



Crime and Corruption Commission
QUEENSLAND

Investigation Apricot

An investigation into alleged corrupt conduct at the
Parole Board Queensland

October 2026



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14 October 2026

The Honourable Mark Furner MP
Member for Ferny Grove
Chairperson, Parliamentary Crime and Corruption Committee
Parliament House
George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000

The Honourable Pat Weir MP
Speaker of the Legislative Assembly
Parliament House
George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000

The Honourable Deb Frecklington MP
Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for Integrity
1 William Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Mr Furner, Mr Speaker and Attorney-General,

In accordance with section 69(1)(b) of the *Crime and Corruption Act 2001*, the Crime and Corruption Commission hereby furnishes to you its report on *Investigation Apricot – An investigation into alleged corrupt conduct at the Parole Board Queensland*.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'B A Barbour'.

Yours sincerely

Bruce Barbour
Chairperson

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Purpose of this public report

1. This is a public report of the Crime and Corruption Commission's (CCC) investigation into conduct at the Parole Board Queensland (PBQ), including allegations of corrupt conduct made against its former President, Mr Michael Byrne KC and the former Minister for Corrective Services, Ms Nikki Boyd MP.
2. This report highlights:
 - a) the consequences of failures to clearly demarcate roles and responsibilities between a statutory body, its administrative arm and its 'parent' department
 - b) the consequences of failure to create and maintain unambiguous policies relating to the recruitment and appointment, working conditions, leave and financial entitlements of appointed Board members
 - c) the need to ensure that all staff know how to correctly interpret policies and appropriate channels exist to clarify expenditure or entitlements,
 - d) the potential for corruption in any environment that does not have detailed and unambiguous policies.
3. In preparing and publishing this public report the CCC is subject to various limitations discussed in Annexure 1.

Procedural fairness

4. Between 31 March and 23 July 2026, the CCC prepared a draft of a proposed public report which contained adverse comments.
5. Written notice containing the draft report (or excerpts of the report) was furnished to relevant parties, as well as the Department of Corrective Services and the PBQ, seeking any proposed submissions.
6. The CCC received responses from each of these relevant parties.
7. In their responses to the CCC, three of the parties declined to make any submissions.
8. The Honourable Mark Ryan MP provided a submission which proposed some minor amendments to the contents of the report. The proposed amendments have been adopted by the CCC.



Establishment and governance of the PBQ and operational environment 2017–2024

Initial appointments

9. In 2016, Mr Walter Sofronoff KC conducted an independent review of Queensland's parole system and on 1 December 2016 delivered the Queensland Parole System Review Report Final Report to Government. The report recommended amalgamation of three separate parole boards into a single Parole Board.
10. On 16 February 2017, the then Premier announced Mr Michael Byrne KC as the President-designate of the PBQ. In May 2017, the *Corrective Services Act 2006* (CS Act) was amended to establish the PBQ as an independent statutory authority within the then Department of Justice and Attorney-General (DJAG).
11. Initial public communication by the then Minister for Corrective Services, Mr Mark Ryan MP (former Minister Ryan), indicated all appointments to the PBQ would be filled by way of open merit-based recruitment processes, with the Director-General of DJAG responsible for the same. Due to an expedited timeframe for the establishment of the PBQ, these arrangements were later amended to allow the President to nominate a pool of suitable candidates from which two Deputy Presidents were to be appointed by the Minister for Corrective Services. The nominees selected were subsequently directly appointed to the Deputy President positions by former Minister Ryan on five-year contracts.
12. However, in expediting the recruitment process to facilitate the PBQ's establishment prior to 3 July 2017, the appointments recommended by the then DJAG failed to include all the necessary and intended terms and conditions required to facilitate the duties of the Professional Board Members (PBMs), including the President and the Deputy President(s). This failure included an absence of role descriptions outlining the necessary qualifications, experience and skills to perform the roles and failed to set out the details of remuneration and other employee entitlements.
13. In addition, the initial appointments of the President and Deputy President roles failed to provide for a number of conditions of employment including the remuneration or entitlement details of the positions, details regarding hours of duty, superannuation and/or leave entitlements. Despite subsequent amendments to rectify these issues, the omissions led to confusion about appointees' entitlements and the duty requirements of the PBMs.

