



Inspector of the National Anti-Corruption Commission

Thank you for the opportunity to make an opening statement.

As you are aware, I commenced as the inaugural Inspector on 1 July 2023, having been appointed on a part-time basis for a 7-year term.

The Office

I am assisted by 2 full-time staff; a Director and Administration Officer. Those staff occupy Australian Government Solicitor premises in Brisbane. Further assistance is provided by other Attorney-General's Department (AGD) staff on an ad-hoc or temporary basis, as required.

As I am not a Commonwealth entity under the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013*, but a secondary statutory entity within the AGD, AGD provides enabling services for me to fulfil my functions.

The Budget

For the 2023-24 financial year the Government allocated a budget of \$1,352,958 for my establishment and activities. \$114,528 was paid to AGD to cover my overheads. The balance of \$1,238,430 was allocated to my remuneration, staff remuneration and other costs, including consultancies and the like.

My actual spend for 2023-24 was \$684,405. This underspend is largely due to not commencing with the full staffing profile that was expected.

My budget allocation for the next three financial years until 2026-27 on current workload is adequate, however, that may well change depending on the volume and complexity of complaints.

Complaints

The National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC) Commissioner must refer any NACC corruption issues he becomes aware of, to me as the Inspector. During the reporting period, two NACC corruption issues were referred. They are set out at section 7.3, page 8, of my Annual Report.

For the 2023-24 financial year, I received over 1300 contacts.

1164 were specific complaints about the NACC's decision not to investigate referrals from the Royal Commission into the Robodebt Scheme. 50 were more general complaints. About 85% of the 50 were complaints that the NACC did not investigate their concerns.

Seven complaints were made about the service standards the complainants said they received when making a referral to the NACC. Most of these complaints concerned the timeframes in which the NACC responded to their referral, having regard to the published guidelines by the NACC; that is, they did not receive responses in the time indicated by NACC guidelines.

There were 2 complaints, other than the Robodebt referrals, received which I considered could amount to maladministration. They are set out at section 7.4.1, pages 9-10, of my Annual Report.

I also received about 160 enquiries and other contacts. Of these

- just under half, 76 did not relate to NACC
- about one third, 46 were addressed to the NACC or contained content which should have been addressed to the NACC
- ten per cent, 16 of the enquiries related to difficulties with making a referral to the NACC



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Although I understand this hearing is focussed on my annual report, I also note that during the annual reporting period I commenced an inquiry into the decision by NACC not to pursue the Robodebt Royal Commission referrals. That inquiry became an agency maladministration or officer misconduct investigation. I published my complaint investigation report on 30 October 2024, following the completion of my investigation.

I welcome questions from the Committee.

22 November 2024