



QUEENSLAND
OMBUDSMAN

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Media release - Ombudsman releases Annual Report 2018-19

30 September 2019

Timely, effective and independent way to have actions reviewed

The Office of the Queensland Ombudsman continues to contribute strongly to fair and accountable public administration in Queensland.

“Our investigations have helped to ensure fairness and accountability for citizens in their dealings with public agencies; our advice and recommendations have contributed to improvements in public administration; and our training programs have helped to ensure public officers have the skills to make good decisions.” Queensland Ombudsman, Mr Phil Clarke said.

The Office deals with complaints about the actions and decisions of state government departments and agencies (including state schools and TAFE colleges), local councils and public universities.

The recently released annual report for 2018-19 highlights its role in assessing and investigating complaints.

In 2018-19, the Office had 11,676 contacts from Queenslanders seeking advice, or assistance about a complaint (a 6% increase from 2017-18). Timeliness remains a priority, with an average time of 3.3 days to complete a preliminary assessment, definitely exceeding the target of 10 days.

The Office finalised 7,831 complaints and completed 1,255 investigations. Of these, 192 investigations resulted in the rectification of an issue, which is where the Ombudsman recommends an agency change a decision or action as a result of a complaint.

As a result of an investigation, the Ombudsman may make recommendations to agencies to improve administrative practice. Of the 250 investigation recommendations made to agencies in 2018-19, 100% were accepted.

“Case studies in the report give real world examples of how the Office manages complaints”, Queensland Ombudsman, Mr Clarke said. Topics covered include corrective services, youth detention, public university students, local councils and state agency complaints.

The Office’s training programs in complaints handling, good decision-making and Public Interest Disclosure (PID) management continue to be in high demand. This year more than 4,500 public sector officers across the state took part in Ombudsman training sessions – a record level of participation. Of these, 94% of participants reported that Office training improved their decision-making.

“Engagement with advocacy and community groups is another pivotal part of the Office’s work. Communicating better ‘complaint know-how’, helps people to make a clear and appropriate complaint to the right place at the right time.” Mr Clarke said.

The Ombudsman also has oversight of the *Public Interest Disclosure Act 2010*, which is an important part of the integrity framework within the Queensland public sector. In March 2019, the Ombudsman approved three new standards to guide the actions public entities must take when preparing for and responding to a PID. These are based on research and extensive collaboration with agencies to learn from past experience.

In the wake of the Crime and Corruption Commission’s report on its investigation into allegations of corrupt conduct in Ipswich City Council (ICC), the Office was contacted by ICC about training for senior

executives, managers and supervisors. The Office's PID and Education and Engagement teams developed a program to match the council's requirements, focussed on the importance of building an organisational culture that values the reporting of wrongdoing and supports and protects employees who do report. Trainers provided guidance on the key features of good decision-making. Participant's feedback reported the training was highly relevant.

"In 2019-20, this Office will continue to provide advice and investigation services for all Queenslanders to ensure fairness and accountability for citizens in their dealings with public agencies." Mr Clarke said.

View the full report, [Queensland Ombudsman Annual Report 2018-19 \(PDF 12.8MB\)](#)

Key facts

In 2018-19:

- 11,676 people contacted the Office for assistance about a complaint
- 4,540 public sector officers across the state took part in Ombudsman training sessions – a record level of participation
- the Office finalised 7,831 complaints
- the Office closed 1,255 investigations
- preliminary assessment of a complaint was completed in an average time of 3.3 days
- 100% of investigative recommendations made to agencies were accepted
- the Office delivered 247 training sessions, of these 96 were delivered regionally
- the Office participated in 54 community engagement activities.

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