

Office of the Independent Assessor

Annual Report

2025 – 2026

Acknowledgement of Country

The Office of the Independent Assessor respectfully acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of Country. We recognise the ongoing spiritual and cultural connection Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples have with land, water, sea and sky. We pay our deep respects to their Elders past and present, support future leaders and acknowledge First Nations peoples' right to self-determination.

About this report

This annual report details significant achievements against our strategic objectives, including performance indicators aligning with our *Strategic Plan 2024-27*.

This report has been prepared for the Minister to submit to Parliament. It has also been prepared to meet the needs of stakeholders, including the Australian and local governments, industry and business associations, community groups, staff and individuals. It is available at our website at www.oia.qld.gov.au or in hard copy on request.

Material addressing additional annual reporting requirements has been published on the Queensland Government Open Data website at www.data.qld.gov.au.

You can provide feedback on this report at the Queensland Government Get Involved website at www.qld.gov.au/annualreportfeedback.

Interpreter statement

The Office of the Independent Assessor is committed to providing accessible services to Queenslanders from all culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. If you have difficulty in understanding this document, you can contact us in Australia on 13QGOV (13 74 68) and we will arrange an interpreter to effectively communicate the report to you.



Contact information

Enquiries about this document are welcome via phone, mail or email:

Phone: 1300 620 722

Post: 13/53 Albert Street, Brisbane, Qld 4000.

Email: independentassessor@oia.qld.gov.au.

Information licencing

This publication has been compiled by the Office of the Independent Assessor.

© The State of Queensland (Office of the Independent Assessor) 2026

This annual report is licensed by the State of Queensland (Office of the Independent Assessor) under a Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) 4.0 International licence.



In essence, you are free to copy, communicate and adapt this annual report, as long as you attribute the work to the State of Queensland (Office of the Independent Assessor).

Note: Some content in this publication may have different licence terms as indicated.

For more information on this licence, visit <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>.

Content from this annual report should be attributed as: The State of Queensland (Office of the Independent Assessor) Annual Report 2025–2026.

The information contained herein is subject to change without notice. The Queensland Government shall not be liable for technical or other errors or omissions contained herein. The reader/user accepts all risks and responsibility for losses, damages, costs and other consequences resulting directly or indirectly from using this information.

Information security

This document has been classified using the Queensland Government Information Security Classification framework (QGISCF) as PUBLIC and will be managed according to the requirements of the QGISCF.

ISSN 2653-1720

Contents

Letter of compliance.....	1	Misconduct.....	17
Message from the Acting Independent Assessor.....	2	Corrupt conduct.....	17
1 About Us.....	4	Review of assessment decisions	17
Our vision.....	4	4 Conduct breach	18
Trust in the integrity of councillors.	4	Referrals to local governments.....	19
Our values	4	5 Investigations	20
What we do.....	4	Investigation timeframes.....	21
Oversight.....	4	Notices issued	22
Legislation	4	Search warrants	22
<i>Human Rights Act 2019</i>	5	Complex complaint investigations	22
Operating environment	5	Review of completed misconduct investigations...	22
OIA financial and non-financial performance information.....	5	6 Natural justice	23
Organisational structure	6	Natural justice timeframes.....	24
2 Complaints and notifications.....	7	Public Interest	25
Complaint volumes.....	9	Matters referred to the CCT	25
Source of complaints	9	7 Tribunal hearings and reviews	26
Anonymous complaints.....	10	CCT applications.....	27
Independent Assessor initiated complaints.....	10	CCT decisions	27
Impact on corruption complaints.....	10	QCAT review of CCT decisions.....	28
3 Assessment	11	Judicial Reviews.....	28
OIA assessment	12	8 Breach of conduct provisions	29
Statutory limitation periods	12	Vexatious complaints	29
How complaints are assessed.....	12	Vexatious complaint issues.....	29
Dismissed or no further action.....	14	Breach of conduct provisions by a councillor	29
Statutory recommendations	15	9 Preventing misconduct.....	30
Vexatious or improper complaints.....	16	OIA misconduct prevention activities	30
Conduct breach.....	16	10 Communication and engagement.....	32
		Appendix A Glossary	34

Letter of compliance

7 September 2026

The Honourable Ann Leahy MP
Minister for Local Government and Water and
Minister for Fire, Disaster Recovery and Volunteers
1 William Street
Brisbane QLD 4000

Dear Minister

I am pleased to submit for presentation to the Parliament the Annual Report 2025—2026 for the Office of the Independent Assessor.

I certify that this Annual Report complies with the prescribed requirements set out in section 150EB of the Local Government Act 2009.

This report covers the period from 1 July 2025 to 30 June 2026.

Yours sincerely



Charlie Kohn
Acting Independent Assessor
Office of the Independent Assessor

Message from the Acting Independent Assessor

I am pleased to present the 2025-26 Annual Report for the Office of the Independent Assessor (OIA).

This year, the OIA received the lowest number of councillor complaints on record. A total of 725 complaints were received, representing a 28 per cent decrease from the previous year. While a range of factors may have contributed to this reduction, there has been a noticeable increase in councillors' familiarity with their statutory obligations as they move into the second half of their electoral term. This downward trend also coincided with a decrease in the number of individual councillors receiving complaints and a reduction in matters warranting misconduct investigation.

The OIA continued to meet key performance benchmarks for complaint assessment and investigation timeframes while managing a substantial volume of work. Under the revised performance framework, which incorporates third-party pauses, complaints were assessed in an average of three working days, well within the seven-day target. Investigations were completed in an average of 46 working days, comfortably meeting the benchmarks of 60 working days for standard complaints and 160 working days for more complex matters, including those involving external agencies such as the Crime and Corruption Commission (CCC). The average time required to complete natural justice processes for misconduct investigations fell from 3.6 months to 2.2 months, reflecting the effectiveness of ongoing process improvements and supporting more timely outcomes for all parties.

During the year, the OIA made seven misconduct applications to the Councillor Conduct Tribunal (CCT), with four matters uncontested by the subject councillors. The CCT delivered four decisions, three of which upheld the OIA's position and resulted in findings of misconduct. These outcomes demonstrate the strength of the OIA's investigative processes and its focus on pursuing serious conduct matters where the evidence supports further action.

The OIA maintained its focus on serious misconduct matters while continuing to support capacity building across the sector. One in ten complaints assessed progressed to formal investigation, with the most common issues involving conflicts of interest and the release of confidential information.

As an alternative to more formal and resource-intensive processes, the OIA issued 46 recommendations to councillors during 2025-26, providing practical guidance to support compliance with legislative obligations and promote good governance. By addressing conduct concerns early and proportionately, the OIA assists councillors and councils to resolve issues efficiently while maintaining focus on serving their communities.

Stakeholder engagement remained a key priority. The OIA continued to work closely with the Department of Local Government, Water and Volunteers (DLGWV), the Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ) and Local Government Managers Australia (LGMA) to analyse complaint trends, share insights and strengthen governance practices across the sector.

During the year, the OIA contributed to parliamentary consideration of the Local Government (Empowering Councils) and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2026 through a detailed submission and participation in Parliamentary Committee hearings. Following passage of the legislation, the OIA supported sector awareness through training sessions, presentations, webinars and targeted communications delivered in partnership with key stakeholders.

The OIA also continued expanding its broader communications and engagement activities, including hosting an information booth at the LGAQ Annual Conference on the Gold Coast, delivering tailored workshops, growing its LinkedIn presence, publishing quarterly editions of OIA Insights and facilitating regular CEO forums.

