Ombudsman Tasmania

Annual Report 2025–26



Ombudsman Tasmania

The Honourable President
of the Legislative Council

The Speaker of the House of Assembly

Pursuant to s30 of the *Ombudsman Act 1978*, I present to the Parliament the Annual Report of the Ombudsman for 2025–26.

Yours sincerely



Dr Grant Davies

OMBUDSMAN
4 November 2026

Contents

Acknowledgement of Country	1
From the Ombudsman	2
Our people and workplace	5
Our role	9
Topical issues	12
Ombudsman Act 1978	15
Personal information protection (PIP) matters and public interest disclosures (PID)	30
Inspections under police legislation	35
Right to Information Act 2009	39
Energy Ombudsman Act 1998	53
Official Visitor programs	61
Financial Statements	64
Independent Auditor's Report	92



Acknowledgement of Country

In recognition of the deep history and culture of this Island, we would like to pay our respects to all Tasmanian Aboriginal people, the past and present Custodians of the Land.

Section 1

From the Ombudsman



We want fewer barriers between people and our services, better experiences for those who engage with us and stronger public confidence that government and service providers are being held appropriately to account.

The 2025–26 year has been one of significant activity and change for our office. It has also given us an opportunity to look closely at how we work, where we need to improve and what we need to do to serve the Tasmanian community better.

Our Purpose remains unchanged: to promote fair treatment and human rights in Tasmania through complaints, investigation and review of systems. This year, we translated that Purpose into a new Strategic Plan for 2026–2029, underpinned by a simple commitment: we believe in a fairer Tasmania.

Fairness is fundamental to independent oversight. It shapes how we respond to people who seek our assistance, how we scrutinise government and service providers and how we exercise the statutory responsibilities entrusted to us. But effective oversight is not only about responding to individual complaints. It also requires us to be accessible, to identify systemic issues and to help strengthen public confidence in the institutions we oversee.

The new Strategic Plan sets out how we intend to do that. It has three pillars – Community and Stakeholder Engagement; Leadership, People and Culture; and Governance and Innovation. These pillars reflect both our responsibilities to the Tasmanian community and our commitment to improving how we work.

This year we also strengthened the office itself. The appointment of a Deputy Ombudsman increased our leadership capacity and our ability to focus on strategic improvement across our functions. The establishment of our Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Focus Group created a new avenue for staff to contribute to an inclusive workplace and to the way we think about the accessibility of our services.

We are also clear about where further work is needed. Reducing backlogs, improving and standardising policies and procedures, streamlining systems and managing workloads remain important priorities. Technology offers opportunities to work more efficiently and consistently, but its use must support, rather than compromise, the quality, fairness and human judgement at the heart of our work.



By 2029, we want more Tasmanians to know who we are, what we do and when we can help. We want fewer barriers between people and our services, better experiences for those who engage with us and stronger public confidence in effective accountability of government and service providers.

The Strategic Plan gives us a practical framework for achieving our goals and, importantly, a way of measuring whether we are succeeding. As an oversight body, we ask others to examine their performance, learn and improve. We expect the same of ourselves.

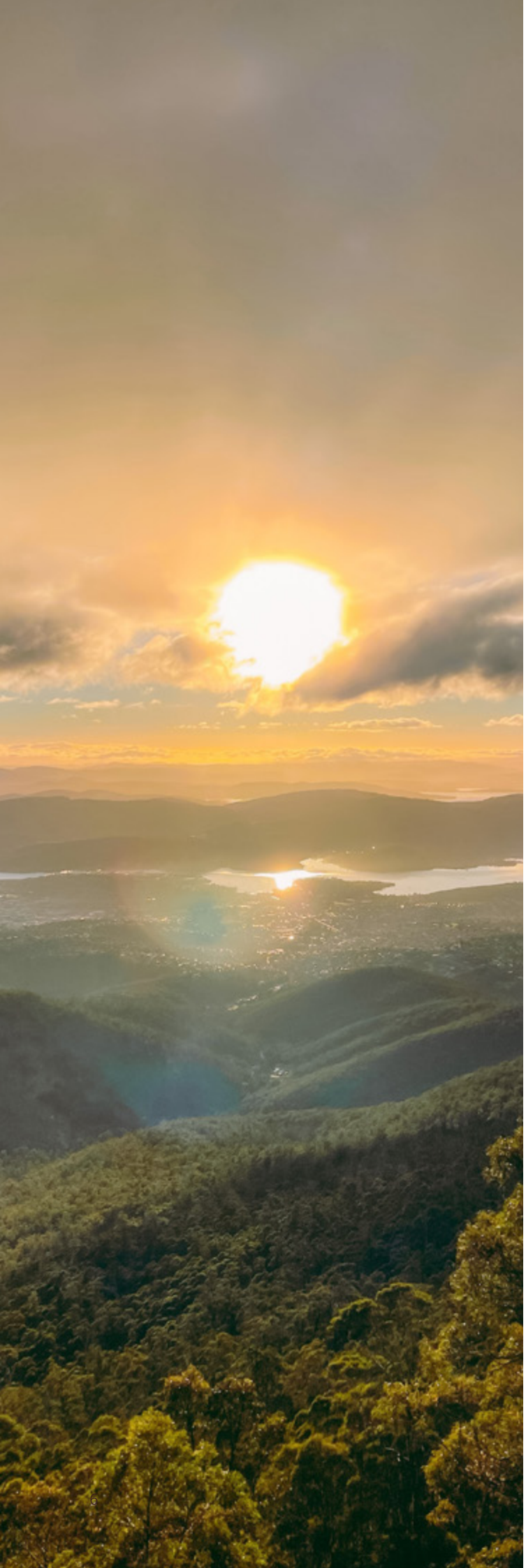
I thank our staff for the professionalism, care and commitment they have brought to their work throughout 2025–26. I also thank the agencies, service providers and community stakeholders who have engaged constructively with our office. I look forward to building on this year's work as we continue to promote fairness, accountability and public confidence across Tasmania.

Dr Grant Davies
Ombudsman

Section 2

Our people and workplace





Our people

The office has a number of discrete teams including Ombudsman, Energy Ombudsman, Right to Information (RTI), Official Visitors, Custodial Inspector, Tasmanian National Preventive Mechanism, Health Complaints and Corporate Services. We work under a range of laws and across diverse subject matters.

We have 37 people who work in the office, amounting to 34.42 full-time equivalent, and only two vacant positions at 30 June 2026. Many of our staff have legal backgrounds, but we have a wide range of other backgrounds including policing, public health, criminology, science and sociology. Our managers are Band 8 under the State Service Award; Senior Investigation/Review/Inspection Officers are Band 6; Investigation/Review Officers are Band 5; Intake Officers are Band 4; and administrative staff vary from Band 3 to Band 7.

The office

We are based in the centre of Hobart in a multistorey office building over two floors. We have a flexible workplace that allows some working from home when organisationally appropriate and requested by staff members and we use a flex-time model. Many of our staff work part-time and we try to accommodate the needs of our people as best we can. We are also an inclusive workplace and keep up to date with training on LGBTIQA+ issues, child-safe practices, trauma-informed approaches and other important issues. Although we have several separate teams and we often deal with challenging subject matter, the office is a friendly and collegial place to work with interaction between different team members.

