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Ombudsman: PID Act Reforms Boost Whistleblower Protections

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The Commonwealth Ombudsman's first six-monthly report under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 2013 (PID Act) was tabled in Parliament on 31 July 2025. The report, covering the period from January to June 2025, highlights how recent legislative reforms are improving protections for whistleblowers and reinforcing integrity within the Australian public sector.

Legislative amendments introduced on 1 July 2023 responded to longstanding calls for reform. These changes expanded protections to include indirect reprisals and extended

safeguards to individuals who may be considering making a disclosure. The updated framework refocused the Act on serious integrity matters such as fraud, misconduct, and corruption. Agencies are now required to notify the Ombudsman of all decisions related to disclosures, increasing transparency and oversight.

The report confirms that 1,247 public interest disclosures were recorded in 2024–25, representing a 15 percent increase from the previous year. The percentage of disclosures handled within mandated timeframes also rose significantly, with 85 percent resolved on schedule—up from 70 percent in 2022. The introduction of biannual Ombudsman reporting has provided greater visibility into agency compliance and performance under the Act.

Further updates to agency responsibilities include improved guidance materials, tools to assess reprisal risks, and additional oversight mechanisms. These measures are designed to support disclosers while encouraging agencies to respond appropriately to reports of wrongdoing. The reforms also align with broader integrity initiatives, including the establishment of the National Anti-Corruption Commission.

While the report notes strong progress in implementation, some challenges remain. Stakeholder feedback has indicated that the system can still be difficult for individuals to navigate, and further simplification of the process is under consideration. Additional reforms are currently being reviewed as part of the government's ongoing commitment to improving whistleblower protections.

Public sector integrity remains critical to national governance and economic performance, particularly within Australia's \$2.7 trillion economy. The PID Act now carries financial penalties of up to \$22,000 for agencies that fail to meet compliance obligations. These consequences reinforce the importance of maintaining transparent and accountable institutions.

Overall, the Ombudsman's report demonstrates that the 2023 reforms are enhancing the effectiveness of Australia's public interest disclosure regime. As further adjustments are developed, the framework continues to evolve to ensure meaningful protection for whistleblowers and sustained public trust in government operations.