

INFORMATION COMMISSIONER — EXTERNAL REVIEWS BACKLOG

**1006. Hon GIZ WATSON to the Attorney General:**

I refer to the article in *The West Australian* on 20 November 2012, “State blocks Spratt compo bid”, which reported that the time frame for an external review of freedom of information decisions by the Information Commissioner is now an average of eight and a half months.

- (1) What is the current backlog for external reviews by the Office of the Information Commissioner?
- (2) What strategies does the Attorney General have to assist the Information Commissioner in addressing this backlog?
- (3) What additional funding has been or will be provided to the Information Commissioner to address this backlog?

**Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN replied:**

I thank the honourable member for some notice of question.

- (1) The Information Commissioner advises that as at yesterday’s date—27 November—there are 106 external review applications before him; 64 of those matters, or 60 per cent, are assigned to an officer for resolution; and 42 of those matters, or 40 per cent, are not yet assigned. The average age of all 106 external review applications is 221 calendar days. The Information Commissioner publishes performance statistics on his website that show the number of external reviews currently on hand, their average age and the number of external review applications received and completed every financial year. This information is updated monthly.
- (2) To ensure the independence and integrity of the external review process, the Information Commissioner is independent of government and reports directly to the Parliament. While I retain full portfolio budget responsibility for the commissioner’s budget, it would be inappropriate of me to purport to exercise any direction or control over the management or operation of the commissioner’s office.
- (3) The government provided the Information Commissioner with an ongoing budget increase of \$300 000 per annum in the 2011–12 state budget over and above previous allocations. The budget also increased the commissioner’s full-time equivalent ceiling from 10 to 12. I understand that the commissioner has created two additional full-time positions dedicated to the external review function.