Entitlements of the President

14. The entitlements and employment conditions of the President were later detailed within the Executive Council Minutes (ECM 311) of 3 August 2017 relating to Mr Byrne KC's appointment. ECM 311 referred to Mr Byrne KC receiving the 'prescribed salary', which is defined in schedule 4 to the CS Act to mean the total of the annual rate of salary, and annual rate of jurisprudential allowance (JA) and expense-of-office allowance (EoO), payable to a Supreme Court Judge, other than the Chief Justice or President of the Court of Appeal, under the *Judicial Remuneration Act 2007* (JR Act).
15. When considering what was permissible or what limitations applied to Mr Byrne KC as President in respect of his allowances, the legislation guidance is ambiguous due to its reference to judicial officers. The investigation did not identify any guidance or policies developed or recommended by QCS, the PBQ or the PBQ Secretariat (PBQS) to former Minister Ryan to address what relevant allowances were permitted, how entitlements were to be



processed, or who (or what position) was empowered to approve the payment of entitlement claims.

16. Similarly, the 'prescribed salary' of the Deputy Presidents is also defined in schedule 4 to the CS Act to mean the total of the annual rate of salary, and annual rate of JA and EoO, payable to a District Court Judge, other than the Chief Judge or a retired acting District Court Judge, under the JR Act.
17. The lack of clarity about the President's and Deputy Presidents' entitlements, and the authority in relation to the appointment and determination of entitlements of PBMs, appear to have contributed to complaints about the President's conduct being made to the CCC.
18. Similarly, issues with PBM entitlements would later arise through the ECM dictating that PBMs were to have employment terms and conditions equivalent to those applying to Senior Officers in the public service as per the Public Sector Commission (PSC) directives, however, also articulating other conditions of employment incongruent with Senior Officer conditions. The investigation did not identify policies developed or recommended by QCS, the PBQ or the PBQS to former Minister Ryan, nor any guidance or direction provided by former Minister Ryan, to address this ambiguity and inconsistency.

Establishment of the PBQS

19. The PBQ was set up as an independent statutory authority focused on consideration and determination of parole applications and related responsibility to ensure community safety. Its administrative arm, the PBQS, was established under the CS Act specifically to perform administrative functions on behalf of the PBQ.
20. While the PBQ was initially set up within DJAG in 2017, subsequent machinery of government changes in December 2017 established Queensland Corrective Services (QCS) as a discrete stand-alone agency, with the PBQ and the PBQS becoming part of the newly established QCS.
21. From the outset, the relationship between these entities was complicated and ambiguous in terms of structure, reporting arrangements, governance and policy frameworks and decision-making authority.
22. Appointed members of the PBQ, including the President, Deputy President(s) and PBMs – and anyone acting in those positions – are not 'public sector employees' as defined in s.12 of the *Public Sector Act 2022* or its predecessor legislation. The President reports to the Minister for Corrective Services, and appointed members report to the President.
23. Importantly, QCS policies do not apply directly to the President, Deputy President(s) and PBMs and anyone acting in those positions.
24. Despite this, the PBQS is part of QCS, staffed by QCS officers who are public sector employees, and is subject to QCS policies as well as other relevant public sector obligations and responsibilities.
25. The PBQS has decision-making authority for various administrative activities relating to the PBQS staff (who are appointed under the *Public Sector Act 2022*), such as leave arrangements, acting engagements, higher duties, and allowances. However, PBQS approvals on such administrative matters also affect PBQ operational matters, for which the President is responsible. In cases where a decision involved both the administrative responsibility of the PBQS and the operational responsibility of the President, it was unclear who held overall authority for the decision. This confusion regarding decision-making authority would result in difficulties for CCC investigators in determining under what legitimate authority decisions were made at the PBQ, particularly when undertaken by PBQS staff.



26. The PBQS is funded by the QCS and is responsible for the allocation and application of funds assigned to the PBQ. In respect of the processes conducted by QCS on behalf of the PBQ, financial management controls and policies are maintained via compliance with the QCS Financial Management Manual, QCS Procurement policies and procedures and Delegation of Authority. Transactions against the PBQ budget allocation are transparent and approved by PBQS finance staff and reconciliations of expenditure are reviewed and approved by PBQS finance staff.

