

JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE CORRUPTION AND CRIME COMMISSION

Seventh Report — Annual report 2021–22 — Tabling

HON DR STEVE THOMAS (South West — Leader of the Opposition) [10.03 am]: I am directed to present the seventh report of the Joint Standing Committee on the Corruption and Crime Commission titled *Annual report 2021–22*.

[See paper [1926](#).]

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: I am pleased to table the Joint Standing Committee on the Corruption and Crime Commission’s annual report for the year 2021–22. It was a busy year for the committee. It held 17 deliberative meetings, five formal evidence hearings with 22 witnesses, tabled six reports with a combined total of 56 findings and 16 recommendations, and initiated one own-motion inquiry.

Reflecting on the six reports, the third report, tabled in February 2022, discussed the work of Matthew Zilko, SC, the Parliamentary Inspector of the Corruption and Crime Commission, including the increase in investigations by his office, his views on the potential need for legislative change to ensure that the commission provides sufficient information to complainants, and the usefulness of police body-worn camera footage to integrity investigations.

The fourth report, tabled in March 2022, highlighted flaws in the definition of “public officer” in the Corruption, Crime and Misconduct Act 2003. The scope and clarity of the definition of public officer is of great importance because the commission, parliamentary inspector and agencies may only deal with an allegation of serious misconduct—that is, corruption—against a public officer as that term is defined. The parliamentary inspector raised concerns with this definition and the Corruption and Crime Commissioner, Hon John McKechnie, KC, noted that legislation has not evolved to recognise the public sector’s increasing use of varying employment arrangements, including contractual arrangements. The committee recommended that the Attorney General direct the Department of Justice to review the definition of public officer as part of its current project to modernise the Corruption, Crime and Misconduct Act 2003. We are pleased that the government accepted this recommendation. I also look forward to seeing the outcomes of the Department of Justice’s project to reform the Corruption, Crime and Misconduct Act 2003, and a new bill to modernise that act.

This year, the committee also commenced an own-motion inquiry titled “What happens next? Beyond a finding of serious misconduct”. We are inquiring into what happens after a public officer is found to have engaged in serious misconduct, including disciplinary and other sanctions imposed by government agencies, criminal prosecutions arising from serious misconduct investigations, and the roles and systemic response of various agencies. There is limited public information about the personal outcomes and institutional responses that follow a finding of serious misconduct. Instances of serious misconduct can shine a light on action needed at an agency or sector-wide level to prevent serious misconduct and enhance the public sector’s capacity to prevent misconduct. We are gathering evidence and conducting hearings to progress this inquiry.

I take this opportunity to thank the parliamentary inspector, Mr Matthew Zilko, SC, and the Corruption and Crime Commissioner, Hon John McKechnie, KC, and their staff for their productive engagement with the committee. This assists the committee in undertaking its oversight role. I also thank my colleagues on the committee: Mr Matthew Hughes, MLA, who is the chair; Mr Shane Love, MLA; and Hon Klara Andric, MLC, who is absent from the chamber on urgent personal business. I add my personal thanks to Suzanne Veletta, the principal research officer, and Jovita Hogan, the research officer, for their continued support of the successful work of the committee.