

ICAC releases final evaluation reports as part of major whistleblower project

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The Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) has identified nearly 30 practical opportunities to improve how public sector agencies receive and manage whistleblower reports, following evaluations of the Department of Human Services (DHS) and South Australia Police (SA Police) tabled in Parliament today.

ICAC Commissioner Emma Townsend said that the evaluations highlight the need for clear systems and processes to make sure that concerns are handled appropriately from the moment they are received, alongside an organisational climate that encourages and facilitates whistleblowing.

“DHS and SA Police have demonstrated a genuine commitment to maintaining integrity and have established many effective and encouraging practices that promote the reporting of suspected wrongdoing, and support those who make a disclosure,” Commissioner Townsend said

“However, the evaluations have also identified practical opportunities for improvement - changes that can be implemented now, without waiting for legislative change.”

The evaluations found that there were a limited number of designated ‘responsible officers’ available to receive whistleblower reports, and that they were frequently only at senior levels.

“A relatively simple change is for agencies to designate extra staff below management level as ‘responsible officers’, creating more accessible and approachable pathways for potential whistleblowers to raise concerns,” Commissioner Townsend said.

Other recommendations include:

- strengthening measures to protect the confidentiality of whistleblowers
- improving the management of shared mailboxes used to receive reports, to ensure whistleblower protections remain intact
- providing clear and accurate information to potential whistleblowers about how their confidentiality will be maintained, and measures in place to prevent and respond to victimisation
- reviewing how reports are made, and who is authorised to receive reports

- training managers and supervisors who may be unaware of their obligations if they receive a whistleblower report
- integrating whistleblowing information within internal policies and procedures, including clear and accessible information about how to make a report and to whom
- fostering a positive reporting culture, with leaders who set the tone from the top.

Commissioner Townsend said the findings would have relevance beyond the two agencies involved in the evaluations.

"Evaluations such as these allow us to look beyond legislation and policy to understand how whistleblower regimes actually operate in practice, not just on paper" she said.

"DHS and SA Police deliver critical services to the community and have the potential to set the benchmark for integrity and accountability across the South Australian public sector.

"We hope these evaluations provide useful lessons for the broader public sector and local government.

"I would like to thank both agencies for their constructive participation in the evaluations and their willingness to examine their own practices."

The two reports represent the final piece of ICAC's major Whistleblower Project, and follow the release of the project report in June 2026, titled *Doing Right by Those Who Call Out the Wrong: A review of South Australia's whistleblower protection regime*.

That report made 61 recommendations for reform, including legislative changes and the establishment of a dedicated whistleblower support service.

Public officers are invited to attend an ICAC webinar on Friday 16 October 2026 (12 - 1pm) to hear more about the findings of the Whistleblower Project, including practical changes that can be implemented within their agencies.

The two evaluation reports are available on the [ICAC website](https://www.icac.sa.gov.au).

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