During 2025-26, the OIA enhanced its complaint data recording and reporting capability to capture more detailed information on complaint themes. This information was used to produce six-monthly complaint snapshots for each of Queensland's 77 local governments, providing councils with greater visibility of local complaint trends and assisting them to identify opportunities for targeted education, training and governance support.

I would like to acknowledge the DLGWV, LGAQ and LGMA for working so closely with us to continue strengthening the councillor conduct framework and improve outcomes across the sector.

I would also like to thank councillors, CEOs and council staff across the state for their ongoing cooperation and assistance throughout the year as we worked together to resolve matters as promptly and effectively as possible.

Finally, I wish to recognise the dedication and professionalism of the OIA team. During a year of sustained demand and significant discussion surrounding legislative reform, staff managed a substantial workload while maintaining high standards of assessment, investigation and stakeholder engagement. Their commitment to delivering timely, fair and proportionate outcomes remains central to the OIA's success. I am proud of the collaborative culture that continues to define our organisation and the shared commitment of our staff to upholding integrity and accountability across local government.

Charlie Kohn
Acting Independent Assessor
Office of the Independent Assessor

1 About Us

Our vision

Trust in the integrity of councillors.

Our values

- Customers first
- Ideas into action
- Unleash potential
- Be courageous
- Empower people.

What we do

The Office of the Independent Assessor (OIA) undertakes the initial assessment of all complaints about councillor conduct in Queensland, helping to ensure the system remains transparent and accountable.

Prior to 1 July 2026, complaints assessed as suspected conduct breaches could be referred to the relevant local government for consideration and resolution. Following the commencement of the *Local Government (Empowering Councils) and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2026* on 1 July 2026, conduct breaches are no longer dealt with under the councillor conduct framework and complaints of this nature are no longer progressed.

Complaints assessed as alleged misconduct may be investigated by the OIA and, following a natural justice process, referred to the independent Councillor Conduct Tribunal (CCT) for determination. Complaints assessed as suspected corrupt conduct are referred to the Crime and Corruption Commission (CCC).

The OIA contributes to the state government's objectives of 'A better lifestyle through a stronger economy' and 'Planning for Queensland's future' by:

- delivering an efficient and trusted councillor complaints framework that is balanced, timely, efficient and consistent
- strategically enhancing councillor integrity by collaborating with key stakeholders to support them to build capacity and foster a culture of accountability and ethical practice in local government.

Oversight

The Local Government, Small Business and Customer Service Committee is responsible for overseeing, monitoring and reviewing the performance of the Independent Assessor (IA).

As part of the Committee's oversight role, representatives from the Office of the Independent Assessor (OIA) appeared at two public hearings during 2025-26, on 27 August 2025 and 4 March 2026, to discuss the OIA's operations and performance.

Legislation

The *Local Government (Councillor Complaints) and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2018* established the OIA to manage councillor conduct complaints and set out the legislative framework for the councillor conduct complaints system.

On 30 March 2020, provisions in the *Local Government Electoral (Implementing Stage 2 of Belcarra) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2019* added the Brisbane City Council (BCC) into the OIA's jurisdiction.

On 22 November 2023, *the Local Government (Councillor Conduct) and Other Legislation Amendment Act* introduced a range of reforms to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the councillor conduct complaints system. The reforms included the introduction of a preliminary assessment process to enable lower-level matters to be closed at an early stage, statutory limitation periods for complaints and referrals, the replacement of the *term inappropriate conduct with conduct breach*, and changes to ensure the framework applied only to councillors acting in their official capacity and, generally, only while they remained in office.

On 1 July 2026, *the Local Government (Empowering Councils) and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2026* took effect, introducing reforms to the councillor conduct framework including:

- removing conduct breaches from the councillor conduct complaints framework
- establishing a revised conflicts of interest framework
- introducing new misconduct provisions
- changes to reporting periods for registers of interests.

The OIA's remit covers all mayors and councillors from Queensland's 77 local governments.

Human Rights Act 2019

The OIA complies with the requirements of the *Human Rights Act 2019* (HR Act) and respects, protects and promotes human rights in its decision-making and actions.

To further the objectives of the HR Act and to ensure the OIA's policies, procedures and practices are compatible, the OIA:

- acts and makes decisions in a way which is compatible with human rights
- considers and refers to the HR Act at key decision points
- raises awareness of the HR Act among OIA staff
- promotes compliance with the HR Act by OIA staff.

Operating environment

The OIA works with its key stakeholders including members of the community, councillors and staff from Queensland's 77 local governments, officers from the DLGWV, and peak bodies including the LGAQ and LGMA.

The OIA also engages with the CCC, Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal (QCAT), Queensland Integrity Commissioner, Queensland Audit Office, Queensland Electoral Commissioner and Queensland Ombudsman.

OIA financial and non-financial performance information

OIA financial information is published in the 2025-26 Department of Local Government, Water and Volunteers Annual Report.

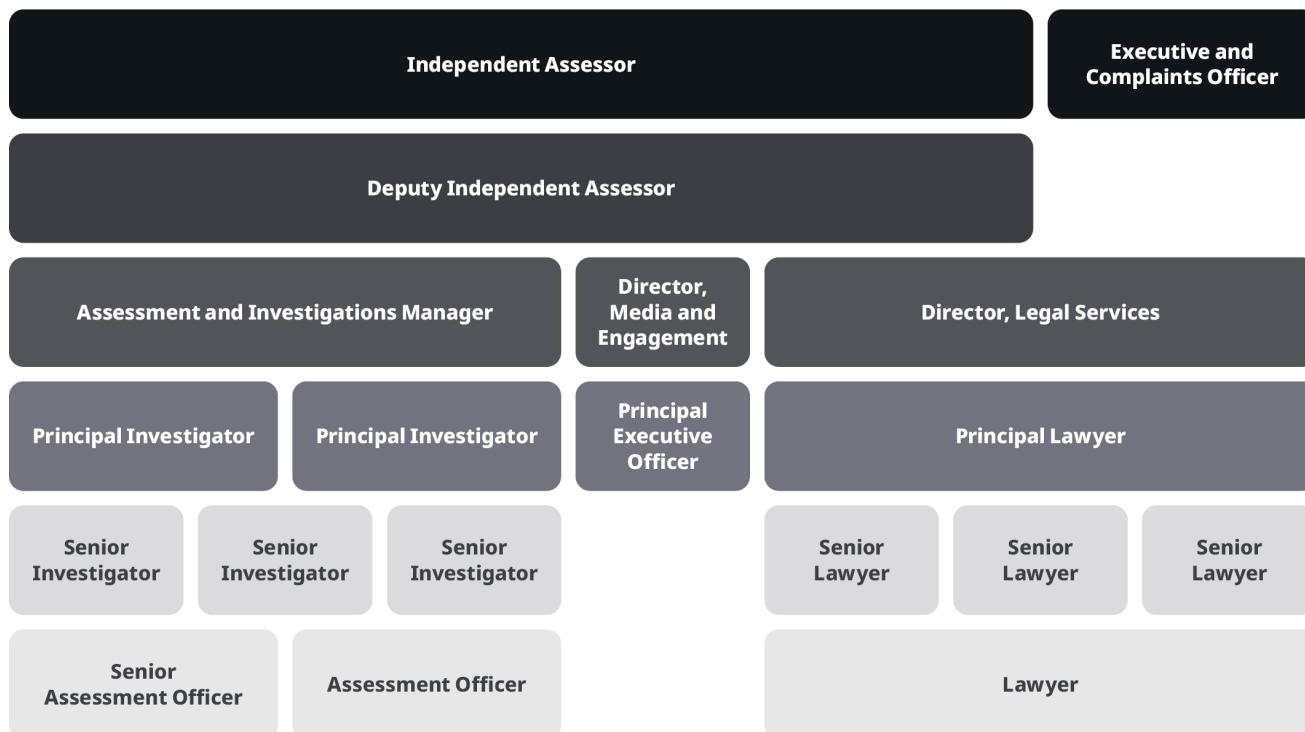
OIA non-financial performance information based on the Service Delivery Statement is also in the 2025-26 Department of Local Government, Water and Volunteers Annual Report.

