



Media release

Integrity and Oversight Committee

Committee reviews performance of integrity agencies

The Victorian Parliament's Integrity and Oversight Committee presented its report today on the Performance of the Victorian Integrity Agencies 2021/22.

The report reviews the performance of the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission (IBAC), the Office of the Victorian Information Commissioner (OVIC), the Victorian Inspectorate (VI) and the Victorian Ombudsman (VO) during 2021/22. The agencies appeared before the Committee at public hearings in July and August 2023 and answered written questions on notice on their performance.

IBAC and the VI received significantly more complaints in 2021/22 than in the previous reporting period, consistent with the longer-term trends, making it increasingly difficult for these agencies to reduce delays in responding to complaints. The VO, on the other hand, was able to finalise most complaints within a month of receiving them and has achieved significant success in resolving complaints through its new conciliation function.

Victorians requesting information under Freedom of Information (FOI) law also encountered delays, and OVIC, despite taking significant action to address the underlying causes of this, has been unable to resolve the problem, in part because it has no power to direct agencies or ministers to decide FOI requests by a certain date. The Committee is concerned that recent significant funding cuts to OVIC will reduce its ability to meet performance targets and perform its statutory functions. The Committee therefore recommends that sufficient funding be restored to OVIC to allow it to conduct an independent review of FOI Professional Standards.

According to Committee Chair, Dr Tim Read MP, "The funding cuts to OVIC are alarming, given the importance of the FOI Professional Standards, and the coming review of the FOI Act. The Government must give agencies sufficient funds to meet their statutory requirements."

The Committee's report makes 10 key recommendations, including that:

- the Victorian Government consider providing OVIC with funding to pursue a more proactive investigations and audits schedule and to support development of its evaluation and assessment framework
- OVIC be granted the power under the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (Vic) to require an agency or minister to make a decision regarding a FOI request by a certain date
- the *Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act 1998* (Vic) and other relevant legislation be amended to enable OVIC to obtain review application data held by VCAT
- the legislation underpinning the Information Security Incident Notification Scheme be amended to require that notifications under the Scheme are made to OVIC at the time of the incident
- IBAC seek legal advice on whether its practice of providing embargoed copies of special reports to media outlets in advance of tabling accords with the privileges of Parliament
- the Victorian Government review the effectiveness and efficiency of the coercive powers notification scheme.

The report is available on the Committee's webpage at: [IOC report](#).

Further information on the Committee is available on its [webpage](#).

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