

*Joint Standing Committee on the Corruption and Crime Commission —
Seventh Report — Annual report 2021–22*

Resumed from 1 December 2022.

Motion

HON DR STEVE THOMAS (South West — Leader of the Opposition) [3.07 pm]: I move —

That the report be noted.

I will jump in to beat the hirsute member who leapt to his feet with enthusiasm to talk about the CCC and make a few comments as the deputy chair of the committee. At the start, members' will note that this is the annual report for 2021–22. It is not the annual report of the last financial year; it is the annual report of the financial year before that. Discussing an annual report tabled at the end of last year, and is now some nine to 10 months old and largely out of date, is perhaps an indication of how slowly we are managing to get through the committee reporting process. Perhaps in the not too distant future, we as a house will take some time to consider how we deal with committee reports. I have a bit of sympathy, particularly for government members who have limited opportunities to make contributions to the debates of Parliament. I understand that it is not the easiest thing in the world to have quite limited opportunities, which is probably demonstrated by the number of members who leapt up to contribute to the last motion. It is understandable that everybody would like an opportunity. When there are so many members on one side of the chamber, it makes it a bit tough. However, the timeliness of debate on reports, and perhaps the length of time that is required for each report, is something for us to consider.

I have a few notes on what we as a committee did in the 2021–22 financial year. Obviously, I will start by acknowledging and thanking the members of the committee. From this chamber, there is Hon Klara Andric, who I understand is unfortunately away on urgent—but unwell—parliamentary business. These things are going around at the moment. From the lower house, Matthew Hughes chairs the committee. At this point in time, the other member of the committee was the Leader of the Opposition in the lower chamber, Shane Love, but he has since been replaced by Hon Mia Davies, so the committee has changed since this particular time. It is a good committee. I think the committee members work together remarkably well considering some of our initial stages and the issues that we inherited. I pay my respects, of course, to the committee staff, Suzanne Veletta and Jovita Hogan, who will note that I used the Spanish pronunciation of her name, not the English version. Call me a stickler for protocol in that way!

The year covered by the report included the early stages of the committee getting together. It obviously started at 1 July 2021, so that was basically at the beginning of our processes. We tabled a number of reports in that year and I do not propose to go through them in any detail. We re-tabled *If not the CCC ... then where? An examination of the Corruption and Crime Commission's oversight of excessive use of force allegations against members of the WA Police Force*; and tabled *'A good year': The work of the Parliamentary Inspector of the Corruption and Crime Commission; The definition of 'public officer' in the Corruption, Crime and Misconduct Act 2003: Parliamentary inspector's report*, and, in fact, the committee has had some results with that issue; *Police power of arrest: Parliamentary inspector's report* and *The Corruption and Crime Commission's unexplained wealth function: The review by the Honourable Peter Martino*. Some of those inquiries were quite interesting. As members will have heard me say as I tabled those reports, it was interesting that in terms of what was put forward by the parliamentary inspector, I not infrequently found myself agreeing with the government and the commission rather than the parliamentary inspector. It might sound a little unusual for an opposition member, but in those cases, and particularly with police powers of arrest, I think that the government and I found a degree of unanimity. I understand that sometimes the parliamentary inspector's role is to raise difficult questions. It may surprise members to know that I have never felt the need to agree necessarily with anybody from any side of politics, and I am usually pretty good at expounding my views on what I think is right—probably more often to my detriment than to my ultimate success, but I am getting a bit old to change now!

The most interesting and important thing in this annual report is the committee's own inquiry, which is called "What happens next? Beyond a finding of serious misconduct". This work has been incredibly interesting and obviously I am not about to pre-empt where we are likely to go with it. It is absolutely the case that quite salacious CCC reports and findings of misconduct have, over many years, ended up imploding into little or no action. There are famous cases. I know the government likes to go back in history and talk about the previous government, but we can go back a bit further and see the actions of Hon Brian Burke in his time as Premier, the issues he had with the CCC, the time he spent in prison and the ultimate overturning of many of those issues. There is no doubt that no matter which side of politics is in government, there is an issue with the outcome following a finding of serious misconduct by the Corruption and Crime Commission.