Organisational structure

The OIA is funded for 19 permanent full-time equivalent (FTE) positions.

The OIA receives support from the DLGWV for human resources, finance, communications, information technology and procurement.

Figure 1: Organisational chart



2 Complaints and notifications

2025-26

COMPLAINT SNAPSHOT

725

complaints received
(28% decrease on 2024-25)

49%

from the public
(1% increase on 2024-25)

45%

from local government
(1% decrease on 2024-25)

42%

**of councillors have had a
complaint made
against them**
(3% decrease on 2024-25)

17%

anonymous complaints

The OIA has received 7,318 complaints about councillor conduct since it was established on 3 December 2018 to 30 June 2026.

In 2025-26, the OIA received 725 complaints or notifications containing 856 separate allegations. This represents a 28 per cent decrease in the number of complaints or notifications received compared with 2024-25 where 1,008 complaints were received. Since establishment, the OIA has consistently received on average just under 1,000 complaints or notifications each year.

Complaints and notifications may allege that a councillor has engaged in a conduct breach, misconduct or corrupt conduct.

We measure our performance towards our strategic objectives against the performance indicators in our strategic plan. A snapshot of our performance towards these indicators is provided on pages 9 to 10, and in more detail under each objective on pages 10 to 22.

Where an achievement has contributed to more than one objective, it appears under the objective to which it contributes most.

Under the OIA's broad discretion, complaints are dismissed on assessment or subject to no further action if they:

- are out of jurisdiction
- are not a conduct breach or misconduct
- contain insufficient information for a proper assessment
- are not a justifiable use of resources
- are not in the public interest
- are improper, that is, vexatious or frivolous.

Complaints or notifications assessed as possible misconduct may be investigated by the OIA and may, following a natural justice process, be referred to the CCT to decide.

Those assessed as corrupt conduct are referred to the CCC.

During 2025-26, complaints assessed as a conduct breach could be referred back to local government for investigation and decision. From 1 July 2026, conduct breaches have been removed from the councillor conduct framework and complaints which fall into this category must be dismissed on assessment.

Complaint volumes

Prior to the OIA being established, Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) were placed in the difficult position of receiving and assessing complaints against mayors and councillors.

The sustained volume of complaints since the establishment of the OIA is likely because of the introduction of mandatory reporting for CEOs and councillors in 2018, previous under-reporting of complaints, and increased confidence in a complaints process that is independent of councils.

This graph depicts the number of complaints lodged with the OIA since it was established on 3 December 2018 and the volume of complaints prior to that with the department responsible for local government.

Table 1: Complaints received each year

Year	Number of complaints received
2015-16	133
2016-17	141
2017-18	162
2018-19	917
2019-20	1,030
2020-21	1,074
2021-22	881
2022-23	897
2023-24	878
2024-25	1,008
2025-26	725

Source of complaints

The source of complaints to the OIA in 2025-26 were:

- 49% from members of the public
- 45% from the local government sector including CEOs, councillors, councillor self-referrals and council staff
- 3% referred by the CCC
- 1% IA initiated
- 3% from other sources including other government departments.

There was some movement in the source of complaints categories in 2025-26 compared with 2024-25 including a one per cent increase in proportion from members of the public and a one per cent decrease from the local government sector. The proportion of referrals by the CCC also increased from one per cent to three per cent this financial year.

Councillors referring their own conduct increased this year to 18 self-referrals, up from 16 in the previous financial year.

Complaints or notifications from one councillor about the conduct of another councillor decreased from 21 per cent of all complaints or notifications received to 17 per cent in 2025-26.

Importantly, this data incorporates mandatory reporting obligations for local government officials under sections 150P and 150R of the Local Government Act 2009 (LG Act).

Complaints were made against 242 individual councillors in 2025-26, representing 42 per cent of the 578-councillor cohort across Queensland. This compares favourably to the previous year which recorded 260 individual councillors being the subject of complaints to the OIA.

The OIA received no complaints relating to councillors from 17 councils.

Anonymous complaints

In 2025-26, the OIA received 125 anonymous complaints which accounted for 17 per cent of all complaints received. While this figure is 49 less complaints than the previous year, the rate of anonymous complaints has remained consistent for the past six financial years.

The outcomes of anonymous complaints in 2025-26 include:

- 116 dismissed on assessment (93%)
- 7 investigated (6%)
- 2 led to recommendations after assessment (1%)
- 0 referred to councils as potential conduct breach
- 0 progressed to CCT

Of the seven anonymous complaints that were investigated, three complaints resulted in statutory recommendations issued to councillors and four were dismissed following investigation.

Historically, many anonymous complaints concerned First Nations councils where, in small communities, there is an increased fear of reprisal or conflict. In 2025-26, the overall anonymous complaints rate relating to First Nations councils was 36 per cent, down slightly from 38 per cent in 2024-25.

Independent Assessor initiated complaints

Under the LG Act, the IA may initiate complaints. The IA commenced nine own-motion complaints in 2025-26. This is an increase from six own-motion complaints in 2024-25.

Impact on corruption complaints

In 2025-26 the OIA referred 15 complaints to the CCC, about two per cent of all complaints for the year.

3 Assessment

2025-26

ASSESSMENT SNAPSHOT

742

complaints assessed
(29% decrease on 2024-25)

3 days

average time to assess complaints

98%

**complaints assessed
within 7 days**

82%

**complaints dismissed or
NFA on assessment**

46

**statutory
recommendations for
training or intervention**

6

**vexatious complainant
warnings issued**

OIA assessment

In 2025-26, the OIA assessed 742 complaints, representing a 29 per cent decrease compared to 2024-25. This figure includes complaints received in previous reporting periods that were assessed during the current financial year. The OIA continued to deliver timely assessment outcomes, with complaints assessed within an average of three days, inclusive of third-party pauses. Overall, 98 per cent of complaints were assessed within the target timeframe of seven days, demonstrating the OIA's ongoing commitment to efficient and effective complaint management.

At assessment, 82 per cent of complaints were either dismissed or resulted in no further action, ensuring investigative resources were directed to serious misconduct matters. The OIA also issued 46 statutory recommendations for training or intervention to address identified risks and improve practices and issued six vexatious complainant warnings during the reporting period.

While the overall volume of complaints decreased during the financial year, the complexity of matters received increased substantially. Many complaints involved multiple allegations, extensive supporting material and nuanced issues requiring careful analysis and assessment. This trend resulted in greater effort being required to identify the key issues, assess the available evidence and determine the appropriate course of action.

The increasing use of artificial intelligence (AI) by complainants also presented new challenges. In some cases, AI-generated complaints were significantly longer and contained a larger number of allegations than in previous years. While these complaints often raised issues requiring consideration, the volume and complexity of the material resulted in additional time being needed to distil the relevant information, assess each allegation on its merits and ensure decisions were fair, proportionate and consistent with statutory requirements.