The office at a glance 2025–26*

37
Staff**

7
Jurisdictions

Whole of office

65%
Female

35%
Male

Executive

50%
Female

50%
Male

2
Executive
Ombudsman and Deputy

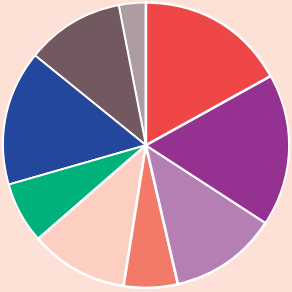
4.5
Oversight
Officers

4.2
Corporate
administration team

6.4
Management
team

17.3
Complaints
Intake and Investigation Officers

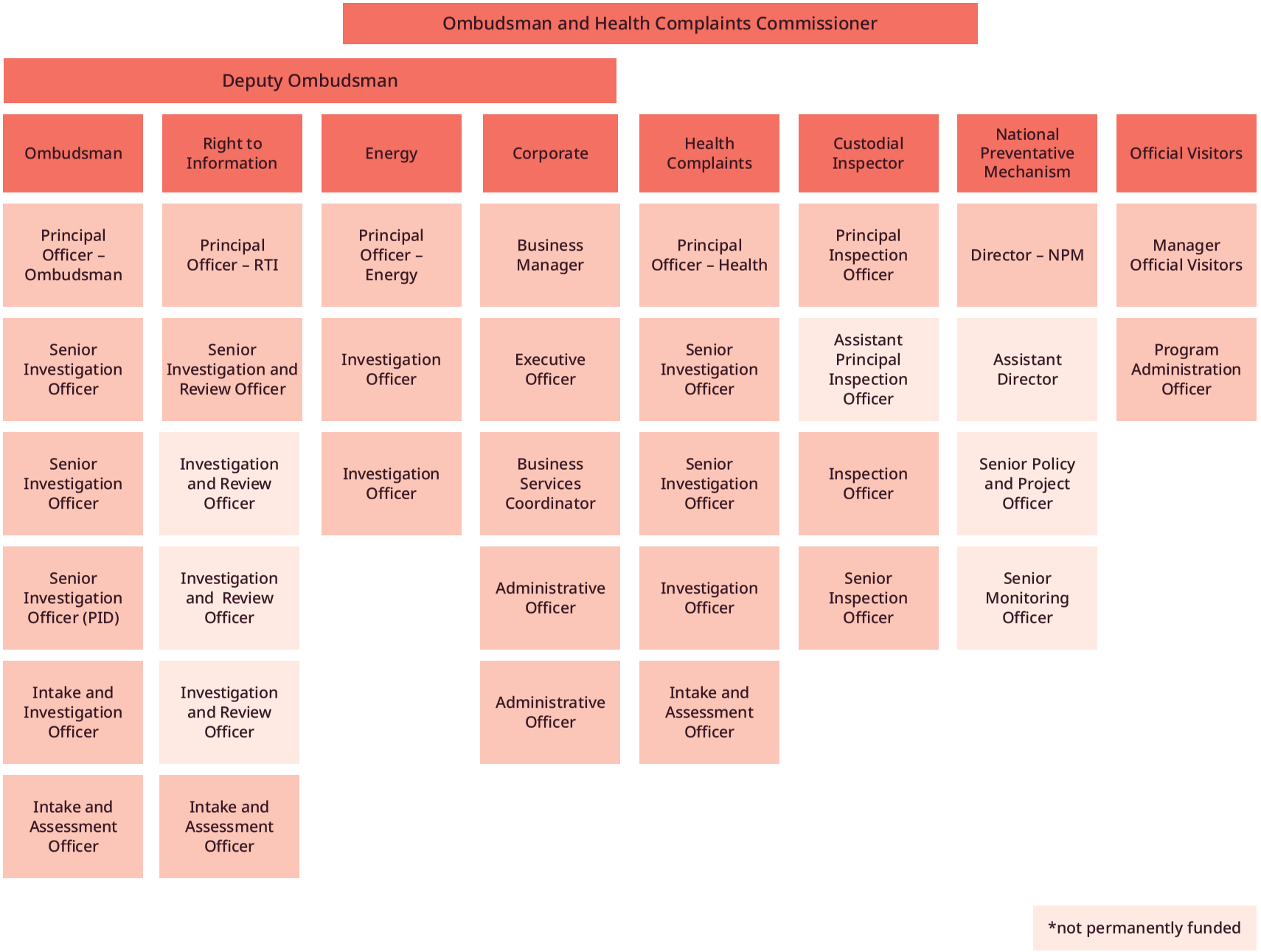
Proportion of staff by jurisdiction



- Ombudsman **17%**
- Right to Information **17%**
- Corporate Administration **12%**
- Executive **6%**
- Custodial Inspector **11%**
- Energy Ombudsman **7%**
- Health Complaints Commissioner **15%**
- National Preventative Mechanism **11%**
- Official Visitors **3%**

*As at 30 June 2026
**34.42 Full-time equivalent (FTE)

Organisation chart



*not permanently funded

Section 3

Our role



The Ombudsman is an independent officer appointed by the Governor of Tasmania under the *Ombudsman Act 1978* (the Act) and is answerable to the Parliament.

The main role of the Ombudsman and my staff is to investigate the administrative actions of Tasmania's public authorities to ensure those actions are lawful, reasonable and fair. We work in an independent, impartial and objective way to resolve complaints. We also try to address wider problems in order to improve the quality and standard of Tasmanian public administration.

The Ombudsman services are free. The Ombudsman also has roles under other Tasmanian laws.

Ombudsman jurisdiction

The Ombudsman can accept a complaint from any person who is personally aggrieved by the administrative actions of a Tasmanian public authority and who has tried unsuccessfully to resolve their complaint directly with the authority.

We resolve most matters through inquiries and cooperation. The Ombudsman makes inquiries (under s20A of the Act); public authorities provide information and then work with us to address complaints and improve their administrative process.

Depending on the circumstances, we may also choose to conduct an investigation.

We can investigate issues when we receive a complaint. We can also investigate issues on our own initiative (these are called 'own motion' investigations).

At the end of an investigation, the Ombudsman will prepare a report and provide it to the relevant authority. The report may include recommendations to address and rectify the actions or issues identified. Although I have no power to make a public authority adopt my recommendations, authorities usually accept and implement recommendations. This reflects the cooperative approach we have taken.

Right to Information reviews

If an eligible person is dissatisfied with a public authority's decision on a right to information (RTI) request, the Ombudsman can review that decision under the *Right to Information Act 2009.* If, at the end of a review, I consider the authority's decision was incorrect, I can make a fresh decision.

Public interest disclosures

The Ombudsman has a significant role under the *Public Interest Disclosures Act 2002* to receive and investigate public interest (or 'whistleblower') disclosures. I have the power to oversee how public authorities deal with such disclosures.

Personal information protection

My office can also receive complaints about possible breaches of the *Personal Information Protection Act 2004.* The person must complain first to the holder of the personal information and not be satisfied with their response before coming to the Ombudsman.

Health Complaints Commissioner

The Ombudsman is also the Health Complaints Commissioner under the *Health Complaints Act 1995* and receives complaints about the provision of any health service by a public or private health service provider.

A significant milestone during the year was the commencement of the Code of Conduct for Unregistered Health Care Workers (the Code) in Tasmania on 24 June 2026. The Code establishes minimum standards of conduct, behaviour and practice for people who provide or claim to provide a health service and who are not registered by the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency.

More details about my role as Health Complaints Commissioner can be found in the separate Heath Complaints Commissioner Annual Report 2025–26.

Energy Ombudsman

Any electricity or natural gas customer may make a complaint about a service provided by their energy retailer or distributor. The Ombudsman has the power under the *Energy Ombudsman Act 1998* to resolve complaints.

Custodial Inspector

The Custodial Inspector provides independent observation of Tasmania's prisons by conducting onsite inspections and publishing reports with findings and recommendations. We focus on the treatment and welfare of people in custody and on the systems for managing and operating the prisons and youth detention centre.

Water and sewerage

Any customer of a water and sewerage corporation who is not satisfied with the outcome of a complaint they have made to that corporation may make a complaint to the Ombudsman under the *Water and Sewerage Industry Act 2009*. The corporation is bound under its licence by the Ombudsman's recommendations.

Police compliance audits

The Ombudsman is responsible for ensuring Tasmania Police comply with the procedures described in the *Telecommunications (Interception) Tasmania Act 1999,* the *Police Powers (Controlled Operations) Act 2006* and the *Police Powers (Surveillance Devices) Act 2006.* I also have to submit reports as detailed in the *Misuse of Drugs Act 2001*.

Other statutory functions

The Ombudsman can review certain decisions of the Commissioner of Police under the *Witness Protection Act 2000* and decisions about the release of information under the *Adoption Act 1988.*

OPCAT and the Tasmanian National Preventive Mechanism (NPM)

I was appointed as Tasmania's NPM in July 2025 following my predecessor's retirement. OPCAT stands for the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture, a human rights treaty aimed at protecting prisoners from torture.

The NPM complements rather than replaces the Ombudsman, Health Complaints Commissioner and the Custodial Inspector. It is one of OPCAT's strict requirements that NPMs must be operationally and financially independent.

This year, we began recruiting staff, planning, developing corporate governance and visiting places where freedom is restricted. I report on these activities separately in my Tasmanian NPM Annual Report.

Referral service

We are frequently approached about matters outside the Ombudsman's jurisdiction. In most cases, we are able to advise a complainant of the best place to have their complaint dealt with. We regularly refer people to the Integrity Commission, the Commonwealth Ombudsman, the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman, the Australian Financial Complaints Authority, the Office of the Anti-Discrimination Commissioner and the Office of Consumer, Building and Occupational Services (now Consumer Affairs Tasmania and Building Standards Tasmania).

ANZOA

I am a member of the Australian and New Zealand Ombudsman Association (ANZOA). Established in 2003, ANZOA is a professional association and the peak body for Ombudsmen in Australia and New Zealand. ANZOA's members are individual Ombudsmen working in not-for-profit, industry-based, parliamentary and other statutory offices. The Ombudsmen meet accepted high standards of independence, impartiality and effectiveness and observe the Benchmarks for Industry Based Customer Dispute Resolution (CDR Benchmarks).

Section 4

Topical issues



Increasing delays to victim-survivors accessing their own personal information

In the past three annual reports, my predecessor and I have noted concerns about increasing delays for victim-survivors and others accessing their own personal information at the Department for Education, Children and Young People (DECYP). The situation has continued to worsen, with applications for personal information under the *Personal Information Protection Act 2004* and the *Right to Information Act 2009* now regularly taking up to two years to receive responses.

