

# PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS

of the  
public service

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Findings from the  
2010 Public Attitudes Survey

Public Perceptions Series

October 2011



**CMC vision:**

That the CMC make a unique contribution to protecting Queenslanders from major crime, and promote a trustworthy public sector

**CMC mission:**

To combat crime and improve public sector integrity

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## Foreword

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This report presents the results of the latest instalment in the CMC's *Public Perceptions* series. In this series, the CMC periodically surveys a representative sample of the Queensland public to gauge its perceptions of the Queensland Police Service (QPS), public service agencies and local government. These surveys are conducted as part of the CMC's monitoring function. They measure the extent to which public sector agencies and employees are meeting the Queensland public's expectations of service delivery.

We have conducted eight surveys of Queensland residents since 1991. This report summarises the public's responses to the 2010 survey's items about the public service and identifies some trends over time.

The results from the 2010 survey show that the public has a positive view of public service employees: interactions with employees tend to be positive, and the results continue to highlight the role of factors such as courtesy and respect in shaping clients' perceptions of the public service in general.

Nonetheless, some results indicated that public expectations about complaints handling are not being met. Compared with previous years, Queenslanders are now more likely to believe that not enough is being done to combat corruption in public service agencies. They are also more likely to have less confidence in the quality of complaints processing. Improvements to the complaints handling processes and public education about the capacity of public service agencies and oversight bodies to prevent, detect and respond to allegations of misconduct may help to reverse this trend.

**Martin Moynihan AO QC**  
Chairperson

## **Acknowledgements**

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This report was prepared by Denise Foster, Jane Olsen and Patricia Ferguson of the Crime and Misconduct Commission's (CMC) Research Unit. Dr Tanya Strub managed the administration of the 2010 Public Attitudes Survey, and Dr Margot Legosz provided advice on survey modifications.

The Communications Unit of the CMC prepared the report for publication.

We are grateful to Colmar Brunton for administering the survey.

Finally, we would like to thank the people who responded to the survey. Without their support, this survey would not have been possible.

## List of abbreviations

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CATI	Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing
CJC	Criminal Justice Commission
CM Act	<i>Crime and Misconduct Act 2001 (Qld)</i>
CMC	Crime and Misconduct Commission
QCC	Queensland Crime Commission
QPS	Queensland Police Service

## Summary

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### ***The Public Perceptions series***

The Crime and Misconduct Commission (CMC) — and its predecessor, the Criminal Justice Commission — has a long-standing interest in measuring the public's perceptions of police officers, public servants and local government staff. We have now conducted eight surveys of Queensland residents: in July 1991, July 1993, June 1995, June 1999, June 2002, July 2005, June–July 2008 and June–July 2010.

Since the first Public Attitudes Survey was conducted, there have been considerable changes within the public sector. There have also been changes in the way the CMC handles complaints about public service and local government employees, and how it monitors other integrity issues. The *Public Perceptions* series helps the CMC to assess changes in public opinion about the behaviour and integrity of people in these public sector roles, and the willingness to use complaints services. By performing this monitoring function, the CMC can recommend corrective action to the agency involved.

This year, the CMC will publish three separate *Public Perceptions* reports. These can be accessed on the CMC's website, [www.cmc.qld.gov.au](http://www.cmc.qld.gov.au):

- *Public perceptions of the Queensland Police Service: findings from the 2010 public attitudes survey*
- *Public perceptions of the public service: findings from the 2010 public attitudes survey*
- *Public perceptions of local government: findings from the 2010 public attitudes survey.*

We also use the Public Attitudes Survey to gather general information about public awareness of the CMC's role and functions. Some of these results are reported in the *Crime and Misconduct Commission Annual Report 2010–11*.

### ***This report***

This report presents the public's current perceptions of the Queensland public service and its employees. It also examines changes in perceptions over the last 15 years. The results presented in this report are based on a random sample of 1529 people across Queensland. Where possible, the results of the 2010 survey are compared with those of previous surveys.

#### **A note on data analysis: percentages and 'valid responses'**

All percentages presented in this report are based on valid responses. That is, any respondents who chose not to answer a question, indicated that they did not know enough to answer the question, or provided an unclear or unsuitable response were excluded from any analysis that included that survey item. Therefore, there are some small variations in the number of valid responses for different questions.

This report is divided into three main parts:

- Part A presents respondents' experiences with public service employees, both satisfactory and unsatisfactory.
- Part B presents the public's general perceptions of public service employees, including employee behaviour, integrity and misconduct.
- Part C presents public opinion about and confidence in complaints processes.

The Appendixes to this report provide a range of background information about the Public Attitudes Survey and the CMC (see Appendix 1), the survey's data collection method (see Appendix 2), demographic characteristics of the 2010 sample (see Appendix 3), and a list of statistical terms to assist with interpretation of the results (see Appendix 4).

### ***Key changes to the 2010 survey***

Several minor changes were made to the survey in 2010 to increase our understanding of the public's perceptions, while maintaining the capacity to examine trends over time. A number of changes were made to the order and wording of questions to minimise any potential bias. However, the most notable difference was that the 2010 survey was divided into two sections. The first section contained all items concerning the Queensland Police Service (QPS). The second section contained all items concerning the public service, local government and the CMC.

### ***Key findings***

The key findings of the survey are:

- **Perceptions of public service employees are generally positive.** Most respondents believed that public service employees behave well (85%) and are honest (81%). This is consistent with the findings of previous surveys.
- **Public service employees' manner, competence and actions are important in interactions.** The perceived manner and competence of the employee and whether the respondent considered that the employee took the appropriate action are important in determining whether the respondent had a positive or negative experience with a public service employee. Few respondents reported that their negative experiences were a result of serious misconduct by a public service employee.
- **Respondents' employment status and recent experience shape perceptions of the public service.** The employment status of respondents and whether respondents had a recent positive or negative experience with a public service employee often help to explain respondents' perceptions of the public service and its employees. Specifically, people who reported a recent positive experience with a public service employee were more likely to have favourable perceptions of the public service than people who reported a recent negative experience. The effect of employment status differed according to the survey item.

- **The public believes that more should be done about public service corruption.** Consistent with previous surveys, most respondents (87%) believed that corruption will always exist in the public service, and half the respondents (53%) agreed that the chances of getting caught doing something corrupt in the public service are slim. In addition, since 2008 there was a significant increase in the proportion of respondents who believed that not enough is being done about corruption in the public service (from 54% to 62%).
- **The public supports investigation of complaints by independent bodies, but tends not to complain to independent bodies.** Almost all respondents (90%) believed that complaints about the public service should be investigated by an independent body. However, those respondents who actually made a complaint directed it to the relevant agency (56%) and rarely referred the complaint to an independent body such as the Queensland Ombudsman (6%).
- **The rate of dissatisfaction with how complaints were handled has remained steady.** Over half the respondents who made a complaint (55%) were dissatisfied with how it was handled, and over one-third (39%) were satisfied. The level of dissatisfaction is comparable to the 2008 survey (57% dissatisfied).
- **Confidence in proper complaints processing has declined.** Despite the results showing that most respondents complained to the agency itself, respondents were least confident in the ability of the relevant agency to properly investigate complaints about public service employees, and most confident in the Ombudsman. Since the 2008 survey, respondents' confidence in complaints being properly investigated by the Ombudsman, the CMC or the relevant agency has declined. For every one person who made a complaint about the public service, another two people felt like making a complaint but did not.
- **Perceptions about the consequences of making a complaint are mixed.** Consistent with previous surveys, two-thirds of respondents (64%) disagreed with the statement 'There is no point reporting corruption in the public service because nothing useful will be done about it.' However, the proportion of respondents who agreed that 'people who complain about the public service are likely to suffer for it' increased from 24 per cent (in the 2002 survey) to 41 per cent.

### ***Areas for improvement***

The 2010 Public Attitudes Survey identified two main areas for improvement.

- The proportion of people who believed that 'people who complain about the public service are likely to suffer for it' has increased. Over half the respondents who made a complaint were dissatisfied with how it was handled; and most respondents believed complaints about the public service should be handled by an independent body. It is not surprising, then, that almost two-thirds of respondents said that not enough is being done about corruption in the public service. The survey results indicate that there are two ways the public service can address this issue. First, public *perceptions* of complaints processing systems could be improved by informing the public about the internal mechanisms that agencies have in place to prevent, detect and investigate misconduct.

Second, public *experiences* of making a complaint could be improved by amending agencies' complaints processing systems and protocols.

- The manner of public service employees continues to be an important factor in shaping perceptions. This finding highlights an opportunity for improvement. If employees consistently act in a courteous, professional and transparent manner, there is a greater chance that the Queensland public will have positive encounters with public service employees, and contribute to more positive general perceptions of public service behaviour.

The CMC is working in partnership with public service agencies to implement improved integrity and complaints management systems. Through the Building Integrity Program, public service agencies will develop infrastructure and strategies to achieve these goals. By taking responsibility for building and maintaining a strong culture of integrity, managers and staff can reduce misconduct and improve complaints handling processes. This, in turn, will lead to improved public confidence in public service agencies.

## Part A: Experiences with public service employees

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The Australian population generally expects that encounters with government employees will be accessible, efficient and effective (Australian Public Service Commission 2003). Therefore, high-quality service delivery has been a priority for the government since the 1990s. To achieve client satisfaction, government employees aim to be responsive to their clients' needs. Often, these client–employee interactions shape public perceptions of the government and its employees.

Previous research shows that the quality of a single interaction, whether it is positive or negative, can shape a person's perception about an entire organisation, or the government as a whole (Williams 2001). Similarly, recent studies show that the experiences of family, friends and work colleagues, called 'vicarious experiences', can also be important in shaping a person's perceptions of government (Miller & Davis 2008; Rosenbaum et al. 2005; Weitzer & Tuch 2005). While the 2010 Public Attitudes Survey captured both *personal* and *vicarious* experiences, the proportion of respondents who reported recent unsatisfactory vicarious experiences was small (4%,  $n = 67$ ) and therefore these will not be discussed in this report.

As shown in previous Public Attitudes Surveys, the demographic characteristics of the client also have a role in shaping perceptions of the government. For this reason we test whether demographic identifiers such as a person's age, gender or ethnicity helped to shape respondents' perceptions of the public service.

This part examines:

- the public's experiences with public service employees
- satisfactory experiences — who initiated contact, the reasons for contact and the reasons for satisfaction
- unsatisfactory experiences — who initiated contact, the reasons for contact and the reasons for dissatisfaction.<sup>1</sup>

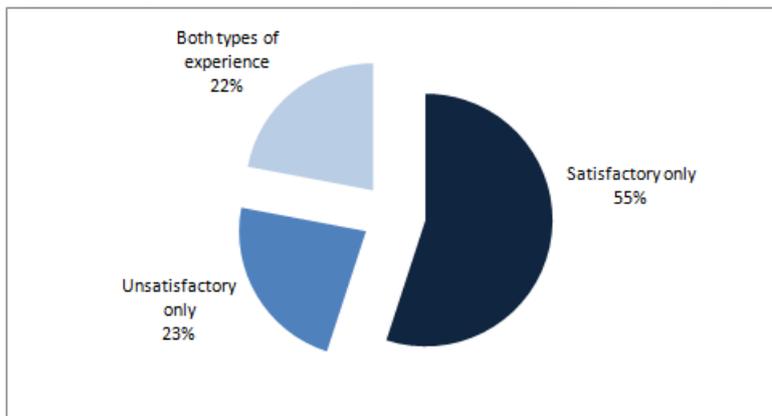
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<sup>1</sup> In the 1999, 2002 and 2005 Public Attitudes Surveys we asked respondents whether a Queensland public service employee had behaved improperly in a way that adversely affected either them or someone they knew. In the 2008 and 2010 surveys, however, we asked respondents if they had had an experience with a member of the Queensland public service that left them feeling dissatisfied. Given the change to the wording of these questions, we are unable to compare the 2008 and 2010 results to earlier years.

## ***The public's experience with public service employees***

In 2010, 46 per cent of respondents ( $n = 704$ ) reported some contact with a public service employee at some stage in their life. As shown in Figure 1, over half of these reported satisfactory experiences only ( $n = 389$ ); an almost equal proportion reported unsatisfactory experiences only ( $n = 160$ ) or a combination of satisfactory and unsatisfactory experiences ( $n = 155$ ).