Governance and policy frameworks

27. Allegations were made to the CCC about misuse of authority, non-compliance with policy, inappropriate financial claims or approval of such claims. Accordingly, the CCC's investigation was required to establish what governance and policy frameworks were in place in relation to the operation of the PBQ and the PBQS. In this regard, the investigation identified a lack of relevant policies, procedures or guidelines maintained by QCS, the PBQS or the PBQ to assist the appointed PBMs to both understand their entitlements and the process to obtain and/or reconcile them.
28. A further issue involved uncertainty around the authority (delegated or otherwise) to approve PBQ appointees' entitlement claims, acting engagements or higher duties. Despite the PBQS being responsible for the administration activities of the PBQ, and section 242E of the *Corrective Services Act 2006* providing that the Minister may make guidelines about policies to help the PBQ in performing its functions, the investigation did not identify policies developed or recommended by QCS, the PBQ or the PBQS to former Minister Ryan, nor any guidance or direction provided by former Minister Ryan, to address this ambiguity and inconsistency.
29. There is no evidence to demonstrate the PBQS sought or received any guidance regarding the meaning of the conditions and terms of PBQ appointments, or requirements for related expense approvals. The PBQS appear to have independently developed and applied their own relevant processes and approvals.
30. As a result of the lack of clarity about delegations and authorities in the PBQS regarding PBQ matters, PBQS staff failed to challenge or apply reasonable oversight to PBMs' requisitions or applications, seemingly because of their lack of belief that they had the authority to do so.
31. The functions and processes of the PBQ, and the PBQS, which suffered from the lack of clear policy guidance included:
- the duties, responsibilities and financial and leave entitlements of appointed members, including the President
 - the process to appoint people to PBQ and PBQS positions, including the process for recruitment and appointment to temporary positions
 - the demarcation of roles and responsibilities between PBMs and the staff of the PBQS
 - the responsibility to keep records of PBQ and PBQS decisions, particularly those related to recruitment and appointments, and
 - the requirements for performance reporting and related public statements.



Increases in workload and service delivery pressures

32. A review of the PBQ's annual reports show sustained and significant increase in its workload over time, driven by increasing prisoner populations and the corresponding rise in parole applications and suspensions considered by the PBQ. The investigation identified that resource and time demands associated with responding to an increasing number of judicial reviews adversely affected the PBQ's capacity to perform its core function of determining parole matters within required timeframes, contributing to a further increase in out-of-time decisions and judicial review activity.
33. Shortly after the establishment of the PBQ, legislative amendments were introduced by government, including the 'no body, no parole' laws, which significantly increased the complexity of parole decision-making. Further, these amendments required the President to personally oversee affected applications.¹
34. Additionally, the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 resulted in prison lockdowns to assist in managing the safety of prisoners and to curtail the transmission of COVID-19 within prisons. These restrictions in turn led to expanded prisoner eligibility for exceptional circumstances applications, leading to increases in judicial review applications following adverse decisions. Collectively, these developments placed significant additional operational demands on the PBQ and necessitated the engagement of additional staff to maintain capacity to ensure it could deliver its functions, duties and activities.
35. Funding was provided to the PBQ to establish additional 'operating boards' to meet the increased demand. The additional boards were approved by the Minister and the QCS Commissioner and established through collaboration between QCS, the PBQ and the PBQS. These operating boards were comprised largely of QCS positions, and an additional PBM position separate to those offices already created by GiC appointment.
36. Except for the PBM role, the QCS Commissioner was authorised to create and appoint to the required positions. However, the PBM role required an additional step, namely a GiC appointment to establish the additional statutory office in order to engage additional Acting PBMs. The failure to establish the requisite GiC-appointed office meant an Acting PBM could not be engaged on a vacancy-in-office basis, as required under the relevant legislation, and the ECM terms and conditions governing Acting PBM appointments were not applicable.

'Springing order' and vacancy management

37. On 19 April 2018, the GiC approved acting arrangements for PBMs, including the President. These arrangements required acting appointments to be made strictly in accordance with the order of succession specified in the ECM appointment instrument (the 'Springing Order').
38. Any departure from the prescribed Springing Order, including bypassing a person higher in the order, was only permitted where the individual was 'absent from duty, or from the State or is, for any reason unable to perform the duties of the office'.²
39. Apart from the definition within the relevant ECM, and mirrored in legislation, the investigation failed to identify any other directions, guidance, policy or instructions as to when a threshold of circumstances is reached to enliven an 'absence' and therefore a permissible engagement of an acting appointment. In addition, there was an absence of records outlining decisions or justifications for acting engagements and/or who was the decision maker in respect of such engagement.