Statutory limitation periods

A complaint, notice or information about the conduct of a councillor must be made or given to the IA:

- within one year after the conduct occurred; or
- within six months after the conduct comes to the knowledge of the person who made the complaint or gave the information or notice, but within two years after the conduct occurred.

Where a complaint is assessed as a conduct breach, the IA may dismiss the complaint or take no further action if at least six months have elapsed since the conduct the subject of the complaint occurred and it would not be in the public interest to take action.

How complaints are assessed

The OIA undertakes a robust assessment process and assesses each complaint on its individual circumstances. The *Local Government (Councillor Conduct) and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2023* introduced a formal preliminary assessment process for the OIA, significantly enhancing the efficiency and consistency of complaint handling. The IA is required to conduct a preliminary assessment of all complaints, notices, and information received about councillor conduct whether submitted directly, notified by councils or provided under section 150AF(3). This process ensures that each matter is considered against clearly defined criteria.

Importantly, the legislation specifies the factors the IA must consider when deciding whether to dismiss a complaint or take no further action. These include whether pursuing the matter would be in the public interest or a justifiable use of resources. The Act also enables the OIA to take no further action where the conduct is already being, or may be, addressed by another entity, such as the Crime and Corruption Commission or the Queensland Police Service. These provisions are critical in ensuring that the OIA's resources are focused on serious misconduct and that duplication across agencies is avoided.

The Amendment Act specifies the IA **must** dismiss or take no further action for complaints that fall within the following categories:

- dealing with the complaint would not be in the public interest
- the complaint was made outside the statutory timeframes
- the alleged conduct was engaged in in compliance with a guideline made by the department's chief executive
- the alleged conduct occurred solely in a personal capacity, unless suspected corrupt conduct
- the conduct is clearly not misconduct or a conduct breach
- the office of the councillor is vacated, unless suspected corrupt conduct
- the complainant is subject to a vexatious complaint declaration, and the complaint is not permitted under a condition of the declaration.

The IA **may** dismiss or take no further action for complaints that fall into the following categories:

- the conduct has been or may be dealt with by another entity
- the complaint is vexatious, frivolous, not made in good faith or lacks substance
- dealing with the complaint would be an unjustifiable use of resources
- for alleged conduct breaches, greater than six months has expired since the conduct occurred
- there is insufficient information to properly assess the alleged conduct.

If none of the above considerations apply, the IA must decide:

- if a conduct breach is reasonably suspected, to refer the conduct to the local government to deal with;
- to investigate the conduct of the councillor; or

- not to deal with the complaint and make any recommendation the IA considers appropriate including, for example, that the councillor attend training, counselling or mediation.

It is important that the IA takes a holistic and contextual approach when assessing complaints. Section 150SD of the LG Act allows for the Assessor to consider any relevant reasons or factors surrounding the conduct in question. This includes, for example, whether the councillor has undertaken any training related to the conduct, or whether the conduct may be influenced by the councillor's Aboriginal traditions or Island customs. These considerations ensure that assessments are fair, culturally informed, and reflective of the broader circumstances in which the conduct occurred.

Whether there is a public interest in a matter proceeding is considered at all stages of the process regardless of whether the complaint or notification has come from a member of the public or a local government official.

When the OIA assesses a complaint or notification, it also considers whether:

- it raises either potential conduct breach, misconduct or corrupt conduct
- it should be dismissed or the subject of no further action for reasons outlined in section 150X or 150Y of the LG Act
- an allegation of conduct breach should be referred back to a local government
- it should be investigated as potential misconduct
- it must be referred to the CCC as it raises a reasonable suspicion of corrupt conduct on the part of a councillor
- a human right or rights are raised
- whether the complaint or notification was made by a public interest discloser and steps are required under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 2010 and the OIA's public interest disclosure policy.

CONDUCT EXAMPLES

Conduct breach

Conduct that breaches a behavioural standard or a policy, procedure or resolution of the local government.

EXAMPLE

Breach of a council's media policy or disrespectful behaviour towards another councillor or member of the public.

Misconduct

Conduct that breaches the misconduct provisions in the LG Act (section 150L of the LG Act)

EXAMPLE

Failing to declare a conflict of interest when participating in a decision of council.

Corrupt Conduct

Conduct that may be a criminal offence or disciplinary matters which may result in termination as a councillor.

EXAMPLE

Corruption, fraud and theft, misuse of council information for a benefit, secret commissions, abuse of office.

Table 2: Assessment outcomes 2025-26

Outcome of complaints assessed	Number of complaints	% of complaints
Dismissed or NFA	612	82
Investigate as misconduct	85	11
Referred to local government as conduct breach	14	1
Referred to CCC as corrupt conduct	15	2
Enquiry only or other outcome	16	4

Dismissed or no further action

In 2025-26, a total of 612 complaints, representing 82 per cent of all complaints assessed, were dismissed or recorded as no further action (NFA). This reflects a continued increase in the proportion of complaints resolved without further investigation following the local government complaints reforms introduced in November 2023. By comparison, 81 per cent of complaints were dismissed or recorded as NFA in 2024-25, up from 76 per cent in 2023-24 and 65 per cent in 2022-23. The ability to dismiss complaints that are not a justifiable use of resources or are not in the

public interest remains an important mechanism for managing investigation workloads and ensuring the OIA's finite resources are focused on matters that warrant investigation.

The OIA has consistently dismissed complaints as not in the public interest under section 150X or, not a justifiable use of resources under section 150Y, in the following circumstances:

- for new inexperienced councillors, a three-month amnesty for low-level misconduct has been provided to allow time for councillors to be trained in their new roles

- where the councillor has obtained legal advice before the conduct and followed that advice in good faith and produces a copy of that advice
- where legislation has changed but the councillor has not had the opportunity to receive training
- where the councillor is facing more serious issues such as criminal charges for drink driving as the matter is best handled by the Queensland Police Service
- failures to update registers of interests where the period of time the register was inaccurate was limited and the interest omitted was not significant and the councillor has since updated the register
- where a councillor self-refers for relatively minor conduct and demonstrates insight, particularly if the councillor is inexperienced.

Table 3: Reasons for complaints being dismissed 2025-26

Reason for complaint dismissal or NFA taken	Number of complaints
Clearly not considered a conduct breach or misconduct	366
Unjustifiable use of resources	57
Insufficient information	56
Dismissed with OIA recommendation	39
Personal conduct	21
Being dealt with by another entity	16
Not in public interest	34
Outside statutory limitation period	11
Vexatious, frivolous or lacks substance	9
Councillor's office since vacated	3

Statutory recommendations

The OIA has flexibility to resolve complaints in a way that builds capacity, rather than focuses on a prosecution before the CCT.

The OIA is able to issue statutory recommendations directly to councillors, rather than pursuing formal investigations of lower-level conduct matters.

This approach allows councillors to address concerns through targeted interventions such as training or counselling, without the need for council-led investigations. It also provides clarity on legislative expectations and can reduce associated costs.

The OIA uses statutory recommendations as an initial step in an escalation process, giving councillors the opportunity to modify their behaviour before more formal actions are considered.

Since the introduction of recommendations, the OIA has issued 139 recommendations to individual councillors and five council-wide recommendations.

In the 2025-26 financial year, 46 recommendations were issued to councillors.

The recommendations mechanism supports a more constructive resolution pathway, allowing councillors to address issues through targeted interventions

such as training or corrective action. In doing so, the OIA is able to clarify legislative expectations, reinforce standards of conduct and reduce the administrative and financial burden associated with more formal processes.