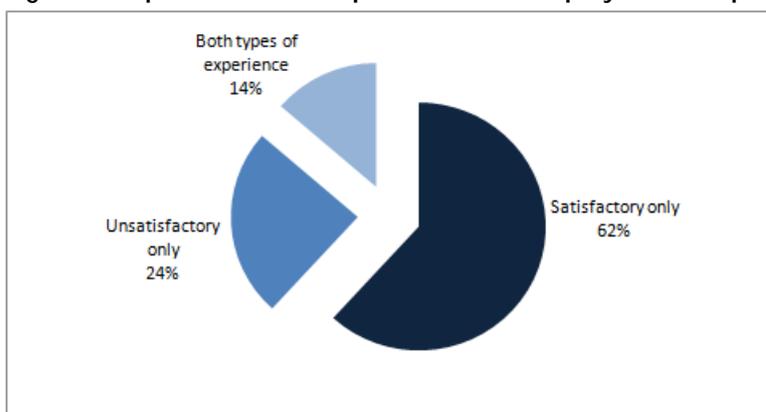
**Figure 1. Experiences with a public service employee at any stage (2010)**



Respondents were asked how long ago this contact occurred. Calculated as a proportion of all respondents, 66 per cent ( $n = 1010$ ) of respondents had no recent contact with public service employees. Of those respondents who had contact with an employee at some stage in their life, 74 per cent ( $n = 519$ ) reported that the contact occurred in the last 12 months.

As shown in Figure 2, two-thirds of these respondents ( $n = 321$ ) reported only satisfactory experiences with public service employees, one-quarter reported only unsatisfactory experiences ( $n = 127$ ) and one in every seven respondents ( $n = 71$ ) reported a combination of satisfactory and unsatisfactory experiences.

**Figure 2. Experiences with a public service employee in the past 12 months (2010)**



Overall, 76 per cent of respondents had a recent satisfactory experience and 38 per cent of respondents had a recent unsatisfactory experience with a public service employee.

### Explaining the variation: recent contact with a public service employee

**Gender** Females (38%,  $n = 292$ ) were more likely than males (36%,  $n = 280$ ) to report a recent experience with a public service employee ( $b = -0.11, p < .05$ ).

**Employment** Student participants (49%,  $n = 19$ ) were most likely to report a recent experience with a public service employee, while persons who were retired or on a pension (30%,  $n = 129$ ) were least likely, compared with other respondents:

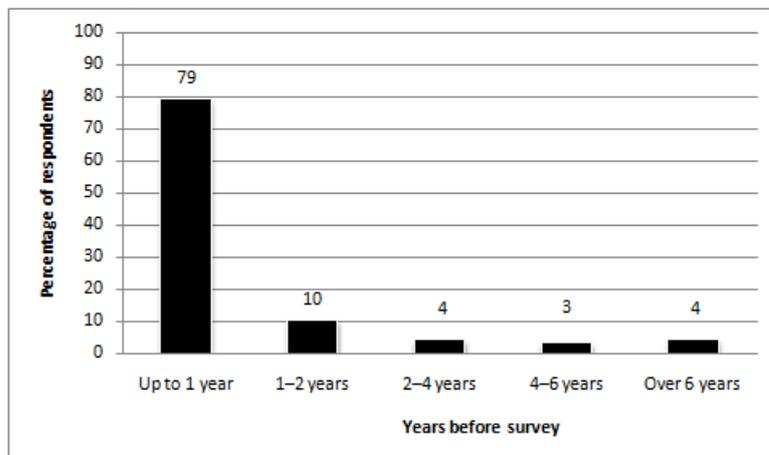
employed: 40%,  $n = 372$   
 unemployed: 32%,  $n = 15$   
 home duties: 39%,  $n = 38$ .  
 $b = -0.05, p < .001$

$R^2 = .11, SEE = 0.89, F(6,1480) = 3.05, p < .01$

### **Satisfactory experiences**

The 2010 Public Attitudes Survey showed that 38 per cent of respondents ( $n = 544$ ) had at least one satisfactory experience with a public service employee at some stage in their life. Of these, the majority ( $n = 392$ ) indicated that this contact occurred in the last year (see Figure 3). When calculated as a proportion of all respondents, one in five people (22%) reported a satisfactory experience with a public service employee in the last 12 months.

**Figure 3. Number of years before the survey that the satisfactory experience occurred (2010)**



### Explaining the variation: recent satisfactory experiences

**Employment** Students (31%,  $n = 12$ ) and employed participants (29%,  $n = 264$ ) were most likely to report having a recent satisfactory experience with a public service employee, compared with other respondents:  
unemployed: 19%,  $n = 9$   
home duties: 25%,  $n = 24$   
retired/pension: 20%,  $n = 80$ .  
 $b = -0.02, p < .001$

**Education** Participants who reported completing some secondary schooling (30%,  $n = 143$ ) were most likely to report a recent satisfactory experience with a public service employee, while persons who had some tertiary education (10%,  $n = 13$ ) were least likely, compared with other respondents:  
primary school: 17%,  $n = 6$   
completed year 12/tech or trade: 26%,  $n = 145$   
completed tertiary: 26%,  $n = 81$ .  
 $b = -0.10, p < .001$

$R^2 = .12, SEE = 0.44, F(6,1480) = 3.63, p < .001$

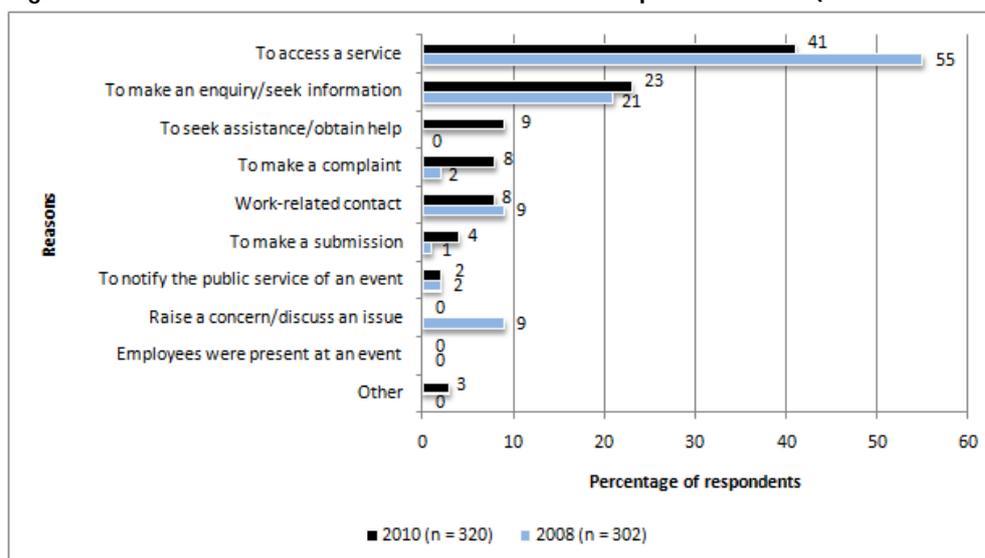
## Initiation of contact

Respondents who reported a recent satisfactory experience were asked who initiated contact with the public service employee. Most respondents (86%,  $n = 320$ ) initiated the contact with the public service themselves, referred to as 'self-initiated' encounters. Fourteen per cent ( $n = 52$ ) were initiated by the public service, referred to as 'employee-initiated' encounters.<sup>2</sup>

Respondents who initiated contact with the public service were asked to identify the main reason for contacting the department or agency. As Figure 4 shows, the leading reasons for recent self-initiated contact in 2010 were consistent with the reasons reported in the 2008 survey. The main reasons were:

- to access a service
- to make an enquiry or seek information.

Figure 4. Reasons for self-initiated contact with the public service (2008 and 2010)

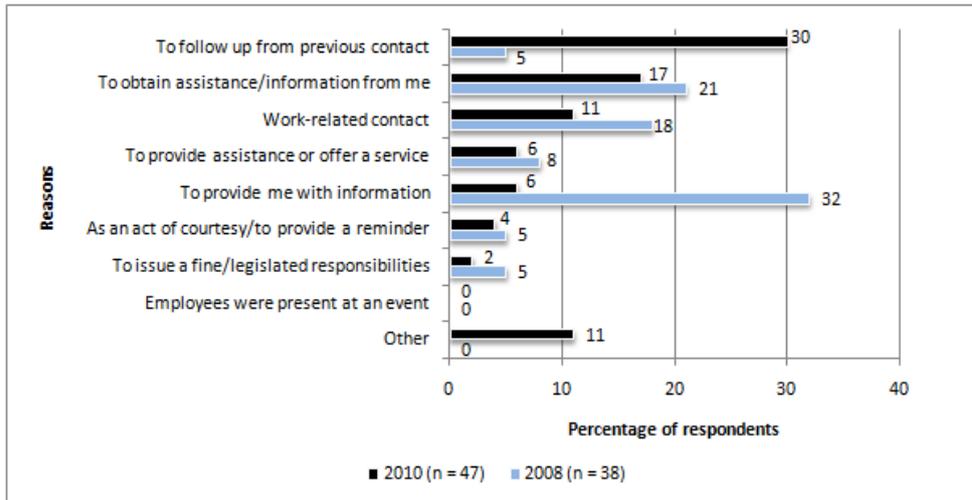


<sup>2</sup> In addition to being self- or employee-initiated, 4 per cent ( $n = 14$ ) of respondents indicated that someone else initiated their contact with a public service employee. These cases were not included in any further analysis about initiation of contact.

The main reasons respondents gave for satisfactory employee-initiated contact in 2010 were quite different from those reported in 2008 (see Figure 5). In the 2010 survey, the leading reasons that employees initiated contact were:

- to follow up from previous contact
- to obtain assistance or information from them.

Figure 5. Reasons for employee-initiated contact with respondents (2008 and 2010)



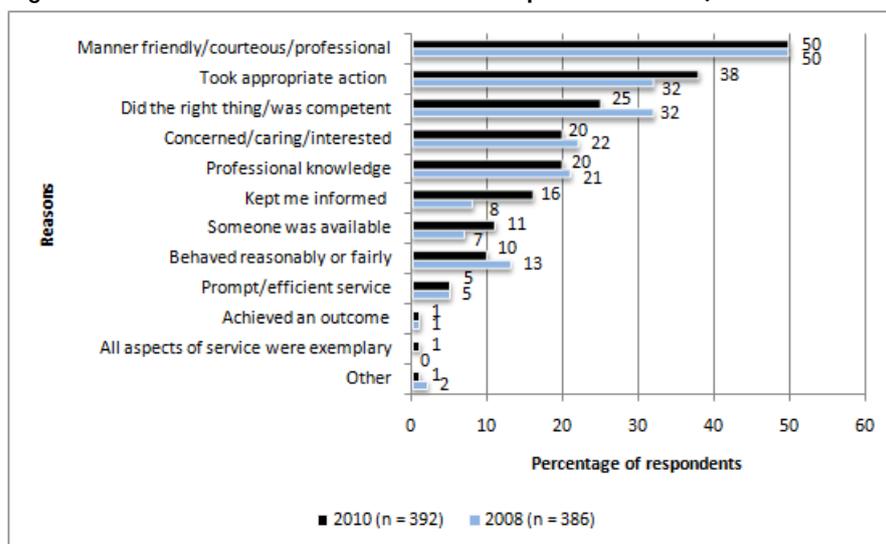
## Reasons for satisfaction

Respondents who indicated that they were satisfied as a result of their recent contact were asked why they were satisfied. As shown in Figure 6, the most common reasons that respondents gave were that the employee:

- had a friendly, courteous or professional manner
- took appropriate action
- did the right thing or was competent.

In general, there were few differences in respondents' reasons for satisfaction since 2008.