The terms of reference indicate that the committee is looking at the hows and whys. Why is it that the commission can make a finding of serious misconduct that can have little or no outcome in the longer term, and can we do that

better? Is it a case that perhaps some of those findings were not in the public interest? Is it the case that they were in the public interest but that the systems in place just could not accommodate the work that was done in order to progress them? I commend the investigation to members. The report is due by the end of this year, and the committee is working diligently on it. For a committee that has had its struggles in recent years, the current members are working together remarkably well. People can usually tell that that is the case because they are not reading about us in the newspaper. We are determined that we will get some better outcomes. In my view, the committee is doing very good work. Both the membership and the staff of the committee are to be commended for the attitude that they are taking to it.

I am more than happy to speak on each of the reports in detail when they come on for debate, particularly to answer questions, but I do not intend to have a second crack during the consideration of the annual report. With the notes I have made about trying to progress Parliament's review of reports perhaps in a slightly more timely manner, this is probably the sole contribution I will make on this report. I hope that the Legislative Council will note this comment as required and move on to something else.

Hon KYLE MCGINN: I thank the honourable member for his contribution. I share some of his views on the time taken for reports to be considered. The member's comments instantly took me back to the WorkSafe report done by the Standing Committee on Public Administration in the last term of government. I think members got 20 minutes to discuss it prior to the end of the last term of government. I also note that it has been like that since I was elected in 2017. It has not really changed in this term from what it was in the last term.

Hon Dr Steve Thomas: I blame whichever government was in charge at the time!

Hon KYLE MCGINN: I am sure it was no different in 2015, but I would be intrigued to get the member's views a bit more when that subject comes up to see what he thinks would be a better way to have these debates on committee reports. Again, I was very disappointed that the WorkSafe report, which involved three years' worth of work, got about 20 minutes of debate in the committee stage.

It is good to stand today to have a chat on this report, but first I will touch on what Hon Dr Steve Thomas talked about. I picked up on his comments about what has been inherited. As a former member of both the Standing Committee on Public Administration and the Joint Standing Committee on Delegated Legislation, it always seemed to me that it was a new start in each term of government. I wonder whether the same applies for this committee or whether it is a continuation from the last Parliament and the committee just gets on with the same work. I know that the public administration committee starts afresh and decides its new agenda, rather than following on from the last term of government.

Hon Dr Steve Thomas: The role of the CCC oversight committee is more constant than that of most others. It has more specific roles when it does its own investigation, but, for the most part, there is a carry-on effect. Much of the things that we do now would be the same things, but with a slightly different slant, that Hon Nick Goiran would have dealt with when he was the chair of the committee close to a decade ago.

Hon KYLE MCGINN: That is what I picked up in what the member was saying. In the reports that have been debated in these sessions, it seems that it is very much an ongoing committee that continues to operate on whatever it was operating on before the term of government ended. That intrigues me because I have not been on a committee like that. It is interesting that the committee had to deal with issues that came from a different formulation of the committee, whereas when we walk onto other committees, it is a fresh start. It would be very interesting to experience that. It sounds as though the new committee got through some issues that were probably not as easy for the last formulation of the committee to get through. I also acknowledge that there has been a change since this report was tabled. Hon Mia Davies—I think she is "honourable"—

Hon Dr Steve Thomas: Yes, because she was a minister.

Hon KYLE MCGINN: Yes, she was a minister. Hon Mia Davies is now on the committee. I assume that came about not so long ago.

Hon Dr Steve Thomas: She was also a member of this house previously, so she is only honourable.

Hon KYLE MCGINN: I wonder about that. She only did one term in this house.

Hon Dr Steve Thomas: It still lifts you.

Hon KYLE MCGINN: Does it? That is something my mum still laughs at—that I am honourable.

Hon Dr Steve Thomas: I hate to say it, member, but she might not be the only one.

