



## Office of the Information Commissioner Queensland

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### Penalties for assaults of public officers

The Queensland Office of the Information Commissioner (**OIC**) appreciates the opportunity to provide a brief submission on the Queensland Sentencing Advisory Council's review of penalties for assaults on police and other frontline emergency service workers, corrective services officers and other public officers (**QSAC Review**).

#### About the OIC

The OIC is an independent statutory body that reports to the Queensland Parliament. We have a statutory role under the *Right to Information Act 2009 (RTI Act)* and the *Information Privacy Act 2009 (IP Act)* to facilitate greater and easier access to information held by government agencies. We also assist agencies to understand their obligations under the IP Act to safeguard personal information that they hold.

OIC's statutory functions include mediating privacy complaints against Queensland government agencies, issuing guidelines on privacy best practice, initiating privacy education and training, and conducting audits and reviews to monitor agency performance and compliance with the RTI Act and the IP Act. Our office reviews agency decisions about access to information, mediates privacy complaints and monitors and reports on agency compliance to Parliament.

#### Scope of Review

OIC notes that the terms of reference for the QSAC Review address several important issues to ensure the penalty and sentencing framework provides an appropriate response to assaults on police and other frontline emergency service workers, corrective services officers and other public officers.

OIC also notes that in addition to the issues within the scope of this review, the existing framework is not effective and efficient for managing the impacts of other unreasonable behavior in a range of circumstances with substantial adverse impacts on public officers, fair access to services for other Queenslanders, and efficient use of resources, including the broader public sector and judicial system.

While generally exceptional in nature, such behavior raises critical health and safety issues for our public service officers, including substantial verbal abuse, intimidation and threats about staff and their family. The response required in managing unreasonable behaviour also utilises a disproportionate amount of agency resources. As noted previously, this impacts on an agency's ability to deliver services in a timely and fair manner to all Queenslanders and presents challenges in meeting and carrying out statutory functions.

The Office of the Information Commissioner is an independent statutory authority.

The statutory functions of the OIC under the Information Privacy Act 2009 (Qld) (IP Act) include commenting on the administration of privacy in the Queensland public sector environment.

This submission does not represent the views or opinions of the Queensland Government.

OIC looks forward to the outcomes, including any recommendations, arising out of the QSAC review, to address these important issues. OIC anticipates that the outcomes of this review will have important learnings for the broader issue of managing substantial and unreasonable behaviour directed at public sector staff delivering services to members of the community.

Yours sincerely

Rachael Rangihaeata  
**Information Commissioner**