

‘Direct threat’: AG slams watchdog budget cuts

David Killick

Budget cuts have affected the ability of key oversight agencies to do their work fighting corruption and waste, estimates committees hearings have heard.

The Liberals made a written promise to former Huon MLC Dean Harriss to fund six performance audits by the Auditor-General’s office to secure his vote in favour of the Macquarie Point Stadium.

But Auditor-General Martin Thompson told MPs he had only been given enough funding to carry out three and the head of the Integrity Commission said her office had also not received the money she had sought to deal with increased responsibilities.

“The budget, as published, has reduced the funding for the performance audit and other parliamentary reporting products from \$2.7m last year to \$2.4m in the current year,” Mr Thompson told budget estimates committee hearings.

“It’s a reduction of just under \$300,000 to meet the commitment that the Treasurer and Premier made to restore funding – It should have increased by \$400,000 to \$3.1m

“My office submitted a budget bid of \$3.1m in time to be included in the budget



Auditor General Martin Thompson. Picture: Linda Higginson

process in line with all required timelines. However, decisions were made outside of my office not to include the required funding, and that was done without reference back to my office. That is a direct threat to the independence of the Auditor General.”

Treasurer Eric Abetz told Tuesday the Auditor-General was “appropriately funded” and declined to answer questions about whether the cuts were by way of retribution.

“The Office of the Auditor General has seen an almost 30 per cent increase in full-time equivalent [staff] in his office since March of last year and so there has been a considerable uplift there.

“Not all agencies will get everything that they ask and request.”

He rejected claims by

Greens deputy leader Vica Bayley the Auditor-General’s office was being starved for funds.

Integrity Commission CEO Ellen McKenzie told another Committee that her office had also sought additional funding to deal with an increasing workload.

“We sought an amount of \$1.358 million in 2026/27; \$1.382 million in 2027/28; \$1.413m – I’m talking about additional funds – in 2028/29 and \$1.453m additional in 2029/30,” she said on Monday.

Independent member for Nelson Meg Webb said it was clear from the budget that bid had been unsuccessful.

“So you’ve got about a third of what you asked for, essentially across this budget each of the forward years, by the sound of it. That’s unfortunate.”