Hon Stephen Dawson: It's because of that haircut.

Hon KYLE MCGINN: I do not think the haircut plays into it as much as everything else. It was interesting to note that a new member is on that committee.

While reading the annual report about the public hearings, I noted the high level of importance of this committee, and the secrecy that goes with that, not to mention the ramifications that occur if information is not kept confidential. I found it interesting that a lot of the committee's functions are carried out behind closed doors, with a lot of closed hearings, not public hearings. The frame of mind of this committee is different from other committees that I have engaged with, when private sessions are only held when needed, whereas it seems that private hearings are generally the first go-to for this committee. That probably reflects on the smallness of the report, not having super detail, because a lot of what it does is probably done in private session. That would make it difficult for the committee to report back to this house wholly on what it has achieved.

However, I am very interested in reading the report of the "What happens next? Beyond a finding of serious misconduct" inquiry that the committee is working on at the moment, which Hon Dr Steve Thomas mentioned would hopefully be delivered by the end of this year. I think his comments were very appropriate, in that no-one really knows what happens after the reports are tabled. As the member notes, on many occasions, nothing happens. Sometimes it is reversed and it goes the other way. That is a bit disappointing because when I came to this place in 2017, the CCC committee was put as one of our highest and most important committees. It looks into one of the most important bodies to ensure that we do not have corruption in this state. I see that there is not much action from the committee. I can only speculate but members may have noticed that no work has been done in that space to follow up on things that have come out of the CCC. I assume that some speculation of the reasoning behind looking into that space is that what happens after the reports are tabled is probably not well reported, unless it is a very high profile thing that the media runs with and brings up every now and then, which keeps it active in people's minds. I very much look forward to seeing what comes out of the committee in that space, so much so that I found myself trying to find it, thinking I had missed it being tabled. I look forward to the report being tabled.

I note that the committee listed its expenditure, which does not include the salaries of the committee staff nor the cost of the administration building and lease costs to the committee, which is pretty normal. I note that, once again, the report includes a miscellaneous amount of \$237. I really want to find out what "miscellaneous" means.

Hon Dr Steve Thomas: As I told you, I'd have to take drastic action.

Hon KYLE MCGINN: That is how it seems. When I read a report that includes "miscellaneous" with a dollar figure in it, I struggle to understand why we cannot name what it is. I am sure it is not due to the secrecy of the bulldog clips being one size or the other, but I would be intrigued to know what it may be. If someone in this chamber wanted to educate me on what is in the "miscellaneous" section, I would be open ears.

I was very happy to talk about this report today. I look forward to hearing other members talk about this report and make their contributions.

Hon LORNA HARPER: I, too, rise to speak on the Joint Standing Committee on the Corruption and Crime Commission's seventh report, *Annual Report 2021-22*. As noted, two honourable members in this chamber are members of the joint standing committee: the Leader of the Opposition, Hon Dr Steve Thomas; and Hon Klara Andric, who unfortunately is away on urgent parliamentary business today. I admit that I find the committee on the Corruption and Crime Commission to have one of the most intriguing titles of all the committees. When we are talking about corruption and crime, of course we all get very nosy, our spines tingle and we wonder what is going on. In reality, it is a lot drier than that and a lot more prescribed. As stated in the report, the functions of the committee are fairly clear. Legislative Assembly standing order 289 states —

It is a function of the ... Committee to —

- (a) monitor and report to Parliament on the exercise of the functions of the Corruption and Crime Commission and the Parliamentary Inspector of the Corruption and Crime Commission;

That is actually quite difficult to say, by the way. Also —

- (b) inquire into, and report to Parliament on the means by which corruption prevention practices may be enhanced within the public sector; and
- (c) carry out any other functions conferred on the Committee under the *Corruption, Crime and Misconduct Act 2003*.