Importantly, statutory recommendations form part of the OIA's process of escalation. They are typically used as an initial step, providing councillors with an opportunity to reflect on and modify their behaviour before more serious enforcement action is considered. This approach aligns with the broader objective of fostering a culture of accountability while minimising unnecessary escalation.

The types of interventions recommended by the OIA are practical and tailored to the circumstances of each matter. Some of the more typical recommendations that have been made include:

- refamiliarisation with the Code of Conduct or relevant council policies
- attendance at conflicts of interest training delivered by the Department
- targeted training or briefings provided by the council CEO
- councillor corrects their Register of Interests.

The effectiveness of OIA recommendations is demonstrated by low levels of repeat intervention. Approximately 70 per cent of councillors who received a statutory recommendation since their introduction received only one, indicating that the majority respond positively and do not re-engage in similar conduct. A smaller proportion received multiple recommendations (21 per cent received two and 9 per cent received three or more).

Vexatious or improper complaints

The OIA has a responsibility to address unacceptable complaint conduct.

To ensure that councillors are provided due process and to uphold the efficacy of the councillor conduct framework, it is necessary for the IA to be provided adequate means by which to manage improper complaint behaviour.

To achieve this, the IA has two processes available under the LG Act to deal with vexatious complaints:

- commence a statutory prosecution under section 150AV or 150R(3) of the LG Act; and/or
- undertake a statutory process to make a 'vexatious complainant' declaration under section 150AWA of the LG Act.

In 2025-26, the OIA issued 6 vexatious warnings to complainants and dismissed 8 complaints as either being vexatious or lacking substance.

It is important to note that the OIA will not consider a complaint to be vexatious if it raises a reasonable suspicion of councillor conduct.

The OIA also notes that councillors and CEOs have statutory obligations under the LG Act to refer complaints about councillor conduct to the Independent Assessor (s.150P) and to notify the Independent Assessor if they become aware of information indicating a councillor may have engaged in a conduct breach or misconduct (s.150R). As a result, it is important that councillors and CEOs feel able to comply with these obligations without fear of adverse consequences. This is one reason why complaints made by councillors in the course of complying with their statutory reporting obligations may be difficult to characterise as vexatious, particularly where they are made in good faith.

Conduct breach

The councillor complaints framework was amended to remove conduct breaches from the councillor conduct framework. However, conduct breaches remained part of the framework during 2025-26 and continued to be assessed under the LG Act.

During 2025-26, where a complaint was assessed as alleging a potential conduct breach, the OIA could refer the matter to the relevant local government for consideration. The OIA also had the discretion under section 150SD of the LG Act to take no further action in relation to a conduct breach matter.

In exercising this discretion, the OIA was mindful of the resource implications for local governments in investigating and dealing with less serious matters. Consequently, only those conduct breach matters considered to warrant further examination were generally referred to local governments.

In 2025-26, 9 matters (14 complaints), representing around two per cent of all complaints assessed, were referred to local governments for consideration. This small proportion reflects the OIA's approach of referring only the more serious conduct breach matters or repeat occurrences, recognising the significant resource impact that investigations can have on local governments.

Conduct breach matters are discussed further in Chapter 4.

Misconduct

Complaints or notifications that raise a reasonable suspicion of misconduct at the time of assessment may be investigated by the OIA. Before a matter is investigated, the OIA must be satisfied that it is in the public interest to proceed.

In 2025-26, 85 complaints or notifications or 11 per cent of all matters assessed including matters from previous years became OIA misconduct investigations. This level remains consistent with the previous year where 10 per cent of complaints progressed to investigation and reflects the OIA's application of a higher threshold for initiating investigations, in line with changes introduced by the Amendment Act.

Misconduct investigations are explored in Chapter 5.

Corrupt conduct

The IA must notify the CCC if a complaint or information involves or may involve suspected corrupt conduct.

In 2025-26, 15 matters or two per cent of all complaints involved suspected corrupt conduct by a councillor and were referred to the CCC.

Under section 40 of the Crime and Corruption Act 2001 (CC Act), the OIA has a complaint-handling agreement that allows the OIA to immediately commence investigating agreed categories of corrupt conduct without first referring the matter to the CCC. The OIA then provides a monthly schedule to the CCC and it can take responsibility for a case at its discretion.

During 2025-26 the OIA reported no suspected corrupt conduct complaint files to the CCC under section 40 schedule of the CC Act. In 2023-24 the OIA referred one suspected corrupt conduct complaint file to the CCC under section 40 of the CC Act.

Review of assessment decisions

Consistent with best practice complaint management the OIA offers an internal review of an assessment decision to dismiss or take no further action on a complaint. Requests for review must be made within 30 calendar days from the date of the outcome advice. Internal reviews are carried out by the Independent Assessor.

In 2025-26, the OIA received 37 requests for internal review of assessment decisions. In all cases, the original decisions were upheld.

Under the Public Sector Act 2022, the OIA is required to publish details of customer complaints. This includes complaints about decisions made which may include requests for an internal review of an assessment decision. In 2025-26, the OIA did not receive a customer service complaint.

4 Conduct breach

2025-26

COMPLAINT SNAPSHOT

343

**complaints alleging a
conduct breach**
(47% of all complaints received)

92%

**conduct breach complaints
were dismissed or NFA**

9

**matters referred to six councils
to deal with**
(2% of all complaints)

A conduct breach occurs when a councillor breaches a behavioural standard or a local government policy, procedure or resolution.

In 2025-26, the OIA received 343 complaints or notifications alleging a conduct breach by a councillor, accounting for 47 per cent of all complaints lodged. This represents a 31 per cent reduction in conduct breach complaints compared to the previous year.

Of the complaints alleging a conduct breach, 92 per cent were dismissed or had no further action taken. This figure includes matters where a statutory recommendation was issued in lieu of progressing the matter further.

The OIA does not have the power to investigate a conduct breach unless it is closely tied to alleged misconduct. However, the OIA does assess complaints of a conduct breach and has the ability under section 150SD of the LG Act to dismiss the complaint or take no further action with respect to the complaint, in the same way as it can do so for complaints assessed as misconduct.

Where the OIA believes there are public interest grounds for taking further action with respect to a complaint assessed as a conduct breach, it would refer the complaint to the relevant local government to deal with.

On 1 July 2026, conduct breaches were removed from the councillor conduct framework following the passing of the Local Government (Empowering Councils) and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2026. This means any future conduct breach matters must be dismissed by the OIA.

It is worth noting that the OIA noticed a considerable drop in conduct breach complaints and notifications being received by the OIA since the government announced its intention to remove conduct breaches from the framework. It is our view that this may have influenced complaint behaviour.

Referrals to local governments

In 2025-26, the OIA referred 9 matters (14 complaints) to six councils for investigation, representing around two per cent of all complaints or notifications received. This was the lowest number of conduct breach referrals in recent years and significantly lower than the 57 complaints referred in 2022-23.

The OIA adopted an escalation process for conduct breach matters, where less serious complaints are initially addressed through advice or statutory recommendations for training. If similar conduct persists, the matter may then be escalated to a referral to the relevant local government.

When deciding whether to refer a matter to a local government or take no further action, the OIA considered a range of factors including the seriousness and nature of the alleged conduct, whether the councillor has a history of similar complaints or findings, the potential impact on public confidence in local government, whether the matter is better addressed through education or guidance and the proportionality of the response relative to the conduct.

In the majority of cases, suspected conduct breaches are only referred to the local government after other avenues of intervention such as correspondence, meetings and statutory recommendations for training and mediation have been exhausted.

