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### **THE PARLIAMENTARY JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON INTEGRITY MET IN COMMITTEE ROOM 2, PARLIAMENT HOUSE, HOBART ON WEDNESDAY 12 DECEMBER 2012.**

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**Mr LEON ATKINSON-MacEWEN**, OMBUDSMAN, WAS CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WAS EXAMINED.

**CHAIR** (Mr Wilkinson) - Welcome, Leon. Leon is here as a result of a conversation I had with him in the street about some issues he wished to raised which are important to how the office is running and will continue to run.

**Mr ATKINSON-MacEWEN** - I appreciate the time this afternoon, particularly given what has been going on in the last couple of days. Thank you very much for your time. The three things I want to talk about are complaints, the budget of the office and some potential future work. Complaints are rising across all my jurisdictions, and will continue to rise - that is not unique to me. All ombudsmen/energy ombudsmen/water and sewerage and health complaints commissioners see the same statistics year in year out. In the five years, 2007-08 through to 2011-12, complaints have effectively doubled in the ombudsman's jurisdiction, for example. At the moment they are running higher than they were this time last year. Last year we had a rise of 30 per cent in the ombudsman's jurisdiction and we expect it is probably going to be 35 per cent or possibly even 40 per cent this year. There is no particular thing you could point at to say that the rise is caused by degradation in services, or a lack of response. I simply think people are becoming more aware of the services of ombudsmen and health complaints commissioners and are getting used to asserting their rights, which is perfectly reasonable.

In the last nine months, since I took over, I have had a fairly significant look at the processes within the office. Generally speaking, the processes are very good and this is borne out by the statistics - as complaints rose each year, the number of complaints open versus the number of complaints closed has been more or less consistent, particularly in the ombudsman jurisdiction. As complaints rose, people's productivity rose to meet that increase. Over that five-year period resources were reducing so people have been running much harder in order to keep standing still with the number of complaints, as they have come in.

Simon, my predecessor, took the view that as cuts were made, he would make cuts to the most extent in the health complaints jurisdiction, not in the ombudsman jurisdiction. That was his call; I was not there. I might have done things differently. Up until about maybe 12-18 months ago that was probably sustainable. Now, with the latest round of budget cuts that have hit the office, cuts have had to impact on the ombudsman jurisdiction, because there is nowhere else to cut. In the next 12-18 months we are going to see degradation in the turnaround times - the resolution times for ombudsman complaints - and an increase in the number of complaints open compared to complaints closed over time. The carry forwards each year, which have roughly run at approximately 150 a year, are likely to rise significantly because we simply will not be able to deal with each of these complaints in the 12-month period. That will start to look a lot like what health complaints currently looks like. Health complaints is looking fairly

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dire in the sense that the number of complaints - open versus closed - has always been open over closed. The carry forward in health complaints is currently running at approximately 165, and that is just under half of what we would expect to get in health complaints each year. They start the financial year on 1 July with half the workload already sitting there open and waiting, and a year's worth of work about to hit them. Things are not going well in health complaints. Given the cuts were mainly made in health complaints, the pain is now going to be taken by the ombudsman jurisdiction. It is not easy to compare health complaints versus ombudsman complaints, but at the moment roughly 55 per cent of health complaints are resolved within three months and 80 per cent within 12 months, versus 85 per cent in three months for ombudsman and virtually 100 per cent within 12 months for ombudsman. Those figures are going to change and they are going to start looking roughly the same. That is, year on year, if we do not get additional resources, we are going to have, say, 20-25 per cent of our complaints running for more than 12 months simply because there are not enough staff to deal with them. As the complaints come in, the pile on the desk gets bigger and so it continues.

One of the signs of a healthy office is the amount of unpredicted leave you have - that is, sick leave, carer's leave and the like. That is rising, and it is almost double what it was five years ago. We are doing everything to ensure that staff are not being stressed by their workloads, but their health is an issue. We have a number of staff who are either about to go on maternity leave or who are returning from maternity leave and, strangely enough, maternity leave and leave during pregnancy are counted as unpredicted leave, and therefore they influence the stats a bit, but when you take that out, we are still running much higher than we ought to be and it is not good. It is not all doom and gloom, but it is just not good.