We put a lot on this committee. As public servants ourselves in a way, it is really important that whatever we do is seen to be above and beyond. Anyone being paid with money from the WA government should see it in the same way. I have been in this country for quite a long time. Even I have missed some of the things that have been reported in the newspaper. But I have gone back and had a look. Yes, both sides of government—the two main parties—have had their moments but they have been dealt with in history, and dealt with very well. It is good to be able to deal with these things.

I also see that the committee held public hearings. As stated in the report, these were held —

To enable the committee to perform its functions and oversight role, we have the power to send for persons, papers and records. Due to the nature of the committee's work, hearings are often held in closed session (sometimes after a public session with the witnesses) and documentary evidence may remain closed evidence.

A lot of us in this chamber sit on committees. There are reasons we do things behind closed doors. We are not trying to be secret and we do not lack transparency. We are trying to get true, honest answers from people and ask them proper questions without them feeling that they will have the whole world judging them or everybody being aware of their answers because sometimes their answers may not be for general reporting and not something we want to see on pages 2 or 4 of *The West Australian*, or whatever editorial might be running that week.

The committee held five public hearings and took evidence from 22 witnesses. I see that on 8 September 2021, Hon John McKechnie, KC, and the Corruption and Crime Commission provided an update on the activities of the commission. Hon Dr Steve Thomas already mentioned the reports that were tabled for further discussion. We can look at the response to the reports, in particular, *If not the CCC ... then where? An examination of the Corruption and Crime Commission's oversight of excessive use of force allegations against members of the WA Police Force*. The government response to that report was tabled on 24 November 2021. All these government responses and reports are available on the committee website for people to read and look into.

Like Steve Thomas, I too am a wee bit nosy. I am very interested in the inquiry, "What happens next? Beyond a finding of serious misconduct", which is mentioned in the report. To be honest, that reads a little like an Agatha Christie novel. I wonder, what does happen next? Are we going to see that in the cinemas on—what do you call that—the *Orient Express*? "Beyond a finding of serious misconduct" is actually quite a good title, so whoever wrote that, I thank them very much.

The committee has commenced its own motion inquiry. I am sure that I put a lot more excitement into it than the committee probably intends, but I am a member of the Joint Standing Committee on Delegated Legislation, and we like to make things sound more exciting. The committee is inquiring into what happens after a public officer is found to have engaged in serious misconduct, including disciplinary and other sanctions imposed by government agencies, and criminal prosecutions arising from serious misconduct, agency rules and systemic responses. I really look forward to finding out later this year what this report will lay down. I do not think there is enough emphasis on how important it is to have this committee: the chair of the committee, Matthew Hughes; the member for Kalamunda; and the deputy chair, Hon Dr Steve Thomas. I see that a previous member was Mr Love, but he was replaced. There was also Hon Klara Andric —

Hon Pierre Yang: It was Hon Mia Davies.

Hon LORNA HARPER: Apologies. Great. We have two women on the committee. That is fantastic! I love to see equity in committees. That makes two females and two males. Mr Love was replaced by someone from the regions, which is good as well. It is better than having a north metro-centric type of committee.

A lot has been said in the past about the Joint Standing Committee on the Corruption and Crime Commission. When I was first elected to this Parliament, the committee was in the newspapers on a regular basis. There were some terrible contributions in the newspapers about the members of the committee and the person heading it. However, I have to say, from reading the reports, all I can do is thank the committee members and staff for the hard work and effort they put in, and for hopefully upholding the standing of this Parliament and the public service of WA. I will leave my comments there.

Hon DARREN WEST: Likewise, I make a few comments on the very important seventh report of the Joint Standing Committee on the Corruption and Crime Commission, *Annual report 2021–22*. I note the difference we still have between our state and federal legislature. Western Australia oversees a Corruption and Crime Commission. Other states have various derivations of oversight bodies, such as the Independent Commission Against Corruption, that keep an eye on the public service and elected members; however, there is not one federally. Although we are moving in the right direction, with the Albanese government committed to that, it has always struck me as odd that we do not have a federal independent commission against corruption or a federal corruption and crime commission. When we think about the reach of the federal government and the amount of money that moves through the federal government, it has always struck me as quite odd that we do not have an equivalent commission in the federal sphere. That is about to change for the better.

