

## MEDIA RELEASE

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### **The Commission's work continues through a challenging year**

The *Corruption and Crime Commission's Annual Report 2019-20* has been tabled in State Parliament today.

The report details a year of increased activity and achievements by the Commission, whilst also managing the impact of COVID-19 and former Commissioner the Hon John McKechnie QC's term ending.

This year's report is the first for Acting Commissioner, Scott Ellis. Mr Ellis has held the position of Acting Commissioner since 2016 and stood-in for former Commissioner McKechnie for short periods from time-to-time.

The Commission assessed a total of 5,743 allegations (up from 5,036 last year) with around 45% of those coming from members of the public, continuing an upward trend over the last three reporting periods, reflecting ongoing community awareness and confidence in the Commission's work.

About a quarter, or 1,450 of the allegations, were referred to public sector agencies (including the WA Police Force) for action, with oversight by the Commission.

Other indicators included:

- efficient assessment of allegations, with 84% completed within 28 days;
- 59 investigations conducted (up from 50 last year), 14 were in cooperation with the agency involved;
- 84% of investigations completed within 12 months;
- 56 days of examinations, five days of which were public examinations; and
- a total of 43 reports – to State Parliament, agencies, and heads of agencies.

The Commission's reports to Parliament included an investigation involving the misconduct and corruption risks relating to \$7.5 million in annual electorate allowances paid to members of Parliament. At year end, an interim report had been tabled and the Commission's enquiry is continuing.

The Commission's most significant investigation was initiated with the WA Police Force into a senior public officer at the Department of Communities. He was subsequently charged with 520 counts of corruptly obtaining more than \$22 million - one of the most serious cases of public sector corruption in Australia. Charges have also been laid against three other individuals. This investigation is ongoing.

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Other significant reports exposed risks and lessons for agencies relating to:

- procurement including contract management corruption;
- falsifying records to claim extra pay;
- the abuse of power and failures in responsibilities to the State; and
- misuse of data and private information.

The WA Police Force remained the subject of more than half of all allegations (approximately 54%) assessed by the Commission. This is in line with expectations. Most related to 'neglect of duty' or 'breach of procedure', though a significant percentage (30.7%) also related to criminal allegations. That is reflected in the focus of the Commission's work with the WA Police Force, including a number of reports relating to excessive use of force.

Prisons also remained a key priority during the year, with the Commission holding public examinations of witnesses from the Department of Justice. The examinations resulted in a parliamentary report considering the response of the Department of Justice to 51 recommendations previously made by the Commission.

In its second year with unexplained wealth powers, the Commission received and assessed 28 referrals and commenced investigations into seven matters. As at 30 June 2020, the Commission had instituted Supreme Court proceedings in four matters leading to freezing orders in excess of \$10 million in assets.

The Commission continues its work with momentum into 2020/21, with a number of ongoing complex investigations, and a very committed team working under strong leadership.

ENDS

## **Read the report**

[\*Corruption and Crime Commission Annual Report 2019-20\*](#)

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