My staff and I have formally raised concerns with DECYP, meeting on multiple occasions and seeking written responses during the year. DECYP has acknowledged the seriousness of the issue and the impact on victim-survivors (who are often seeking information for redress claims relating to alleged abuse while under the care of DECYP). However, the steps it has taken to address the backlog have been implemented slowly and the situation has worsened during the year. I did not launch an investigation, due to the steps being implemented by DECYP to recruit more staff and improve processes. However, I have been disappointed with the seeming lack of urgency and lack of resources allocated to this issue. Close monitoring by my office of the situation continues and I am optimistic that improvement will occur in 2026–27.

Rise of AI

The increasing use of artificial intelligence (AI) presents an emerging issue across all areas of my office and society more broadly. The rapid pace of technological change, combined with the absence of established rules and practices for incorporating AI into government administration, is a challenge across the public sector. Concerns have been raised about the use of AI by public authorities; on the other hand, some stakeholders have suggested that a lack of AI adoption may contribute to delays and inefficiencies in government processes.

The use of AI by people engaging with our office has noticeably increased. AI is making our work harder. We are receiving far more correspondence and AI is making some complainants' persistent and unreasonable behaviour worse. AI-generated complaints can also contain errors and made-up information. There are positives, however, with some complainants using AI to make their communications clearer and achieving better success in describing their concerns. We also see AI as an important accessibility tool.

To help maximise these positives, while reducing potential negative impacts, we have developed a guide on using AI when making a complaint under the *Ombudsman Act 1978*. We will continue to monitor developments in AI, assess the impact and consider whether any further guidance or other measures are required.

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The rapid pace of technological change, combined with the absence of established rules and practices for incorporating AI into government administration, is a challenge across the public sector.

Knock to Stay Connected

The office considered issues arising from the Knock to Stay Connected (KTSC) program during the year. KTSC is a voluntary initiative of the Energy Charter that provides information about payment assistance and hardship support to electricity customers at risk of being disconnected. In Tasmania, Aurora Energy and TasNetworks deliver the KTSC program together; TasNetworks visits customers' premises before a planned disconnection to provide the information. KTSC has reportedly helped many customers avoid disconnection.

When assisting a financially vulnerable customer, the Ombudsman identified that a TasNetworks fee for a KTSC site visit had been added to the customer's Aurora Energy account. The customer was not aware that taking part in the program might result in an extra charge on their bill. This raised our concerns about customers incurring extra debt because of a program intended to provide support.

Following our enquiries, Aurora Energy advised us it would absorb KTSC fees when a customer enters its hardship support program after a KTSC visit. TasNetworks also advised us that when a customer is subsequently disconnected, it absorbs the KTSC site visit fee and instead applies the standard disconnection charge. While these arrangements reduce the impact on some vulnerable customers, they do not address all circumstances in which KTSC-related fees may be passed on to customers. I will continue to monitor this issue and any complaints relating to the program.

Public interest disclosure – development of new guidelines and training

Ombudsman Tasmania data demonstrate an increase in enquiries and complaints about public interest (whistleblower) disclosures. The Ombudsman is responsible under the *Public Interest Disclosures Act 2002* (the PID Act) to provide advice to public bodies about the PID Act.

The Ombudsman must publish guidelines and standards to help people interpret and apply the PID Act. We recognise the importance of our educational role and we have begun a significant update of the guidelines and standards. We have consulted with public authorities on the guidelines to identify where we can improve the information available to all public authorities when receiving disclosures.

We are extremely impressed with the level of engagement in response to our consultation. Work has now begun to ensure the feedback received is incorporated into new improved information that will be published on the Ombudsman's website. The timing of this project is opportune as it will assist with the review of large public bodies' procedures under Part 7 Division 1 of the PID Act, which is due to start in 2027.

Section 5

Ombudsman Act 1978

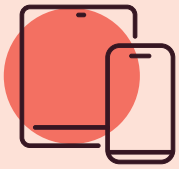


Year at a glance

Total complaints
*includes PID & PIP



711
complaints
received



756
complaints
closed

Total enquiries
*includes PID & PIP



1628
enquiries
received

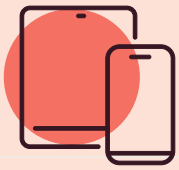


1451
enquiries
closed

Complaints
Ombudsman Act



667
complaints
received



715
complaints
closed

Enquiries
Ombudsman Act



1581
enquiries
received



1412
enquiries
closed

Time taken to close complaints



36%
complaints
closed in
1 week or under
(269)

19%
complaints
closed in
8–30 days
(145)

32%
complaints
closed in
1–6 months
(245)

13%
complaints
closed in more
than 6 months
(97)

Overview

Overall, the number of complaints we received and closed was similar to last year. The number of enquiries we received increased by 22%. We believe an important part of our role is assisting people to identify the most appropriate avenue for their concerns. We are proud of the service provided to the public in this area and acknowledge the significant contribution of our frontline staff.

Our office made a change to our case management system at the start of the financial year. This change provided additional clarity on how contacts are identified and classified as either enquiries or complaints. The number of out of jurisdiction complaints decreased significantly during the reporting period. This change is likely attributable to improvements in the initial assessment process used to triage and assess matters upon receipt.

Responding to and redirecting enquiries is resource-intensive and we are continuing to explore opportunities to improve efficiency. This includes enhancements to our website to make it easier for people to understand our role, determine whether their complaint falls within our jurisdiction and access information about alternative complaint pathways. We have also recruited an Intake and Assessment Officer to support the management of enquiries and complaint intake.

The increasing use of AI-generated complaint material has also presented challenges during the year. While this material can assist complainants to articulate their concerns, submissions are often lengthy and complex, increasing the time required to assess and process matters. This has contributed to longer assessment timeframes. We acknowledge the impact of these delays and have redirected resources and strengthened internal processes to support timely assessment and reduce the backlog as efficiently as possible.

Notable issues identified in 2025–26

Ashley Youth Detention Centre

The Ombudsman plays an important role in receiving and managing complaints from young people detained at Ashley Youth Detention Centre (AYDC). The number of complaints received by our office has reduced over two years, from 27 (in 2023–24) to 15 (in 2025–26) with no new complaints received since mid-April 2026. This is positive news; however, we are conscious young people are still raising significant concerns directly with the Secretary of the Department of Education, Children and Young People (DECYP). We may receive requests to review how those complaints have been managed in the future.

The most serious complaints we received from young people in AYDC over the past year have been about the use of force. Other concerns raised by young people have included:

- complaint forms going missing
- restrictions imposed to limit or prevent access to areas of the AYDC facility and programs
- restraints used when being transported by contract security
- lockdowns.

In response to these concerns, we have made suggestions to DECYP that include:

- improving access to complaint forms and complaint processes to ensure all complaints are managed and responded to appropriately
- improving training in the use of physical restraints especially when transporting young people
- improving communication between DECYP and young people to ensure DECYP responds to complaints promptly.

We reported last year on the delays young people experienced in obtaining responses to their complaints to DECYP. We recognise

the changes DECYP has implemented to its complaints management process and we are working proactively with the Complaints Management Oversight Unit to improve the exchange of information.

University of Tasmania

A National Student Ombudsman (NSO) was established in February 2025. Since then the number of complaints we have received about the University of Tasmania has reduced from 20 (2024–25) to 15 (2025–26). Although we now refer most enquiries relating to general complaints about the University of Tasmania to the NSO, we remain responsible for public interest disclosure notifications and complaints relating to academic judgement.

In September 2025, our office hosted a number of investigators and officers from the NSO when it was visiting Hobart. The Ombudsman team took this opportunity to meet with our NSO peers to discuss and share information about the NSO process and how we can continue to work positively together.

Tasmania Prison Service

The Tasmania Prison Service (TPS) continues to trigger the highest number of complaints and enquiries we receive. As explained in previous annual reports, this in part reflects the availability of free and confidential telephone access to our office for people in prison.

Lockdowns across the TPS remain a concern due to their impact on access to services, work and visits. TPS has advised us that lockdowns are primarily caused by operational staffing issues and therefore fall outside our jurisdiction. We continue to monitor concerns raised.

Other concerns of note raised with our office include placement within the TPS facilities. Although we cannot influence where a person is held, we can make sure they know how to appeal.

Over the past 12 months, our office has handled a diverse range of complaints from people in custody and from members of the community seeking to visit or communicate with family and friends at the TPS. This included complaints about visiting bans and restrictions.

The outcome of one such complaint included identifying restrictions that had been imposed on a person in custody based on the behaviour of the caller. We suggested that the TPS review its policies and procedures to promote consistent decision-making and ensure that both the person in custody and the community member are informed of the reasons and the available review options.

Tasmania Police

The number of complaints and enquiries about Tasmania Police remained stable this reporting year. We mostly receive enquiries and we redirect complainants to Tasmania Police's formal complaint process or other legal avenues.

Complaints received during the year raised concerns about the use of force during arrest, alleged assaults and other alleged misconduct by Tasmania Police officers.

