

## THE AUSTRALIAN

# Queensland's Crime and Corruption Commission slammed

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**Queensland's corruption watchdog is "overly elitist" and "badly letting down" citizens by dismissing ordinary complaints and whistleblowers and allowing seconded police to investigate their own.**



Criminology and justice professor Timothy Prenzler.  
Picture: Griffith University

The scathing criticism in unreported expert submissions to the five-yearly review of the state's powerful Crime and Corruption Commission come amid increasing concern about the use of power by NSW's ICAC.

Criminology and justice professor Timothy Prenzler said the review offered an unprecedented opportunity for a major restructure of Queensland's Crime and Corruption Commission.

"In my view, the Commission's present structure and functions are inconsistent with democratic principles and with the science of government accountability and public sector integrity management" the University of Sunshine Coast academic wrote in his s CCC review.

"The current approach is overly elitist. Ordinary complainants and whistleblowers are

The current approach is overly strict. Ordinary complainants and whistleblowers are treated dismissively, and the people of Queensland are badly let down. A major restructure is required to ensure optimal legitimacy and effectiveness.”

The PCCC is holding a public hearing at Parliament House in Brisbane today, at which witnesses including Shane Duffy, chief executive of the Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander Legal Service, are testifying.

Professor Prenzler argues that the CCC needs to investigate a greater proportion of the public's complaints. He told *The Australian* that currently fewer than two per cent of complaints were dealt with by the CCC and the rest were referred back to government departments for internal investigation and “largely disappear”.

Professor Prenzler said to cope with the spike in workload, the watchdog would need to recruit and train more specialist civilian investigators, rather than rely on the current contingent of seconded police entrusted to investigate claims.

He also said the watchdog's task should be limited just to investigating alleged corruption and public sector wrongdoing, recommending the revoking of its scope to combat major crime.

The Newman government overhauled the watchdog after ordering a review by former High Court judge Ian Callinan and academic Nicholas Aroney.

But Griffith University Institute of Ethics, Governance and Law director Charles Sampford said that while the Callinan Aroney review was long overdue, it was not enough, and some of the reforms it sparked would deter genuine whistleblowers.

Professor Sampford's submission to the PCCC said the requirement for complainants to swear a statutory declaration — and the risk they could be jailed for up to a year if their complaint is found to be vexatious, mischievous or malicious — would have a “chilling effect” on the reportage of complaints.

“While few of us would condone complaints that fall within most of those categories, lay people may be uncertain what is meant by these terms,” he said. “Potential complainants could fear that they might be accused and pursued through the courts with the attendant cost in time, emotion and maybe even jail.”

He said permanent independent bodies like the now-abolished Electoral and Administrative Review Commission, recommended by the landmark Fitzgerald Inquiry, should be established to review ICAC and the CCC every ten years.

A similar suggestion has been made by former Queensland Premier Peter Beattie, who revealed [in a column for \*The Weekend Australian\* that he'd lost confidence in the CCC over its handling of an investigation into a public servant.](#)

Mr Beattie said a four-yearly public review by a retired High Court judge should be

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held into the CCC and ICAC.

He said he hoped new chair, highly regarded barrister Alan MacSporran QC, would restore his confidence in the institution.

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