In Queensland, New South Wales and other states, history is littered with serious findings, on both sides, of individuals who have taken the huge privilege of being elected members and using it to benefit themselves. I think that is shameful, and one way to help prevent that is to have an effective Corruption and Crime Commission. This committee that oversees, and reports and deliberates on, the activities and functions of the Corruption and Crime Commission is equally important. I take the point made by Hon Lorna Harper a few moments ago about the composition of this committee. It is particularly evenly balanced now. There are two regional members, two metropolitan members, two men, and two women—that is good. There are two from the conservative side of politics and two from the progressive side of politics. There are also two members from the Legislative Assembly

and two members from the Legislative Council. I do not know how there could be a more balanced committee than that. It comprises the chair, Matthew Hughes, MLA; the deputy chair, our own Hon Dr Steve Thomas, MLC, regional member for South West Region; and the now Leader of the Opposition. He was here at the time, and he was replaced by the former Leader of the Opposition, Hon Mia Davies, member for Central Wheatbelt. Of course, who could forget Hon Klara Andric, MLC, member for South Metropolitan Region? She is a particularly determined individual who I am sure will add greatly to this committee's deliberations. The committee staff includes Ms Suzanne Velletta, a very experienced staff member who has been at Parliament for a long time and provided a lot of great work; and Ms Jovita Hogan, the research officer.

Think back to the time of the 2021–22 report. It was in the height of COVID-19. We were spread out in this chamber, using the President's gallery as the floor of Parliament. We were wearing masks, religiously sanitising our hands and keeping our distance, while the state of Western Australia managed COVID-19 particularly well; it kept our economy strong and kept people safe. It was in that background that the committee deliberated and reported.

The report is a pretty standard affair. It is fair to say that the chair's words of wisdom make corruption the point of the stewardship of the Commissioner of Crime and Corruption, John McKechnie, KC; and the Parliamentary Inspector of the Corruption and Crime Commission, Matthew Zilko, SC. It is important to acknowledge those individuals. They are there to do important work and have done so for some time. I have tremendous respect for John McKechnie. Members may remember the lengths the government went to to ensure that he was able to continue working in that position. There was a push by a former committee to remove John McKechnie, but fortunately, the government stood its ground, stared down those who were determined to see him go, and retained the highly successful and perfect person for the job, John McKechnie, in that role. I am very pleased that he continues in his role, and the chair has made that point as well in this report.

I think this may have been pointed out already. I had to duck out for urgent parliamentary business, so I missed some of the earlier contributions from Hon Dr Steve Thomas and Hon Lorna Harper. As is clear from Legislative Assembly standing order 289 and the report, one of the functions of the committee is to monitor and report to Parliament on the exercise and the functions of the Corruption and Crime Commission and the Parliamentary Inspector of the Corruption and Crime Commission. It is also to inquire into and report to Parliament on the means by which corruption prevention practices may be enhanced within the public sector. The committee is always learning, always improving and always seeking to do better with these things, but there have been some very high-profile cases in the public sector. I will not mention them because I think some of them are still before the courts, but I think everyone knows what I am referring to. It is disgraceful when it happens. It is challenging for all of us when these charges are laid. I hope that if there has been any wrongdoing, the full force of the law is felt by those who have abused their position. It is also here to carry out two other functions conferred on the committee under the Corruption, Crime and Misconduct Act 2003. As members can see by the report, the committee has been particularly active. A table in the report outlines the activities of the committee between 1 July 2021 and 30 June 2022. There have been 17 deliberative meetings, so almost fortnightly; five hearings in which formal evidence has been gathered; and 22 witnesses have appeared. There has been one briefing and six reports have now been tabled. I will go to that detail in a little while. The reports contain 56 findings and 16 recommendations, all of which have been tabled to WA Parliament.