Two occasions of note involved young people and we identified improvements that Tasmania Police can make to its administrative actions.

In one matter, we identified that the language used by Tasmania Police officers towards a young person was unprofessional. Tasmania Police responded by confirming those officers would receive Continued Professional Development.

The other complaint related to a search of a young person in 2021. We identified deviations from the appropriate search procedure applicable at the time. Tasmania Police disagreed with some of our findings and provided operational reasons for the action taken.

We acknowledge the significant progress Tasmania Police has made since 2021 to its approach to the arrest, custody and search of young people. This includes improved policies to protect young people from trauma, distress and harm arising from searches.

Review of these complaints has identified Tasmania Police remains cooperative and responsive to any questions or requests for information this office makes.

Social housing

Social housing continues to be a significant issue. The Ombudsman has commented on the limited availability of social housing in the past five annual reports and, once again, it is important to highlight the number of enquiries received from people on the waiting list for social housing. The significant time individuals are having to wait to be allocated a home and the limited pool of social housing stock remain at the heart of the issue. Our office has no role in allocating properties and can only ensure individuals have received access to fair and equitable administration of process.

Another issue is the charges issued to tenants on vacating a property. Our reviews have identified that the housing provider needs to keep accurate and detailed records about the condition of the property, from the start of the tenancy through the life of the rental agreement. We have provided this feedback to social housing providers.

Summary of complaints and enquiries

Table 1 All cases received and closed, with three-year comparison and variance between 2024–25 and 2025–26

Measure	2023–24	2024–25	2025–26	Variance %
Complaints received	660	666	667	0%
Complaints closed	677	676	715	6%
Enquiries received	1142	1291	1581	22%
Enquiries closed	1100	1256	1412	12%
Cases open at 30 June	187	196	327	67%
Total received	**1802**	**1957**	**2248**	**15%**
Total closed	**1777**	**1932**	**2127**	**10%**

Figure 1 Ombudsman Act complaints and enquiries, 2023–24, 2024–25, 2025–26

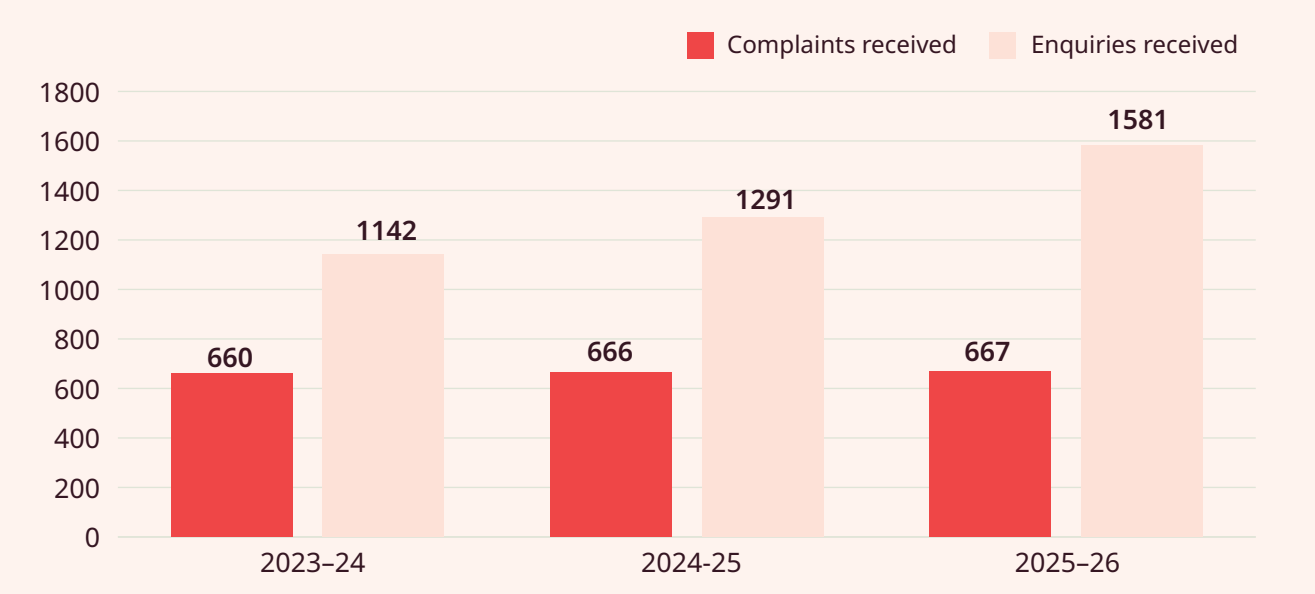


Table 2 Breakdown of complaints received, with three-year comparison and percentage of 2025–26

Category	2023–24	2024–25	2025–26	% of total
State government departments	386	463	503	75%
Local government	63	67	75	11%
Public authorities and GBEs	76	64	79	12%
Out of jurisdiction	135	72	10	2%
Total	**660**	**666**	**667**	**100%**

Table 3 Breakdown of enquiries received, with percentage of 2025–26

Category	2025–26	% of total
State government departments	697	44%
Local government	172	11%
Public authorities and GBEs	139	9%
Out of jurisdiction	573	36%
Total	**1581**	**100%**

Table 4 Most common out-of-jurisdiction referral bodies 2025–26

Referred to	Number
Consumer, Building and Occupational Services	127
Commonwealth Ombudsman	49
Fair Work Ombudsman	48
Australian Financial Complaints Authority	39

Agency complaint data

Table 5 Summary of complaints received against agencies, with breakdown of top agencies

Agency	2023–24	2024–25	2025–26
Department of Justice	158	221	250
Department for Education, Children and Young People	82	63	63
Housing Authority	38	33	50
Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management	20	51	46
TasWater	43	37	42
Homes Tasmania	39	36	32
Department of Health	8	9	23
Various	272	216	161
Total	**660**	**666**	**667**

Table 6 Summary of complaints closed against agencies, with breakdown of top agencies

Agency	2023–24	2024–25	2025–26
Department of Justice	152	220	259
Department for Education, Children and Young People	92	68	58
Housing Authority	32	41	49
Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management	26	42	47
TasWater	37	37	45
Homes Tasmania	29	42	34
Department of Health	12	12	23
Various	297	214	200
Total	**677**	**676**	**715**

Table 7 Summary of outcomes of complaints against agencies 2025–26

Department	Declined, referred, withdrawn or out of jurisdiction	Discontinued	No defective administration	Partly or fully substantiated	Total
Department of Justice	157	1	57	48	**263**
Department for Education, Children and Young People	35	2	7	22	**66**
Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management	32		11	7	**50**
Housing Authority	22	1	18	9	**50**
TasWater	25	1	11	9	**46**
Homes Tasmania	17	2	10	6	**35**
Department of Health	17		6	6	**29**
Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania	7	1	4	5	**17**
University of Tasmania	11		2	2	**15**
City of Hobart	9			2	**11**
TT-Line Company Pty Ltd – Spirit of Tasmania	4		4	1	**9**
Glenorchy City Council	4	1	3	1	**9**
Department of Treasury and Finance	5		4		**9**
Kingborough Council	4			4	**8**
Building Tasmania	1	1	2	4	**8**
Department of State Growth	5	1	1	1	**8**
Burnie City Council	3		3	1	**7**
Huon Valley Council	2		2	3	**7**
West Coast Council	4	1		2	**7**
Devonport City Council	3		1	2	**6**
Northern Midlands Council	2		1	3	**6**
Office of the Ombudsman & Health Complaints Commissioner	3			3	**6**
Various	51	1	16	16	**84**
Total	**423**	**13**	**163**	**157**	**756**

Most common issues

Issues against general agencies



83 Administrative practices/ policies

31 Communication/ Customer Service

23 Financial issues*

23 Approvals**

Issues with prisons



43 Classification/ placement

29 Daily routine

26 Property

24 Telephones

Issues with social housing



31 Waitlist or transfer

30 Maintenance and repairs

11 Neighbours

Issues against local councils



34 Administration and general management of councils

12 Planning

12 Nuisance

11 Rates and charges

*allowances, concessions, costs, charges, fees, levies, fines
**grants, permits, licences, registrations, applications

Most common issues

Issues with police



19 Misconduct by police

17 Investigations and prosecutions

12 Administration

10 Arrest/ detention/ warrant

Issues with TasWater



21 Billing and accounts

17 Water authorities – general

5 Meters – faults

4 New customer charges

Issues with Ashley Youth Detention Centre



7 Failure to ensure physical safety

5 Allegations of sexual abuse/ harassment/ discrimination/ racism/bullying/ assault

5 Officer misconduct

3 Periodic detention

Case summaries

Tasmania Prison Service – July 2025

Reimbursement of funds incorrectly deducted

In June 2024, a prisoner complained to us about collective charging practices by the Tasmania Prison Service (TPS). The prisoner complained that when the electricity was 'tripped' in the Southern Remand Centre (SRC), all prisoners in that group of cells were charged a fee.