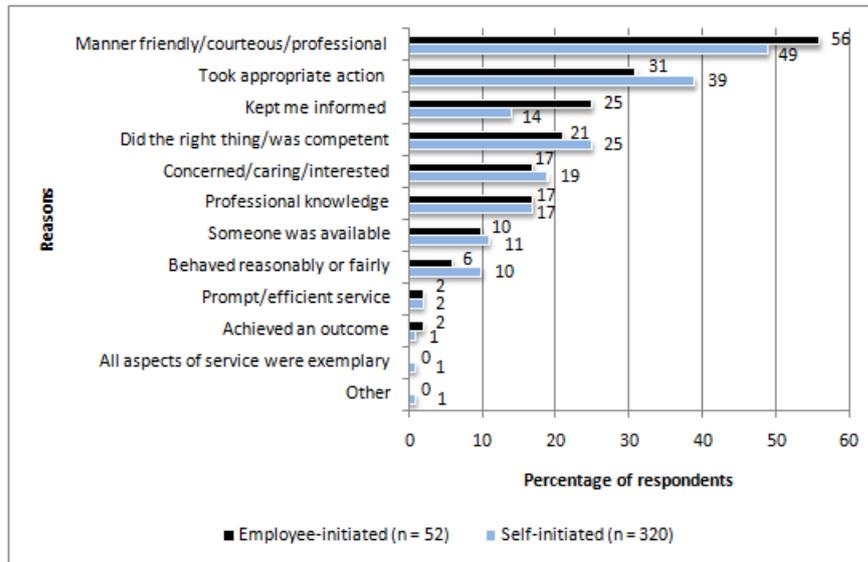
Figure 6. Reasons for satisfaction with the public service (2008 and 2010)



The reasons for recent satisfactory experiences were largely comparable regardless of whether the recent satisfactory experience was self- or employee-initiated (see Figure 7). Common reasons for satisfaction were:

- the employee had a friendly, courteous or professional manner
- the employee took appropriate action.

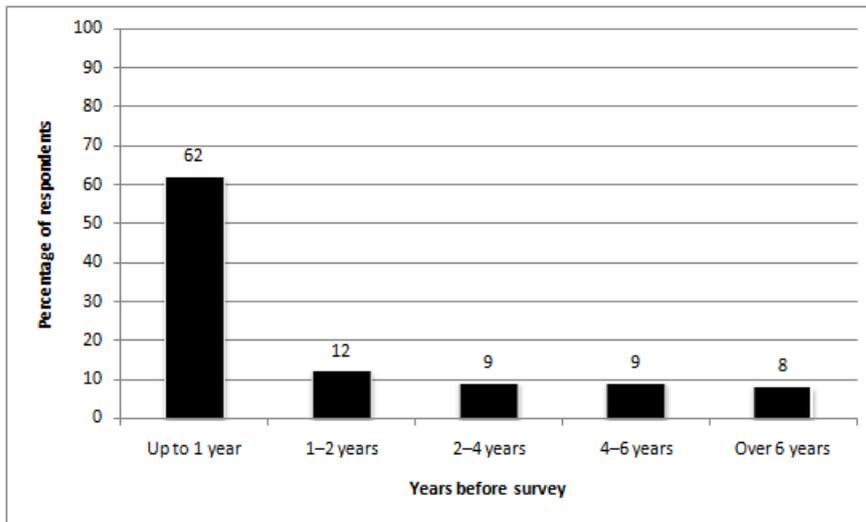
Figure 7. Reasons for satisfaction after recent contact with the public service, by initiation of contact (2010)



## Unsatisfactory experiences

One in five respondents (21%,  $n = 315$ ) reported that they had an unsatisfactory experience with a public service employee at some stage in their life. As shown in Figure 8, almost two-thirds ( $n = 198$ ) of these experiences occurred in the last year. This is comparable to the 2008 survey responses, wherein 22 per cent ( $n = 347$ ) reported ever having an unsatisfactory experience with a public service employee, 55 per cent ( $n = 183$ ) of which occurred in the preceding 12 months.

Figure 8. Number of years before the survey that the unsatisfactory experience occurred (2010)



### Explaining the variation: recent unsatisfactory experiences

<b>Gender</b>	Females (61%, $n = 223$ ) were more likely than males (50%, $n = 158$ ) to report a recent unsatisfactory experience with a public service employee ( $b = -0.33, p < .01$ ).
<b>Employment</b>	Employed (61%, $n = 259$ ) and unemployed (60%, $n = 6$ ) participants were most likely to report a recent unsatisfactory experience with a public service employee; and persons who were retired or on a pension (41%, $n = 64$ ) were least likely, compared with other respondents: student: 55%, $n = 6$ home duties: 56%, $n = 28$ . $b = -0.08, p < .01$
<b>Education</b>	Participants who had completed tertiary education (61%, $n = 96$ ) or completed year 12/tech or trade (60%, $n = 173$ ) were most likely to report a recent unsatisfactory experience with a public service employee, compared with other respondents: primary school: 50%, $n = 9$ some secondary school: 46%, $n = 77$ some tertiary: 45%, $n = 19$ . $b = -0.14, p < .01$

$R^2 = .26, SEE = 0.96, F(6,317) = 3.88, p < .001$

## Initiation of contact

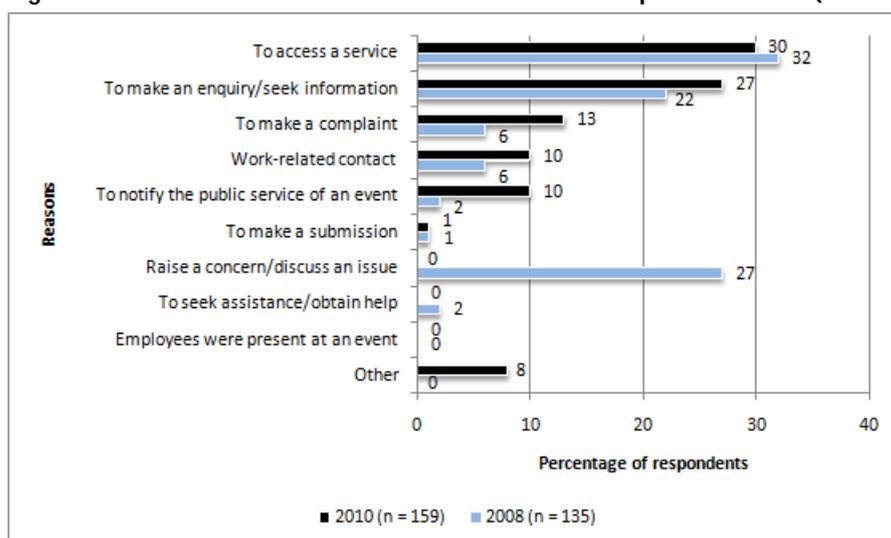
Most respondents who had an unsatisfactory experience reported that the encounter was self-initiated (84%,  $n = 159$ ), whereas 16 per cent ( $n = 30$ ) reported that the encounter was employee-initiated.<sup>3</sup>

As shown in Figure 9, respondents who were dissatisfied after self-initiated contact reported that the main reasons for contacting the public service were:

- to access a service
- to make an enquiry or seek information.

There are several changes since 2008, including an increase in respondents who contacted the public service to make a complaint, and a substantial decline in the proportion of respondents who contacted the public service to raise a concern or discuss an issue.

Figure 9. Reasons for self-initiated contact with the public service (2008 and 2010)

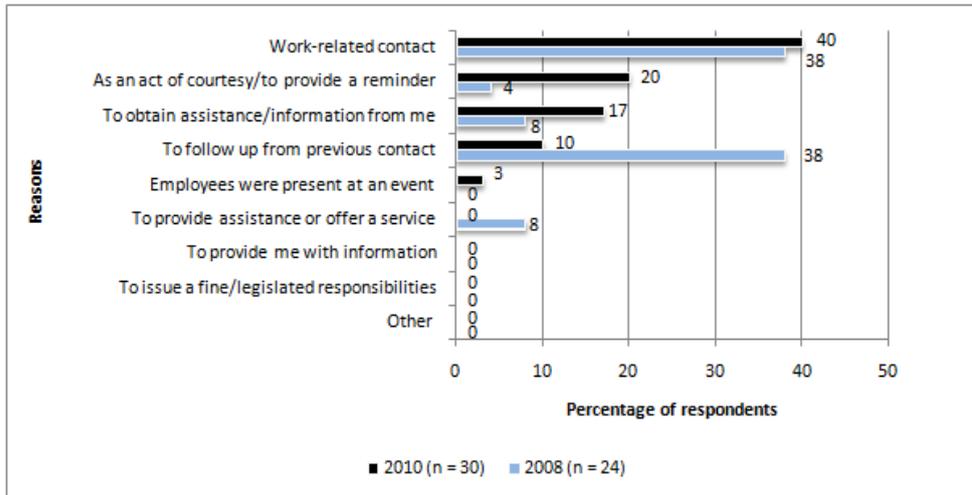


<sup>3</sup> In addition to being self- or employee-initiated, 2 per cent ( $n = 5$ ) of respondents indicated that someone else initiated their contact. These cases were not included in any further analysis about initiation of contact.

Figure 10 shows that respondents who were dissatisfied after employee-initiated contact most commonly reported that the employee made contact:

- in the course of the client’s work
- as an act of courtesy or to provide a reminder
- to obtain assistance or information from them.

Figure 10. Reasons for employee-initiated contact with respondents (2008 and 2010)



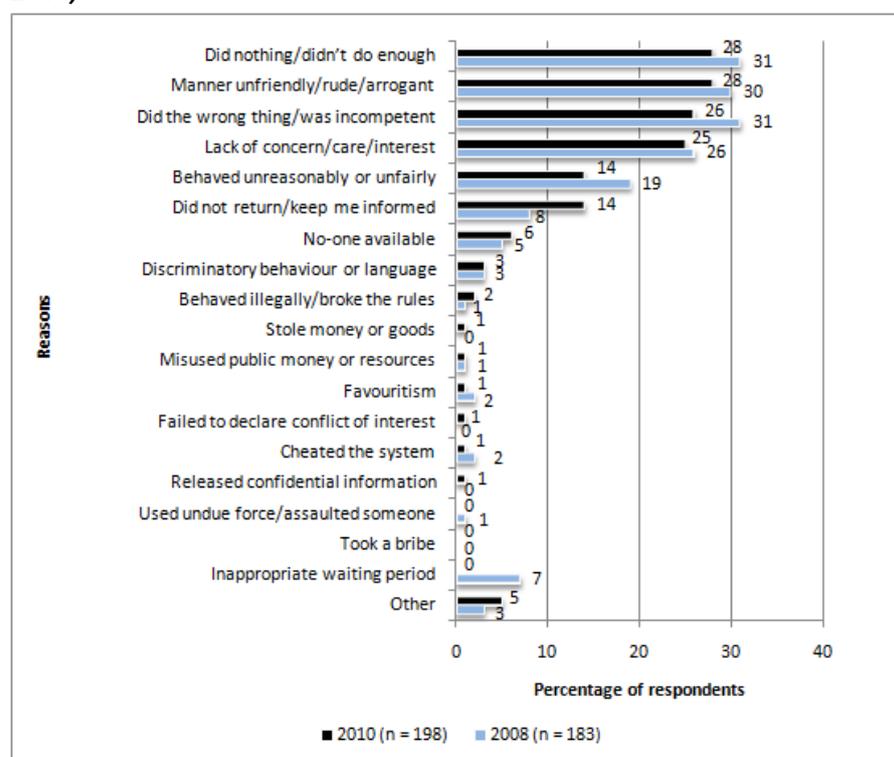
## Reasons for dissatisfaction

Respondents who were dissatisfied after their recent contact with the public service were asked to report the reason for their dissatisfaction. As Figure 11 shows, the main reasons were:

- the employee did nothing or not enough
- the employee's manner was unfriendly, rude or arrogant
- the employee did the wrong thing or was incompetent
- the employee lacked concern, care or interest.

Overall, there were few differences from the 2008 survey responses, and few respondents reported that their dissatisfaction was the result of serious misconduct such as the employee taking a bribe, using undue force or behaving illegally.

