



ICAC recommends overhaul of SA's Public Trustee office to prevent further cases of corruption

By political reporter Nick Harmsen

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South Australia's Independent Commissioner Against Corruption has recommended an overhaul of the state's Public Trustee office to prevent further cases of corruption.

Commissioner Bruce Lander launched an evaluation of the office in March after the arrest of a Public Trustee employee on seven counts of abuse of public office.

Alana Marie Bartels pleaded guilty to stealing cash, cars and jewellery from deceased estates.

The Trustee manages about \$922 million in funds on behalf of its customers, which include beneficiaries of estates and trustees, charitable and religious organisations.

In his evaluation, commissioner Lander said his office had received more than 30 complaints and reports about Public Trustee staff since 2013.

ICAC makes 19 recommendations

He made 19 recommendations, including greater division of caseloads between staff to minimise the risk of inappropriate behaviour, and random checks of high-risk areas.

Mr Lander found there was little cooperation between staff members within the office, and urged the Public Trustee to take active steps to "foster a culture of recognition and reward rather than the existing culture of scrutiny and blame".

The ICAC recommended a major overhaul of the Public Trustee's electronic systems for core business to reduce duplication and better manage its workload.

"The recommendations that relate to the modernisation of electronic systems depend upon Public Trustee being appropriately resourced by government to enable those recommendations to be implemented," commissioner Lander said.

"The cost will not be insignificant. It is imperative that Public Trustee has procedures and processes that are consistent with the 21st century electronic age," he said.



PHOTO: Commissioner Bruce Lander has recommended a major overhaul of the Public Trustee office's electronic systems. (ABC News: Nick Harmsen)

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