¹ *Corrective Services (no body, no parole) Amendment Act 2017.*

² 19 April 2018 ECM 131 – Acting PBM appointments.



40. The investigation revealed that it was routine practice for an acting PBM to simply advise whether they were 'available' or 'not available' to enliven the filling of the vacancy or absence. Generally, acting PBM absences were due to external work commitments, due to PBMs typically having full-time employment outside the PBQ. The investigation noted an absence of records to establish the reasons for absences, with the records unclear and lacking detail to establish whether alternate work commitments were considered a valid reason for the acting PBM to be unable to perform the duties of the office, thereby enlivening an absence and permissible engagement of an acting appointment as a PBM.
41. A record of the overall availability of any acting PBM at any given time was not maintained by the PBQ. As a result, the 'vacancy' and 'absences' of the acting PBM for the purpose of Springing Order compliance was unable to be determined. A failure to comply with the Springing Order consistently or contrary to Executive Council approval exposed the PBQ to administrative error, corruption risks (such as cronyism, bias or partiality in decision making) and procedural unfairness.

Recordkeeping

42. In practice, the CCC investigation identified that the PBQ and the PBQS operated as a single entity, with the administrative processes being performed by PBQS staff. The investigation identified that systems, processes and records were developed independent of QCS, on an *ad hoc* basis, and often left to the determination of the individual secretariat officer who was designated to perform the relevant task at that time.
43. Because of the absence of accurate internal recordkeeping, the CCC investigation was unable to clearly determine and confirm:
- the appropriateness of PBQ appointments
 - compliance with the Springing Order requirements or the basis for the engagement, such as an absence or vacancy of office or some other inability to perform duties that would permit an acting engagement to occur, and
 - consistency in how Ministerial approvals were sought, recorded or stored. While indirect evidence of Ministerial approvals was located (e.g. internal briefing notes), the official Ministerial requests or approvals were not recorded or stored in a manner that allowed the records or approvals to be identified and retrieved.
44. Further, the structure of the PBQ and the PBQS created uncertainty regarding custodianship of records. The CCC investigation identified that because of these ambiguities, it was unclear whether responsibility for creating, controlling, maintaining and storing relevant public records rested with the President, or with the CEO (or Commissioner) of QCS responsible for the PBQS.

Public reporting by the PBQ

45. The PBQ had clear responsibilities for monitoring its compliance with legislated timeframes for making parole decisions. Under the CS Act, the PBQ was required to determine parole applications within a specified statutory timeframe. This statutory timeframe had no regard to the 'consideration' of a parole application. To meet this obligation, the PBQ was obliged to track the progression of each application and provide accurate internal reporting on its performance against the statutory timeframe.



46. Where statutory timeframes could not be, or were not being, met, the PBQ President was responsible for documenting the reasons for delay and reporting any instances of non-compliance to the Minister for Corrective Services. In this regard, it is noted that sections 242G and 242GA expressly provide that the Minister and Chief Executive can respectively request information about a matter affecting the performance of a function of the PBQ, or the management or administration of the PBQ or the operations of the PBQS, with which the PBQ must comply. The PBQ is also obliged to incorporate key performance information in its annual report.
47. These reporting responsibilities, including ensuring the PBQ meets its transparency and accountability obligations, can only be accurately and effectively achieved through robust recordkeeping practices, with the PBQS required to ensure all relevant dates and actions are accurately recorded.
48. Despite the PBQS being responsible for the administration activities of the PBQ, and section 242E of the *Corrective Services Act 2006* providing that the Minister may make guidelines about policies to help the parole board in performing its functions, the investigation did not identify policies developed or recommended by QCS, the PBQ or the PBQS to former Minister Ryan, nor any guidance or direction provided by former Minister Ryan, to address these issues. In addition, the investigation revealed a lack of PBQ policies for performance reporting, statistical interpretation or data dictionaries available to the PBQ or the PBQS.



Complaints received by the CCC

49. This part deals with matters which have been the subject of public comment, particularly those concerning the former President of the PBQ, Mr Michael Byrne KC, and former Minister for Corrective Services, Ms Nikki Boyd.
50. While the CCC also received complaints raising allegations about less senior QCS staff, these complaints have not been subject of investigation by the CCC, rather these matters have been devolved to be dealt with by the QCS and are being monitored by the CCC. Consequently, no further comment will be made about these matters in this report.