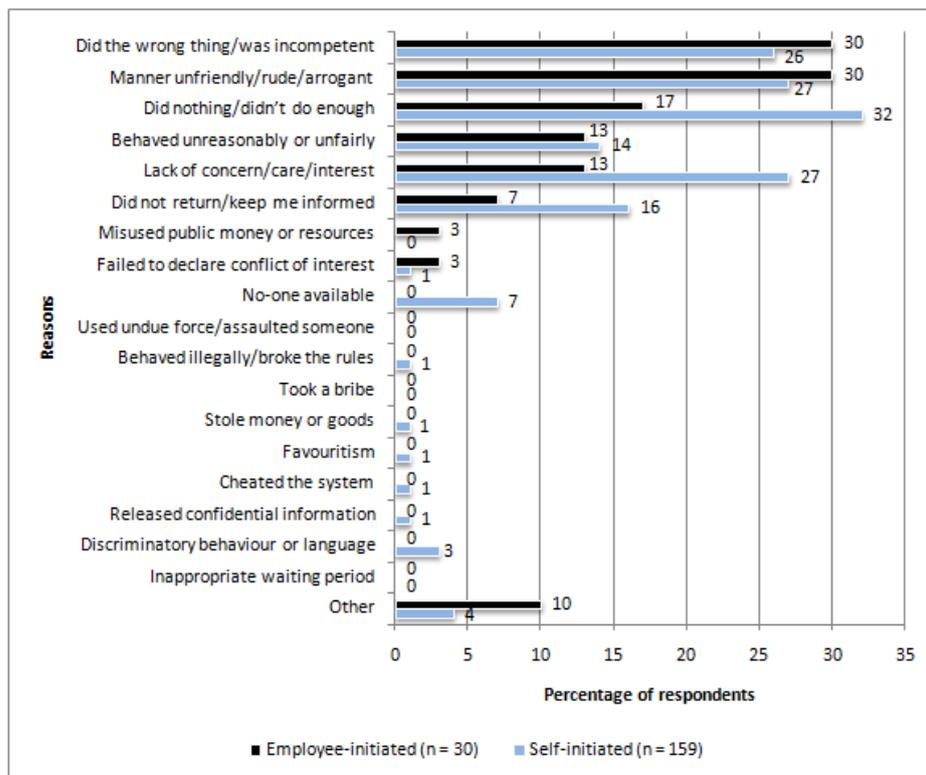
Figure 11. Reasons for dissatisfaction after recent contact with the public service (2008 and 2010)



We also considered whether the reasons for respondents' dissatisfaction differed depending on whether the contact was self- or employee-initiated (see Figure 12). While there were some differences, the six most frequent reasons were common to self- and employee-initiated encounters:

- the employee did the wrong thing or was incompetent
- the employee's manner was unfriendly, rude or arrogant
- the employee did nothing or not enough
- the employee behaved unreasonably or unfairly
- the employee lacked concern, care or interest
- the employee did not keep the client informed, or did not come back.

**Figure 12. Reasons for dissatisfaction after recent contact with the public service, by initiation of contact (2010)**



## Part B: General perceptions of public service employees

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Accountability and trust play a vital role in shaping perceptions of integrity. Therefore, all government employees are expected to operate according to high standards of behaviour (Aulich, Halligan & Nutley 2001). Recent research, however, has indicated that public trust of the government and its employees has declined (Head, Brown & Connors 2008; Provan & Milward 2001; Shepherd 2009; Van de Walle, Van Roosbroek & Bouckaert 2008). While many factors contribute to this decline, misconduct or corruption in government can have a particularly damaging impact on the public's trust in government (Brown & Evans 2009; Goldsmith 2010).

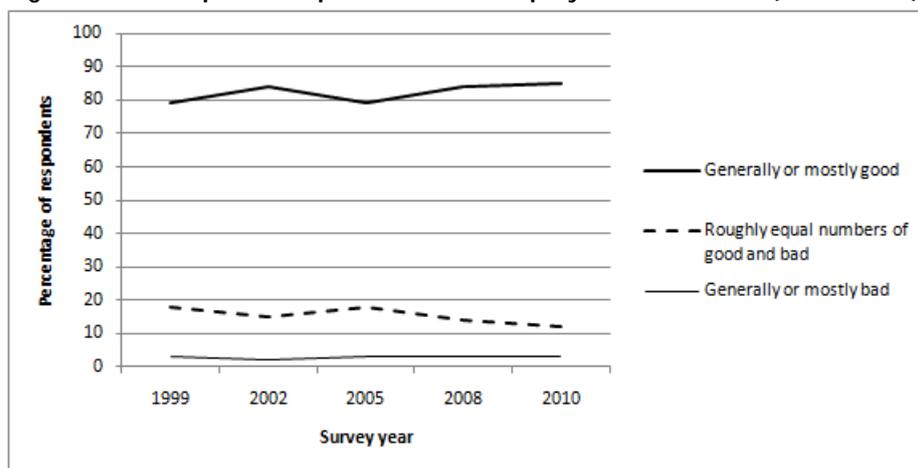
In the Public Attitudes Survey, we examined respondents' perceptions of public service employee behaviour, honesty and misconduct.

### *Perceptions of behaviour*

In 2010, the majority of respondents (85%,  $n = 1241$ ) agreed that public service employees generally behave well, 12 per cent ( $n = 171$ ) said that there are 'roughly equal numbers of good and bad' employees, and 3 per cent ( $n = 41$ ) reported that public service employees are 'generally or mostly bad'.

Responses to this item have been relatively stable over time (see Figure 13).

Figure 13. Perceptions of public service employees' behaviour (1999–2010)



## Explaining the variation: perceptions of public service employee behaviour

**Employment** Employed participants (88%,  $n = 779$ ) were most likely to report that public service employees were generally or mostly well behaved, compared with other respondents:  
student: 84%,  $n = 32$   
unemployed: 84%,  $n = 38$   
home duties: 78%,  $n = 69$   
retired/pension: 83%,  $n = 310$ .  
 $b = 0.03, p < .05$

**Experience with public service employees** Respondents who reported a recent *satisfactory* experience with the public service (90%,  $n = 346$ ) were more likely than those who did not report a recent satisfactory experience (84%,  $n = 895$ ) to believe that public service employees were generally or mostly well behaved ( $b = -0.16, p < .001$ ).

Respondents who reported a recent *unsatisfactory* experience with the public service (73%,  $n = 187$ ) were less likely than those who did not report a recent unsatisfactory experience (88%,  $n = 1054$ ) to believe that employees were generally or mostly well behaved ( $b = 0.20, p < .001$ ).

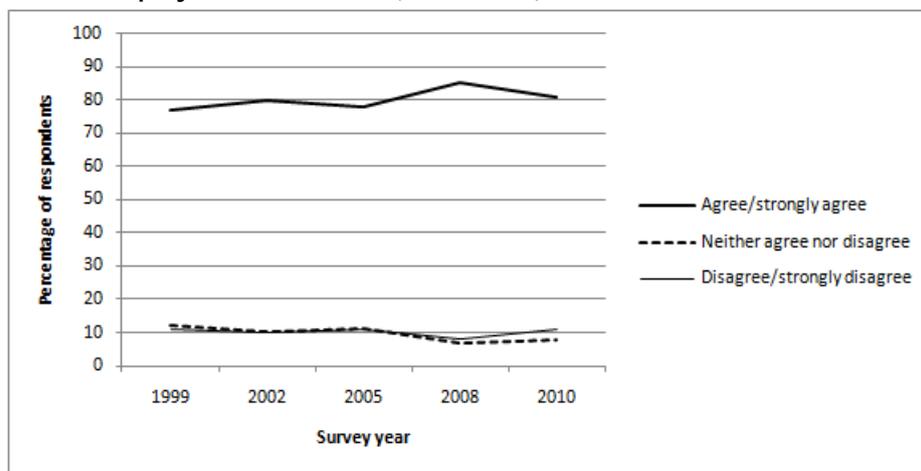
$R^2 = .21, SEE = 0.82, F(6,1405) = 8.40, p < .001$

## Perceptions of employee honesty

To examine the public's perceptions of public service integrity, respondents were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the statement 'Most public service employees are honest.' Consistent with previous survey results, the majority of Queenslanders surveyed (81%,  $n = 1196$ ) believed that most public service employees are honest. Eleven per cent of respondents ( $n = 165$ ) disagreed that most public service employees are honest, and 8 per cent ( $n = 120$ ) neither agreed nor disagreed.

As Figure 14 shows, responses to this item have remained stable over time.

Figure 14. Attitudes to public service integrity: responses to the statement 'Most public service employees are honest.' (1999–2010)



### Explaining the variation: agreement with the statement 'Most public service employees are honest.'

**Indigenous** Non-Indigenous respondents (81%,  $n = 1161$ ) were more likely than Indigenous respondents (67%,  $n = 30$ ) to agree that public service employees are honest ( $b = -0.29$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

**Experience with public service employees** Respondents who reported a recent *satisfactory* experience with the public service (87%,  $n = 336$ ) were more likely than those who did not report a recent satisfactory experience (79%,  $n = 860$ ) to agree that public service employees are honest ( $b = -0.27$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

Respondents who reported a recent *unsatisfactory* experience with the public service (68%,  $n = 175$ ) were less likely than those who did not report a recent unsatisfactory experience (84%,  $n = 1021$ ) to agree that public service employees are honest ( $b = 0.16$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

$R^2 = .23$ ,  $SEE = 0.75$ ,  $F(8, 1431) = 9.65$ ,  $p < .001$

## Perceptions of misconduct

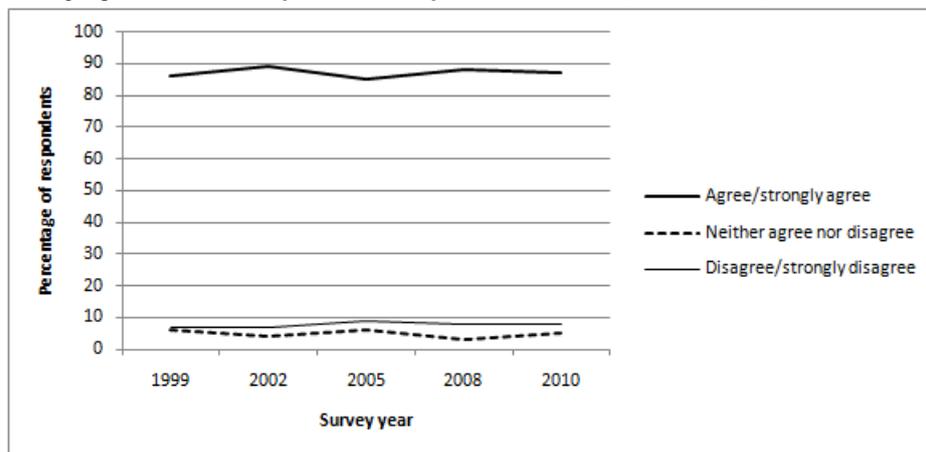
To gauge respondents' perceptions of misconduct, the 2010 Public Attitudes Survey asked Queenslanders to report their level of agreement with the following statements:

- *You will always get some corruption in the public service.*
- *Not enough is being done about corruption in the public service.*
- *The chances of getting caught doing something corrupt in the public service are slim.*

The majority of respondents (87%,  $n = 1296$ ) agreed that 'you will always get some corruption in the public service', 8 per cent ( $n = 123$ ) disagreed, and 5 per cent ( $n = 69$ ) neither agreed nor disagreed with this statement.

As Figure 15 shows, responses to this item have remained stable over the survey series.

**Figure 15. Attitudes to public service misconduct: responses to the statement 'You will always get some corruption in the public service.' (1999–2010)**



**Explaining the variation: agreement with the statement  
'You will always get some corruption in the public service.'**

**Employment** Respondents who were retired or on a pension (83%,  $n = 355$ ) were most likely to report that you will always get some corruption in the public service, compared with other respondents:  
employed: 76%,  $n = 767$   
student: 78%,  $n = 31$   
unemployed: 80%,  $n = 40$   
home duties: 81%,  $n = 84$ .  
 $b = 0.02, p < .01$

**Experience with public service employees** Respondents who reported a recent *satisfactory* experience with the public service (82%,  $n = 314$ ) were less likely than those who did not report a recent satisfactory experience (89%,  $n = 982$ ) to agree that you will always get some corruption in the public service ( $b = 0.02, p < .01$ ).