Public hearings are held to enable the committee to perform its functions and oversight role. The committee has the power to send for persons, papers and records. Due to the nature of the committee's work, hearings are often held in closed session, sometimes after a public session with the witnesses. Documentary evidence may remain closed evidence. That is a good point about sensitive information. This committee has a particularly sensitive role to play. Obviously, allegations that may be made would be serious in nature and would need to be handled appropriately.

As I mentioned, the committee has tabled six reports: *Annual report 2020–21*, which is the predecessor of this report, tabled on 9 September 2021; *If not the CCC ... then where? An examination of the Corruption and Crime Commission's oversight of excessive use of force allegations against members of the WA Police Force*, which I note was debated extensively in this chamber; *A good year: The work of the Parliamentary Inspector of the Corruption and Crime Commission* was tabled in both houses on 22 February 2022; *The definition of 'public officer' in the Corruption, Crime and Misconduct Act 2003: Parliamentary inspector's report* was tabled in both houses on 24 March 2022, a month after the one before; and *Police power of arrest: Parliamentary inspector's report*, its fifth report, was also tabled in both houses on the same day, 24 March 2022. The committee was clearly very active around this time. It also tabled *The Corruption and Crime Commission's unexplained wealth function: The review by the Honourable Peter Martino* in this chamber on 24 March 2022.

Members, we had significant discussion in here about those very important reports. I want to acknowledge the hard work of the committee and wish it all its best in future deliberations. It is important that it has a clear run at its very important role. I note that the report refers to the formal budget. By the look of that budget, the taxpayer is getting particularly good value for money from this committee. Its oversight is important, the work is important,

and stamping out corruption and crime right throughout the public service is important. I look forward to the day when we have a not dissimilar derivation of our CCC and committee of oversight in the federal Parliament.

Hon PETER FOSTER: I also rise to make some brief comments on the Joint Standing Committee on the Corruption and Crime Commission's seventh report, *Annual report 2021–22*. It is unfortunate that Hon Klara Andric is out of the chamber on urgent parliamentary business, because I know she was super keen to make a contribution to the debate today. I acknowledge that in the future she might be in a position to be back in the chamber and to make a contribution. It is great to get up and talk about this report today. I will start by acknowledging the committee. Many of us in this place are on parliamentary committees. Depending on the committee, there is often a bit of work involved. I acknowledge the chair, the member for Kalamunda, Matthew Hughes, MLA, and the deputy chair, Hon Dr Steve Thomas, who is here in the chamber. I acknowledge his contribution to this annual report today, noting that he did not want to talk about each of the individual reports mentioned in this annual report. He did a lot of great work on this report and judging by his contribution, he is very passionate about this committee and the great work that it does. I also acknowledge the other two members of the committee, Shane Love, MLA, and Hon Klara Andric, as I already mentioned. None of the members today have acknowledged the staff, so I acknowledge the staff.

Hon Darren West: You should have been listening, member.

Hon PETER FOSTER: I apologise for that. I was out of the chamber myself on urgent parliamentary business. I acknowledge the staff named in the report, Ms Suzanne Veletta, principal research officer, and Ms Jovita Hogan, the research officer. Many of us are involved in committees and it is really great that we have such a great team of staff supporting us. Whether it is organising the meetings, conducting hearings or helping us put together the report, it is very much appreciated and I acknowledge our great committee staff who support us in our jobs so that we can produce quality reports just like this one.

As some of the members noted today, there has been a change in the membership of the committee. The committee now includes Hon Mia Davies, MLA. She has now stepped onto the committee. I recall from Hon Darren West's contribution that there is now a great mix of country and city members, which is great.

Hon Darren West: It is eclectic.

Hon PETER FOSTER: It is a great mix, is it not? It is great to see a broad spectrum of representation on this committee that is doing great work.

