



MEDIA RELEASE

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Improving services for all Queenslanders

The Office of the Queensland Ombudsman has significantly reduced the time to investigate complaints despite a small increase in complaints, according to the 2013-14 annual report.

Queensland Ombudsman Phil Clarke said the Office saw a 26 per cent improvement in the time taken to investigate complaints.

"Investigations took an average of 55.6 days to finalise compared to 75.3 days in 2012-13," Mr Clarke said.

"The Office also finalised 6,293 complaints, a three per cent increase on last year."

"The majority (93 per cent) were finalised within 30 days."

Most complaints received were about state government agencies, including departments and statutory authorities (4,169 or 66 per cent), 28 per cent were about local councils (1,778), and five per cent related to public universities (339).

Complaints were made about prisons, housing, schools, enforcement of laws by local councils, rates and valuations, and student exclusions from university.

Mr Clarke said the Office ensured Queenslanders received a fair go when dealing with the public sector.

"Decisions made by public agencies can have a profound impact on people's lives," he said.

"The Office encourages people to try and resolve their concerns with the agency before contacting the Ombudsman.

"The Office also works with agencies to improve their complaint management processes. However, when a person is not satisfied with the agency's response, or feels that more should have been done, the Office will consider an independent review."

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Note: The annual report is available at www.ombudsman.qld.gov.au. The following page includes case studies and statistics.

CASE STUDIES

The report features a selection of case studies highlighting the positive impact of the Office's complaint resolution and investigation processes.

- Special circumstances: helped secure backdated long service leave for an employee as his employer was unaware they needed to register him in the state-run scheme (p. 34).
- Wrong information: helped a business-owner save \$393,000 after the local council charged a higher land rate, which was based on wrong information (p. 35).
- Review gets results: insisted the local council conduct an internal review after a couple were liable for land tax following a compulsory property acquisition by the local council. The local council agreed to compensate the couple \$28,000 (p.37).
- Debt delays: helped a university student save \$1,310 after a university charged the wrong fees and only notified the student of the mistake after the date he could have withdrawn from the course without penalty (p.38).

FACTS & FIGURES

Dealing with complaints

- received 11,995 contacts
- finalised 6,293 complaints
- finalised 71 per cent of complaints within 10 working days; 93 per cent within 30 days

Rectifying unfair decisions

- conducted 932 investigations
- made 146 recommendations to agencies
- released three major reports:
 - *The Liquor Report*
 - *The Ownership Transfer Fee*
 - *The Water Licences Report*

Improving decision-making

- delivered 137 training sessions to more than 2,202 state and local government officers on complaints management, good decision-making, public sector ethical standards and investigating complaints
- conducted reviews of 15 state government complaint management systems
- received 63 requests for administrative improvement advice