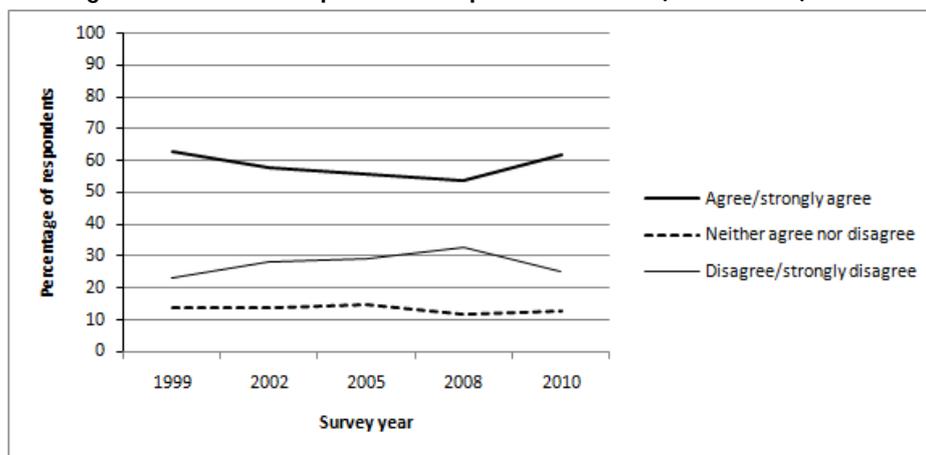
Respondents who reported a recent *unsatisfactory* experience with the public service (90%,  $n = 263$ ) were more likely than those who did not report a recent unsatisfactory experience (87%,  $n = 1060$ ) to agree that you will always get some corruption in the public service ( $b = 0.02, p < .01$ ).

$R^2 = .11, SEE = 0.70, F(8,1439) = 2.37, p < .05$

About two-thirds of respondents (62%,  $n = 858$ ) agreed that 'not enough is being done about corruption in the public service', and one-quarter (25%,  $n = 339$ ) disagreed. The remaining 13 per cent ( $n = 180$ ) neither agreed nor disagreed with this statement.

While there was no significant difference in the 1999 and 2010 survey responses, Figure 16 shows that from 1999 to 2008 there was a continual increase in the proportion of respondents who disagreed with the statement 'Not enough is being done about corruption in the public service.' From 2008 to 2010, however, this trend reversed, with respondents in 2010 significantly more likely than in 2008 to agree that not enough is being done about corruption in the public service ( $\chi^2 = 25.58, p < .001$ ).

**Figure 16. Attitudes to public service misconduct: responses to the statement 'Not enough is being done about corruption in the public service.' (1999–2010)**



**Explaining the variation: agreement with the statement  
'Not enough is being done about corruption in the public service.'**

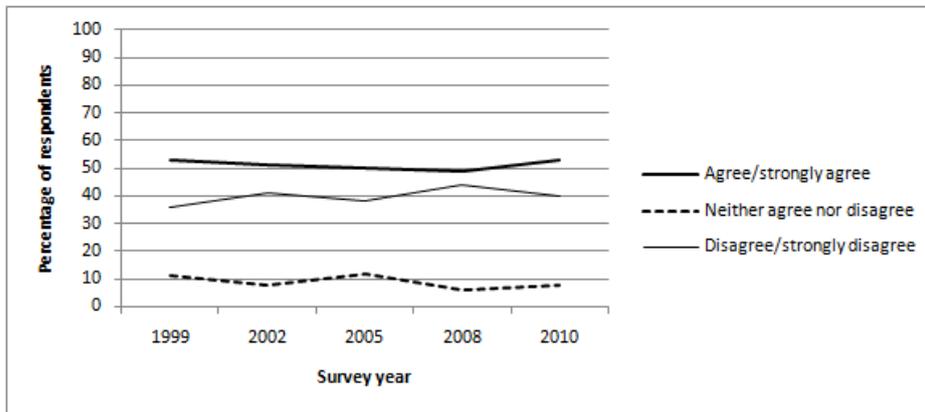
<b>Age</b>	<p>Participants aged 65 years and older (69%, <math>n = 196</math>) were most likely to agree that not enough is being done about public service corruption, compared with other respondents:</p> <p>18 to 24 years: 56%, <math>n = 117</math>          25 to 34 years: 62%, <math>n = 99</math>          35 to 44 years: 61%, <math>n = 165</math>          45 to 54 years: 61%, <math>n = 136</math>          55 to 64 years: 64%, <math>n = 64</math>.</p> <p><math>b = 0.14, p &lt; .05</math></p>
<b>Employment</b>	<p>Unemployed participants (83%, <math>n = 355</math>) were most likely to agree that not enough is being done about public service corruption compared with other respondents:</p> <p>employed: 60%, <math>n = 502</math>          student: 61%, <math>n = 20</math>          unemployed: 58%, <math>n = 25</math>          home duties: 65%, <math>n = 57</math>          retired/pension: 69%, <math>n = 240</math>.</p> <p><math>b = -0.04, p &lt; .05</math></p>
<b>Experience with public service employees</b>	<p>Respondents who reported a recent <i>satisfactory</i> experience with the public service (53%, <math>n = 190</math>) were less likely than those who did not report a recent satisfactory experience (66%, <math>n = 668</math>) to agree that not enough is being done about public service corruption (<math>b = 0.23, p &lt; .001</math>).</p> <p>Respondents who reported a recent <i>unsatisfactory</i> experience with the public service (72%, <math>n = 179</math>) were more likely than those who did not report a recent unsatisfactory experience (60%, <math>n = 679</math>) to agree that not enough is being done about corruption in the public service (<math>b = -0.16, p &lt; .001</math>).</p>

$R^2 = .18, SEE = 0.96, F(8,1328) = 5.56, p < .001$

In 2010, half the respondents (53%,  $n = 741$ ) agreed that 'the chances of getting caught doing something corrupt in the public service are slim', while another 40 per cent ( $n = 554$ ) disagreed. Eight per cent ( $n = 107$ ) neither agreed nor disagreed with this statement.<sup>4</sup>

As Figure 17 shows, the 2010 results continue the trend where more people agreed than disagreed that the chances of getting caught doing something corrupt in the public service are slim.

**Figure 17. Attitudes to public service misconduct: responses to the statement 'The chances of getting caught doing something corrupt in the public service are slim.' (1999–2010)**



<sup>4</sup> The total exceeds 100 per cent due to rounding.

**Explaining the variation: agreement with the statement  
'The chances of getting caught doing something corrupt in the public  
service are slim.'**

**Employment** Unemployed participants (88%,  $n = 30$ ) were most likely to agree that the chances of getting caught doing something corrupt in the public service are slim, compared with other participants:  
student: 40%,  $n = 14$   
employed: 49%,  $n = 420$   
home duties: 54%,  $n = 50$   
retired/pension: 58%,  $n = 221$ .  
 $b = -0.05, p < .001$

**Education** Participants whose highest level of education was primary school (62%,  $n = 18$ ) were most likely to agree that the chances of getting caught doing something corrupt in the public service are slim, compared with other respondents:  
some secondary school: 57%,  $n = 248$   
completed year 12/tech or trade: 54%,  $n = 281$   
some tertiary education: 45%,  $n = 51$   
completed tertiary education: 49%,  $n = 138$ .  
 $b = -0.05, p < .001$

**Experience with public service employees** Respondents who reported a recent *satisfactory* experience with the public service (42%,  $n = 154$ ) were less likely than those who did not report a recent satisfactory experience (57%,  $n = 587$ ) to believe that the chances of getting caught doing something corrupt in the public service are slim ( $b = 0.36, p < .001$ ).

Respondents who reported a recent *unsatisfactory* experience with the public service (60%,  $n = 151$ ) were more likely than those who did not report a recent unsatisfactory experience (51%,  $n = 590$ ) to agree that the chances of getting caught doing something corrupt in the public service are slim ( $b = -0.15, p < .001$ ).

$R^2 = .22, SEE = 1.04, F(8,1354) = 8.49, p < .001$

## Part C: Complaints processes

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Government agencies have an important role in complaints processing. In accordance with the *Crime and Misconduct Act 2001* (the CM Act), the CMC may give authority to government agencies to start dealing with less serious complaints of official misconduct and to report within agreed timeframes.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, while the CMC retains primary responsibility for dealing with more serious complaints of misconduct, the CM Act requires the CMC to refer matters back to the relevant agency, as long as the public interest is safeguarded (see Appendix 1 for more information).

In this part, we present the public's perceptions of how complaints about public service employees are handled, specifically:

- respondents' experiences of making a complaint following an unsatisfactory encounter with a public service employee
- reasons for not complaining about an unsatisfactory experience
- confidence in how a complaint would be dealt with by the relevant agency, the Queensland Ombudsman or the CMC, regardless of whether there was any experience with the processes or with public service employees
- general perceptions of the complaints process, regardless of whether there was any experience with the processes or with public service employees.

### ***Experiences of making a complaint***

Of the respondents who were dissatisfied with their recent encounter with a public service employee, more than one in three ( $n = 79$ ) felt like making a complaint and more than one in five ( $n = 45$ ) actually made (or tried to make) a complaint (see Table 1). For every one person who made a complaint, however, there were two other respondents who felt like making a complaint but did not. As Table 1 shows, these figures are comparable to the 2008 Public Attitudes Survey results.

**Table 1. Proportion of recently dissatisfied respondents who felt like making, made or tried to make a complaint (2008 and 2010)**

	Percentage of respondents	
	2008 ( $n = 183$ )	2010 ( $n = 196$ )
<b>Making a complaint</b>		
Proportion of recently dissatisfied respondents who felt like making a complaint	43	40
Proportion of recently dissatisfied respondents who made a complaint or tried to make a complaint	20	23
Ratio of 'felt like making a complaint' to 'made or tried to make a complaint'	2:1	2:1

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<sup>5</sup> Through directions under s. 40 of the CM Act

Those respondents who made (or tried to make) a complaint after a recent unsatisfactory experience were asked to which agency they directed their complaint. Due to the small number of cases in this subset, these figures must be interpreted with caution. As shown in Table 2, more than half the 2010 survey respondents ( $n = 19$ ) reported the matter to the government department or agency about which the complaint related. Overall, there are few differences between the 2008 and 2010 survey responses.

**Table 2. Proportion of respondents who made or had tried to make a complaint, by agency (2008–2010)**

Agency respondent complained to	Percentage of respondents	
	2008 ( $n = 34$ )	2010 ( $n = 34$ )
Government department/agency itself	74	56
Member of parliament/local member	9	18
Health Quality and Complaints Commission	3	9
Queensland Ombudsman	6	6
Relevant union	0	6
CMC	3	0
Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian	3	0
Attorney-General	3	0
Media	0	0
QPS	0	0
Queensland Audit Office	0	0
Another government agency	0	0
Other	6	9

*Note:* Totals exceed 100 per cent because multiple responses were allowed.

Of those respondents who had made a complaint about an unsatisfactory experience with the public service, 55 per cent ( $n = 17$ ) were dissatisfied with the way the complaint was handled. This is comparable to the 2008 survey, wherein 57 per cent ( $n = 21$ ) were dissatisfied with the way the complaint was handled.

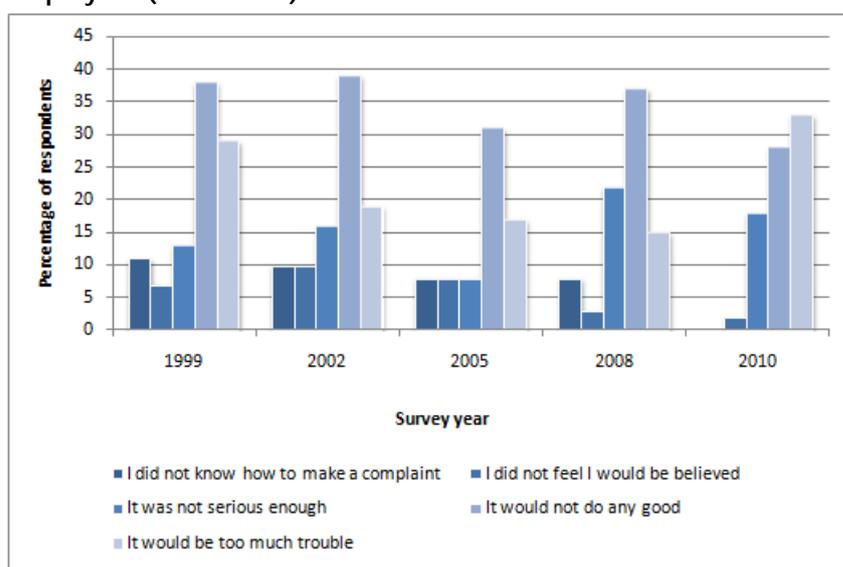
One-third of the 2010 survey respondents (39%,  $n = 12$ ) indicated that they were satisfied with how the complaint was handled, and the remaining 6 per cent ( $n = 2$ ) were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with the experience.