TPS provided information that each group of cells in SRC has its own circuit breaker. When the electricity is tripped, there is a fee for a contractor to come and reset it. TPS investigated to find the individual responsible for tripping the power but could not always find out who it was. When TPS did find the individual, only that person was charged. Otherwise, all prisoners in a cell group were charged with a prison offence and shared the cost.

TPS advised it was not following specific policy in relation to the charges. It was following a Director's Standing Order (DSO) on disciplinary proceedings for prison offences.

We raised concerns with TPS about whether its practice was lawful or reasonable.

- Rule 43 of the *United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (The Nelson Mandela Rules)* prohibits collective punishment. These rules are not legally binding but are widely recognised as best practice in prison settings.
- Via the disciplinary process, prisoners were being charged (with a prison offence and a financial penalty) for an act they did not commit. However, any finding of guilt would be wrong as TPS could not be sure the prisoner had committed the offence, as was required under the DSO.
- The outcome of the disciplinary and appeal process was already pre-determined.
- The process provided no incentive for TPS to properly investigate such incidents, or for the offending prisoner to accept responsibility.

We acknowledged that when the responsible person could be identified through proper investigation, the disciplinary process could be complied with.

TPS agreed to stop collectively charging prisoners when a responsible person could not be identified and to reimburse those affected. TPS also advised us it was considering installing a circuit breaker in each cell in SRC. TPS accepted our suggestion that it clearly communicate how it will manage the 'tripping' of electricity in the SRC during induction.

We received another complaint in July 2025 after the complainant returned to custody: TPS had automatically deducted a weekly fee for the tripping of power from a group of cells the previous year.

We made enquiries with TPS.

TPS identified that when it had implemented its policy changes outlined above, the complainant had already left the prison. When the complainant returned to prison, the deductions to his account started again. This was due to an administrative error. TPS immediately reimbursed the charges and stopped making deductions.

TPS confirmed that following this complaint it undertook a review of its systems to ensure there were no other inmates who were similarly affected.

TasWater – September 2025

Issues with Smoothpay direct debits

We received a complaint from a TasWater customer about his *Smoothpay* direct debit arrangement.

The complainant advised us his direct debit payments were not being automatically reviewed each year to cover his usage and he had been issued with an overdue bill. This was contrary to the *Direct Debit/ Smoothpay Request Service Agreement* (direct debit agreement), under which TasWater must review the arrangement at the end of each 12-month period to ensure direct debit payments will cover usage.

The complainant also raised concerns about how TasWater managed and responded to his complaints about this issue. TasWater wrongly told him it couldn't check whether his direct debit amount was enough to cover his usage. It said customers had to get in touch themselves if they noticed the amount and their usage didn't match. However, this was contrary to the direct debit agreement.

We considered that providing incorrect information led to unnecessary confusion about the customer's obligations. In this case, the customer raised concerns that many customers would struggle to calculate their payments against usage.

When responding to our preliminary inquiries, TasWater identified there was an issue with the automation of reviews of *Smoothpay* billing arrangements and reviews were not occurring consistently. This was due to a problem with TasWater's billing system.

To address this issue, TasWater advised us it will amend its bill equalisation approach as part of broader system improvements ahead of the implementation of its next Pricing and Services Plan (PSP5) from 1 July 2026.

In the interim, TasWater advised us it will monitor issues on a case-by-case basis and take corrective action, if required. While not ideal, we accept TasWater is working within its current system limitations and is now aware of the issue.

TasWater also amended the relevant clause of the direct debit agreement to clarify that reviews may not occur automatically for some customers and the obligation is on customers to contact TasWater if their direct debit arrangements are not covering their usage. TasWater advised us this was an interim measure, and the direct debit arrangement may be amended again once reviews can occur consistently.

We queried whether TasWater had informed customers of this change to the direct debit agreement, and TasWater was unable to confirm this. TasWater undertook to notify customers when we raised this as an issue.

We also found problems with how TasWater handled this complaint. It was slow to respond, did not explain how to escalate the complaint internally, left required information out of its responses and gave confusing advice about complaining through social media. TasWater acknowledged most of the issues identified and undertook to address them.

TasWater also apologised to the customer and waived the overdue amount as a gesture of goodwill.

The Office of the Public Guardian – November 2025

Improvements made in relation to communication and managing unreasonable conduct

A complainant contacted us about issues she had experienced with the Office of the Public Guardian (OPG).

The OPG was the appointed guardian for the complainant's son, with powers including making medical treatment decisions and restricting visits. The complainant was not satisfied with the OPG's decision to restrict her from visiting her son. She also alleged the OPG's communication with her had been unsatisfactory and she had received inadequate updates about her son's medical treatment.

We declined the aspects of the complaint relating to restricting visits because Supreme Court proceedings were in progress which is the appropriate way to review the OPG's power to restrict visits.

In relation to updates, the OPG provided to the complainant, we agreed with the OPG's substantive position on this. In this case, the OPG had concerns about sharing information with the complainant and was not satisfied that sharing the information with the complainant about her son would promote his wellbeing. Therefore, the OPG was required to maintain confidentiality under section 86(2) of the *Guardianship and Administration Act 1995*. Given the concerns, we agreed it was not appropriate for updates to be provided to the complainant about her son.

However, we considered improvements were needed in relation to the OPG's management of its communication with the complainant. The complainant contacted the OPG frequently about the same issues through a variety of channels and we considered that responding to all the complainant's communication would be both impractical and an unnecessary use of resources.

However, the OPG had not clearly confirmed to the complainant its position in relation to its engagement with her or the reasons why. In this case, receiving inconsistent responses from the OPG likely caused frustration, further communication attempts and worsening relations.

The OPG agreed to confirm its position in relation to communication, updates and engagement with the complainant about her son. This would include information about the OPG's legal obligations.

We identified the OPG did not have a policy on managing unreasonable complainant conduct. We considered having such a policy would provide the OPG with a framework to manage unreasonable persistence and/or demands from complainants in a procedurally fair way. For example, by implementing restrictions on communication with complainants where their conduct does not improve after a warning.

Managing difficult interactions with complainants without such a policy risks providing poor customer service and breaching other policies, such as complaints policies.

The OPG agreed it would be beneficial to implement a policy to assist in managing unreasonable complainant conduct. We consider this will improve the OPG's efficiency, quality of responses and staff wellbeing.

We also identified the OPG did not manage the complaints in accordance with its complaints policy. While the complainant did not formally complain, she informally complained numerous times. The OPG should have managed these informal complaints in accordance with its complaints policy.

The complaints policy provides a clear process for complaints management, including escalating and investigating complaints, responding to complaints and providing options for review. These steps did not appear to have been followed.

We suggested the OPG manages complaints in accordance with its policy and considers training staff in complaints management.

The OPG agreed and advised us it was reviewing its complaints policy to incorporate our suggestions. It also advised us that staff would be provided with additional professional development to ensure complaints are dealt with appropriately and in accordance with its policy.

Homes Tasmania – May 2026

Pest infestation

We received a complaint from a Homes Tasmania (Homes) tenant concerning a cockroach infestation at their property. The tenant stated Homes had declined to replace the oven, which was damaged by cockroaches, or to arrange pest control. The tenant had attempted to resolve the issue with bug bombs and had obtained a quote for professional pest control but could not meet this cost. At the time the tenants complained to our office, it was winter and they were cooking in a makeshift kitchen outside.

Preliminary inquiries were made to Homes. It confirmed it was aware of the issues but stated these were the tenant's responsibility. Homes had already replaced the oven once for the same reason and it was in a dispute with the tenant about the cause of the infestation. The tenant believed cockroaches were present early on in her lease, while Homes considered the issue resulted from living conditions at the property including a composting area on the lawn where food was being left out for birds. Homes had extensive knowledge of the issues from the tenant's complaints, its own inspections, and external maintenance advice and photos.

The tenant was referred to the Residential Tenancy Commissioner (RTC) to resolve the dispute as I do not have the power to do so. The RTC ordered Homes to replace the oven and take appropriate action to remove any pests. The oven was stated to be an essential service and repairs had to be completed as soon as practicable in accordance with section 33 of the *Residential Tenancy Act 1997*. The RTC found the repairs the tenant requested to be reasonable and not required through any fault of their own.

The RTC stated:

> *Generally, where there is an issue with pests at a property a tenant should first try to prevent or remove the pests themselves, using reasonable methods. If this fails, the tenant should notify the owner, and the owner then has an obligation to get rid of pests or treat the cause of pests. I do not consider that the tenant should be liable to engage a professional pest controller especially in this circumstance where they've stated that it will take multiple visits to rectify the issue.*

Although the RTC can resolve disputes between Homes and tenants, I consider it is good administrative practice for Homes to first take steps to help tenants resolve issues and respond to complaints in a timely manner. I acknowledge tenants should take all possible steps to prevent pest issues in accordance with the terms of their lease.

