusted to remove historical PIDs) to 822 PIDs in 2023-24.¹⁰³
- In 2023-24, agencies finalised data on 1,991 PIDs.¹⁰⁴ Of those finalised PIDs:
 - 250 PIDs (12.6%) were closed because the agency decided that no action was required in accordance with section 30 of the PID Act, which was a significant (20%) decrease to that recorded in 2022-23
 - 1,741 PIDs (87.4%) were closed following commencement of an investigation.¹⁰⁵
- After excluding discontinued investigations, 76.7% of PIDs investigated and finalised in 2023-24 were either totally or partially substantiated, a 2.3% increase from 2022-23.¹⁰⁶

⁹⁶ Queensland Ombudsman, Annual Report 2023-24, p 27.

⁹⁷ Queensland Ombudsman, Annual Report 2023-24, p 27.

⁹⁸ Queensland Ombudsman, Annual Report 2023-24, p 28.

⁹⁹ Queensland Ombudsman, Annual Report 2023-24, p 28.

¹⁰⁰ Queensland Ombudsman, Annual Report 2023-24, p 28.

¹⁰¹ Queensland Ombudsman, Annual Report 2023-24, p 29.

¹⁰² Queensland Ombudsman, Annual Report 2023-24, p 28.

¹⁰³ Queensland Ombudsman, Annual Report 2023-24, p 28.

¹⁰⁴ Queensland Ombudsman, Annual Report 2023-24, p 29.

¹⁰⁵ Queensland Ombudsman, Annual Report 2023-24, p 29.

¹⁰⁶ Queensland Ombudsman, Annual Report 2023-24, p 29.

- In many cases, there is a lengthy period of time between a person making a disclosure and the matter being concluded by the agency dealing with it, with one matter raised in 2016-17 being finalised in 2023-24.¹⁰⁷
- To fulfil its statutory role under the PID Act to perform an educational and advisory role, in 2022-24 the Office:
 - presented 59 PID training sessions to a total of 1,140 participants
 - delivered 4 Public Interest Disclosure Agency Network Training webinars with more than 479 attendees
 - distributed a monthly e-newsletter, *PIDmail*, to more than 1,000 subscribers.¹⁰⁸
- Overall, total participant engagement increased 2.9% in 2023-24 from 1,573 participants in 2022-23 to 1,619 in 2023-24.¹⁰⁹

Oversight public hearing

2.8. Opening statement

In his opening statement at the public hearing, the Ombudsman provided a brief explanation of his roles as Ombudsman and the Inspector of Detention Services.¹¹⁰

The Ombudsman reported that in the 2023-24 financial year, the Office had responded to 11,479 contacts, received 6,295 complaints and finalised 1,047 investigations. Additionally, the website had recorded more than 227,000 visits.¹¹¹

The Ombudsman advised how the complaints investigation jurisdiction had changed in two ways during 2023-24:

- in September 2024, following the commencement of the new section 12A of the Ombudsman Act, the Office's jurisdiction has been enhanced to enable it to initiate investigations of government services provided by non-government entities, and
- given the commencement of the new National Student Ombudsman, some complaints about public universities that might have been investigated by the Office may instead be referred to the new National Student Ombudsman, which is an Australian government service.¹¹²

The Ombudsman referred to the administrative improvement program which resulted in 178 recommendations for improvement during 2023-24. Two of these investigations resulted in public reports tabled in parliament; a report on prison overcrowding in February 2024 and a report on the Forensic Disability Service in August 2024.¹¹³

The Ombudsman outlined other activities conducted by the Office, including:

¹⁰⁷ Queensland Ombudsman, Annual Report 2023-24, pp 29-30.

¹⁰⁸ Queensland Ombudsman, Annual Report 2023-24, p 30.

¹⁰⁹ Queensland Ombudsman, Annual Report 2023-24, p 30.

¹¹⁰ Public hearing transcript, Brisbane, 19 February 2025, p 1.

¹¹¹ Public hearing transcript, Brisbane, 19 February 2025, p 1.

¹¹² Public hearing transcript, Brisbane, 19 February 2025, p 2.

¹¹³ Public hearing transcript, Brisbane, 19 February 2025, p 2.

- the release of the annual investigation case book, and
- supporting Queensland government agencies regarding the administration of the disaster resilience program.

The Ombudsman provided an update on his role as Inspector of Detention Services in accordance with the IDS Act which commenced fully on 1 July 2023.¹¹⁴ The Ombudsman noted the achievement of a number of significant milestones, including:

- establishing the Detention Services Inspection Unit
- developing and publishing inspection standards for prisons and youth detention centres
- undertaking many inspections of places of detention
- establishing an online presence and publications to inform the community about their work
- undertaking extensive engagement with detainee, community organisations and government agencies
- tabling the first annual report for the Inspector of Detention Services.¹¹⁵

The Ombudsman noted that as of the date of the public hearing, the Inspector of Detention Services had inspected:

- all three of Queensland's youth detention centres
- three prisons
- two watch houses.¹¹⁶

The Ombudsman further advised that the Inspector of Detention Services had reported to the Legislative Assembly in relation to two inspections, being:

