

TRANSCRIPT

INTEGRITY AND OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

Performance of the Victorian Integrity Agencies 2023/24 and 2024/25

Melbourne – Monday 16 February 2026

MEMBERS

Dr Tim Read – Chair

Hon Kim Wells – Deputy Chair

Ryan Batchelor

Jade Benham

Eden Foster

Paul Mercurio

Rachel Payne

Belinda Wilson

WITNESSES

David Wolf, Commissioner, and

Kate O'Neill, Director, Parliamentary Workplace Standards and Integrity Commission.

The CHAIR: We resume our broadcast for the Integrity and Oversight Committee's public hearing into the performance of the integrity agencies. Welcome back.

I have just got to explain a couple of things to the witnesses, so please bear with me. Evidence taken by this Committee is generally protected by parliamentary privilege. You are protected against any action for what you say here today, but if you repeat the same things elsewhere, including on social media, those comments will not be protected by that privilege. Any deliberately false or misleading evidence may be considered a contempt of Parliament.

All evidence given today is being recorded by Hansard. You will be provided with a proof version of the transcript to check once that is available. Verified transcripts will be placed on the Committee's website. Broadcasting or recording of the hearing by anyone other than Hansard is not permitted.

I welcome, from the Parliamentary Workplace Standards and Integrity Commission, Commissioner David Wolf and Director Kate O'Neill to give evidence at the hearing. We welcome any brief introductory remarks before we ask questions.

David WOLF: Thank you, Chair. I do not propose to make extensive opening remarks given the relative maturity of our organisation, aside to say that it is a privilege to establish and lead a commission of this type. The entire team and Kate and I are acutely aware of the responsibility that comes with that role, and we are very pleased to be here to talk about the Commission and our work this afternoon.

The CHAIR: Welcome. I might start then with a couple of questions. I would just be interested in a little bit of a run-down of your structure and staffing, your current EFT [equivalent full-time], where you are currently and how that has evolved over the – what is it? – 14 or so months of your existence.

David WOLF: Yes, just over that. Obviously one of the key parts of the implementation of the Commission was developing the structure, which was going to serve the purposes for the remit which we have under the legislation. In doing that we knew that we needed expertise, particularly in the case management and the process of dealing with referrers – people that are lodging material or information with us. We also knew that we needed expertise in running the business itself, the core corporate side of it, as well as engagement activities, the proactive side of the business and making sure that we have the right resources in place to meet that remit as well. Our current FTE [full-time equivalent] includes the two Commissioners – me and Natasha de Silva – and there are six full-time staff in the organisation: Kate and five others. Basically it is split between a reactive operations area and the proactive and business support area. In that, because we are such a small organisation, there is crossover with every role, so each of the team can assist in other parts of the business as required.

The CHAIR: Thank you. In your understandably brief annual report, given you had only been going for six months, there was nothing about your budget. I understand that that was to be incorporated in DPC's [Department of Premier and Cabinet] budget line.

David WOLF: Correct.

The CHAIR: We would be interested in a bit more detail on that, but particularly how we as a Committee and how Victorians can identify that information – your budget – how it breaks down and what you will be spending on various aspects of your operations in the future.

David WOLF: Sure. The rationale behind that, of course, was that there was budget committed for the establishment prior to the Commission commencing, and that was managed by the Department of Premier and Cabinet. In the first six months the Department continued to manage our budget until we landed the final operating procedure in terms of where our budget sits and who was going to assist us with our corporate functions, which at the end of the day will be the Department of Parliamentary Services – that is bedded down now. So as of this financial year we will be reporting the full, extensive figures of our budget in our annual report. But for the previous year it exists within the Department of Premier and Cabinet's annual report.

The CHAIR: All right.

Ryan BATCHELOR: Can I clarify something?

The CHAIR: Yes.

Ryan BATCHELOR: So from 2025/26 you will effectively be an entity in [Department of] Parliamentary Services?

David WOLF: No. We are established under the *Public Administration Act [2004 (Vic)]* as a special body. We are our own entity, albeit that we are buying corporate services from the Department of Parliamentary Services, but we will report on our own budget.

Ryan BATCHELOR: So in your 2025/26 annual report we will have a full set of financial statements and a full report on operations?

David WOLF: That is correct.

Ryan BATCHELOR: Will the 2026/27 Budget papers include separate, identifiable reporting on your performance measures?

David WOLF: So BP3 [Budget Paper 3] measures?

Ryan BATCHELOR: Yes.