It was identified Homes does not have appropriate policy in place to guide staff on escalating and resolving pest issues when a tenant has taken all reasonable steps within their financial means to resolve the issue. It is unclear to staff when Homes should step in to assist tenants and protect its asset from further damage. Homes advised my office it can offer tenants a 'do and charge' option to cover costs in certain circumstances; however, we identified that the factors Homes considers when making such a decision are not documented in policy for transparency.

Homes advised us it manages pest issues under its *Behaviours in Homes Tasmania Properties Policy* which guides tenancy officers to effectively manage tenancies at risk of breaches resulting from unlawful or nuisance behaviour, including a failure to maintain the property. We were not provided with copies of any formal correspondence between Homes and the tenant about these issues or the tenancy being at risk in accordance with the principles outlined in the policy.

I made suggestions to Homes for improved administrative practice in the areas of implementing policy, policy compliance, complaints handling and record keeping. Homes is currently considering these suggestions.

Anglicare Tasmania (Housing Connect) – June 2026

Procedural accessibility for Aboriginal people

We received a complaint from an Aboriginal person raising procedural accessibility issues.

The complainant was applying for social housing. Staff at Anglicare Tasmania (Housing Connect) said her daughter must sign a consent form to allow Housing Connect to share her daughter's personal information with Centrelink. This was to verify the complainant's household income to determine her eligibility for social housing. Housing Connect said her daughter's consent was required to submit the housing application and eventually, allocate the complainant a property.

The complainant considered this culturally offensive. She submitted her daughter was still at school and was not old enough to sign documents. She was also dissatisfied with how Housing Connect managed her complaint.

We did not consider Anglicare Tasmania intended to cause the complainant cultural offence. However, we were not satisfied Anglicare Tasmania managed her complaint appropriately.

We ascertained the daughter's consent to sharing information was not a prerequisite to submitting the housing application because the complainant's household income could be checked by other means.

Advising people they must consent to share personal information with Centrelink is contrary to privacy law principles. Under the *Personal Information Protection Act 2004,* personal information should be collected directly from people and not third parties, if it is reasonable and practical to do so.

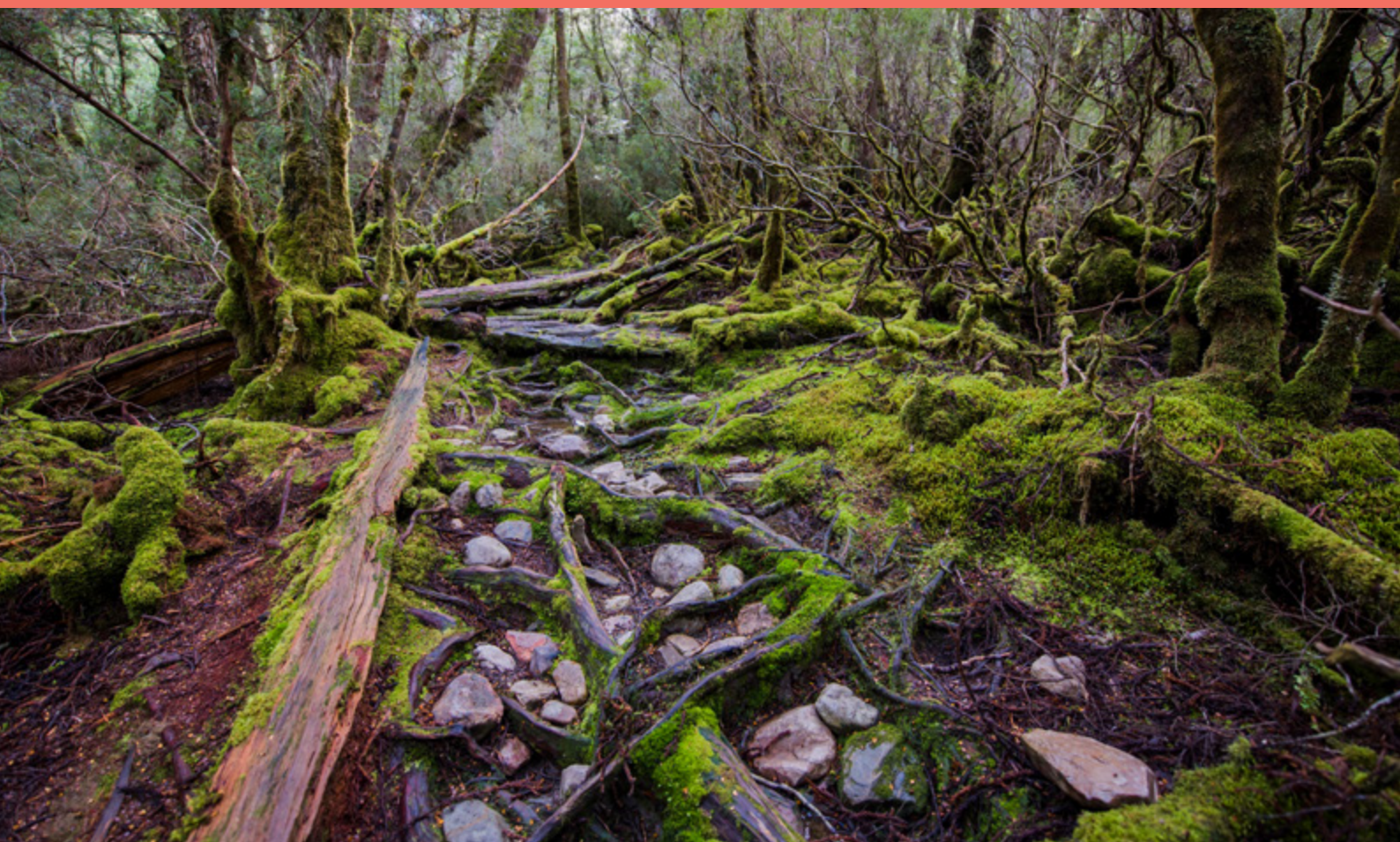
Housing Connect advised us that declining to share information with Centrelink could result in delays submitting housing applications and allocating people properties. However, it is unclear why this should cause delays, as long as people provided complete information to Anglicare Tasmania in a timely manner.

Anglicare Tasmania did not investigate this complaint. The complainant sought representation from the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre with her complaint. Anglicare Tasmania did not have the complainant's consent to discuss her complaint with the representative. However, Anglicare Tasmania did not explain this to the complainant or try to obtain her consent. Doing so might have made the complaint procedure more accessible.

Anglicare Tasmania acknowledged the issues we identified. It apologised to the complainant for managing her complaint poorly. It confirmed staff will receive Aboriginal cultural training. Significantly, Anglicare Tasmania will also create an Aboriginal role within Housing Connect to support Aboriginal people accessing the service.

Section 6

Personal information protection (PIP) matters and public interest disclosures (PID)



Year at a glance

Complaints
Public Interest Disclosure

25 complaints received

26 complaints closed

Enquiries
Public Interest Disclosure

20 enquiries received

15 enquiries closed

Complaints
Personal Information Protection

19 complaints received

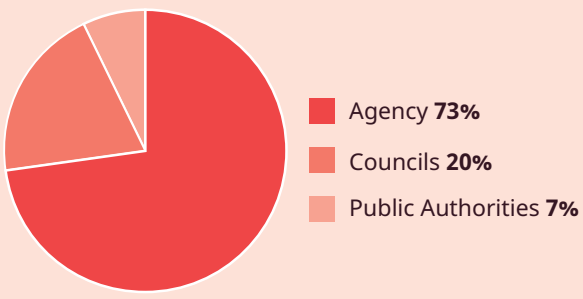
15 complaints closed

Enquiries
Personal Information Protection

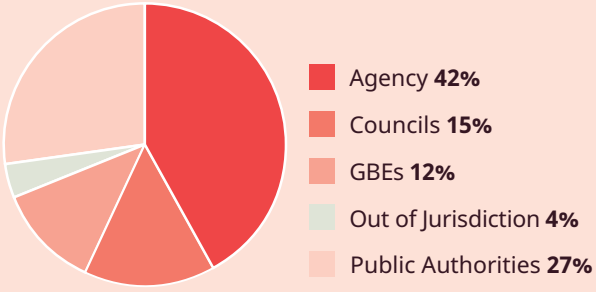
27 enquiries received

24 enquiries closed

Who was investigated



PIP



PID

Table 8 Personal information protection (PIP) matters and public interest disclosures (PID) received

Received	2023–24	2024–25	2025–26
Personal information protection matters	21	7	19
Public interest disclosures	10	23	25

Table 9 Personal information protection (PIP) matters and public interest disclosures (PID) closed

Closed	2023–24	2024–25	2025–26
Personal information protection matters	21	12	15
Public interest disclosures	10	35	26

Table 10 PIP closure outcomes

PIP	2023–24	2024–25	2025–26
Declined, referred, out of jurisdiction or withdrawn	18	8	10
Fully or partially substantiated or determination made	0	1	0
PIP – case substantiated	2	2	3
PIP – case unsubstantiated	1	1	2
Total	**21**	**12**	**15**

Table 11 PID closure outcomes

PID	2023–24	2024–25	2025–26
Declined, referred, out of jurisdiction or withdrawn	1	3	10
Fully or partially substantiated or determination made	0	1	0
PID – agency determination	1	13	5
PID – determination investigated	1	1	0
PID – disclosure not PID	7	17	11
Total	**10**	**35**	**26**

Overview

1. Public Interest Disclosures Act 2002

My responsibilities under the *Public Interest Disclosures Act 2002* (PID Act) include:

- receiving and assessing potential public interest disclosures of improper conduct by public officers and public bodies
- determining whether a disclosure is a public interest disclosure
- investigating such disclosures where appropriate
- reviewing public bodies' decisions under the PID Act
- preparing and publishing guidelines and standards for the procedures to be followed by public authorities when implementing the provisions of the PID Act
- approving those procedures once developed
- preparing and publishing guidelines to help determine whether improper conduct is serious or significant
- monitoring the progress of investigations being undertaken pursuant to the PID Act by public bodies
- advising public bodies in relation to the operation of the PID Act.