President's travel claims

51. The CCC received a complaint alleging that Mr Byrne KC had improperly claimed travel expenses for a spouse, when he was not entitled to do so.
52. As noted above, ECM 311 provides, in accordance with 225(1) of the CS Act, the President of the PBQ is paid a 'prescribed salary', meaning a total package of an annual rate of salary, annual rate of jurisprudential allowance (JA) and expense-of-office (EoO) allowance payable to a Supreme Court Judge, other than the Chief Justice or President of the Court of Appeal, under the JR Act.
53. Accordingly, Mr Byrne KC received JA and EoO allowances as part of his entitlements upon his appointment as President of the PBQ.
54. With respect to the JA, a judicial officer can be paid all or part of the allowance to reimburse their expenses incurred for the cost of self-education. A judicial officer is also entitled to claim the reimbursement of self-education against the JA for the cost of a spouse accompanying the judicial officer to a place for the self-education.
55. The CCC examined two relevant travel claims submitted by Mr Byrne KC in which he claimed reimbursement for a 'partner'. A review of the claim paperwork and related correspondence reveals there was no misrepresentation or deception by Mr Byrne KC referencing his travel companion as his spouse.
56. When questioned about any relevant JA entitlements, and the circumstances that needed to exist to seek reimbursement for another person's expenses, Mr Byrne KC stated that he believed the entitlement for reimbursement against JA included the expenses of his travelling companion or partner, not that there was a requirement for such person to be a 'spouse'.
57. The CCC investigation failed to identify any evidence that Mr Byrne KC had specific knowledge that a 'spouse' was a requirement for this kind of reimbursement, including in the ECM appointment instrument and appointment letters.
58. When questioned about the claim process, Mr Byrne KC described the process he followed, namely he would identify an appropriate and relevant conference of interest to him, pre-pay for the conference for himself and his travelling partner and then furnish any relevant invoices to administration staff of the PBQS for reimbursement of any relevant payable expenses or allowances.
59. Mr Byrne KC stated that the process for applying for the JA reimbursement was *ad hoc*. He was not expressly aware of the requirements for reimbursement; he simply provided the invoice paperwork for costs incurred for processing by the PBQS and payment of relevant reimbursements. He noted he was not aware of any other requirements, nor was he aware of



the identity of the appropriate decision maker for assessing and approving the reimbursement claim.

60. Consistent with these observations, the CCC investigation failed to identify any relevant specific policies, guidelines or instructions of either the PBQ or QCS documenting permissible JA claims, management, accountability or processing of the JA.
61. Mr Byrne KC observed the allowance ‘belonged’ to him, and he was simply seeking reimbursement for costs incurred, and if he had inadvertently done the wrong thing in relation to any relevant claim/s, he had no intent to do so. Nor did he intend to defraud anyone at any time.
62. The allowances under discussion in relation to this allegation are part of Mr Byrne KC’s remuneration package. In respect of the JA, a recipient is permitted to have the allowance paid and then used at their discretion. The investigation revealed Mr Byrne KC did not receive any JA monies he was not otherwise entitled to as part of his remuneration package. The investigation noted in this regard that Mr Byrne KC could have sought to have the relevant JA paid out as a lump sum or salary and then used it to cover his travelling companion/partner’s expenses without issue.
63. The process adopted between Mr Byrne KC, the PBQS and the QCS was an *ad hoc* system. Analysis of email correspondence along with Mr Byrne KC’s version provided during interview support a view that the system was largely dependent upon the entitlement holder self-determining the appropriateness of the JA claim. The entitlement holder was required to pre-pay any relevant expenses before submitting relevant claims to the PBQS to process the claim against his allowance (usually specifying whether to utilise their respective JA or EoO or a combination of both).
64. The QCS, including the PBQS, relied on the entitlement holder identifying and submitting the JA or EoO entitlements correctly, before processing the claims submitted without further consultation or confirmation. No specific instruction, policy or guidelines were in effect to identify the parties’ obligations, identify decision-makers, or to ensure the overall process was properly conducted.