Up until this year, we have had about \$140 000 taken out of the budget. As of 2013-14 that rises to \$157 000 and in 2014-15 it rises to \$182 000. The office runs with about 80 per cent of the budget being staffing, and 20 per cent being operating expenses, with a number of operating expenses that are high and more or less fixed - rent, service level agreements with Justice in relation to IT, and IT contracts for the Resolve database system et cetera. We don't have a great deal of wriggle room in the operating expenses. In order to meet the sorts of savings we were asked to make, the cuts eventually have to come out of salary. We have lost 1.6 band 6 FTEs. The band 6 staff are the investigating officers - the senior investigating officers who do the bulk of the complex work - and we have lost 1.6 of those in the period since the start of 2011-12. I just let 0.4 of a band 6 go in order to make my 2012-13 target and I will have to let another band 6 full-time FTE go in order to make my 2014-15 target, and that is taking the guts of the investigating team out of the office.

We have done a lot of things to improve processes. Simon put in an online complaint form, which has made things a lot easier. We have a database that is very good, but at the end of the day you need bums on seats to make it work and we don't have enough.

**Dr GOODWIN** - Leon, sorry to jump in, are you able to provide us with an organisational chart - a breakdown of your different staffing roles?

**Mr ATKINSON-MacEWEN** - Yes, certainly. There is one on the back of the annual report but we are happy to send one across to you. That is not a problem.

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As complaints have risen year on year, the budget has shrunk year on year. It has got to the point where, if the budget continues to shrink and the complaints continue to rise, the bar at which we can accept complaints will have to go higher and higher. This is not good, but it is the only way we will be able to cope without additional funding.

The funding of the office is somewhat peculiar. Because of the number of hats we wear there are different funding arrangements in place for a number of those, for example, energy. The one jurisdiction that is fully funded by the industry is fine. They know that if they generate \$100 000 worth of complaints, they pay \$100 000 to me in order to recompense the work we do, or \$150 000 or \$200 000 - they have an incentive. Aurora has an incentive to minimise complaints in order to reduce the cost of the complaint handling that we do. The energy jurisdiction is fine.

The water and sewerage jurisdiction is an interesting one.

**Mr DEAN** - Is it fair to say that the energy complaints at this stage would get some priority within your area because they are funding the investigation?

**Mr ATKINSON-MacEWAN** - They do not get priority as such. I simply have sufficient staff funded from the energy budget to do the energy complaints. But because the budget is set a year in advance, we have to be predictive about how many complaints we are likely to receive and how many staff we have.

**Mr DEAN** - I was wondering how you did that.

**Mr ATKINSON-MacEWAN** - It is a bit tricky, but it works. From an energy point of view, we are always likely to have enough staff to deal with energy complaints because the industry funds that for us.

**Mr DEAN** - Those staff work solely on that area? They cannot be used elsewhere if there is not enough staff?

**Mr ATKINSON-MacEWAN** - That is right, because they are funded by the energy industry. I have to account each year for the expenditure of those funds. That is a common situation across all the energy ombudsmen in Australia. Either parliamentary schemes or industry-based schemes - they are invariably funded by the industries.

Energy and water is an interesting one. We currently do around \$95-100 000 worth of work each year on water and sewerage complaints. I have a principal officer and a couple of other staff members, some of whose time is spent on energy and water, and we are required to record that, because each year that dollar value - how much we have spent on dealing with their complaints - forms part of the licence fee of the water corporations. Treasury go to the three water corporations and say, 'Southern Water your split is \$40 000', and the other two might have a 30/30 split. They recoup that amount through the licence fees. Strangely enough, they only give me \$50 000, with indexation.

**Dr GOODWIN** - It is not much of a deal for you.

**Mr ATKINSON-MacEWAN** - When we got the water and sewerage jurisdiction we got an additional \$50 000, and that was it.

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**Dr GOODWIN** - To do a \$100 000 worth of work? Not much of a deal.

**Mr ATKINSON-MacEWAN** - No. It was a great little deal. It would be useful if water and sewerage, given that there is only going to be the one water corporation shortly, were to be put on the same basis as energy. That way they generate the complaints, then they pay for them. Ombudsman and health are funded out of the Consolidated Fund and there is no way of doing anything like the water and sewerage approach. Ombudsman sits across state and local government and health sits across both public and private health and it would be difficult to put some levy in place. That is essentially funded from the Consolidated Fund. We have within the office the official visitors scheme - the mental health official visitors and the prisoners' official visitors. We picked that up from Health and Human Services and it came across with about \$182 000 in funding which was not indexed - it did not cover superannuation and anything else. It was a lump sum, which has meant that since that time the office has been subsidising the gap between the \$182 000 and what it costs us to foster the programs. Do not get me wrong, it is extraordinarily worthwhile to have the OV's within the office, but we are ending up subsidising to a degree. There are some issues.