David WOLF: Yes. They are under construction at the moment. We are still working with the Department of Treasury and Finance on the final elements of those. It is very close, but yes, they will be reported next financial year – not 2025/26, but 2026/27.

Ryan BATCHELOR: The finalisation of the agreed BP3 performance measures – are they subject to any discussion with any of the parliamentary committees?

David WOLF: I do not think so. You might remind me. I do not think they have been to this point, but in essence they will relate to timeliness, service and the proactive – the education and engagement facets of our remit.

Ryan BATCHELOR: It may be something you want to think about.

David WOLF: Yes.

The CHAIR: I suppose the other question that goes along with that is: do you think that your resources are sufficient for your current workload?

David WOLF: It is a very interesting question, because when we commenced we were not sure what the call on services would be, given that we are largely reactive. I do not have own-motion powers, so we are effectively driven by what comes in the front door. And we have our, as I said, proactive remit in terms of training, guidance and education, but in terms of the reactive work, we sit and wait for material to come in. We do not know what that volume is going to be, so we are seeing a steady increase of material coming to us now. At the moment I would say yes, the budget is sufficient, but that could change, particularly given the year we are in, an election year. Things may get a lot busier for us and, yes, we may have to see how we are going to allocate resources appropriately because of that.

Ryan BATCHELOR: Sorry, did you mention – I might have missed it in the answer – how many FTE you have got at the moment?

David WOLF: Six, so two Commissioners and six staff. In essence, if I can explain that, we made a decision not to employ specialist investigative and dispute resolution resources, given we were unsure about the volume of work that we had. What we have employed is a team with some expertise, but we are able to manage those processes. We are able to manage a dispute resolution process or manage an investigation, and where we need specialist resources we bring that in. In terms of perhaps evidence collection, forensic evidence collection or interviewing expertise, we might bring that in on a needs basis, and that is a far more responsible way.

Ryan BATCHELOR: So contract it in rather than have it in-house?

David WOLF: On a needs basis, yes. It means that if we have an underspend at the end of the year where we have not utilised those resources, then we have got budget to give back.

The CHAIR: By the time your annual report went to print you had had 13 referrals – or 13 complaints, are they?

David WOLF: Referrals. The designation is referral under our Act [*Parliamentary Workplace Standards and Integrity Act 2024 (Vic)*], yes.

The CHAIR: What are you up to now?

David WOLF: I will hand over to Kate for that. She is the keeper of all the statistics.

The CHAIR: Or do you want to just talk about the 12-month period?

Kate O'NEILL: No, we will do it now. What we are at now? No problem. The total referrals that we have received at this point in time is sitting at 30, so we have received an additional 17 referrals this financial year. I think that is as of today. Referrals are complaints that meet our jurisdiction under the Act, so broadly matters that we are empowered to deal with. We have also received quite a few – 19 matters – that we are not empowered to deal with and that we still put due time and resources into assessing, but that is not captured in our annual report from last year. However, this year we are going to consider broadening out what we report on in terms of the reports that come through to us, the issues people bring to us that are not matters that we are empowered to deal with.

David WOLF: I think the extension to that answer is when we commenced, our first priority was to gain awareness across the sector that we existed, and we are now into that phase of building confidence with people. They are aware of us now and then they have that confidence to come to us if issues arise.

The CHAIR: Thank you. I have got a few more questions, but I think it is time to let the rest of the Committee ask some questions, so Rachel Payne, would you like to?

Rachel PAYNE: Thank you, Chair, and lovely to meet you both. Thanks for coming and speaking with us today. Do you mind outlining for the Committee your procedures for accepting, assessing and providing an outcome of referrals, including timeframes and communication with referrers and the subjects of referrals, please?

Kate O'NEILL: Absolutely. I am happy to talk you through that. First, someone wants to come to us. They have an issue that they want to raise. They can raise that with us through our secure complaints portal called Elker or they can send an email. They can leave a voicemail message. They can write us a letter if they want to. Our focus at this stage is for the first step not to be a hurdle. We can accept anonymous referrals at this point and we can use this portal to engage in two-way encrypted chat with people who wish to remain anonymous at that point. We found this to be really useful for people who want to dip their toe in the water. Maybe they are unsure about whether their matter falls within our remit; they might have questions. Once this is received, through Elker or otherwise, our skilled Senior Complaints Officer will contact them personally within five business days, either by Elker chat or by any other method that they have opted to receive updates. And we are lucky to have a Senior Complaints Officer who has extensive experience in complaints handling across Victorian integrity bodies.