Minister Boyd’s handling of the President’s resignation

65. The CCC received a complaint in which it was alleged that Ms Nikki Boyd MP, the former Minister for Corrective Services (having succeeded former Minister Ryan) dishonestly conferred a benefit to Mr Byrne KC, namely permitting him to obtain a greater judicial pension than he should otherwise have been entitled to.
66. Mr Byrne KC was appointed for a term of five years to the position of President of the PBQ, effective 3 July 2017.
67. On 13 June 2022, Mr Byrne KC was appointed to a further term of five years effective from 3 July 2022.
68. On 14 June 2024, Mr Byrne KC provided notice of his intention to resign as President of the PBQ effective 12 July 2024. On 14 June 2024, Mr Byrne KC was advised his letter of resignation as President of the PBQ had been accepted by Minister Boyd, with the original notice period reduced and effective, as subsequently agreed upon between Mr Byrne KC and then Minister Boyd, 4 July 2024.
69. Central to this complaint is Mr Byrne KC’s entitlement to a judicial pension, which is calculated at 6% of his final salary, per full year served, at the time of resignation.



70. Mr Byrne KC's pension entitlement was governed by the *Judges (Pensions and Long Leave) Act 1957*, which provides for a pension based on years of service and retirement age. For example, a recipient retiring at the age of 70, after at least 5 years of service, is entitled to 6% of their salary for each completed year of service up to a maximum of 60%.
71. The complaint alleged that Minister Boyd dishonestly conferred a benefit on Mr Byrne KC, namely, permitting him to obtain a greater pension than he otherwise would have been entitled to.
72. The CCC investigation identified that prior to accepting Mr Byrne KC's resignation and negotiating a suitable date, Minister Boyd sought and obtained appropriate advice on the matter, thereby negating any claim that she acted negligently, arbitrarily or that she otherwise acted in a manner which dishonestly conferred an improper benefit.



Corruption risks identified through the investigation

73. As set out above, Investigation Apricot identified areas of concern relating to:
- the establishment of the PBQ and the PBQS and the absence of a clear governance framework to support its operations
 - workload and staffing, including the demarcation of roles and responsibilities between staff of the PBQ and the PBQS
 - recordkeeping practices, and
 - public reporting on performance.
74. Overall, the investigation identified there were inadequate or non-existent guidelines, instructions, policies and procedures governing the official duties of PBMs and PBQS staff, uncertainty around the authority (delegated or otherwise) to approve PBM entitlements, and incomplete and inconsistent internal recordkeeping about key administrative decisions.
75. The alleged conduct examined occurred between 2017 and 2024. Since its establishment, the PBQ has undergone several external reviews and significant organisational change, altering its operations and governance framework.

Current governance reforms

76. Since August 2025, the CCC has been engaging with senior members of the PBQS to discuss the risks and vulnerabilities identified through the investigation and the opportunities that exist to manage or mitigate these risks.
77. The CCC acknowledges recent significant and important steps taken by the PBQS to address systemic deficiencies in the PBQ's and the PBQS's operating framework. This includes establishing a governance and risk program of work which is focused on reviewing and strengthening the PBQ's governance framework to ensure it meets its statutory obligations and responsibilities in relation to parole matters. The program aims to embed the principles of sound governance, transparency and defensible decision-making across the PBQ's operations. It also seeks to optimise the allocation and use of PBQS resources to ensure the PBQ is appropriately supported to perform its functions efficiently and consistently, reducing vulnerabilities that may undermine integrity, public confidence or outcomes.
78. Key initiatives completed to date include:
- the development of an overarching approach to good governance
 - the development of a draft PBQ Charter, and
 - the implementation of improved approval pathways and delegations.
79. Together, these measures assist to clarify roles, responsibilities and decision-making authority, reduce the risk of improper influence and unauthorised decision-making.
80. Additionally, the introduction of an onboarding procedure, updated decision-making frameworks, and a dedicated Human Rights Handbook seeks to strengthen consistency in PBQ operations and aid in lawful and fair decisions and reducing discretion-related vulnerabilities.
81. Enhancements to complaint management have also been implemented to increase protections for reporting wrongdoing, and the introduction of digital case-management systems further reduces reliance on manual processes, improving record integrity and auditability.



