

Media release - Ombudsman releases 2016-17 Annual Report

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Empowering Queenslanders to make their complaint heard - Queensland Ombudsman 2016-17 Annual Report

The Office of the Queensland Ombudsman continues to play a pivotal role in public agencies making fair and accountable decisions – a key element of open and transparent public administration.

Everyone has the right to speak-up about public sector decisions they think are wrong or unfair, but finding the right complaint pathway can be challenging.

The Office's recently released annual report shows continuous improvements undertaken to assist Queenslanders with their complaints.

A new website was launched in December 2016 which is responsive across multiple personal devices and supports self-service via an improved online complaint form and online booking system for training. These features improve the public's access to information about the role and processes of the Ombudsman and better inform

people about what they can expect when raising a complaint.

Phil Clarke, Queensland Ombudsman, reported that, “We saw an increase of 22% in users visiting the site since the launch”.

“Navigating the full complaint system can be a complex process and our advice and referral service is another way we add value and get better results for all Queenslanders,” Mr Clarke said.

The Queensland Ombudsman 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.

In 2016-17, the Office finalised 6,958 complaints and conducted 1,407 investigations, a 26% increase on the previous year. In 232 instances, the investigation resulted in the total or partial rectification of the administrative action.

The Ombudsman continued to bring systemic issues to the attention of the Queensland Parliament by releasing 5 major reports relating to state government departments and local councils.

“In 2017-18, 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.

Key Facts and Figures

Dealing with complaints in 2016-17

- 10,954 people contacted the Office for assistance in 2016-17 (11,294 in 2015-16)
- out of jurisdiction matters fell by 7%, driven by continuous improvements in the information and systems available, making it easier for people to find the right complaint pathway
- we finalised 6,958 complaints in 2016-17 (6,919 in 2015-16)

- 22% increase in users visiting the new website after its launch in December 2016

Improving decision-making in 2016-17

- 1,407 investigations finalised, an increase of 26% over the previous year (1,118 in 2015-16), and timeliness was improved
- 100% of recommendations accepted
- 1,591 public sector officers trained
- 42 regional training sessions undertaken
- The Office published five major reports completed in 2016-17.
 - *The Patient Travel Subsidy Scheme report*: An investigation into the administration of the Patient Travel Subsidy Scheme by Queensland Health
 - *The Redland City Council defamation report*: An investigation into the unreasonable threat of legal action against residents by Redland City Council
 - *The Toowoomba Regional Council Auction Notices Report*: An investigation of action taken by Toowoomba Regional Council to name a homeowner on an auction notice when selling their property for overdue rates
 - *Overcrowding at Brisbane Women's Correctional Centre* : An investigation into the action taken by Queensland Corrective Services in response to overcrowding at Brisbane Women's Correctional Centre
 - *Management of child safety complaints*: An investigation into the current child safety complaints management processes within the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services.

About

The Queensland Ombudsman is an independent complaints investigation agency. We make sure that Queensland public agencies (State government departments and bodies, and local councils) act fairly and make the right decisions for the community.

We also help public agencies improve their decision-making and administrative practice.

Contact Details

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