- the Cleveland Youth Detention Centre, with a focus on separation due to staff shortages, and
- the Cairns and Murgon watch houses, with a focus on the detention of children.¹¹⁷

The Ombudsman discussed the Office's role as the oversight agency for the PID Act.¹¹⁸ In terms of the Office's workforce, results for the *2024 Working for Queensland* survey were very positive and had improved on the results of the 2023 survey. In terms of employment engagement income, the Office was 16 per cent higher than for the public sector as a whole and 3 percent higher than the 2023 result. In terms of funding, the Ombudsman was pleased to report that the Office's expenditure remained within budget during the relevant financial year and that he also anticipated that the Office will also remain within budget in 2024-25 and 2025-26. Accordingly, the Ombudsman did not submit a funding proposal for additional funding to the committee for 2025-26.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁴ Public hearing transcript, Brisbane, 29 April 2024, p 2.

¹¹⁵ Public hearing transcript, Brisbane, 29 April 2024, p 2.

¹¹⁶ Public hearing transcript, Brisbane, 29 April 2024, p 2.

¹¹⁷ Public hearing transcript, Brisbane, 29 April 2024, p 2.

¹¹⁸ Public hearing transcript, Brisbane, 29 April 2024, p 2.

¹¹⁹ Public hearing transcript, Brisbane, 29 April 2024, p 2.

2.9. Committee questions

Questions from the committee during the public hearing focused on:

- the development of inspection standards and any parliamentary feedback received
- any modelling undertaken on the Making Queensland Safer Laws regarding capacity and safety in detention facilities and watch houses
- the role of the Ombudsman as the Inspector for Detention Services in relation to the inspection of youth detention centres and the publication of his findings
- complaints received from detainees
- any differences in the rehabilitative function of the Cleveland Youth Detention Centre and the Brisbane Youth Detention Centre
- any forecasts or recommendations about staffing of new youth detention centres
- timing of the Making Queensland Safer Laws in relation to the opening of new facilities (Wacol Youth Remand Centre and the Lockyer Valley Correctional Centre)
- any inspections of the Crisafulli government's reset camps
- number of and attendees at training sessions delivered by the Office
- detention centres and watch houses to be inspected during 2024-25 financial year
- any reflections on the detention centres and watch houses inspected during the previous 3 months
- capacity of the Wacol Youth Remand Centre
- any information regarding the denial of access to detention centres in Queensland to the UN subcommittee on the prevention of torture in 2022
- dissatisfaction of clients (45%) with the services of the Office in the client satisfaction survey results
- any inspections of the Southport, Logan and Coolangatta watch houses during 2 and 10 February when media reports revealed over-crowding and capacity issues at those facilities
- the increase in time to finalise a preliminary assessment of a complaint
- the recommendation of the royal commission into police responses to domestic and family violence for an independent police oversight body
- biggest challenges and risks ahead for the Office in the next 12 months

Responses to these matters can be found in the transcript of public proceedings.¹²⁰

2.10. Questions taken on notice

Two questions were taken on notice at the public hearing.

In response to the first question regarding whether the Office sought any feedback or input from the committee regarding the Detention Standards, the Ombudsman stated:

¹²⁰ Public hearing transcript, Brisbane, 29 April 2024.

The Ombudsman, who is also the Inspector of Detention Services, undertook a consultation process to support the development of inspection standards for prisons and youth detention centres in Queensland. The process included a public invitation for comment on proposed standards. This was promoted on the Office's website from February 2023 with feedback requested by 24 March 2023.

More than 26 government and community organisations provided responses about the proposed standards. The Ombudsman did not make a specific request to the oversight committee for feedback; and the committee did not provide a response to the public invitation to comment.

On Thursday 1 June 2023, the Ombudsman provided information about the standards development process at the Office's oversight meeting with the Legal Affairs and Safety Committee. ...

Information about the standards development process has been included in the Office of the Ombudsman's annual reports for 2022-23 and 2023-24. Information about standards development is also included in the Inspector of Detention Services Annual operational report 2023-24.¹²¹

In response to the second question regarding the proportion of complainants who respond to the satisfaction survey, the Ombudsman stated:

For the 12 month period December 2023 to November 2024 (most recent data), the average proportion of complainants who responded to the satisfaction survey was 17%.¹²²

Committee comment



The committee congratulates the Ombudsman and his staff on their performance to date and the 50 years of the Office in Queensland.

The committee acknowledges the new innovations introduced by the Office to foster good decision making across the public sector including the provision of accessible resources for agencies and the wider public about the role of the Ombudsman and the principles of good governance.

The committee notes the inspection and reporting schedule of the Ombudsman in respect of his role as Inspector of Detention Services.

The committee also notes that the strategic review of the Office of the Ombudsman is due to be conducted in 2025.



Recommendation 1

That the House notes the contents of this report.

¹²¹ Correspondence from the Ombudsman to the committee dated 25 February 2025, attachment, p 1.

¹²² Correspondence from the Ombudsman to the committee dated 25 February 2025, attachment, p 1.