Local governments are required under section 150AHA of the LG Act to provide the OIA with notice if they decide not to start or continue with an investigation about a conduct breach. Notice must also be given when a decision has been made about whether a councillor has engaged in a conduct breach (and any applicable penalty imposed).

5 Investigations

2025-26

INVESTIGATIONS SNAPSHOT

73

misconduct
investigations
completed

46 days

average time to complete
an investigation

11%

of complaints
assessed became
misconduct
investigations

14%

of investigations relate to release of
confidential information

The OIA undertakes an investigation when a complaint or notification raises a reasonable suspicion of misconduct or further inquiries are necessary to determine this. Where there are public interest reasons for doing so, the Independent Assessor may decide to investigate a complaint. This occurs when the IA has chosen not to deal with a complaint in another way, for example by recommending a councillor attend training or mediation.

Investigation timeframes

During 2025-26, the OIA completed 73 misconduct investigations, including matters carried over from previous financial years. This compares with 102 investigations completed in 2024-25, 147 in 2023-24 and 205 in 2022-23.

At 30 June 2026, there were 40 active investigations, compared with 20 at 30 June 2025, 22 at 30 June 2024 and 34 at 30 June 2023.

As at 30 June 2026, the average time taken to complete an investigation was 46 working days, compared with 38 working days in 2024-25.

The increase in average investigation time reflects the OIA's continued focus on investigating more serious and complex matters. These investigations typically require more extensive evidence gathering and analysis resulting in longer completion timeframes than less complex matters.

The below table depicts the age of outstanding investigations at 30 June of each year.

Table 4: Timeframes for complaints under investigation as at 30 June of each financial year

Timeframe	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
0 to 3 months	16	11	31
3 to 6 months	5	6	5
6 to 12 months	0	0	4
12 months +	0	0	0
On hold investigations	0	3	0
Total	21	20	40

Table 5: Top 5 themes among misconduct matters investigated by the OIA each year

	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
1	Release of confidential information	Non-compliance with an Act	Non-compliance with an Act
2	Conflicts of interest issues	Conflicts of interest issues	Release of confidential information issues
3	Not honest and not impartial	Register of interests issues	Conflicts of interest
4	Breach of trust	Conduct breaches*	Conduct breaches*
5	Influencing others while having a conflict of interest	Release of confidential information	Register of interests issues

* Complaints reclassified as conduct breach after investigation, linked to misconduct matters or a council has resolved that future breaches be treated as misconduct.

During 2025-26, allegations of non-compliance with an Act were the most common category of misconduct investigation, accounting for 23 per cent of all issues investigated. Allegations concerning the release of confidential information accounted for 14 per cent of issues investigated, making it the second most common category in 2025-26.

Allegations aligned with Code of Conduct breaches represented 13 per cent of issues investigated. While conduct breaches were generally outside the OIA's investigative remit, some matters initially assessed as potential misconduct were found, following investigation, to more appropriately align with Code of Conduct obligations. Investigations relating to registers of interests accounted for 11 per cent of issues, down from 17 per cent in 2024-25.

Conflicts of interest remained a key area of focus for the OIA. Combined allegations relating to conflicts of interest, declarable conflicts of interest and prescribed conflicts of interest accounted for 12 per cent of all issues investigated during the year.

Notices issued

The LG Act under Chapter 5A, Part 4 provides investigation and enforcement powers to the OIA. The following powers were exercised in 2025-26:

- Section 150CH allows investigators to request information that is reasonably necessary to investigate a councillor's conduct: 27 notices issued.
- Section 150CJ notices require the attendance of a person at an interview with investigators: six notices issued.
- Section 150CK states that the person's attendance at an interview or the information provided is confidential, as is the notice itself. This is issued when it is reasonably believed to be necessary to ensure the investigation is carried out confidentially or to prevent the commission of an offence: four notices issued.

Search warrants

An OIA investigator is able to apply for a search warrant under section 150BN where there are reasonable grounds for suspecting that there is evidence of a conduct offence at a place.

No search warrants were issued in 2025-26.

Complex complaint investigations

The OIA applies adjusted timeframe benchmarks for complaints classified as complex. While straightforward complaints are expected to be investigated within 60 working days, complex matters are allowed up to 160 working days for completion. These typically involve external agency engagement, such as with the Crime and Corruption Commission, or relate to interlinked complaints across multiple files, require significant travel, or involve the issuing of multiple notices.

In 2025-26, the OIA commenced eight complex investigations and finalised 20. This is an increase on the previous year when 15 complex investigations were completed.

Review of completed misconduct investigations

At the conclusion of a misconduct investigation all matters are reviewed by an OIA multi-disciplinary group which includes the Independent Assessor and the Deputy Independent Assessor. If the matter does not meet the threshold of reasonable satisfaction that misconduct has occurred, the complaint is either dismissed, a recommendation is issued or no further action is taken.

Where reasonable satisfaction of misconduct is reached, the matter may proceed to the natural justice phase, during which it is further assessed by the OIA's internal legal team. This stage of the complaints management process is outlined in more detail in Chapter 6.

6 Natural justice

2025-26

NATURAL JUSTICE SNAPSHOT

13

**misconduct complaints or
notifications referred for
natural justice process**

7

**misconduct applications
referred to the CCT**

At the end of an OIA investigation, if there is a reasonable satisfaction of misconduct and it is in the public interest, the matter will progress to a natural justice process.

In 2025-26, 13 misconduct complaints or notifications concerning seven councillors and 16 allegations were referred to OIA legal to undertake this process. This represents 18 per cent of all completed investigations, compared with 11 per cent in the previous year.

The natural justice process involves the OIA preparing a statement of facts which sets out the allegation, the particulars and supporting facts, and explains what category of misconduct is alleged. This statement is shared with the councillor and their legal representative (if applicable) who may provide a further response. This is a statutory natural justice process that is required under section 150AA of the LG Act.

A councillor's response must be considered by the IA in deciding if the matter proceeds to the CCT or is to be dismissed at this point. The natural justice process also allows parties to narrow the issues in dispute if a matter is subsequently referred to the CCT.

As at 30 June 2026, two complaints were undergoing the natural justice process, down from five at the same time in 2025.

Natural justice timeframes

As at 30 June 2026, the average time taken to complete the natural justice process had reduced to 2.2 months, down from 3.6 months in 2024-25 and 4.8 months in 2023-24. The OIA continues to operate within target timeframes that account for third-party pause periods, ensuring performance measures reflect only the time directly attributable to the OIA. Time during which external parties, including legal representatives, are compiling or providing information is excluded from the calculation.

Table 6: Timeframes for complaints undergoing natural justice process as at 30 June of each financial year.

Timeframe	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
0 to 3 months	5	3	2
3 to 6 months	5	1	0
6 to 9 months	9	0	0
9 to 12 months	0	1	0
Total	19	5	2

*Third-party pause calculations

Public Interest

Consideration is given to a range of public interest factors prior to the IA making an application to the CCT including:

- the seriousness of the alleged misconduct
- whether there are reasonable prospects of a finding of misconduct
- the experience of the councillor
- any mitigating or aggravating circumstances
- the availability and effectiveness of any alternatives to making an application to the CCT
- whether the subject councillor has previous disciplinary history, including for similar conduct
- is the alleged breach a continuing or subsequent breach
- how often misconduct of this kind occurs and whether there is a need for deterrence
- the length of time since the alleged misconduct occurred
- the physical or mental health of the subject councillor
- the length and expense of any misconduct hearing
- if the alleged misconduct is sustained, what are the possible sanctions available
- the need to maintain public confidence in the councillor conduct framework.