**CHAIR** - Leon, in relation to the mechanisms to obtain that money from energy and also from water and sewerage, is that an agreement between the government and yourselves, or is it enshrined in an act?

**Mr ATKINSON-MacEWAN** - The energy side of it is in the legislation but the water and sewerage is done by way of the licence fee calculation for the three water corporations. I am not sure whether that is in the water corporation legislation or in regulations, or whatever, but it is not in my act. It is one of the subset of elements that make up the annual licence fee for the three corporations.

**CHAIR** - When you say it is in legislation, excuse my ignorance, with energy - is it in your legislation?

**Mr ATKINSON-MacEWAN** - It is in the energy ombudsman legislation. Fundamentally, we have gone backwards over the last five years, as has every other government department and agency. I am not saying that we are being treated any differently to anybody else. But, we are such a small agency with no discretion about the work we do - it is complaints. It is meant to be more than complaints, but at the moment and for a long time it has just been complaints. Therefore, without any additional funding, it will not only remain being just complaints but it is going to backwards in terms of the number of complaints we will be able to handle.

One startling example of the problems we have is that when I took over there were four major own-motion investigations under way. One was into child protection services, one was into the pharmaceutical services branch of DHHS, one related to the Launceston General Hospital and the fourth one was related to use of chemical restraint in emergency departments, in particular in the hospitals. Each of those matters has taken more than 12 months to resolve because they have been done off the side of the desk by officers who have been trying to advance the investigation at the same time as dealing with complaints.

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**Dr GOODWIN** - That was also the issue with the Tamar Unit report?

**Mr ATKINSON-MacEWEN** - Exactly. We have an extraordinarily limited capacity to do very necessary work, by way of own-motion investigations into systemic issues, without supplementation. We cannot do it. We end up taking much longer than it ought to take to get a resolution and a report out.

**Dr GOODWIN** - Can I ask about the child protection issue because the children's commissioner has been calling for more powers to enable her to do some own-motion work. Is there any crossover there?

**Mr ATKINSON-MacEWEN** - I think there is because the Ombudsman Act gives me the ability to look at the administrative actions of, say, Child Protection Services. There is no reason why the children's commissioner could not - and she has in the past - raise matters of concern with the Ombudsman. The issue is how Simon and I would resource those matters. What priority could we give them, given some of the other things we have on our plate?

The mechanism is there and there are a couple of matters in the mental health area where either the Mental Health Tribunal or the Guardianship Board raises matters with Simon. They can't technically be a complaint because the Mental Health Tribunal and Guardianship Board are aggrieved complainants, but they could be taken on as small own-motion investigations to determine whether there was a systemic issue. The only reason you would take on an own-motion investigation is on the basis of a reasonable belief that there are systemic issues to deal with.

At the moment there are probably half a dozen potential own-motion investigations that I could do, but I don't have the resources.

**Mr BOOTH** - Leon, isn't there a mechanism of revision in the Ombudsman Act that allows you to seek extra funding from the government? I cannot recall the wording but I thought it was in the Ombudsman Act, and not to do with the Attorney-General, where if your resources are inadequate, there is a provision in there.

**Mr ATKINSON-MacEWEN** - Not that I am aware of. My allocation is a straightforward budget allocation each year and it forms part of the appropriation bill. I can go back to the government towards the end of a financial year and put in a request for additional funding.

**Mr BOOTH** - If you cannot recall it, I cannot give any further detail. I thought it was specifically in the act. There was a clause -

**Mr ATKINSON-MacEWEN** - Not that I have spotted. The mechanisms for getting funding in the past, where there has been a shortfall, have been through the RAF process. That is an inefficient process and fraught with danger from my perspective, in that I may not get the funding, which means I have a deficit at the end of the financial year, and there are significant issues there. In the Auditor-General's annual report, he has made the comment that I am vulnerable in terms of my budget, and I accept that.

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Mike is a valued and esteemed colleague. He was not telling me anything I did not know but he had to say it and I accept that is the case - the budget is very vulnerable. The only way we can remain in budget is to shed staff.

The \$400 000-odd worth of operating expenses is relatively inflexible.

**Mr BOOTH** - I will see if I can find that provision. I thought it enabled you to ask the Treasurer for additional funding, so you could not be shut down by lack of funding. If you do not recall it, then maybe it does not exist.