82. The CCC has made 17 recommendations directly to the PBQS, the PBQ and QCS to address remaining gaps in its corruption control framework to ensure it effectively manages and mitigates risks. These recommendations include:
- a) strengthening its governance and policy framework to clearly define roles, responsibilities and decision-making authority for the board and improve board member on-boarding practices
 - b) implementing training for PBQS staff to maintain a contemporary understanding of the legal instruments establishing and maintaining the PBQ and those governing member appointments and entitlements
 - c) implementing training for PBQS staff and PBMs on ethical decision-making, conflict of interest management, fraud and corruption awareness, and applying governance frameworks
 - d) developing procedures which outline PBM appointments, their roles and responsibilities and improving processes for managing appointments
 - e) formalising decision-making and delegations and improving recordkeeping practices, including ensuring all staff receive records management training
 - f) standardising reporting processes, improving data capture and conducting independent audits of performance data to ensure integrity and accuracy.

Corruption risk #1 – Establishment of the PBQ and the PBQS and a governance framework to support its operations

83. Across Australian jurisdictions, parole boards are commonly established as independent statutory decision-making bodies. While the legislative frameworks vary between states and territories, some parole boards share consistent structural and administrative characteristics.
84. A defining feature is the separation between decision-making authority (the board) and administrative or secretariat support. This model is evident across multiple jurisdictions, including Queensland, New South Wales, South Australia and at the Commonwealth level. Within each jurisdiction, the board retains responsibility for independent parole decision-making, while the supporting agency remains accountable for the employment, management and conduct of secretariat staff.
85. The investigation highlighted the significant risks that can arise when clear policies, procedures, and governance frameworks are not in place to govern decision-making. In the absence of guiding instruments, ambiguity may occur regarding roles, responsibilities, decision-making authority, and entitlements, which can lead to administrative inconsistencies and potential integrity concerns. It also fails to provide a neutral and objective standard against which decisions can be assessed and provide staff the ability to challenge advice based on defined policies and well documented processes. It can also undermine organisational culture by creating uncertainty about expectations, accountability and appropriate behaviour.



Corruption risk #2 – Workload and staffing

86. In view of sustained and significant increases in workload over time, additional funding was provided to the PBQ to establish additional 'operating boards' to meet the increased demand. The additional boards were approved by the Minister and QCS Commissioner and were established through collaboration between QCS, the PBQS and the PBQ. They were comprised largely of QCS positions, and an additional PBM position separate to those offices already created by GiC appointment.
87. Except for the PBM role, the QCS Commissioner was authorised to create and appoint to the positions as required. A record of the overall availability of any acting PBM at any given time was not maintained by the PBQ, as a result the 'vacancy' and 'absences' of the Acting PBM for the purpose of Springing Order compliance was unable to be accurately determined. A failure to comply with the Springing Order consistently and acting contrary to Executive Council approval, exposed the PBQ to administrative error, corruption risks (such as cronyism, bias or partiality in decision making) and procedural unfairness.

Corruption risk #3 – Recordkeeping

88. In practice, the PBQ and the PBQS operate as one entity, with the administrative processes being performed by PBQS staff.
89. The structure of the PBQ created uncertainty regarding custodianship of its records. It was unclear whether responsibility for creating, controlling, maintaining and storing these records rested with the President, or with the CEO (or Commissioner) of QCS acting through the PBQS.
90. To strengthen administrative transparency, accountability, and compliance with statutory obligations, the CCC recommends that the PBQ and the PBQS review their practices to ensure enhanced recordkeeping, documentation and governance practices.³

Corruption risk #4 – Public reporting

91. The PBQ has clear responsibilities for monitoring its compliance with legislated parole decision timeframes. Under the CS Act, the PBQ is required to determine parole applications within specified statutory periods. Where statutory deadlines could not be, or were not being, met, the President of the PBQ was responsible for documenting the reasons for delay and reporting any instances of non-compliance to the Minister.
92. The PBQ must incorporate key performance information into its annual report. These reporting responsibilities can only be achieved with robust recordkeeping practices, with the PBQS required to ensure all relevant dates and actions are accurately recorded. Effective recordkeeping underpins reliable reporting and ensures the PBQ meets its transparency and accountability obligations.
93. Despite the PBQS being responsible for the administration activities of the PBQ, and section 242E of the *Corrective Services Act 2006* providing that the Minister may make guidelines about policies to help the PBQ in performing its functions, the investigation did not identify policies developed or recommended by QCS, the PBQ or the PBQS to former Minister Ryan, nor any guidance or direction provided by former Minister Ryan, to address these issues. In addition, the investigation revealed a lack of PBQ policies for performance reporting, statistical interpretation or data dictionaries available to the PBQ or the PBQS.

