

Statement by Chris Field PSM

1 May 2024

As is known, I am currently the subject of an investigation by the Corruption and Crime Commission (**the Commission**). To ensure respect to the Commission's process, I have not, and will not, make any comment on the investigation. With no criticism at all of the Commission, I can comment that the investigation, and particularly the public hearing process for which I was the only witness for a total of 9 days, has placed very considerable strain on my mental health. For this reason, I have decided to take a period of extended leave. Indeed, I note that the Commissioner himself at the end of the last day of public hearing on 12 April, in my view in clear good faith, suggested I consider taking a period of leave.

Where it is not known when the Commission's investigation will conclude, I have not set an exact date to the period of leave, but the Acting Ombudsman, senior management team of the office (many of whom have served the office for nearly two decades), and the staff of the office of the Ombudsman, will continue to provide the highest level of professional services while I am on leave.

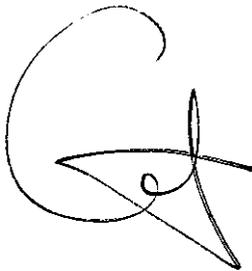
At all times my decisions to travel as an officer holder, and then President, of the International Ombudsmen Institute (**the IOI**) were taken in complete good faith. At all times, I strongly believed it was part of my broader duties to carry out the international role of President, which can only be carried out by a serving Ombudsman, after being the first Australian elected to the position of President of the IOI in its 43-year history. I never made any secret of my travels in various IOI positions over many years, nor the fact that this travel was in part funded by the office of the Ombudsman. Nor did I make any secret of what I was trying to achieve by travelling as President of the IOI, both in ensuring that Western Australia was taking a leadership role in promoting and protecting human rights, good governance and the rule of law, as well as advancing Western Australia's bilateral interests, particularly in the Asia Pacific Region.

At all times my travel with the IOI was the subject of extensive disclosure to Parliament and the subject of detailed and continual briefings to the most senior office holders in State Government. It was not just that in light of wide disclosure and briefings of the travel that there was no person who suggested the travel should not occur; the reverse was true. The many senior people who were aware of it, encouraged it. Exactly as did my outstanding predecessors, I of course fully disclosed to the IOI my travel and, again like my predecessors, was very pleased to receive support for travel, including IOI funding for travel.

Looking forwards, there is a balance to be struck between asserting important rights and presumptions in favour of people being investigated (who have had no adverse findings made against them) and what has always been my profound commitment over the 17 years I have been fortunate enough to be the Ombudsman of Western Australia - to ensure the best operation of the office of the Ombudsman.

Because of my strong belief that I have not engaged in serious misconduct, nor that I corruptly took advantage of my appointment as Ombudsman to obtain a benefit for myself, for any colleague or for the IOI and its members, I do not intend to resign my position before the Commission's final report, although, in the interests of my mental health, my resignation is very likely, whatever the outcome of the report. Equally, however, because I believe my continued work as Ombudsman would distract from the best operation of the office until the outcome of the Commission's investigation, my intention is to remain on leave until the matter is resolved.

Otherwise, I will be making no further statement on the investigation or any matter regarding myself at this time.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'C. Field', with a large, stylized 'C' and a smaller 'F'.

Chris Field PSM
Ombudsman