**Mr ATKINSON-MacEWEN** - In a sense, it is essential. The independence of an ombudsman or a health complaints commissioner, or any statutory officer, is not just the independence enshrined in the legislation. The financial independence is the key. I know that Mike Blake has pursued this, and rightly so. There are mechanisms that could be put in place, that are used in other states, to involve members of parliament in the process of setting budgets. In Queensland, for example, the Queensland Auditor-General's budget is set after consultation between the Auditor-General and members of the council.

**CHAIR** - Leon, what capacity do you have to negotiate with Treasury about the budget, or do they give you a figure and say you have to abide by it?

**Mr ATKINSON-MacEWEN** - I came on board after the budget had been set, so I am yet to face a budget round with Treasury. It would be churlish of Treasury to knock me back on the water and sewerage side of things. If they are taking roughly \$100 000 out of the three water corporations for the work I am doing then my budget ought to reflect that. That \$50 000 will be a help but it is not going to be the thing that digs me out of the hole.

We have taken productivity dividend hits, although we can demonstrate that our productivity has increased immensely over five years. I have not been involved in the discussions yet, so I do not know what approach Treasury will take, or has taken in the past, but from my observations of Treasury when I was there, complaint handling is not necessarily seen as a valuable exercise and that is what concerns me.

People are complaining because they can't get something resolved by a government department. The fact that Treasury doesn't interact with the public generally and therefore does not generate many complaints, is not the point. Other departments do - DHHS has an extraordinary number of interactions with Tasmanians every year so it is not surprising they have the largest number of complaints. I don't think people in Treasury understand or value the complaint handling and dispute resolution processes undertaken by my office. We should be investigating system improvement more broadly and undertaking an auditing function. It is all very well to go through a process of complaint resolution and determine whether or not a department has appropriate processes in place. At the end of many of our complaints investigations we are told, 'Yes, we will improve the processes and put procedures in place', but we don't have the capacity to go back and say, 'Tell us what you've done. Show us the processes and procedures. Show us they're effective.' We do not have the ability to follow up.

**CHAIR** - That ability, you were saying, could well be one of the jobs of this committee.

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**Mr ATKINSON-MacEWEN** - Indeed. I don't want to keep going on with this litany of complaints. I would like to turn to something a bit more positive and that is what I could do with some more resources.

**CHAIR** - Apart from the annual review, if you have resourcing issues how do you pursue them? Have you pursued them with Treasury or the government?

**Mr ATKINSON-MacEWEN** - I am told, 'Talk to us at budget time', or 'Put in a RAF and take your chances'. Literally, take your chances. That is an extraordinarily risky approach to take.

**Mr BOOTH** - Perhaps you should be carrying a chainsaw when you put in that request, Leon. You'll get pretty quick attention if you have one of those.

**CHAIR** - That's right. Yes, \$40 million.

**Mr ATKINSON-MacEWEN** - Who knows what may happen? They may get entirely the wrong impression.

It is a process whereby the response is, 'You're just another agency like every other agency. You stand in line, go through the committee process and get what you get at the end of it'. You have to accept that.

**Dr GOODWIN** - Leon, you and I have had discussions before about the idea of an independent prisons inspectorate and this issue with Australia and OPCAT, which also extends to places of detention for asylum seekers. We have one of those that is about to reopen. Have things progressed at all in relation to that?

**Mr ATKINSON-MacEWEN** - Not that I am aware of. I am aware the Department of Justice was pursuing some options, but beyond that I do not know. There was a promise made that in developing those options I would be consulted. I have yet to be consulted, so I am presuming the options have yet to be developed. I understand Justice has a lot of other things on its plate at the moment, but nothing to my knowledge has been progressed there. If there was to be some sort of additional role for my office, given the role of the official visitors at the moment, it is not out of the bounds of reason that you might put an inspectorate inside my office. If it does not come with funding, and appropriate funding, it becomes yet another drain on resources.

**Dr GOODWIN** - I thought there might be an opportunity for some federal funding if it also applies to Pontville.

**Mr ATKINSON-MacEWEN** - We currently have an arrangement between the commonwealth ombudsman and myself, so I presume if we pick up that role for the commonwealth, that arrangement would mean we get additional funding through that stream to do that.

**Dr GOODWIN** - There haven't been any more discussions amongst the Ombudsmen from across Australia either?

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**Mr ATKINSON-MacEWEN** - No. We have made our views known - that we support it and we think that there are natural homes for this inspectorate - but it has now gone into the policy development stage and that is where it lies.

