



Australian Government
Attorney-General's Department
Integrity and Security Division

18/310

26 November 2018

Committee Secretary
Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee
PO box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

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Dear Chair

Inquiry into the Freedom of Information Legislation Amendment (Improving Access and Transparency) Bill 2018 – public hearing

Thank you for the opportunity to attend the public hearing in relation to the Freedom of Information Legislation Amendment (Improving Access and Transparency) Bill 2018 on Friday, 16 November 2018.

I have now reviewed the Hansard transcript of my evidence before the Committee and I am concerned that I may have inadvertently provided inaccurate information to the Committee with respect to the budget of the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner (OAIC).

As the Committee is aware, in the 2014-16 Budget the Government announced its intention to abolish the OAIC. This changed in 2016 when the Government announced that the OAIC would continue in its current form. In my evidence I stated that following the decision to continue with current arrangements, the OAIC budget was returned to a neutral position compared to before the decision to abolish the OAIC was made. However, not all funding was, in fact, returned to the OAIC budget.

Money that was appropriated to the Australian Human Rights Commission, the Attorney-General's Department and the Administrative Appeals Tribunal from the 2014-15 Budget measure to abolish the OAIC has now been returned to the OAIC budget.

As part of the 2014-15 Budget measure there were expected to be savings of \$3.6m per year, reflecting the abolition of FOI and information law functions performed by the OAIC. When the Government decided that the OAIC would continue in its current form, an amount of \$2m per year was returned to the OAIC budget from those \$3.6m of savings. The \$1.6m which was not returned reflected streamlined arrangements that had been put in place by the OAIC to manage its workload, particularly in the area of FOI.

I trust that this information adequately clarifies the evidence that I provided to the Committee and I apologise for any confusion.

The action officer for this matter is Kerry Davis who can be contacted on

Yours sincerely

Andrew Walter
First Assistant Secretary
Integrity and Security Branch
Attorney-General's Department