The report summarises the activities of the Joint Standing Committee on the Corruption and Crime Commission between 1 July 2021 and 30 June 2022, the reporting period. The committee monitors and reports on the exercise of functions of the Corruption and Crime Commission and the Parliamentary Inspector of the Corruption and Crime Commission, and commences its own inquiries and carries out functions under the Corruption, Crime and Misconduct Act 2003. The functions of the committee can be found in the report under the introduction, and it states —

Under Legislative Assembly Standing Order 289 it is the function of the committee to:

- (a) monitor and report to Parliament on the exercise of the functions of the Corruption and Crime Commission and the Parliamentary Inspector of the Corruption and Crime Commission
- (b) inquire into and report to Parliament on the means by which corruption prevention practices may be enhanced within the public sector
- (c) carry out any other functions conferred on the committee under the *Corruption, Crime and Misconduct Act 2003*.

We can see that this committee has done a lot of work over the past 12 months and it has summarised its activities in the report. It held 17 deliberative meetings and five formal evidence hearings; called 22 witnesses, which is quite a substantial number of witnesses, I would attest; held one briefing; and tabled six reports in the 12-month period. It is quite a busy committee. In those reports it tabled 56 findings and 16 recommendations. The report outlines its public hearings. The committee has the power to send for persons, papers or records. Due to the nature of the committee's work, which we understand can be quite confidential, many hearings are held in closed session.

I am on the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs. Last year, we held some public hearings. It was the first time I had ever been involved in a committee whereby I was the chair and we had to hold public hearings. It was quite an experience. People tuned in to watch, which was really great. It was an interesting experience. I know from other members who have been involved in hearings that there is a lot to learn. It is a great opportunity for members of the public who cannot be physically in Perth. Of course, COVID is still in our community, so unfortunately some people cannot leave their homes to attend business. We also have a lot of regional voters in our state who cannot travel to Perth for whatever reason, be it work, childcare commitments or the cost of flights, although it is great that we have capped airfares. It is great that the hearings are streamed online so that people can hear firsthand exactly what information the committee is seeking and what answers it receives.

As we can see from the report, five public hearings took place, with 22 witnesses called. We learn from the report what matters were discussed, including matters relevant to police misconduct within the oversight of the commission with the then Acting Commissioner of Police, Col Blanch, and the Western Australia Police Force. As has been mentioned, the Joint Standing Committee on the Corruption and Crime Commission tabled a number of reports. This report helpfully lists those reports and it also has hyperlinks to the reports. If members can access the electronic copy of this report, they can click on the hyperlink to take them to the report. A couple of reports have been considered by this chamber. In particular, a number of members talked about *The Corruption and Crime Commission's unexplained wealth function: The review by the Honourable Peter Martino*, which was tabled in this chamber in March last year. I was one of the members who made a contribution during that debate. It was interesting to hear about the work the commission is doing to tackle the issue of unexplained wealth. The work it does is quite interesting. If members jump on the CCC website, they will see quite a number of media statements that refer to the work it is doing.

A media release from July 2023 refers to how the CCC delivered close to \$1 million in unexplained wealth. The Corruption and Crime Commission obtained two unexplained wealth declarations in the WA Supreme Court, which equated to the \$1 million. The cases related to investigations undertaken into the accumulation of unexplained wealth dating back more than a decade. This is great work; we need to tackle the scourge of unexplained wealth and how particular individuals gain that wealth. Do they engage in illegal activities? It is great that the CCC looks at these matters.

I note that I have less than a minute. I want to jump to the financial statement. Hon Kyle McGinn is out of the chamber on urgent parliamentary business, but he was quite baffled by the “miscellaneous” line item in the expenditure table. Hon Shelley Payne and I wondered what the miscellaneous item could be. Those members who have attended committee meetings know that there is often tea, coffee and biscuits in the back corner. I will take a guess that this miscellaneous item refers to the tea, coffee and biscuits in the back corner.

Hon Darren West: And Fantaes.

Hon PETER FOSTER: Fantaes! I am not sure whether Hon Dr Steve Thomas can advise what the miscellaneous item is, but I reckon it is the tea, coffee and biscuits.

Noting that my time is almost up, I commend the committee members and staff involved in the report and commend the report to the house.

