

Thank you Commissioner.

It gives me great pleasure to be here today, and I thank you all for making time to join us for this special occasion – the official opening of the Corruption and Crime Commission’s new office and operations centre here in Northbridge.

Today marks the start of an exciting new chapter for the Corruption and Crime Commission as it continues its important work to protect and improve the integrity of this State’s public sector, and to investigate, expose, and disrupt corruption and serious misconduct by Western Australian public officers.

In September 2005, when then Attorney-General Jim McGinty was speaking at the official opening of the Commission’s previous premises on St Georges Terrace, he said one of the advantages of the Commission was the ability to hold public examinations as it was, and I quote: “...critical as the public can see that an investigation has been done thoroughly and that all the right questions have been asked.”

Corruption – as Commissioner McKechnie often expresses – is an activity that is conducted in the dark... and the Commission’s role in shining a light into those dark corners remains as critical today as ever. So much so, that in the last financial year, the Commission received 2,425 reports of suspected corruption and serious misconduct that resulted in a vast 4,939 allegations being assessed.

The Commission has done a tremendous job exposing corruption and bringing to light serious misconduct issues that are in the public interest. The Commission is now livestreaming its public examinations and giving members of the public, regardless of where they are, an insight into its proceedings. The Commission has also taken public examinations on the road to regional Western Australia - making it possible for residents to hear first-hand about corruption matters that directly impacted their community without having to leave the district.

Another dark corner I am keen for the Commission to shine a light into is unexplained wealth.

Since coming into office last year, the McGowan Government has moved forward with a range of significant reforms to justice legislation.

Last year, I introduced a draft Bill into the Parliament of Western Australia, to grant the Commission functions with respect to unexplained wealth.

Under the proposed amendments to the Criminal Property Confiscation Act and the Corruption, Crime Misconduct Act - the Commission will have the jurisdiction to conduct investigations into unexplained wealth and criminal benefits, and to apply to the court to freeze or confiscate assets that are likely derived from unlawful activities.

Unexplained wealth laws do not require the Commission to prove a crime has been committed, but require a person who lives beyond their apparent means to justify how their assets are lawfully acquired, or those assets may be confiscated by the State.

For all of us working in our State's legal system, it is vital that we keep asking these questions and ensuring the general public can see that justice is being done.

If passed, the new unexplained wealth function will enable the Commission to truly operate as a 'crime commission' and I personally look forward to seeing this work unfold.

These new premises will equip the Commission for its important role in this work, now and in the years ahead.

The decision to relocate, and the choice to move to these premises, was based on a sound rationale to support the Commission's operational and administrative efficiencies.

While no longer on the Terrace, it is still in close proximity to the Perth court and legal precinct which is a necessity for the Commission's work.

The previous office on the Terrace was ageing and the wear and tear of more than a decade of tenancy was evident. It no longer met operational requirements and it was time to overhaul the office fit out, the security, and the building management systems.

This office accommodates all of the Commission's team of more than 120 people and provides special operational accommodation requirements, as well as public examination rooms and interview rooms, all on one floor – for the first time.

It has state-of-the-art technologies built-in, providing more advanced systems and security, as well as more efficient working conditions, but with lower running costs.

This will all be achieved on a smaller footprint, which will reduce the government's net debt by some \$7.4 million over the 15 year lease.

And the relocation has all been delivered both under budget and on time.

Like all public sector agencies, the Commission has been undergoing organisational change as it adapts to meet the demands of an ever-changing economic environment.

The Commission consolidated its organisational structure in 2016-17, while throughout the year it conducted 71 investigations, including 18 in cooperation with other agencies, produced eight reports and made 23 anti-corruption recommendations to public authorities.

Improved efficiencies led to a significant decrease in the average time taken to complete an investigation – 297 days in 2016-17, down from 427 days in 2015-16.

The Commission also set itself a benchmark of assessing notifications within three months of receipt – and last year recorded a success rate of 94 per cent in achieving that benchmark.

I'd also like to take this opportunity to thank Commissioner John McKechnie, Chief Executive Ray Warnes and all those who have been involved in delivering this project. You are to be applauded.

I am confident Commission staff will enjoy working from their new home here in Northbridge, as they write the next chapter of WA's leading integrity agency.

Now, without further ado, if I could now ask the Commissioner to join me.

It gives me great pleasure, to officially pronounce this Corruption and Crime Commission office open!