

**Outline of opening statement by Professor John McMillan, Australian Information Commissioner, to Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit annual scrutinies body hearing, 26 June 2013**

1. The work of the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner (OAIC) in recent months has been dominated by workload pressures and budgetary tightening:
  - *Workload:* By the end of the third quarter (March 2013), privacy complaints had increased by 12.9% compared to the same period the previous year, FOI complaints by 50.6% and applications for Information Commissioner (FOI) review by 10.1%. Similar increases occurred in 2011-12. Other active work in the office includes (the following figures are approximate): telephone enquiries (22,000 annually), written enquiries (2500), own motion investigations and audits (40), data breach notifications (60), submissions and policy advice to agencies (250), speeches (50), publication of guidance materials (60), media enquiries (300) and website visits (1.2 million).
  - *Budget:* The OAIC's budget appropriation for 2013-14 is \$10.6M, plus \$2.75M under MOU arrangements with other agencies for specific projects (eg, eHealth records advice). OAIC staffing at March 2013 was 63.97 (full time equivalent) staff, plus 13.55 supported by MOU funding. The comparable figures at March 2012 were 76.2 FTE staff and 5.1 MOU staff.
  
2. The OAIC will face major new challenges in 2013-14 in its three areas of responsibility:
  - *Privacy:* substantial changes to the *Privacy Act* commence in March 2014 that significantly affect government and business information management. The office will prepare roughly 50 key sets of documents and undertake substantial consultation with government, business and the community.
  - *Freedom of information:* The review of the FOI Act and the OAIC by Dr Allan Hawke will be presented to the Government in June 2013. The OAIC made a lengthy submission to the review proposing changes to the FOI Act concerning FOI requests, reviews and complaints, and the role of the FOI Act in underpinning a culture of open government that is now dominated by digital record keeping and electronic publication and exchange of information.
  - *Information policy:* The Attorney-General announced in May 2013 that Australia will join the international Open Government Partnership. Australia will be required to prepare a national open government action plan. The OAIC will propose that the plan take up the range of information policy and management issues identified in an OAIC report published in 2013, *Open public sector information – from principles to practice*. This report contained the findings of a survey of 191 Australian Government agencies.