## Reasons for not complaining

Respondents who reported a recent unsatisfactory experience with a public service employee but did not make a complaint (77%,  $n = 153$ ) were asked their reasons for not complaining.

As Figure 18 shows, the proportion of respondents who believed that complaining would be too much trouble is higher than in all previous surveys, and was the main reason in 2010 that people did not complain. Over one-quarter believed complaining 'would not do any good', and one in five considered that the behaviour of the public service employee 'was not serious enough' to justify making a complaint.

Figure 18. Reasons that respondents chose not to complain about public service employees (1999–2010)



Respondents who said that they had not made a complaint because it would not do any good ( $n = 23$ ) were asked why they had felt this way. Once again, due to the low number of responses for this question, caution should be taken when interpreting the results.

The main reason respondents gave for not complaining about an unsatisfactory experience with the public service was because they believed that 'government agencies all stick together' (44%,  $n = 10$ ). Other reasons given were:

- 'It would be their word against mine.' (22%,  $n = 5$ )
- 'I couldn't be bothered.' (13%,  $n = 3$ )
- 'Complaints bodies aren't really independent.' (13%,  $n = 3$ )

These findings are consistent with the findings of past Public Attitudes Surveys and previous research that show that people are reluctant to complain because they believe it won't do any good (Smith 2009).

## Confidence in the complaints process

Respondents were asked to indicate their level of confidence in a complaint about a public service employee being properly investigated if made to the public service agency itself, the CMC or the Queensland Ombudsman.

The results from the 2010 survey show that two-thirds of respondents would be confident that their complaint would be properly investigated if made to the CMC ( $n = 966$ ) and three-quarters of respondents would be confident that their complaint would be properly investigated if made to the Ombudsman ( $n = 1115$ ). Half the respondents ( $n = 725$ ) reported that they would be confident that their complaint would be properly investigated if made to the relevant agency (see Table 3).

**Table 3. Level of confidence in public service complaints being properly investigated by agencies (2008 and 2010)**

Agency	Percentage of respondents, 2008			Percentage of respondents, 2010			$\chi^2$
	Confident	Neutral	Not confident	Confident	Neutral	Not confident	
Ombudsman	83	6	11	78	9	13	12.52**
CMC	74	7	18	66	13	21	32.82***
Relevant agency	52	11	37	49	15	36	9.55**

\*\*\*  $p < .001$

\*\*  $p < .01$

Since the 2008 Public Attitudes Survey, there has been a statistically significant decline in the public's confidence that complaints would be properly investigated by public service agencies, the CMC and the Queensland Ombudsman.

## General perceptions of complaints

To explore general perceptions of the complaints process, respondents were asked their level of agreement with the following statements:

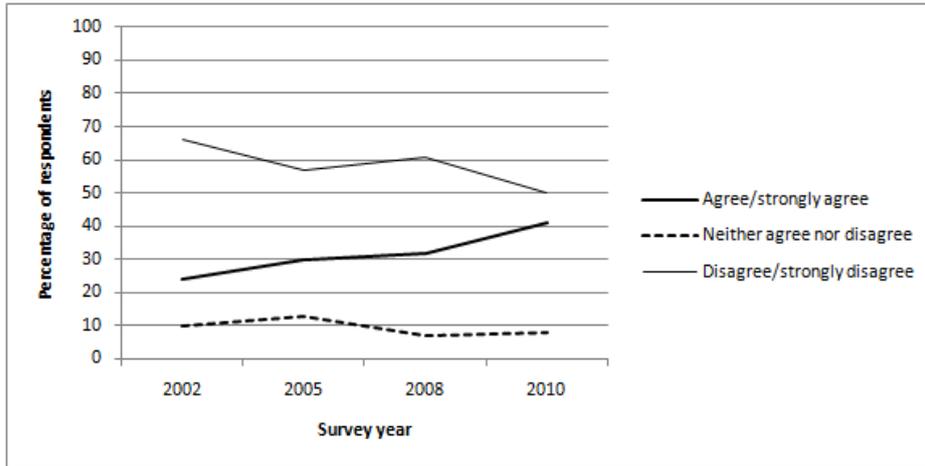
- *People who complain about public service employees are likely to suffer for it.*
- *There is no point reporting corruption in the public service because nothing useful will be done about it.*
- *Complaints about public service employees should be investigated by an oversight body, not by the government.*

In 2010, half the respondents (50%,  $n = 712$ ) disagreed that people who complain about the public service are likely to suffer for it, while 41 per cent ( $n = 587$ ) agreed. Eight per cent ( $n = 118$ ) neither agreed nor disagreed with this statement.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> The total does not reach 100 per cent due to rounding.

While respondents in 2010 were more likely to disagree than agree with this statement, Figure 19 shows that over time the proportion of respondents who agreed with this statement has significantly increased, from 24 per cent in 2002 to 41 per cent in 2010 ( $\chi^2 = 102.97, p < .001$ ). There has been a corresponding decline in the proportion of respondents who disagreed with this statement, from 66 per cent in 2002 to 50 per cent in 2010. Responses in 2010 are also significantly more negative than the 2008 survey responses ( $\chi^2 = 33.06, p < .001$ ).

**Figure 19. Perceptions about complaints: responses to the statement 'People who complain about public service employees are likely to suffer for it.' (2002–2010)**



**Explaining the variation: agreement with the statement  
'People who complain about public service employees are likely to  
suffer for it.'**

**Gender** Males (45%,  $n = 320$ ) were more likely than females (38%,  $n = 267$ ) to agree that people who complain about the public service are likely to suffer for it ( $b = -0.15, p < .01$ ).

**Employment** Respondents who were retired or on a pension (48%,  $n = 173$ ) were most likely to agree that people who complain about the public service are likely to suffer for it, while employed respondents (39%,  $n = 335$ ) and those who undertake home duties (39%,  $n = 35$ ) were least likely, compared with other respondents:  
 student: 45%,  $n = 17$   
 unemployed: 43%,  $n = 19$ .  
 $b = -0.05, p < .01$

**Experience with public service employees** Respondents who reported a recent *satisfactory* experience with the public service (34%,  $n = 128$ ) were less likely than those who did not report a recent satisfactory experience (44%,  $n = 459$ ) to agree that people who complain about the public service are likely to suffer for it ( $b = 0.24, p < .001$ ).

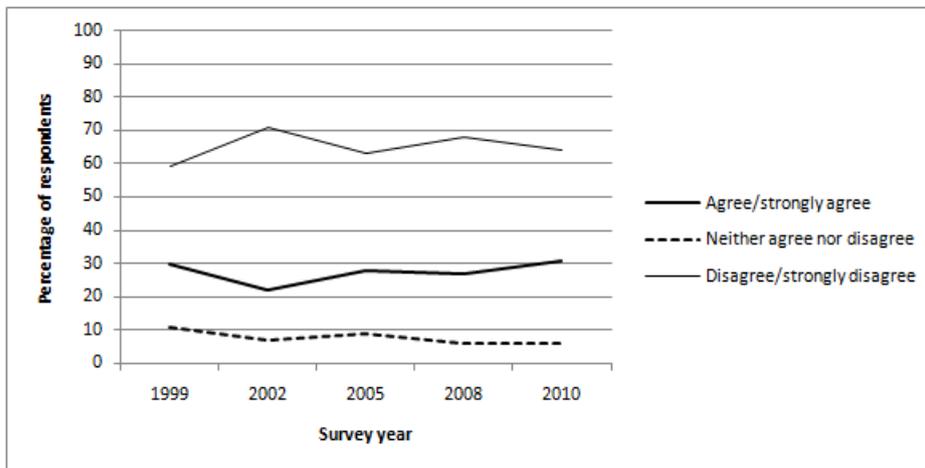
Respondents who reported a recent *unsatisfactory* experience with the public service (55%,  $n = 139$ ) were more likely than those who did not report a recent unsatisfactory experience (39%,  $n = 448$ ) to agree that people who complain about the public service are likely to suffer for it ( $b = -0.23, p < .001$ ).

$R^2 = .22, SEE = 1.03, F(8,1369) = 8.54, p < .001$

Two-thirds of respondents (64%,  $n = 920$ ) disagreed with the statement 'There is no point reporting corruption in the public service because nothing useful will be done about it.' Almost one-third (31%,  $n = 443$ ) agreed with the statement, and 6 per cent ( $n = 84$ ) of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed.<sup>7</sup>

Figure 20 shows that responses to this item have not changed substantially over time. Generally, people disagreed with this statement at twice the rate of those who agreed with the statement.

**Figure 20. Perceptions about complaints: responses to the statement 'There is no point reporting corruption in the public service because nothing useful will be done about it.' (1999–2010)**



<sup>7</sup> The total exceeds 100 per cent due to rounding.

**Explaining the variation: agreement with the statement  
'There is no point reporting corruption in the public service because  
nothing useful will be done about it.'**

**Employment** Unemployed respondents (38%,  $n = 17$ ) and respondents who were retired or on a pension (39%,  $n = 142$ ) were more likely to agree that there is no point reporting corruption in the public service, compared with other respondents:  
 employed: 27%,  $n = 243$   
 student: 24%,  $n = 9$   
 home duties: 28%,  $n = 26$ .  
 $b = -0.07, p < .001$

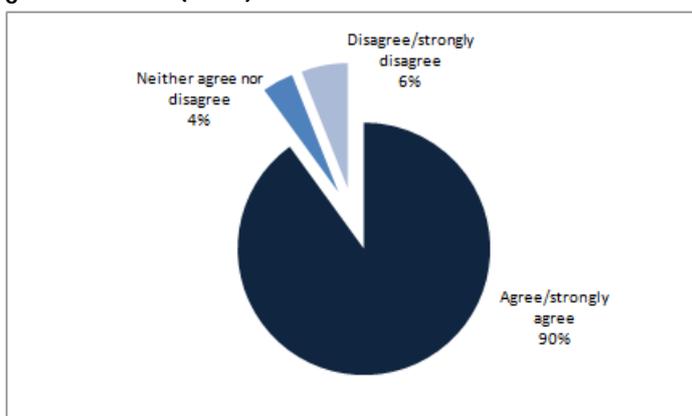
**Experience with public service employees** Respondents who reported a recent *satisfactory* experience with the public service (23%,  $n = 86$ ) were less likely than those who did not report a recent satisfactory experience (33%,  $n = 357$ ) to agree that there is no point reporting corruption in the public service ( $b = 0.29, p < .001$ ).

Respondents who reported a recent *unsatisfactory* experience with the public service (43%,  $n = 108$ ) were more likely than those who did not report a recent unsatisfactory experience (28%,  $n = 335$ ) to agree that there is no point in reporting corruption in the public service ( $b = -0.20, p < .001$ ).

$R^2 = .22, SEE = 1.03, F(8,1401) = 9.25, p < .001$

The 2010 Public Attitudes Survey asked respondents for the first time if they believed that complaints about the public service should be investigated by an independent body rather than the government. Most respondents agreed with this statement ( $n = 1358$ , see Figure 21).

