

MEDIA RELEASE

28 April 2020

Corruption and Crime Commissioner's term ends

The five-year term of Corruption and Crime Commissioner, the Hon. John McKechnie QC ended at midnight on 27 April 2020.

The Hon. John McKechnie QC is the first person to serve a full five-year term as Commissioner and the only person to seek reappointment.

The nomination committee, headed by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, and the leaders of both major political parties supported Mr McKechnie's reappointment. However, the reappointment did not achieve bipartisan or majority support from the Joint Standing Committee on the Corruption and Crime Commission, which comprises of four sitting Members of both houses of State Parliament.

The Commissioner's departure comes at a critical time with a number of significant ongoing investigations underway, including into:

- procurement and other corrupt activities within the Department of Communities;
- serious misconduct within the State's prisons;
- parliamentary electoral allowances; and
- alleged excessive use of force by WA Police Force officers.

Reviews of the responses from various WA public sector agencies to Commission reports and recommendations have also commenced, but are yet to be completed.

Commissioner McKechnie has been instrumental in highlighting publicly or directly to public sector authorities, particular corruption risks in the WA public sector concerning: procurement and financial management; the misuse of data and information; the inappropriate use of force; people at risk; policy, regulation and licensing; and the WA Police Force.

Commissioner McKechnie delivered 45 public reports into corruption in Western Australia during his term in office. Recent reports include uncovering the largest public sector corruption case in Australia's history; exposing corrupt conduct involving more than a million dollars in two investigations; and more than a decade of serious misconduct and corruption at the North Metropolitan Health Service.

Although much of the Commission's work is confidential, Commissioner McKechnie has been instrumental in ensuring the Commission has more effectively informed the public sector, media, and the WA community on the outcomes of investigations and their responsibilities to report misconduct.

Since Commissioner McKechnie's appointment, there has been an increase in public confidence in reporting serious misconduct to the Corruption and Crime Commission. Prior to his appointment 11% of allegations were from the public. At the end of his appointment, approximately 40% of allegations come from the community.

Commissioner McKechnie has also ensured Commission investigations are conducted more efficiently, with investigations now taking an average of 309 days to complete.

Commissioner McKechnie leaves the Corruption and Crime Commission a much better organisation than the one at which he commenced in 2015. He has restored the focus and confidence of those within the Commission to exposing and disrupting corruption in the WA public sector.

The Acting Corruption and Crime Commissioner is Mr. Scott Ellis.

Mr. Ellis has been an Acting Commissioner since 1 July 2016 and has been actively involved in Commission matters since then. He was reappointed in July 2019 and his current term ends in July 2022. Mr Ellis is a barrister with considerable experience in commercial litigation and decision-making. Whilst maintaining his legal practice, he will undertake his acting Commissioner responsibilities on a part-time capacity until a new Commissioner is appointed.

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