The DEPUTY CHAIR (Hon Dr Brian Walker): The question is that the report be noted. Hon Pierre Yang.

Hon PIERRE YANG: Deputy chair, thank you for the opportunity to make a contribution to the debate on the seventh report of the Joint Standing Committee on the Corruption and Crime Commission, *Annual report 2021–22*. I acknowledge the previous members for articulating and reciting the terms of reference of the committee. It is very important that we have a parliamentary standing committee that provides oversight of the very important crime and corruption fighting agency in our state.

It is interesting that Hon Darren West talked about the time frame covered by the annual report, which was the financial year 2021–22. He said that we were religiously sanitising our hands and sticking to the protocols. I prefer the word “regimentally” as opposed to “religiously”. As a community, we were all doing our part to keep COVID out of our community. Looking back, we were able to live a relatively normal life during that period. We decided to open the state border in early 2022, but the new Omicron variant delayed the reopening by a number of weeks so that we could get the first-dose level up in the community. What a great decision by the state government at that time; it saved countless lives. Again, that decision was made notwithstanding the huge number of pressures from all fronts. The government demonstrated its resolve in listening to medical and scientific advice and provided guidance so that we could stick with our road map out of COVID, modifying it to suit the situation that we were in.

I want to talk about one fundamental element of our democracy and the need to have the Corruption and Crime Commission and its functions. I echo the words of Hon Darren West; the nation would be better served if we had a national crime and corruption agency. A lot of people in Australia were baffled when the former Morrison government went back on its promise to have a national corruption fighting agency. It is important that we, as a democracy, have the ways and means to fight those behaviours and the people who try to take advantage of the trust placed in our system and the people we serve. It is important that we have those mechanisms in place so that society can develop better trust in our system. People like us who are doing our part to serve will benefit in the end.

The founding fathers of the United States wanted the country to be a republic with a rule of law and a healthy dose of scrutiny on the executive powers, and that is why there are three branches of government—the legislative branch, the judiciary and the executive branch. It is the same for our democracy in Australia and Western Australia. We have a slightly different system. As opposed to the presidential system, we have a parliamentary system, with the executive government embedded as part of Parliament. The head of government in our state is the Premier and the head of the federal government is the Prime Minister, being the leader of the party with the majority vote in

the lower house of Parliament. It is different, but the trust and fundamental rationale of that legitimacy of government are the same between America and Australia. If we look at the importance of trust, especially in the post-COVID world when there is a lot of distrust and misinformation in social media and certain circles of the community, the CCC not only plays a very important function in fighting crime, but also what it is doing can force a better trust in our system. I think we have talked about this issue time and again. It is important to have a very powerful anti-corruption agency, but who is helping us watch them? I think that is why it is particularly important that we have a Parliamentary Inspector of the Corruption and Crime Commission and the Joint Standing Committee on the Corruption and Crime Commission, whose terms of reference cover not only the functions of the commission, but also the parliamentary inspector. These are all very important linkages to give us, as a parliamentary democracy, the ultimate decision-making power. It comes back to Parliament. Parliament established the Corruption and Crime Commission through a parliamentary act. The act also established a parliamentary inspector so that complaints about the actions of the CCC can be made to the parliamentary inspector. At the same time, Parliament has a joint committee of the Legislative Council and the Legislative Assembly that provides oversight of the functions and the actions of the Corruption and Crime Commission and the Parliamentary Inspector of the Corruption and Crime Commission.

We have looked at the reports listed in the annual report in 2021–22 and Hon Peter Foster correctly pointed out that a number of them have been discussed and debated in this place. I want to note the report of the CCC committee next listed, which is the sixth report, *The Corruption and Crime Commission's unexplained wealth function: The review by the Honourable Peter Martino*. If I recall correctly, I have made a contribution or two on that report and I certainly look forward to seeking an opportunity to continue to make a contribution on that sixth report when it comes up. As for today, I appreciate the opportunity to talk about this report and I look forward to speaking again.

Question put and passed.