**Figure 21. Perceptions about complaints: responses to the statement 'Complaints about public service employees should be investigated by an oversight body, not by the government.' (2010)**



**Explaining the variation: agreement with the statement  
'Complaints about public service employees should be investigated  
by an oversight body, not by the government.'**

<b>Region</b>	<p>Brisbane respondents (52%, <math>n = 447</math>) were least likely to agree that complaints about the public service should be investigated by an independent body rather than the government, compared with respondents from all other regions:</p> <p>South-East Queensland: 91%, <math>n = 232</math>          South-West Queensland: 92%, <math>n = 228</math>          Central Queensland: 87%, <math>n = 227</math>          North Queensland: 89%, <math>n = 224</math>.</p> <p><math>b = 0.03, p &lt; .05</math></p>
<b>Experience with public service employees</b>	<p>Respondents who reported a recent <i>satisfactory</i> experience (86%, <math>n = 334</math>) were less likely than those who did not report a recent satisfactory experience (91%, <math>n = 1024</math>) to agree that complaints about the public service should be investigated by an independent body rather than the government (<math>b = 0.11, p &lt; .01</math>).</p> <p>Respondents who reported a recent <i>unsatisfactory</i> experience (95%, <math>n = 252</math>) were more likely than respondents who did not report a recent unsatisfactory experience (89%, <math>n = 1106</math>) to agree that complaints should be investigated by an independent body rather than the government (<math>b = -0.10, p &lt; .001</math>).</p>

$R^2 = .15, SEE = 0.69, F(8,1460) = 4.00, p < .001$

## Conclusion

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The 2010 Public Attitudes Survey shows that the Queensland public generally has positive perceptions of public service employees. Respondents believed that public service employees act honestly and are well behaved. In addition, most respondents who had contact with a public service employee in the last year reported that the interaction was satisfactory. Nonetheless, analysis showed that unsatisfactory experiences were related to negative perceptions of the public service. Therefore, employee interactions with the public could still be improved. The results also showed that public service agencies fail to live up to the public's expectations of complaints processing systems.

### Interactions with the public

The quality of an employee's interactions with the public is clearly important in shaping perceptions of public service employees and agencies. Specifically, perceptions can be improved if the employee has a friendly or professional manner, takes what the client considers to be appropriate action, and behaves in a way that the client considers to be competent.

This finding provides public service employees with an opportunity to improve public perceptions. If employees consistently act in a courteous, professional and transparent manner, there is a greater chance that the Queensland public will have positive experiences with public service employees and contribute to more positive general perceptions of the public service, and the government in general.

### Perceptions of corruption and complaints processing

The survey results show that the public considered that corruption will always exist in the public service and that the chances of getting caught are slim. The public also believed that more should be done to combat corruption in the public service. While these sentiments are evident from previous Public Attitudes Surveys, respondents in 2010 were even more likely to believe that not enough is being done about corruption in the public service than they were in 2008.

Further, respondents' confidence in complaints processing systems — of the relevant agency, the Ombudsman or the CMC — has significantly declined since the 2008 survey. In addition, there was a substantial proportion of dissatisfied respondents who *felt like complaining* after an incident with a public service employee but did not. The proportion of respondents who did not complain because it would be 'too much trouble' doubled since the 2008 survey. These results indicate that the number of lodged complaints substantially underestimates the prevalence of poor employee behaviour, and that this behaviour may go unchecked.

While the public preferred that complaints be handled by an oversight body rather than the government, few of the respondents who made a complaint reported to the Ombudsman,

and none reported to the CMC. Instead, over half the respondents made a complaint directly to the agency with which they had the negative experience.

Taken together, the results show that the public's confidence in the complaints process has declined since the last survey was conducted in 2008. Education about the capacity of public service agencies and oversight bodies to prevent, detect and adequately respond to allegations of misconduct may help to reverse this trend.

The CMC's Building Integrity Program aims to develop sound integrity and complaints management systems in the public service. By establishing and maintaining a strong culture of integrity, managers and staff are better placed to deliver services and handle customer complaints, thereby improving client perceptions and public confidence. The CMC will keep the public informed on this program via publications and website updates.

## Appendix 1: Background to the survey

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### ***About the survey***

The 2010 Public Attitudes Survey is the eighth in a series of telephone surveys conducted by the Crime and Misconduct Commission (CMC), beginning in 1991. This research provides a valuable source of information about changes over time in public perceptions of the Queensland Police Service (QPS), the Queensland public service and local government, and the CMC. The survey is one means by which the CMC can monitor changes and improvements in relation to perceived levels of integrity and misconduct.

### ***The role of the CMC***

The CMC (formerly the Criminal Justice Commission) was established as a result of the Commission of Inquiry into Possible Illegal Activities and Associated Police Misconduct, to help restore confidence in Queensland's public institutions, particularly the QPS.<sup>8</sup> More commonly known as the 'Fitzgerald Inquiry', the resultant report documented the extensive police misconduct and prevalent corruption that had thrived under maladministration within the police and the government (Fitzgerald 1989). The report recommended changes that substantially reformed the QPS. It also identified the need for an independent agency to oversee the police service and other government agencies, deal with complaints of *official misconduct*, and assume a variety of other criminal justice responsibilities.

**Official misconduct** As defined by s. 14 and s. 15 of the *Crime and Misconduct Act 2001* (Qld) (the CM Act), official misconduct must involve at least one of the following:

- dishonesty or lack of impartiality
- a breach of the trust put in a person by virtue of their position
- a misuse of officially obtained information.

It must also be a criminal offence or serious enough to justify dismissal, if proven.

In recognition of the importance of police integrity, the CMC also has a broad jurisdiction over behaviour known as *police misconduct*.

**Police misconduct** Conduct that is 'disgraceful, improper or unbecoming to an officer, that shows unfitness to be an officer, or that does not meet the standard of conduct the community reasonably expects of an officer' is considered to be police misconduct (CM Act, Schedule 2). Examples might include failure to comply with policies and procedures, or serious conduct in a private capacity that reflects adversely on the QPS.

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<sup>8</sup> The CMC came into existence on 1 January 2002 when the Criminal Justice Commission (CJC) and the Queensland Crime Commission (QCC) merged to form the new organisation.

Further, while the terms *misconduct* and *corruption* are often used interchangeably, they have specific meanings in legislation.

**Corruption** In this report, corruption involves a breach of trust in the performance of official duties and may fall within the category of official misconduct under s. 15 of the CM Act.

**Misconduct** Misconduct means *official misconduct* or *police misconduct* under Schedule 2 of the CM Act.

### ***Changes in complaints processing***

When the CM Act was passed in 2001, it introduced a new regime for handling complaints. While the CMC retains primary responsibility for dealing with complaints of official misconduct, the CM Act requires that it refer such matters to the agency to which the complaint relates, as long as the public interest is safeguarded. This is part of the principle of *devolution*.

**Devolution** Action to prevent and deal with misconduct in a public sector agency should, wherever possible, happen within the agency itself.

As part of the devolution process, the CMC may give authority to the relevant agency to commence dealing with certain less serious complaints of official misconduct and to report within agreed timeframes.<sup>9</sup>

If a complaint is more serious, the CMC must decide whether it is appropriate to refer the matter to the agency. In making this decision, the CMC must consider the nature and seriousness of the complaint, the public interest, and the capacity of the agency to respond effectively.<sup>10</sup> Most matters are not serious and are therefore appropriate for the agency to deal with. Nonetheless, the CMC monitors how well the agency is carrying out this responsibility. If it is identified that the agency is not carrying out this responsibility, the CMC may monitor the matter more closely or assume responsibility for the investigation.

### ***Measuring integrity***

The word 'integrity' is often used to describe moral excellence. It derives from the Latin *integritas* meaning 'wholeness, entireness, completeness'. In the public sector, integrity describes the integration of factors such as operational systems, control strategies and ethical standards that influence how organisations operate. It encompasses values such as

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<sup>9</sup>Through directions under s. 40 of the CM Act

<sup>10</sup>The CMC investigates serious matters, particularly if there is reason to believe the misconduct is prevalent or systemic, or where allegations involve serious criminal conduct that has the potential to undermine public confidence.

honesty, transparency, accountability and respect; and requires that organisations always act in the public interest.

Perceptions of public service employee integrity can be shaped by numerous factors, including the nature of media reporting and citizens' style of media consumption (Donlon-Cotton 2007; Edwards 2005; Weitzer & Tuch 2005). Such factors can have a substantial effect on public perceptions, but are unmeasured in the Public Attitudes Survey.

The Public Attitudes Survey uses a number of measures of 'integrity' throughout this report. These include respondents' level of agreement (or otherwise) with statements such as 'Most public service employees are honest' or 'Not enough is being done about corruption in the public service'. We believe that, when combined, the responses to such questions give the reader a sense of the public's views about public sector integrity.<sup>11</sup>

For a broader perspective of public service integrity, the reader is encouraged to access our website ([www.cmc.qld.gov.au](http://www.cmc.qld.gov.au)) for other CMC publications about public service performance and integrity.

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<sup>11</sup> This view is in line with other Australian research conducted on public perceptions, for example, the Australian Government Productivity Commission's *Report on government services* series at [www.pc.gov.au](http://www.pc.gov.au).

## Appendix 2: Survey method

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### ***Survey administration***

The CMC, and formerly the CJC, has collected Public Attitudes Survey data regularly for 19 years.<sup>12</sup> This allows for comparisons of public perceptions over time, and many trends are presented throughout the report. In assessing these trends, it is important to remember that significant changes have occurred during this period, which therefore have a substantial impact on public perceptions.

The survey was administered using a random sample drawn from the population of all Queensland residents aged 18 years and over who were the usual residents in a private dwelling with a landline telephone. Unlike previous years, the 2010 Public Attitudes Survey used a stratified random sampling technique. Stratified sampling ensures that the representation of particular sub-groups in the sample is proportionate to their representation in the population. The sample was stratified by age, gender and region of residence. Furthermore, quota sampling was used for the 18–24 age group because this group was substantially underrepresented in the 2008 survey. Unlike previous years where responses were not weighted, the use of quotas in the 2010 survey's sampling strategy for the 18–24 age group necessitates the use of weighted data when examining changes over time.

The sample was drawn from five Queensland statistical divisions — Brisbane, South East (excluding Brisbane), South West, Central and Far North.<sup>13</sup> Telephone numbers were randomly selected from all telephone numbers in each division. One resident aged over 18 years was randomly selected from the household to complete the survey.<sup>14</sup>

The survey was undertaken by Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) in June–July 2010. The order in which participants completed the survey sections was varied (i.e. 51 per cent of participants completed the first section first; 49 per cent of participants completed the second section first). This was done in an effort to combat fatigue due to the length of the survey.

A total of 1529 respondents participated in the 2010 survey, and the response rate was 29 per cent. This was lower than in previous years — 33 per cent in 2008, 43 per cent in 2005 and 48 per cent in 2002. The lower response rate could reflect further advancements in technology such as answering machines and caller identification, or it could simply reflect

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<sup>12</sup>This report only analyses trends over a 15-year period because the 1991 and 1993 survey data is not comparable due to changes in the questions.

<sup>13</sup>The Queensland Government Office of Economic and Statistical Research and the Australian Bureau of Statistics define 13 regions. To ensure sufficient respondents from each region for statistical purposes, we combined several of these, and refer to five regions only.

<sup>14</sup>To randomly select which member of the household would participate in the survey, the resident whose birthday was closest to the day of the survey was selected.

the wariness people have towards telephone solicitation (Calvert & Pope 2005; Kempf & Remington 2007; Vehovar, Berzelak & Manfreda 2010). The increase in the use of mobile phones poses a similar challenge for household telephone survey practitioners (Vehovar, Berzelak & Manfreda 2010) because mobile phones are gradually replacing residential landlines. Overall, the relatively poor response rate weakens our confidence in the ability to generalise the results to the Queensland public. In light of this, we will consider changing the survey method to improve the response rate in the future.

### ***Data analysis***

Chi-square analysis, nominal regression and descriptive statistics were used to explore perceptions of the public service, to assess the relationship between demographic factors and survey responses from the 2010 Public Attitudes Survey, and to measure changes in responses over time. Appendix 4 provides a list of statistical notations and definitions to assist with an understanding of the statistical terms used within the report.

The analyses and figures presented in this report exclude a small number of respondents who refused to answer the relevant question(s) or indicated that they did not know enough about the question to provide a response. Because of this, there are some minor variations from the figures presented in previous reports.

### ***Survey limitations***

Quantitative surveys are the preferred method for gauging public opinion about a particular issue because you can draw inferences about the population from the responses of a relatively small sample (Roberts & Hough 2005). However, the results of this survey remain an estimate of the views of the population and are subject to sampling error. In particular, our method of surveying via landline telephones may lead to a sample bias.