This year, in addition to receiving and assessing potential disclosures, our office began a review of our Guideline 2: Procedures for Public Bodies which will be completed by the end of 2026. These procedures have not been reviewed substantially since 2021. Public bodies were invited to provide feedback on the practical application of the existing procedures and delivered constructive insights for our consideration.

This year our office has also experienced an increase in contact from a range of public bodies seeking advice and training in managing public interest disclosures. Once our updated model procedures are in place, our focus will move to how best to build the capability of public bodies further through targeted PID training and publishing of more PID resources.

Section 84 of the PID Act requires me to include in my Annual Report specific information about various aspects of the Act's operation. Therefore, I make the following report for 2025–26.

- Copies of current guidelines and standards published by the Ombudsman under Part 6 of the PID Act could be obtained or accessed on the Ombudsman website at ombudsman.tas.gov.au or by calling 1800 001 170 and requesting a copy – s84(a).
- The Ombudsman received 21 disclosures about improper conduct.
- Twenty-six determinations were made that disclosures were not public interest disclosures – s84(c).
- Two investigations from the previous year into alleged improper conduct continued this year – s84(d).
- One new investigation was commenced into improper conduct this year – s84(d).
- No disclosed matter was referred under s41 to the Commissioner of Police, the Auditor-General, a Commission under the *Commissions of Inquiry Act 1995* or any other prescribed bodies or the holder of a prescribed office to investigate – s84(e)(i).
- No disclosed matter was referred to a public body to investigate under Part 7 of the PID Act – s84(e)(ii).
- The Ombudsman did not decline to investigate any disclosed matters under s40 of the PID Act – s84(f)(i).
- No disclosed matter was referred to the Ombudsman by a public body for investigation – s84(f)(ii).

- No disclosures were referred to the Ombudsman by the President of the Legislative Council or by the Speaker of the House of Assembly – s84(g).
- The Ombudsman took over no investigations of any disclosed matter – s84(h).
- No recommendations were made during the year – s84(i).
- No recommendations were made during the year – s84(j).
- No recommendations were made in relation to the procedures established by a public body under Part 7 – s84(k).
- No action was taken during the year on any recommendations of the Ombudsman – s84(l).

I am also required to oversee the determinations made and the investigations conducted by public bodies.

2. Personal Information Protection Act 2004

Schedule 1 of the *Personal Information Protection Act 2004* (PIP Act) creates the Personal Information Protection Principles (PIPPs) binding all personal information custodians. These principles and other provisions of the PIP Act regulate the manner in which a public information custodian can collect, maintain and use personal information and the limited circumstances in which such information can be disclosed.

The PIP Act makes a distinction between basic information and sensitive information. The Act also lists the steps to be taken by public authorities to ensure compliance with the different protection principles. The Act gives people the right to complain to the Ombudsman about an alleged breach of the PIPPs.

I can only deal with a complaint regarding an alleged breach of a PIPP that applies to the complainant, not another person. The complainant, however, must first have raised the matter with the relevant personal information custodian and been unsatisfied with the response they received.

A contravention of the PIP Act does not result in punishment of the personal information custodian or compensation to a complainant. Rather, there is a focus on improving practices, policy and systems, to safeguard the likelihood of contraventions of the PIP Act occurring in the future. At the end of an investigation, I can recommend that the personal information custodian make any improvements I consider necessary.

We received 26 and closed 24 PIP Act enquiries; we also received 19 and closed 15 PIP Act complaints during the year. The closed complaints included:

- one that was rejected on the basis the complaint lacked substance
- four that were closed under s19(1A) as, having regard to the nature and seriousness of the complaint, the Ombudsman believed the complaint could be resolved quickly and efficiently
- seven where it was identified the complaint needed to be raised with the relevant personal information custodian.

Concerns raised primarily related to Personal Information Protection Principle 2, Use and Disclosure of personal information, although the Collection, Data Security and Access and Correction issues were also raised.

Section 7

Inspections under police legislation



Police Powers (Surveillance Devices) Act 2006

This Act provides for the installation, use, maintenance and retrieval of surveillance devices in criminal investigations and other matters. The role of our office (as the 'inspection entity') is to ensure that law enforcement agencies in Tasmania (principally Tasmania Police and the Integrity Commission) comply with their record-keeping obligations under the Act.

My delegated officers conduct inspections of records held under the Act at least once every year and I make a written report to the relevant ministers on the results of each inspection. The Minister for Justice then causes a copy of the report to be laid before each House of Parliament. A copy of my latest report on this financial year's inspection can be obtained through Hansard on the parliamentary website.

Police Powers (Controlled Operations) Act 2006

This Act provides for the authorisation, conduct and monitoring of controlled police operations. As with the Surveillance Devices Act, it is the role of the 'inspection entity' to ensure law enforcement agencies comply with their record-keeping obligations under the Act. Again, my latest inspection report can be obtained through Hansard on the parliamentary website.

Telecommunications (Interception) Tasmania Act 1999

Tasmania Police is obliged to keep certain records relating to telecommunications interceptions.

These records must be inspected by my office at least once every six months to ensure Tasmania Police is complying with its obligations. I must report to the relevant minister on the inspections at the end of each financial year. The minister must then provide a copy of the report to the relevant Australian Government minister.

My officers conducted inspections in December 2025 and June 2026. Tasmania Police was at all times cooperative in facilitating inspections and I was satisfied that its records were adequate and comprehensive.

Misuse of Drugs Act 2001

Section 38B of the *Misuse of Drugs Act 2001* allows the Commissioner of Police to issue authorisations for police officers, employees or correctional officers (authorised persons) to possess and supply controlled substances, such as heroin, cocaine, cannabis and methylamphetamine hydrochloride.

The purpose of these authorisations is to enable controlled substances to be used for training and assessing drug detection dogs and to be transported to other police officers, interstate or federal police officers, or correctional officers. I am required under s38I of the Act to prepare a report, after receiving an operational report from the Commissioner of Police, setting out:

a) a summary of the matters provided in the operational report
b) my opinion as to the comprehensiveness and adequacy of the records of the Commissioner of Police kept under s38G
c) my opinion as to whether the authorisations to which the operational report relates have been effective and appropriate
d) my comments and suggestions as to how the issue, supervision and implementation of authorisations may be improved.

The operational report, pursuant to s38H(1), is required to contain:

a) the number of authorisations issued during the financial year
b) the purposes for which the authorisations were issued
c) a summary of the details specified in each report received by the Commissioner of Police under s38F(1).

Commissioner Adams PSM APM advised us that 13 police officers (six primary handlers and seven relief handlers) and two correctional officers were issued with authorisations for the 2025–26 financial year. The Commissioner provided a copy of each authorisation as well as each of the authorised person's written reports required under s38F of the Act. These reports detail:

a) the quantity and description of each controlled substance that was possessed by the authorised person, or supplied by the authorised person to another person under the authorisation
b) any ancillary action taken by the authorised person
c) the name of any other person to whom a controlled substance was supplied by the authorised person under the authorisation and the address to which the controlled substance was supplied
d) if the controlled substance was supplied by the authorised person to another person for delivery to a third person, the name and address of the third person
e) to whom the delivery of the controlled substance was to be delivered
f) each day the authorised person was in possession of the controlled substance.