We then conduct a very careful assessment in line with our legislation. This involves speaking with the complainant and helping to talk through the issue and unpick any specific allegations that they might be raising. It is also a process, sometimes, of managing expectations when they have raised an issue with us that is beyond our remit. It is a fairly collaborative process. We can also make a formal request to them for information, and they have 90 days to provide that information to us before we are able to dismiss it. We can also request information at this stage from another person or body. So we might ask for procedural or administrative information, for example from DPS [Department of Parliamentary Services] or the Clerks of the Parliament, so we can understand the procedures that we need to, or we can make a more specific request under our legislation. At that point, we are prohibited from making a request of the person who is the subject of the allegation. That is under our legislation.

Sometimes these matters can be live if it is a workplace matter or dispute of some sort, which means that we will work with that complainant, make sure they are aware that they can withdraw their matter at any time and support them to some degree to provide the information that they need to help us make that full assessment. Then we undergo the full assessment against our jurisdiction, which takes a certain amount of rigour at this stage given that we are quite a new entity and the definition of parliamentary misconduct is increasingly clear to

us, but not necessarily clear to the people who make referrals, and that is something we are absolutely working on from a public engagement perspective. But it varies with respect to Minister and Member, and it also engages multiple different pieces of legislation: the *Parliamentary Administration Act*, the *Members of Parliament (Standards) Act [1978 (Vic)]* and a couple of other key policy and procedure documents. That is quite a rigorous process for us at the moment.

We have set a sort of provisional target where we get back to someone within 45 days. Our internal target is more like 30 days, and at the moment we are meeting that when we have all the information that we need; that is how long it takes us, if not less, to get back to someone with a definitive answer about how their matter is going to be handled. In terms of decision-making, at this stage, most decisions go to a meeting of the Commissioner for a decision, and again that is just out of the fact that we are a new entity, and we do not have years of precedent to go on; we do exercise a lot of caution with respect to making sure we are only taking on things that are within our remit and we are not knocking anything out that we should be considering. So at this stage in our entity's establishment, that is quite a process; Commissioners will then turn their minds to it and make a decision or request further information in a Commissioner meeting.

I think you also asked about information that we provide to the subjects of referrals.

Rachel PAYNE: Yes, please.

Kate O'NEILL: So that is another important consideration for us. It is very stressful – or tends to be quite stressful – to be under investigation, and we make all efforts to make people who are subject to our investigations aware of the steps of the process. We have extensive information sheets we provide that kind of signpost each step: when they are likely to hear from us, what is likely to happen and managing expectations around – we have strict confidentiality provisions, and they are balanced with our transparency requirements in terms of what we are required to publish at the conclusion of an investigation; in particular, all our full reports must be provided to either the Privileges Committee or the Premier. We make sure the person who is subject to the investigation understands those pathways and the consequences – the sanctions that we may be able to apply or recommend. We also make efforts to confirm someone's direct contact details and contact them discreetly before we, for example, send an email to a publicly available email address that other staff might have access to. Those are some of the considerations that we take. In terms of investigation time lines, we work to about four months, but we are setting six months as our target, noting that sometimes the complexity of investigations can differ.

Rachel PAYNE: Fantastic. Thank you.

David WOLF: If I could just add, one of the things we are really conscious of as well is, to the extent possible, providing people with information that is consumable, so it is not complex legal information. When we are providing an outcome, particularly to someone that has made a referral where we are dismissing it, we ensure that we explain why, and we have been doing it in person as well where we can. Certainly with the written information we are providing, we are putting perhaps more information in that than a lot of agencies do with a view to trying to provide that transparency.

Rachel PAYNE: I appreciate that. Thank you. Just to follow on, because it sounds like you have got lots of processes in place, but something formalised would be: have you established or are intending to establish a service charter to provide clear communication about how the Commission engages with referrers throughout the process?

David WOLF: I might lead off with that one. Our initial information was all contained on our website, which included quite extensive, frequently asked questions, so all the material that would be included in a service charter was contained in those frequently asked questions. We commenced a piece of work late last year; my team consulted with other integrity agencies, we saw what documents they had available, and we commenced the piece of work to produce our own. That was approved in early January this year, and it went live last week, so there is a service charter on our web page now.

Rachel PAYNE: Fantastic. Thank you.

The CHAIR: Good. Thanks very much. Let us go to Belinda Wilson.

Belinda WILSON: My question has been answered, so I think we can probably go to the next one.

The CHAIR: Actually, you are right; it has. Why don't we go to Eden Foster.