The concepts of 'integrity' and 'confidence' are complex, and are difficult to measure using structured responses to simple questions. Further, the complex nature of public attitudes and the diversity of attitudes among community members make this measurement difficult.

Although regression analyses were used to explore the association between variables (i.e. the relationship between demographic characteristics and perceptions of public service employee honesty), these analyses do not imply causation; and the results should be treated as indicative rather than conclusive. There may also be important factors that could explain differences in perceptions that were not measured in the Public Attitudes Survey, such as sources of media consumption.

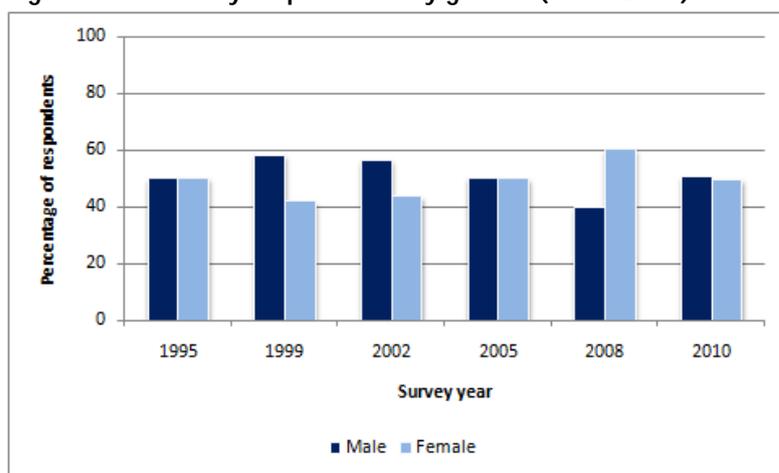
## Appendix 3: Respondent demographics

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### Gender

Figure A3.1 shows the proportion of male and female respondents to each survey. Given that the 2010 Public Attitudes Survey used stratified random sampling, the proportion of male (50%,  $n = 770$ ) and female (50%  $n = 759$ ) respondents is significantly different to a number of past years. The significantly higher proportion of females in 2008 and males in 2002 and in 1999 ( $\chi^2 = 129.50, p < .001$ ) is a result of random sampling.

Figure A3.1. Survey respondents by gender (1995–2010)



## Age

The data presented in Figure A3.2 show a significant difference in the age of respondents over time ( $\chi^2 = 372.00, p < .001$ ). The proportion of respondents aged 18–24 years was three times larger in 2010 ( $n = 229$ ; see Table A3.1) than in 2008 (5%,  $n = 70$ ). This increase reflects the quota sampling strategy for the 18–24 years age group adopted in 2010. Consequently, from 2008 to 2010 there was a decrease in respondents aged 45–55 years ( $n = 247$ ) and those aged 55–64 years ( $n = 248$ ).

Figure A3.2. Survey respondents by age (1995–2010)

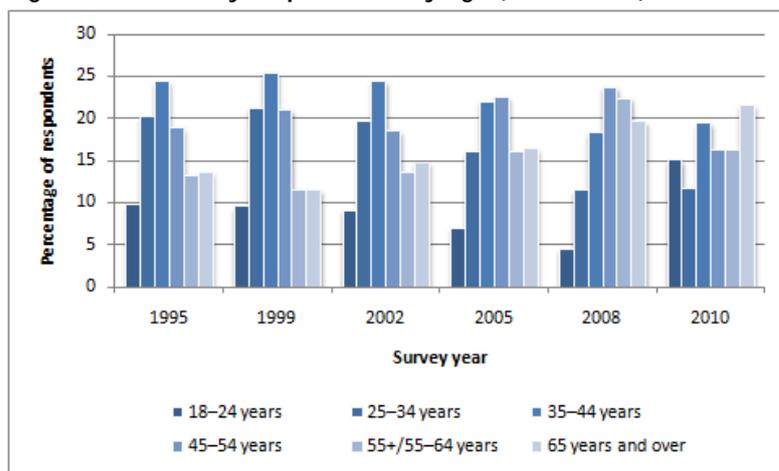


Table A3.1. Breakdown of respondents by age (2010)

18–24 years	25–34 years	35–44 years	45–54 years	55+/55–64 years	65 years and over
15%	12%	19%	16%	16%	21%

## Employment status

Figure A3.3 shows that the majority of respondents for each year were employed. There were only small differences in the employment status of respondents from 2008 to 2010.

Figure A3.3. Survey respondents by employment status (1995–2010)

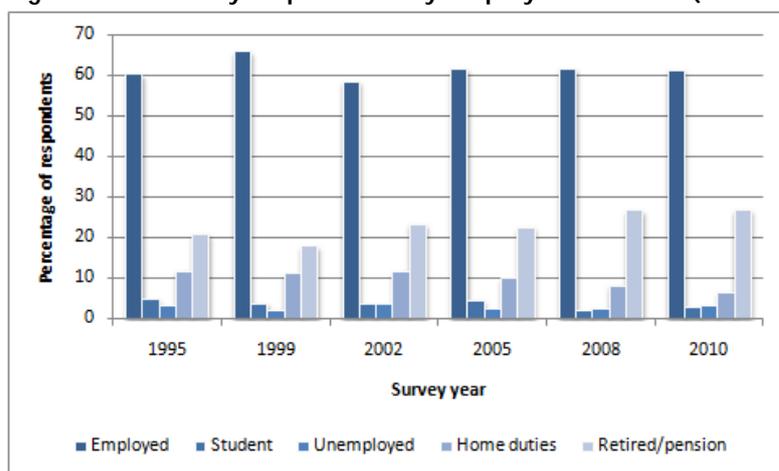


Table A3.2. Breakdown of respondents by employment status (2010)

Employed	Student	Unemployed	Home duties	Retired/pension
61%	3%	3%	6%	27%

## Education

Respondents were asked to state their highest level of educational achievement. In 2010 there was a decrease in the proportion of respondents who had completed tertiary education ( $\chi^2 = 891.50, p < .001$ ). See Figure A3.4.

Figure A3.4. Survey respondents by highest level of education (1995–2010)

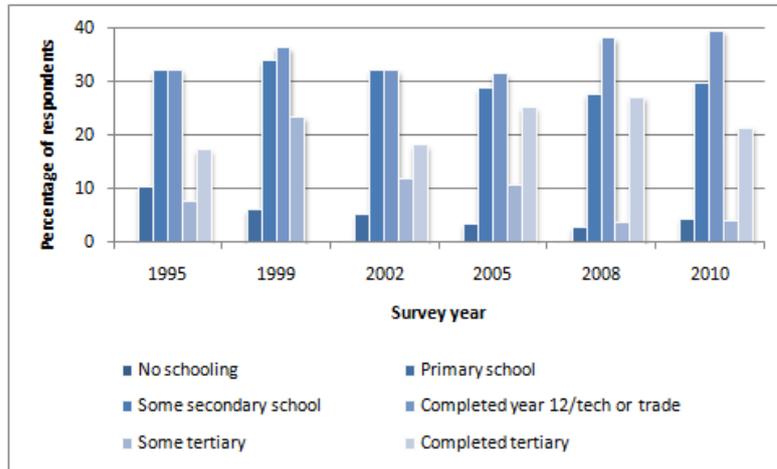


Table A3.3. Breakdown of respondents by education level (2010)

No schooling	Primary school	Some secondary school	Completed year 12/tech or trade	Some tertiary	Completed tertiary
0%	4%	30%	40%	4%	21%

## ***Ethnicity***

Respondents were asked if they identified with a particular ethnic or cultural group. Of the 1437 participants who responded to this question in 2010, the majority identified themselves as Australian (89%,  $n = 1286$ ), while 11 per cent ( $n = 151$ ) identified themselves as belonging to a culture other than 'Australian' or as 'mixed ethnicity'.<sup>15</sup> The most common ethnic or cultural groups that the respondents identified with were British (4%,  $n = 52$ ), New Zealander (2%,  $n = 32$ ) and Southern European (1%,  $n = 14$ ). There was no significant difference in the ethnicity or culture of 2008 and 2010 respondents.

Of the respondents who reported their Indigenous status, the sample was twice as likely to identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander in 2010 (3%,  $n = 46$ ) compared with 2008 (1%,  $n = 22$ ). In 2010:

- 35 respondents identified as Aboriginal
- 6 identified as Torres Strait Islander
- 5 identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.

The proportion of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander respondents was slightly less than the estimated Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander population in Queensland (4%).<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> A small number did not identify with an ethnic or cultural group.

<sup>16</sup> The estimated proportion of resident population of Indigenous persons in Australia is 2.5 per cent. More than one-quarter (28%) of the national Indigenous population live in Queensland (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2008).

## Region

The data presented in Figure A3.5 display the breakdown of respondents by region. There has been no significant change in the proportion of respondents from each region since 1999. The data from 1995 differ significantly from other years because the sampling frame in that year was based on police regions rather than statistical divisions ( $\chi^2 = 193.80$ ,  $p < .001$ ).<sup>17</sup>

Figure A3.5. Survey respondents by region (1995–2010)

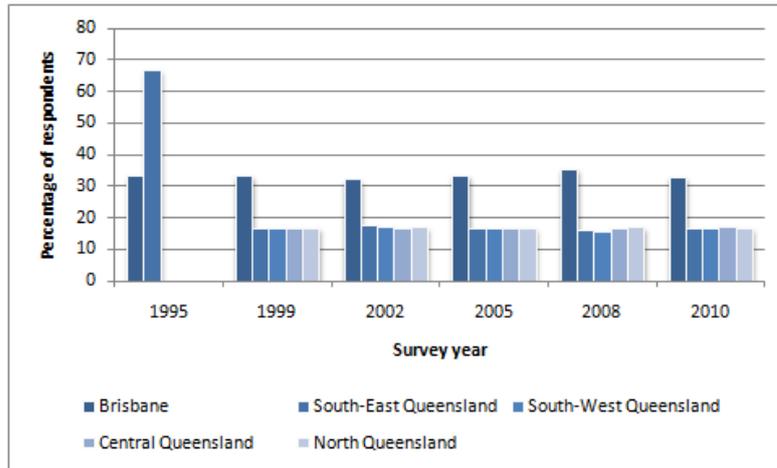


Table A3.4. Breakdown of respondents by region (2010)

Brisbane	South-East Queensland	South-West Queensland	Central Queensland	North Queensland
33%	17%	17%	17%	17%

<sup>17</sup> For comparisons, the 1995 data have been coded to approximate the Australian Bureau of Statistics statistical regions used in subsequent survey rounds.

## Appendix 4: List of statistical terms, symbols and descriptions

Statistical term or symbol	Description
$\chi^2$	Chi-square is a statistical technique used to test the independence of two categorical variables. It compares the frequency of responses found in the various categories of one variable across the different categories of another variable (e.g. the proportion of respondents with a satisfactory experience in 2010 compared with 2008).
$n$	Number of participants in a sub-sample
Nominal regression	Nominal logistic regression is the extension of the statistical technique <i>logistic regression</i> , where the categorical outcome variable has more than two levels. This means that while it is still used to predict the probability of an occurrence (like logistic regression), it allows for multiple outcomes (e.g. instead of predicting only dissatisfied or satisfied in logistic regression, there may be several groups — namely: strongly agree or agree; neither agree nor disagree; and strongly disagree or disagree).
$p$	$p$ is the <i>probability</i> of obtaining the given result when the null hypothesis is true and any difference between groups or relationship between variables is due to chance alone. $p$ values of less than .05 are described as statistically significant because there is a less than 5 per cent likelihood that the result occurred by chance.
$R^2$	<i>R squared</i> is a descriptive measure between zero and one, indicating how good a variable is (or a set of variables are) at predicting another variable.
$SEE$	The standard error of the estimate ( <i>SEE</i> ) is the difference between the actual values of the outcome variable and the values that are predicted by the regression model.
$F$	The <i>F</i> -ratio is used to test the overall differences between three or more group means.
$b$	$b$ indicates the strength of a relationship between an outcome variable and a predictor variable; for example, the relationship that gender (predictor variable) has on respondents' satisfactory experience with public service employees (outcome variable).

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**Legislation cited in this report:**

*Crime and Misconduct Act 2001* (Qld)