³ Refer to the Queensland Ombudsman's *Good Decisions Resource* available online at: www.ombudsman.qld.gov.au/publications/training-materials/good-decisions



Recommendations

94. The lack of governance, policies and a clear demarcation of roles and responsibilities put both the PBQ and the PBQS at risk of fraud and maladministration. Had staff intended to actively exploit system weaknesses, there would have been very few obstacles to them doing so.
95. Failing to establish an environment where staff fully understand their roles, responsibilities and delegations, and are supported by detailed and unambiguous policies and processes can expose any public sector agency to corruption or the perception of it.
96. The CCC recommends that all public sector and public service entities have appropriate internal controls and governance frameworks in place to ensure probity, transparency and accountability in their day-to-day operations and decision-making about the use of public funds.
97. To address the broader issues identified through Investigation Apricot, and ensure that all Queensland public sector and public service entities and their secretariat support are established and operate in a way which appropriately manages risks, it is recommended that the Queensland Government review its processes, including associated legislative frameworks, for the establishment of public sector and public service entities and their secretariat support to ensure that detailed guidance is provided to guarantee robust governance frameworks, ethical practices, and appropriate resourcing and reporting models.



Annexure 1 – Limitation and scope of public reports

98. The CCC's corruption functions are prescribed by the *Crime and Corruption Act 2001* (CC Act)⁴ which include investigating⁵ and publicly reporting⁶ on matters that may involve corrupt conduct by, or involving, person/s holding an appointment⁷ within a unit of public administration (UPA)⁸ in Queensland.
99. In preparing and publishing this public report, the CCC has had regard to the CC Act which prescribes that the CCC must have regard to several significant competing factors⁹ and is subject to various limitations.¹⁰ These factors include matters which support the publication of the report, while others weigh against the making of a public report.
100. Further, the CC Act prohibits the CCC from making any finding or statement that a person has engaged in corruption;¹¹ should be prosecuted for a criminal offence or be subject of disciplinary action¹² or that there is evidence, or insufficient evidence, supporting the start of such proceedings against a person.¹³ Nothing in this report should be taken as conveying any of these matters.
101. To ensure the interests of relevant parties are protected, the decision to publish a report must have regard to the human rights of any affected persons,¹⁴ while the CC Act provides for the procedural fairness that must be afforded to any person about whom the CCC proposes to make an adverse statement.¹⁵

⁴ CC Act, Part 3, Division 1 (particularly sections 33, 34 and 35).

⁵ CC Act, section 35(1)(f) and (g).

⁶ CC Act, section 35(1)(m).

⁷ CC Act, section 21.

⁸ CC Act, section 20.

⁹ CC Act, section 64A.

¹⁰ CC Act, section 48B.

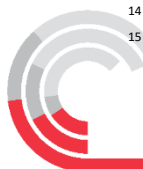
¹¹ CC Act, section 48B(1)(a).

¹² CC Act, section 48B(1)(b)(i).

¹³ CC Act, section 48B(1)(b)(ii).

¹⁴ *Human Rights Act 2019* – See Annexure 2 for the Human Rights Compatibility Statement.

¹⁵ CC Act, section 69B – Any relevant submissions received from an affected party have been considered and addressed within the body of the report.



Annexure 2 – Human rights compatibility statement

102. As part of its statutory requirements, in deciding to prepare and/or publish a public report, the CCC must act consistently with any other law. The CCC is required by the *Human Rights Act 2019* to act and make decisions in a way that is compatible with human rights, and in making decisions, to give proper consideration to human rights relevant to the decision.
103. The CCC has considered the following rights of relevant parties which may be affected by the preparation and publication of the report: the right to take part in public life (section 23), the right to privacy and reputation (section 25), the right to fair hearing (section 31) and rights in criminal proceedings (section 32).
104. The CCC has considered competing human rights impacting the decision to publish the report. The CCC has balanced, on the one hand, the rights of the subject officer to take part in public life and perform their employed functions, along with the right to privacy and reputation, the right to fair hearing and rights of the subject officer in relation to the criminal proceedings. However, these rights and privileges are also subject to the public's right to have confidence that when taking part in public life, including the necessary provision of personal information to government, their privacy, safety and wellbeing will be protected through enhanced integrity in systems and processes.
105. As any interference with the subject officer's privacy, because of this report, is lawful and not arbitrary, the CCC has determined that the decision to publish the report is compatible with human rights under the *Human Rights Act 2019*.



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