Matters referred to the CCT

In 2025-26 the OIA made seven applications to the CCT reflecting 14 complaints and 12 allegations.

7 Tribunal hearings and reviews

2025-26
CCT SNAPSHOT

7

**misconduct
applications
referred to CCT**

4

**applications
decided by the CCT**

5

**full-merit reviews
before QCAT**

A referral to the CCT is a disciplinary process, not a criminal one. The purpose of a disciplinary process is to ensure compliance with the standards of conduct set out in the LG Act, to promote future compliance and to uphold confidence in the integrity of councillors.

CCT applications

The CCT receives councillor misconduct applications referred to it by the IA. The IA is the applicant in all matters and bears the onus of proof.

After conducting a hearing in relation to an application, the CCT must decide whether or not the councillor has engaged in misconduct and, if so, decide what disciplinary order is appropriate.

Under the LG Act, the President of the CCT provides practice directions to assist parties in the hearings.

The CCT is required to act as quickly and informally as is consistent with a fair and proper consideration of the issues and natural justice. Each application is dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

In 2025-26, the OIA made seven applications to the CCT, relating to 14 complaints with 12 allegations against five councillors. The OIA submitted four applications in 2024-25.

As at 30 June 2026, four of the seven applications were awaiting a decision from the CCT.

Table 7: Timeframes for matters before CCT as of 30 June 2026

Timeframe	Applications with CCT	Number of complaints reflected in application	Number of allegations
0 to 3 months	2	3	5
3 to 6 months	2	4	3
Total	4	7	8

Since establishment, the OIA has referred a total of 153 applications to the CCT.

CCT decisions

In 2025-26 the CCT decided a total of four applications, down from five in 2024-25 and 18 in 2023-24.

Of those applications, the CCT sustained three applications with one application not being sustained.

The CCT publishes a written summary of its decisions on the website of the department responsible for local government, recording findings and reasons. The following findings and orders reinforce the need for councillors to remain vigilant in identifying and managing their interests and to learn from CCT decisions.

The circumstances in which misconduct findings were made in 2025-26 included:

- A councillor was found to have engaged in misconduct after emailing confidential council documents to a journalist. The Tribunal determined that the councillor failed to exercise appropriate care in handling confidential information.
- A councillor was found to have engaged in misconduct after releasing confidential council information to a journalist on two occasions, including legal advice and details from a confidential councillor workshop.
- A mayor was found to have engaged in misconduct after treating a council employee in a condescending, disrespectful and discourteous manner. This occurred shortly after being reprimanded for a conduct breach and receiving multiple warnings that further similar conduct would be considered misconduct.

QCAT review of CCT decisions

A CCT misconduct decision may be subject to a full-merits review by QCAT.

Any party to the matter may apply to QCAT for a review of the decision.

In 2025-26, QCAT delivered one decision that set aside a CCT decision and found that the allegations of misconduct were not sustained.

As at 30 June 2026, there were five applications awaiting a decision from QCAT. These reviews represent three councillors or former councillors awaiting directions or hearings relating to 20 allegations. One review was initiated during the financial year. The oldest matter at QCAT was five years and two months.

Table 8: Timeframes for applications before QCAT for review as of 30 June 2026

Timeframe	Number of reviews to QCAT	Number of complaints reflected in a review	Number of allegations
Under 12 months	1	1	1
12 to 15 months	1	3	4
15 to 18 months	0	0	0
18 to 21 months	0	0	0
21 months to 2 years	0	0	0
2 years or more	4	8	19
Total	5	9	20

Judicial Reviews

There were no judicial reviews involving the OIA during the 2025-26 period.

8 Breach of conduct provisions

The IA may prosecute offences against 'conduct provisions' before the Magistrates Court as set out in section 150AY of the LG Act.

While the councillor conduct matters referred to in earlier chapters are potential disciplinary matters, a breach of a conduct provision is a potential criminal matter.

Examples of conduct provisions include dishonest conduct of a councillor, use of council information for a benefit or detriment, prohibited conduct of a councillor in possession of inside information, making a complaint vexatiously or not in good faith, and failing to leave a meeting after declaring a prescribed conflict of interest.

Vexatious complaints

In 2025-26, the OIA dismissed eight complaints as vexatious, lacking substance or not made in good faith.

In addition, six vexatious warnings were issued to members of the public.

One complainant was declared a vexatious complainant under section 150AWA of the LG Act.

Vexatious complaint issues

Members of the public who make a complaint frivolously or improperly may be prosecuted under sections 150AV and 150AU of the LG Act.

Similarly, under section 150R(3), it is a potential breach of a conduct provision where a local government official may be prosecuted for making a complaint vexatiously or not in good faith. A local government official for the purposes of section 150R is a CEO of the local government or a councillor.

Breach of conduct provisions by a councillor

In some circumstances, the IA may deal with a breach of the conduct provision by a councillor as misconduct. Generally, matters will be dealt with as misconduct unless it is serious, involves repeat conduct and/or dishonesty, and is not being dealt with by the CCC.

Where investigating or prosecuting a conduct provision is possible, the following public interest considerations are taken into account:

- the seriousness of the alleged offending
- if there are any mitigating or aggravating circumstances
- the availability and effectiveness of any alternatives to dealing with the matter as a breach of a conduct provision (that is, dealing with it as misconduct)
- the councillor's previous disciplinary history or compliance with disciplinary orders
- is the alleged breach a continuing or subsequent offence
- how often offences of this kind occur and whether there is a need for deterrence
- statutory time limits on bringing a prosecution
- the age and physical or mental health of the councillor
- if the councillor is convicted, what are the possible penalties available
- whether charging a councillor may result in their immediate suspension, whether this is proportionate given the impact on constituents, and proximity to a local government election
- the need to maintain public confidence in local government.

9 Preventing misconduct

The OIA plays an active and strategic role in promoting good practice and preventing misconduct across the local government sector. While its core mandate is the assessment and investigation of councillor conduct complaints, the OIA's broader purpose centres on building and maintaining public trust and confidence in the integrity of all councillors.

A key strategy in working towards this goal is by supporting capacity building across the sector, with a strong focus on councillor conduct, ethical decision making and the consistent promotion of integrity and accountability directly with stakeholders.

By leveraging comprehensive complaint data, detailed trend analysis and sector-wide insights, the OIA takes a proactive and preventative approach to managing councillor conduct. This approach is driven by our overall objective: to reduce incidents of misconduct, decrease repeat complaints and ultimately strengthen overall public trust and confidence in councillors across the state.

In 2025-26, the OIA submitted five departmental notifications after identifying systemic or emerging issues affecting the sector. In addition to these formal notifications, the OIA regularly shares high-level observations and emerging risks with the Department. Through the complaints and information received each year, the OIA is uniquely positioned to identify concerning patterns, systemic issues and emerging trends. By highlighting these risks early, the OIA supports proactive responses that strengthen governance practices, protect councillors and councils and help reduce misconduct across the sector.

OIA misconduct prevention activities

The OIA undertakes a number of activities which are designed to prevent misconduct or operate as mechanisms to address conduct and improve behavioural standards.

These include:

- issuing statutory recommendations to councillors
- providing detailed correspondence to both subject councillors and complainants
- participating in workshops and training sessions with specific councils and stakeholders
- issuing unique six-monthly data snapshots to every council CEO across Queensland
- promoting good practice and highlighting case studies in industry publications, quarterly newsletters and webinars
- presenting at industry events and hosting information stalls to offer advice, increase awareness of the OIA's role, and encourage engagement with our activities and key conduct focus areas
- monthly data snapshots of complaint information shared with key stakeholders
- notifications to the Department recommending additional training and guidance about systemic or emerging issues.