Getting back to the issue of audits. I look at what Mike Blake does with a great deal of envy. Mike has, he might say, not enough resources. I would say he has far more resources than I have, and that is great, given the role Mike has with DPAC and, more broadly, the functions of the Auditor-General. But, if I had even a little bit more resources -

Mike is a wonderful colleague, and we are trying to work on joint audits. It is very clear that if you are going to audit an area, there is a range of administrative function decisions you could audit that would fall to the Ombudsman, and the financial side would fall to the Auditor-General. For me, there are things like whether or not there are delegations in place, whether the people understand what their delegated powers and responsibilities are, and whether they are operating within the scope of those powers and responsibilities, and applying the criteria in the relevant legislation when they are making decisions, et cetera. These things are outside Mike's realm. He is looking at the risk with the dollars.

From my point of view, there are significant areas of government where there are risks, albeit I am not sure necessarily how grave those risks are from an administrative point of view. One is the revenue area of government. Mike's audits secure the financial side of things to ensure there is no fraud going on. But are the administrative actions lawful, or not subject to challenges? We could have processes going on that, if challenged, might mean refunds of significant amounts of money to taxpayers because the decisions were not lawful. I think there is a risk there.

There is a risk with the grant schemes across the state. Mike looks at the financial side of grant schemes. The administrative side of grant schemes ought to be looked at because I suspect there is a strong possibility of significant risks where moneys would either have to be reclaimed or, alternatively, people could claim they ought to have been given grants and weren't and therefore there could be additional claims on the budget.

More broadly, there are any number of discreet investigations I could do - Mental Health, whole parts of DHHS and I would like to look at the prison health system. We get a lot of complaints from prisoners about the health service in the prison. A lot of those complaints have no merit, but many of them do. Some of those complaints probably relate to the interactions - the system issues between the prison health system and the prison system itself. I note that the Victorian Ombudsman did a report last year into the Victorian prison health system and I suspect, if I did the same, I would come up with much the same results.

There are some big ticket items that I should be doing in conjunction with Mike, and then there are some really important, discreet areas that I should be looking at that would provide me, but more broadly would provide government and parliament, with some security for the risks that might be associated with them.

At the moment, this committee's terms of reference - although they sit inside the Integrity Commission Act - do extend across to me, and without necessarily going down the route

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of an administrative PAC, there are some distinct possibilities and opportunities for a closer working relationship between my office and the committee in looking at administrative action across the state. Unfortunately, it would all boil down to the resources necessary to do it, but I think there are some real opportunities there.

**CHAIR** - Is there any way you could do a fee-for-service? In other words, if you need to audit the prisons department, Justice pays, or if you need to audit Sport and Recreation, they pay? It would be nice.

**Mr ATKINSON-MacEWEN** - It would be nice. We would probably need an administrative version of the PAC Act to put that in place, to give it the foundation that would legitimise that sort of approach. In a sense that would be fine for those services that are delivered by state and local government, in ombudsman, for example. Health only falls across state in terms of the hospitals and DHHS. There would be a whole set of the private sector that we could not recover funds from in that sense.

I have thought long and hard about a mechanism to tax departments in much the same way as the DPP has moved away from a fee-for-service to an underlying tax in every agency and department. We all pay a certain amount of money that goes to the DPP to fund that office. I do not think it would be unreasonable to tax government departments and agencies - you could do it on the basis of the number of complaints we get, or on a straight FTE basis, the size of the department, et cetera. What I will be looking for, in terms of dollars, in my discussions with Treasury next year, will be \$350 000 back in my budget to reverse the drain that has occurred over the last three-and-a-half to four years. It would give me one extra FTE, which would be enough, given the complaints we have and the own-motion work that we might have, to allow me to do some significant own-motion reporting. That is what I am after in my discussions with Treasury.

**CHAIR** - Do any other jurisdictions have a fee-for-service relationship?

**Mr ATKINSON-MacEWEN** - Not that I am aware of. In fact as far as I am aware, every ombudsman is in the same financial straits that I am.