Eden FOSTER: Thank you, Chair, and thank you to David and Kate for being with us today. In the

establishment of the Commission, what considerations have you had for the welfare of referrers and disclosers providing information to you, and do you have continuing projects in the witness welfare space as well?

David WOLF: Yes, great question. Thank you for that. That really affords us the opportunity to set out the provisions we have got in place, and this is one of our key considerations. Our Act requires us to have consideration for the safety, privacy and wellbeing of anyone that makes a referral; notwithstanding that it is in the legislation, it is our responsibility, in any event, to ensure that is the case. So we have quite a number of provisions in place, and I will get Kate to talk about the specifics, but it is important to note that the expertise in the Commission comes from my fellow Commissioner Natasha, who is a nationally recognised expert in workplace cultures, human rights, equality and inclusion and very experienced in that space. Kate herself has a master's in social work. Our Senior Complaints Officer has about 20 years' experience in dealing with complainants in really sensitive spaces. I come with the background of – it is a horrible thing to say – nearly 40 years in the space of dealing with witnesses in some quite traumatic situations. So we are very attuned to what is required to ensure that we have a trauma-informed approach and have the best outcomes for those parties that take that step forward and make a referral to our Commission. Kate, do you want to talk about the specifics?

Kate O'NEILL: Yes, sure. In addition to making sure we have the capabilities in-house, from a systems processes perspective, we have a safety and wellbeing policy that guides all of our work. We sought some early feedback from Integrity Oversight Victoria on this, which was really useful for us. We have clear procedures for assessing and escalating any risks, so escalating threats of harm to self and others, dealing with challenging behaviour fairly and respectfully. We also conduct a full safety and wellbeing assessment and a Charter of Human Rights assessment before the application of any coercive powers.

To get down more to the specifics of what we do to make sure our complaint-handling and investigation processes are trauma informed, I think the first thing that we do is understand that retelling a story can be re-traumatising for people and also understand that people who have experienced trauma can act in ways that are a little bit different or unexpected. People might be distressed, or they might be detached. They might be a little bit aggressive, or sometimes they are not communicating so clearly. We work with people so they can get their point across and so that we can give full weight to the potential allegations they might be making.

We also make sure that people are informed and have control over their matter. It is important for them to understand the process from start to finish, what happens next and that they can withdraw at any time if they wish to. Even if we are halfway through an investigation, if that person who made the referral wishes to withdraw because it is not going to work out for them, then we are bound by our legislation; we need to cease handling that matter. There is an exception for public interest disclosures, but I speak specifically within the *Parliamentary Workplace Standards and Integrity Act [2024 (Vic)]*.

We also work with the people who we interact with, with equal parts empathy and clarity, making sure that we are really clear and manage people's expectations of what we can and cannot do for them. We are an impartial body. We weigh up the facts, but we can also provide empathy as we do that, making sure that we validate people, that we are always respectful and always professional.

I guess it comes back again to having the skills to identify safety and wellbeing risks, so really understanding the kinds of changes in behaviour that might mean that we prompt someone to seek supports that are available to them. We have a long list of things that we can refer people to. For anyone who is employed through the Department of Parliamentary Services, there is an Employee Assistance Program, and we will encourage people to contact that free service if they need to, otherwise we will help that person to connect with the supports available to them in their community. From start to finish, it is a really big consideration of ours.

Eden FOSTER: Fantastic. As a psychologist, you are speaking my language, so good to hear.

The CHAIR: All right. Thank you. I might just ask that we keep the answers a bit concise just so that we can get through the rest of the questions in the time we have got. Let us go to Kim Wells.

Kim WELLS: You mentioned public interest disclosures. What engagement did you have with IBAC [Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission] in establishing your processes in regard to –

David WOLF: Indeed. As part of the integrity system, we have consulted with IBAC on a number of issues in terms of establishment of policies and processes but certainly the *Public Interest Disclosure Act [2012 (Vic), 'PID Act']* as well, which I am very well versed in, having been at that agency for some years. There are clearly some challenges with our legislation and the PID Act. Our legislation effectively mirrors the *Public Interest Disclosure Act* in terms of the confidentiality provisions, the protections against any civil action and the consequences for detrimental action for a person making a referral. It is mirrored to some

extent. Then the definition of what is considered improper conduct is largely the same definition as parliamentary misconduct. So there is a clear crossover. One of our difficulties is explaining that to someone who is in the course of making a referral, about which pathway is available to them, and we are asked the question: which one should they take? We cannot provide that advice, but we can set out the information. It is quite confusing for those that are proposing to make a referral. I think that there are some challenges with that definition of what 'improper conduct' captures, like workplace conduct and disputes. I think that is where the difficulty lies for us.

