



**OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN AND HEALTH
COMPLAINTS COMMISSIONER**

SERVICE STANDARDS

OUR SERVICE STANDARDS

Our role

The role of the Office of the Ombudsman and Health Complaints Commissioner is to perform the functions given to the Ombudsman and Health Complaints Commissioner by or under Acts of the Tasmanian Parliament.

The functions of the Ombudsman are principally found in the –

Ombudsman Act 1978
Energy Ombudsman Act 1998
Right to Information Act 2009
Public Interest Disclosures Act 2004
Personal Information Protection Act 2004
Telecommunications (Interception) Tasmania Act 1999.

The Ombudsman's functions also include administering the Official Visitor schemes under the *Corrections Act 1997* and the *Mental Health Act 1996*.

The functions of the Health Complaints Commissioner are found in the *Health Complaints Act 1995*.

Our purpose

In general terms, our purpose is to serve the Tasmanian community through –

- the independent and impartial resolution of complaints relating to public administration, health care and energy services in Tasmania
- the pursuit of system improvement in public administration, health care and energy services in Tasmania
- the independent and impartial review of decisions to refuse access to information under the *Right to Information Act 2009*, and
- the provision of Official Visitor services to prisons and public mental health facilities.

Our goals

We aim –

- to be recognised as an accessible, effective, efficient, independent and impartial office for the investigation and resolution of complaints

- to be recognised as an agent for positive change in public administration, and in the delivery of health and energy services
- to demonstrate best practice in complaint management and conciliation, and in the conduct of investigations
- to assist agencies to effectively address complaints through internal processes
- to communicate with all parties as clearly as we can
- to increase awareness of our services
- to create a supportive and professional work environment where staff respect each other, are diligent, and work cooperatively and responsively.

The service you can expect from us

In all cases we will –

- give careful attention to your matter
- seek to resolve the matter as soon as practicable, recognising that the time required will vary with the complexity of the matter and other factors
- advise you if time is required for more complex matters
- aim to act promptly in our contacts with you, for instance when we –
 - first receive your complaint or enquiry,
 - receive a message to ring you, or
 - receive correspondence from you which requires a reply
- provide you with the name of a contact person in our office, on all correspondence
- keep you informed at regular intervals of the status of your matter
- clearly explain our processes to you
- act fairly, independently, objectively and in the public interest
- communicate with you clearly and courteously

- respect your privacy, and collect, store, use and disclose your personal information only in accordance with law
- clearly explain to you the reasons for any decisions we take, and
- seek to identify and promote beneficial changes to systems and practices

If we decide that we cannot assist in your case, we will –

- explain why, and
- try to refer you to someone who can

How you can help us

To help us meet our standards of service, we ask you to –

- treat our staff with courtesy and respect
- provide us at the outset with full and accurate, but only necessary, information
- promptly respond to any requests for further information
- let us know changes to your contact details
- let us know any new information relevant to your complaint
- inform us of any special needs you may have

Things to keep in mind

We ask you to keep in mind that -

- we act impartially and in the public interest, and do not advocate for any party or take sides
- we can only do those things which fall within our statutory powers and functions
- we cannot award compensation, except in some circumstances under the *Energy Ombudsman Act*
- we do not provide legal advice
- our resources are limited.

Unhappy with our decision?

If you are unhappy with a decision made by our Office, you can ask for the decision to be reviewed.

Any review is carried out by another officer of equal or greater seniority than the officer who made the original decision.

The review will be completed as soon as practicable, and the review officer will write to you to inform you of the outcome.

There is no potential for internal review where the decision has been made by the Ombudsman or Health Complaints Commissioner personally.

Unhappy about our level of service?

If you are unhappy with the level of service provided by a member of our staff, you may raise the issue directly with that person.

If you are not comfortable with doing this, or are still unsatisfied after speaking with the staff member, you may raise the matter with their supervisor.

Oversight by the Parliament

The performance of the Ombudsman (but not of the Health Complaints Commissioner) is monitored and reviewed by the Joint Standing Committee on Integrity, established under the *Integrity Commission Act 2009*.

If you wish to complain to the Committee about the performance of the Ombudsman, you can write to –

Chairman
Joint Standing Committee on Integrity
Parliament House
Salamanca Place
HOBART 7000

The Committee will not review decisions on individual complaints.

If you wish to complain about the performance of the Health Complaints Commissioner, you can write to the Attorney-General, who is the Minister with responsibility for the administration of the *Health Complaints Act 1995*.

The address of the Attorney-General is –

Attorney-General
State Offices
15 Murray Street
HOBART
TAS 7000

Working towards continuous improvement

As we find out daily in handling complaints for others, complaints are an opportunity to improve. Compliments also encourage people to maintain and hopefully improve the standard of the work that they do. We therefore welcome your compliments, complaints and suggestions about the service we have provided.

To tell us what you think about our service, you can telephone, fax, email or write to us.

How to contact our office

Telephone us on

1800 001 170 (free call)
1300 766 725 (cost of a local call anywhere in Australia)

Send by fax to (03) 6233 8966

Write and post to

GPO Box 960, Hobart
Tasmania 7001

Access our websites and online complaint forms at

www.ombudsman.tas.gov.au
www.healthcomplaints.tas.gov.au
www.energyombudsman.tas.gov.au
www.officialvisitors.tas.gov.au

Visit our office at

99 Bathurst Street, Hobart

Non-English speakers can talk to our Office using the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) on 131 450.

Simon Allston
OMBUDSMAN

26 July 2011