**CHAIR** - Where do you think we can help? We're here to help.

**Mr ATKINSON-MacEWEN** - Your name is Kevin: 'I'm from Queensland, and I'm here to help'.

*Laughter.*

**Mr ATKINSON-MacEWEN** - The best thing the committee can do for me, when budget issues are raised and when the work of the office is raised, is reinforce the message that funding is the key. Adequate funding - and I am not suggesting funding at the level of the Auditor-General, but funding that is appropriate, as the Auditor-General's funding is appropriate - would allow a much better set of administrative arrangements in government. Complaints are important to the individuals but they are generally a unique set of circumstances. The fundamental thing that the Office of the Ombudsman and Health Complaints Commissioner can do is identify systemic problems, and work cooperatively with agencies to fix them. When you fix a systemic problem, it is not just an individual who gets the benefit; a class of individuals get the benefit. That is where

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we make the most gain and provide the best 'bang for buck'. I do not want to denigrate the complaints work - it is extraordinarily important to the individuals who come to us with a complaint that we can investigate independently and fairly, and determine whether they have an issue, and try to get that issue resolved. That work is vital, but at the moment it is basically consuming us because it is so large a portion of our day. We cannot get on and do the systemic work, which is the really valuable stuff.

**CHAIR** - What about doing the audit-type work? There is a traffic light system, as Ivan would know, with the Public Accounts Committee, for you to conclude a report. You make certain recommendations and that goes to Shane, Shane decides whether he gives it a colour - shouldn't have a look at it, maybe and yes, definitely. It comes back to the committee, the committee goes through that and says, 'Yes', 'No', or otherwise and then we can have a look at what is going on. Like the Tas Education fund we are considering at the moment. That arose out of that process, and some interesting things are going on there.

**Mr ATKINSON-MacEWEN** - With resources, I can certainly provide you with information you could use to make those sorts of decisions. But at the moment I am not in a position to do that.

In the Ombudsman Act, section 16 says:

### Investigation on reference by Parliament

- (1) Either House of Parliament, or any committee of either House or a joint committee of both Houses of Parliament, may refer to the Ombudsman, for investigation and report, any matter within his jurisdiction that that House or committee considers should be investigated by him.

I welcome those investigations, if I was to receive a reference, but the first thing I would say to the House or the committee is, 'Could you give me some money to do it, please'. There is a mechanism in the Ombudsman Act to refer matters to me, and with funding - and I am not suggesting that I want to create another PAC - there is a real possibility to provide substantive work, collaboratively between the committee and my office, that meets both our agendas. I appreciate I have taken up a lot of your time.

**CHAIR** - No, that was good. We will open up to questions.

**Mr ATKINSON-MacEWEN** - Certainly.

**Mr DEAN** - To change the subject - what was the result of closing your office in Launceston? Did that have an impact?

**Mr ATKINSON-MacEWEN** - Strangely enough it did not have a significant impact on the ombudsman jurisdiction. The decision was made to close the Launceston office on the basis that a substantial portion of the work was health complaints work. Without that base and person in Launceston, we now have to travel further and longer to attend to health complaints - particularly conciliation work - with complainants in the north and north-west. It has meant very little change in complaints and the way we deal with

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complaints with ombudsman, but it has stretched our resources in health complaints. I have staff travelling to Burnie and Launceston regularly to pick up work that would have ideally been done by the person based in Launceston.

**CHAIR** - Any questions, Vanessa?

**Dr GOODWIN** - I am tempted to say something cheeky about resource envy and the Integrity Commission, but perhaps I won't go there.

**Mr ATKINSON-MacEWEN** - Yes - a \$3 million budget. This is a \$2 million budget.

*Laughter.*

**Mr ATKINSON-MacEWEN** - I would happily swap, no doubt about that.

**CHAIR** - Any final matters?

**Mr ATKINSON-MacEWEN** - Just to say thank you again for the time. I appreciate it is not the ideal time to be pulled away and listen to my gripes.

**CHAIR** - It is good to listen to them in the way you have put them as opposed to what we have been confronted with at the moment. Thank you very much.

**Mr BOOTH** - Thank you, Leon, for letting us know about the important oversight role. There needs to be an independent funding stream. You cannot be starved of resources by a government of any flavour or persuasion wishing to prevent your work. It is very important.

**Mr ATKINSON-MacEWEN** - I certainly support that.

**CHAIR** - Thank you, Leon.

**Mr ATKINSON-MacEWEN** - Before I go, can I put in a plug for the Integrity Commission. The commission and the staff of the commission have been working on the three-year report. I am pretty sure the CEO would like an opportunity to brief the committee, if not yourselves, on the report outline, in order for them to start work on fleshing out the bits and pieces.

**CHAIR** - Thanks Leon.

### **THE WITNESS WITHDREW**