Kim WELLS: Have you had any referrals from IBAC, or do you see in the foreseeable future referrals from IBAC coming your way?

David WOLF: Yes, absolutely, as part of that relationship with the integrity systems to ensure that there is a 'no wrong door' policy, and we see that working well, I am reluctant to give numbers, but we have had interaction with IBAC, particularly with public interest disclosure referrals, and we see it working well through the course of the year. That includes the other integrity partners as well – particularly the VEC [Victorian Electoral Commission] might be a relevant agency as we get closer to November. But certainly with IBAC, we have a close relationship from that perspective.

The CHAIR: Thank you. Let us go to Paul Mercurio.

Paul MERCURIO: Thank you. Integrity Oversight Victoria's [IOV] annual report stated that it had oversight of the Commission's use of coercive powers 2024/25 and provided guidance to assist PWSIC to create a framework to exercise its powers. Can you outline what you have done to establish a framework for exercising the Commission's powers and how you have engaged the IOV in that process?

David WOLF: Absolutely. Our legislation, to a large extent, sets out the process for the use of coercive powers. That is an investigation request under our Act. That is a requirement for a person to provide information or attend for the purposes of an interview. So we set out the broad framework and then consulted with IOV, who provided us with detailed information around the use of coercive tools, and they effectively merged together and became our overarching policy and guidelines in relation to the use of those tools. It was a really effective engagement. The use of their expertise was welcomed, and I think the process is robust.

Paul MERCURIO: Cool. Thank you. Last question: the establishment of a new commission requires engagement with the general public and stakeholders to provide advice about new processes. What stakeholders have you prioritised engaging with and what initiatives have you undertaken and do you continue to undertake to share information about the Commission and your referral process?

David WOLF: In terms of the engagement activity, we prioritised the key cohort at the start, which was Members of Parliament, so we sought information from a vast number of Members, which was really illuminating. And then we connected with the people that work in the parliamentary precinct, so the workforce that operate this building and the building across the road. Again, that was quite useful for us. And the next cohort were the electoral office staff – a little bit more difficult for us to reach out to given the broad regional locations, but we did that through a number of forums and sought some information and provided information about what we do. The next step in terms of our engagement was the integrity system itself. So that was a two-way conversation about what we do and seeking information from those agencies about what they do and where the crossover might be, so sharing information for that purpose. And then our next step is those people in the VPS [Victorian Public Service] in particular that might have contact with Members of Parliament, so reaching out to that cohort. And members of the public are next; that is next on our work plan. It is a big undertaking to reach out to all those particular groups and develop the relationships and the feedback. I have got to say that the Parliamentary Ethics Committee was one of the key bodies that we were looking forward to building that relationship with, and that has been very useful to date.

Paul MERCURIO: Okay. Thank you. It sounds like you are doing a great job. Well done.

David WOLF: Hopefully.

Paul MERCURIO: Getting there.

The CHAIR: Thank you. Ryan Batchelor.

Ryan BATCHELOR: Thanks, Chair. Speaking of the jobs you have done, you have prepared one report on an investigation tabled in the Parliament. I am not interested in the ins and outs, but the report itself tells us about some teething issues with the way the office is being set up. Your report says at point 6 of the investigation process:

During the investigation –

and this was an investigation about two Members –

the Commission became aware of a technical issue that may cause ambiguity with respect to the investigation request notices.

It is written in a very passive way – you ‘became aware’. What is, I think, interesting for this Committee is to understand whether that was something that you as a body picked up through your own internal processes or it was something brought to your attention as the defect that got in the way of the smooth running of the investigation.

David WOLF: The potential defect.

Ryan BATCHELOR: Potential defect.

David WOLF: The issue was identified in conjunction with Integrity Oversight Victoria, and it related to two elements of our legislation which talk about the power and the function. What we established was that a power was appropriately exercised in relation to an investigative request, but there was a question about the function itself and whether that was clear in the notice about who had exercised the power. We ultimately sought some additional advice, and it remained arguable, as most legal advice is. It had no material effect on the investigation. Had it had that effect, then we would have sought another remedy, but it was not necessary in this instance. But what it allowed us to do was change our process so that it is not a question in the future. It was effectively resolved in that we have altered our process to make sure it is not ambiguous in the future.

Ryan BATCHELOR: Can I just go to that point: you mentioned it was something that was dealt with, with IOV.