These activities allow the OIA to share insights into complaint trends, highlight systemic risks and support councillors and councils to manage behavioural issues before they escalate or become widespread.

Case study – Addressing integrity issues with councillors’ registers of interest

During 2024-25, complaints relating to registers of interest were the most common category of misconduct investigations, accounting for 17 per cent of all matters investigated by the OIA.

These investigations typically involved allegations of omissions or inaccuracies in a councillor’s register of interests, many of which were subsequently corrected following OIA intervention.

In response to the increasing number of complaints relating to registers of interest (which reached 48 complaints in 2024-25) and the associated investigation workload, the OIA adopted a proactive and preventative approach to address the issue at a sector-wide level.

The OIA raised the issue directly with the Department and the LGAQ, highlighted it as an emerging integrity risk through a dedicated edition of its OIA Insights e-newsletter and incorporated it into CEO updates, councillor presentations and other stakeholder engagement activities.

These actions sought to improve councillor awareness and understanding of their obligations before errors resulted in complaints or investigations.

In 2025-26, the OIA recorded 18 complaints relating to registers of interest and commenced 10 misconduct investigations concerning the issue.

This represented a 62 per cent reduction in complaints and a 37 per cent reduction in investigations, demonstrating the value of targeted education and stakeholder engagement in addressing emerging conduct risks and improving compliance across the sector.

10 Communication and engagement

Effective stakeholder engagement is critical to the OIA's ability to contribute to a transparent, responsive and trusted councillor conduct framework. Given the breadth of the OIA's stakeholders, including councillors, local governments, peak bodies and the broader community, engagement is a core mechanism through which the agency builds understanding, supports capability and strengthens confidence in the framework.

The OIA has continued to mature its approach to stakeholder engagement, recognising that proactive engagement contributes directly to improved awareness of conduct obligations and, over time, leads to a reduction in complaints. This reflects a deliberate shift from reactive communication to a more strategic, prevention-focused strategy that supports better outcomes across the local government sector.

The OIA's stakeholder engagement approach is guided by four foundational pillars: direct engagement, a data-informed methodology, accessible and consistent communication, and stakeholder-led opportunities for collaboration and learning. Together, these principles ensure that engagement activities remain relevant, responsive and aligned with the evolving needs of councils, councillors and key sector partners.

During 2025-26, the OIA continued to deliver targeted workshops, presentations and briefings with councils and council staff across Queensland. These sessions focused on councillor conduct obligations, emerging complaint trends, practical case studies and lessons learned from assessment and investigation activities. By providing accessible guidance and encouraging open discussion, the OIA supported councillors and council officers to better understand their responsibilities and contribute to a culture of integrity and good governance.

The OIA also expanded its participation in sector events and professional development activities. This included maintaining a dedicated presence at the LGAQ Annual Conference and contributing to a range of LGAQ and LGMA forums, webinars and publications throughout the year. These engagements provided valuable opportunities to share insights, address emerging issues and strengthen relationships with stakeholders across the sector.

To further support informed decision-making and transparency, the OIA continued to publish monthly performance and complaints data dashboards. These reports provide stakeholders with timely information on complaint volumes, assessment outcomes, processing times and emerging trends, offering valuable insights into both the performance of the OIA and the operation of the councillor conduct framework more broadly.

Building on this commitment to data-driven engagement, in 2025-26 the OIA also introduced six-monthly council snapshots for each of Queensland's 77 local governments. These tailored reports provide councils with information about local complaint themes and trends, enabling them to identify areas of potential risk and target training, education and policy responses more effectively.

The OIA's quarterly newsletter, OIA Insights, continued to serve as an important communication channel, providing stakeholders with updates on key developments, emerging issues, case studies and practical guidance. By highlighting common conduct matters and sharing lessons learned, the newsletter assists councillors and council staff to better understand the framework and apply good governance principles in practice.

The OIA maintained regular engagement with council CEOs through quarterly online discussions focused

on emerging risks, complaint trends, governance challenges and framework updates. These sessions provide a valuable forum for information sharing and constructive dialogue, enabling the OIA to better understand the operational environment of councils while supporting a collective commitment to high standards of conduct and accountability.

During the year, the OIA continued to strengthen its digital engagement capability through its LinkedIn presence, using the platform to share educational content, sector updates, organisational news and recruitment opportunities.

Through the Tripartite Forum, the OIA continues to meet regularly with the Department of Local Government and Water and the Councillor Conduct Tribunal to discuss emerging issues, coordinate activities and promote consistency across the conduct framework.

The Local Government Interagency Liaison Group (LGIG) continued to mature during the year, bringing together representatives from the Crime and Corruption Commission, Queensland Ombudsman, Queensland Audit Office, the Department and the OIA. The group provides an important mechanism for cross-agency collaboration, supporting the identification of systemic issues, coordination of sector-wide education initiatives and the delivery of collaborative projects that strengthen local government governance.

The OIA also contributed to webinars, articles and presentations on a range of contemporary issues

affecting the sector, including social media use, emerging governance risks and legislative developments. These activities support broader awareness and understanding of the councillor conduct framework while ensuring stakeholders have access to practical and timely guidance.

In its media engagement activities, the OIA continued to apply a balanced and transparent approach that recognises the importance of public interest reporting while maintaining the confidentiality requirements necessary to protect the integrity of assessments and investigations. This approach promotes transparency, supports public confidence and reinforces trust in the independence of the OIA.

In June 2026, the Acting Independent Assessor participated in a live radio interview with ABC Radio in Brisbane, explaining the jurisdiction of the OIA, clearing-up myths and promoting the upcoming inquiry into the councillor conduct framework. This was the first time the OIA was represented with a spokesperson in broadcast media for several years.

Overall, the 2025-26 financial year saw the OIA continue to mature and strengthen its stakeholder engagement program through a combination of targeted education, transparent reporting, strategic partnerships and proactive communication. By fostering strong relationships across the local government sector and supporting a shared commitment to ethical conduct and accountability, the OIA has continued to contribute to a more informed, capable and trusted councillor conduct framework for Queensland.

Appendix A Glossary

Term	Meaning
Application	One legal file referred to the CCT for one councillor. It may contain multiple complaints and multiple allegations about the same or closely connected issues.
Matter	The OIA determines its statistics in line with the number of complaints received or assessed. A 'matter' represents one complaint. It may contain multiple allegations.
On the papers	A CCT hearing conducted only through written submissions and a review of the application.
On hold	In previous performance years, investigations were placed 'on hold' pending the availability of an investigator
BCC	Brisbane City Council
CCC	Crime and Corruption Commission
CCT	Councillor Conduct Tribunal
DLGWV	Department of Local Government, Water and Volunteers
FTE	Full-time equivalent
HR Act	<i>Human Rights Act 2019</i>
IA	Independent Assessor
LG Act	<i>Local Government Act 2009</i>
NFA	No further action
OIA	Office of the Independent Assessor
QCAT	Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal

ANNUAL REPORT 2025–2026

Office of the Independent Assessor

Level 13, 53 Albert Street, Brisbane Qld 4000

1300 620 722

independentassessor@oia.qld.gov.au

OIAcomplaints@oia.qld.gov.au

PO Box 15031, City East Qld 4002

www.oia.qld.gov.au