

Operation Impala

A report on misuse of confidential information in the Queensland public sector

Overview | February 2020

Improper access to and disclosure of confidential information by public sector employees has been one of the Crime and Corruption Commission's (CCC) key areas of focus since 2016.

Operation Impala was a CCC corruption investigation authorised to examine the practices of a representative group of Queensland public sector agencies regarding their management of confidential personal information.

Operation Impala examined the impacts of unauthorised access to and disclosure of information both on agencies and on the people whose information is accessed or disclosed to third parties without their knowledge or consent.

Breaches of personal information were found to have ongoing and long-lasting effects including stress, feelings of vulnerability, financial loss, and frustration with the difficulty of obtaining redress or adequate compensation.

It also sought agencies' views on why their staff continued to access information without legitimate reason to do so. The main drivers of this behaviour were identified as personal interest (curiosity), the desire to obtain a material benefit, relationships that could make some employees more susceptible to misusing confidential information, and the personal circumstances of an individual.

The CCC's 18 recommendations are informed by agencies' experiences and insights and designed to assist individual agencies strengthen their practices as well as improve consistency across the wider public sector.

The table below summarises the recommendations.

| Recommendation | No. |
|---|----------------|
| Introduce a range of technical and organisational enhancements to strengthen information management systems and create a more privacy-aware culture | 1-9, 18 |
| Create a new offence in the Criminal Code that will be better suited to offending related to misuse of confidential information | 10 |
| Improve remedial avenues available for victims of misuse of confidential personal information | 13, 17 |
| Extend and clarify the Office of the Information Commissioner's powers and practices | 11, 12, 14, 15 |
| Revise and consolidate the Information Privacy Principles and National Privacy Principles into a single set of privacy principles | 16 |



For more detail and to read the recommendations in context, see the Operation Impala report: www.ccc.qld.gov.au/operation-impala