David WOLF: It was identified by –

Ryan BATCHELOR: Identified by IOV. Just for the benefit of the Committee, because we are still understanding how you operate: how do you relate to IOV? I do not want the details of this case, but when you are going through your processes, how is your ongoing relationship at a day-to-day level with IOV? That will tell us then how this came out.

David WOLF: Yes, absolutely. One of the really appropriate measures that is in place is that IOV have a provision where we are required to provide them information when we are issuing a notice using our coercive powers.

Ryan BATCHELOR: This would have been a notice using coercive powers –

David WOLF: Yes, correct.

Ryan BATCHELOR: that then triggered a standard review upstairs, so to speak.

David WOLF: Yes, a review by Integrity Oversight Victoria, who questioned one of the provisions, which [we] went back and had a look at. As I said, we went through the process of seeking advice and determining whether it would have an effect on the investigation. It was a circumstance, I could say, where the process worked – it worked really well. Aside from that, as we have mentioned before, the oversight body have been very helpful in reviewing other processes and policies as well to make sure that we are contemporary.

Ryan BATCHELOR: So you feel that, as you roll out your processes and begin to do investigations, your own processes are evolving and the relationship between what you are doing and the oversight you have got from IOV is, without wanting to put words in your mouth, smoothing out the processes to make them best practice from the start. I am just trying to figure out –

David WOLF: I would like to think they are bedded down now. We have spent a lot of time and done a significant amount of work to develop our processes in line with our legislation and advice, so I would like to think they are bedded down now. We will continue, obviously, to provide that information as required to IOV when we exercise our powers, and should there be another circumstance where an anomaly arises, we will certainly look into that. But I would like to think they are pretty well settled now.

Ryan BATCHELOR: Without going into any specifics, has IOV raised any concerns about any other exercise of your coercive powers subsequent to the first incident?

David WOLF: No. One of the other elements I will say to that is that the reason we included that in the report was one of our guiding principles is about transparency and we thought it was appropriate that we

identified that that was an issue.

Ryan BATCHELOR: Okay. It is interesting for us to tease that out, because it was a little unclear, reading the report, how much of this was as a result of your processes working, so to speak, or applicants or their legal representatives coming and giving you a sort of ‘Hang on a minute’.

David WOLF: No, it certainly was not that set of circumstances. Ultimately, to have that provision tested – if we did not agree with the view, the appropriate avenue to have it tested would have been the courts. But it simply was not necessary in this case because, as I said, it did not have any material effect.

Ryan BATCHELOR: My only other question, sorry: you have had 30 referrals – you said an extra 17. How many of them were withdrawn or dismissed?

Kate O’NEILL: I can say at this point none of those have been withdrawn. Some are still under consideration, but I would say that of the majority where a decision has been made, the majority have been dismissed.

Ryan BATCHELOR: Okay.

Paul MERCURIO: Just out of interest, you also said that there were 19 matters that were not part of your remit. I was just wondering, because if people are coming to you with concerns, they are legitimate to some extent, and then I just worry about their health and wellbeing if you have said, ‘No, we can’t help.’ What happens to them?

David WOLF: We, to the extent we can, try and provide advice as to where they can take up their issue. Often it is a really difficult piece of advice. It might be ‘Go to your local Member’ or it might be ‘Go to the Minister’. But to the extent possible, we try and give them guidance where we can. It is not about moving them on to the next agency. We try and explain what our remit is, so they are fully across what we do, and what the best approach is.

Paul MERCURIO: Okay.

Ryan BATCHELOR: Of those, so probably either the ones that are in or out – broad percentages, if you can – how many of them are from civilians, like members of the public? How much of what is coming in is from members of the general public versus people who are connected to a parliamentary workplace in some way, shape or form, would you say?

David WOLF: I would say it is a pretty even spread. What we do know is that the receipt and assessment of referrals is the hardest part of the work we do, particularly when we have to say no to someone who is really engaged in their matter, and often the answer we give is an answer that is not well received. We try and explain it to the extent we can, but it is a really difficult part of our business. We have one matter that is being tested before the courts at the moment, so it is not as simple as getting a referral in and saying no. It goes on and on, and it draws on our resources over time. But that is a pathway that is available for people to have tested again, so we will work with that.

The CHAIR: Thank you. Any further questions? All right. Thank you, Committee. Thank you very much, David Wolf, Commissioner, and Kate O’Neill, Director of the Parliamentary Workplace Standards and Integrity Commission. I declare the hearing closed.

Committee adjourned.