The authorised person's reports provided by the Commissioner outline the following details:

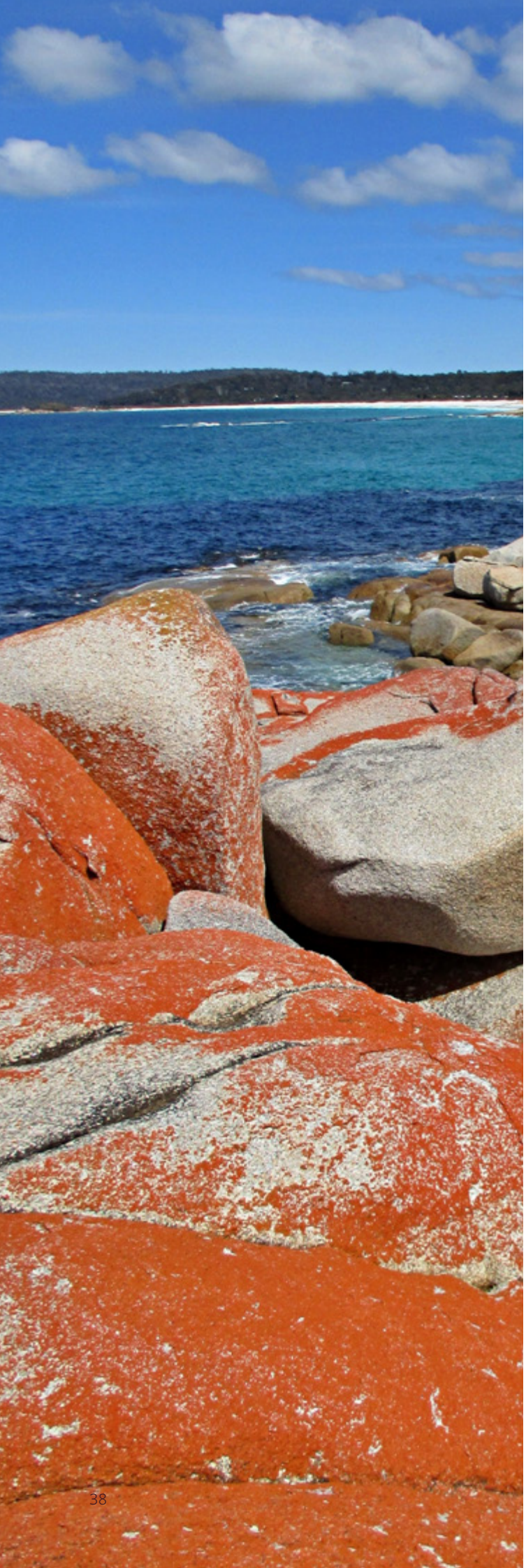
- The Southern district reports prepared by authorised police officers show regular possession of the controlled substances recorded with detail and accuracy.
  - Reflected in one relevant officer's report is that he is the handler of a dog which detects explosives and has less need to access controlled substances. The officer may provide relief handling of a drug detection dog when the Sergeant and another Constable are absent.
  - Other officers are relief handlers whose primary roles are in another Division.
- The Northern district reports show regular possession of the controlled substances recorded with detail and accuracy.
  - The other constables are relief handlers whose primary roles are in another division.
- The Western district reports show regular possession of the controlled substances recorded with detail and accuracy.
  - A Senior Constable is the handler of a dog that detects explosives and firearms and has less need to access controlled substances, which is reflected in his report.
- The Tasmania Prison Service reports show possession and supply of the controlled substances recorded with appropriate detail and accuracy. A controlled substances audit was conducted on 26 June 2026. No issues were observed in relation to the storage, management and supervision of the controlled substances.

No authorisations were cancelled during 2025–26.

The Commissioner advised us that for the coming financial year, 12 police officers (five primary handlers and seven relief handlers) and two correctional officers will be issued with authorisations under s38B of the Act.

The Commissioner advised us that Tasmania Police has four drug detector dogs, two based in Hobart and one each in Launceston and Devonport. Each dog has a primary handler who uses the dog operationally and trains the dog on a regular basis. The remaining police officers with authorisations are relief handlers who manage the dogs when the primary handlers are on leave or unavailable. The TPS has two drug detector dogs and two handlers, both based at Risdon Prison.

The Commissioner advised us no details were omitted from his operational report to me on the basis they would compromise the lawful carrying out of any duties by a police officer.



I am required to express an opinion as to the comprehensiveness and adequacy of the records of the Commissioner of Police kept under s38G and whether the authorisations to which the operational report relates have been effective and appropriate.

The Commissioner's report required no clarification regarding the matters reported. The Commissioner provided copies of all the records made during the year under s38G of the Act. I was satisfied on reviewing the report and those records that the records were comprehensive and adequate. The authorised person reports required under s38F contained all the required details.

Having reviewed those reports, I was also satisfied the authorisations to which the operational report relates have been effective and appropriate. The authorisations were required by the dog handlers and relief dog handlers so they could fulfil the requirements of their roles.

I am required to make comments or suggestions in relation to how the issue, supervision and implementation of authorisations may be improved. I have no comments or suggestions this year.

Section 8

Right to Information Act 2009



Year at a glance

Points of interest for the year

- **Requests for external review have almost doubled on the previous year, up from 67 to 130.**
- **We finalised an own-motion Ombudsman investigation.**
- **Our historical backlog of external review applications reduced – average days open fell from 293 (end 2023–24) to 173 (2024–25) to 150 (2025–26).**

External review applications



130
Applications received

72
Applications closed

98
Total number of open external review applications at 30 June 2026

Types of applicants



100
Member of the public

16
Third party

7
MP

4
Journalist

3
Organisation

Common topics of external reviews



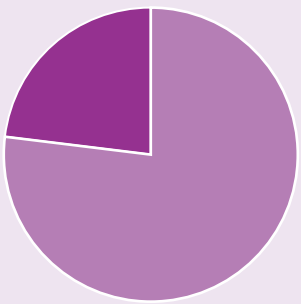
1. Difficulty accessing personal information connected to child abuse in government institutions

2. Concerns about the environmental and animal welfare impacts of industry – particularly salmon farming, forestry and greyhound racing

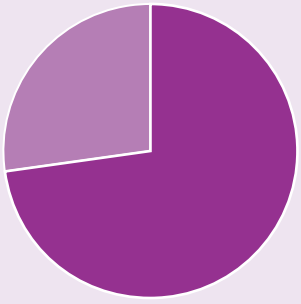
3. Concerns about the integrity and use of financial entitlements of government officials and elected representatives

Enquiries

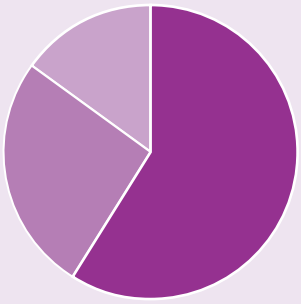
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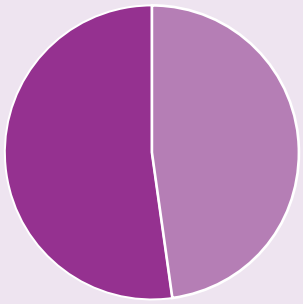


Received from:



Types of requests





Related to:

- State government departments **59%**
- Local councils **26%**
- Statutory authorities and other bodies **15%**

- General topic of interest **48%**
- Personal interests of applicant **52%**

Most common exemptions appealed to the Ombudsman

38%
s36
Personal information

19%
s35
Internal deliberative information

17%
s30
Information relating to the enforcement of the law

7%
s37
Information relating to business affairs of a third party

Reasons for external review requests

32%
Public authority did not provide decision within the required timeframe **(42)**

24%
Dispute the refusal of their application or only that all relevant information found **(31)**

23%
Dispute only the use of exemptions **(30)**

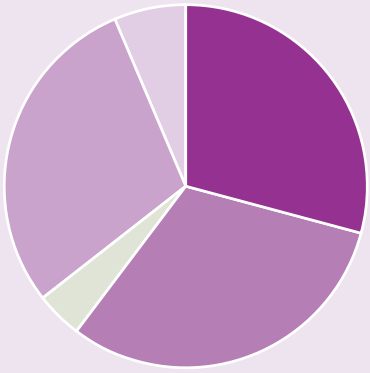
12%
Prevent the release of their personal or business information **(16)**

9%
Dispute the use of exemptions and that all relevant information found **(11)**

Early closure

Of the **48** external reviews closed without a formal decision:

- Invalid **14**
- Declined for lack of substance/ not progressed by applicant **15**
- Withdrawn **2**
- Resolved between the parties **14**
- Resolved through assistance from Ombudsman Tasmania **3**



Decisions of the Ombudsman

24
Decisions issued on external review applications

21%
Related to prioritised applications **(5)**

25%
Reviewed the sufficiency of searching for information **(6)**

Most commonly reviewed exemptions in decisions of the Ombudsman



75%
s36
Personal information of a person – fully affirmed in 11% of uses **(18)**

54%
s35
Internal deliberative information – no uses fully affirmed **(13)**

25%
s37
Information relating to business affairs of third party – no uses fully affirmed **(6)**

33%
s30
Information relating to enforcement of the law – fully affirmed in 25% of uses **(8)**

17%
s39
Information obtained in confidence – no uses fully affirmed **(4)**

17%
s31
Legal professional privilege – no uses fully affirmed **(4)**

Overview

The Ombudsman plays a central role in information access, as the external review entity under the *Right to Information Act 2009* (RTI Act). The RTI Act gives a legally enforceable right to members of the public to access government information. My office's work is directed to ensuring the maximum amount of official information is released by public authorities in accordance with the objects of the RTI Act.

Public authorities include all government departments, local councils, ministers, government business enterprises and other statutory bodies (such as the University of Tasmania). The Ombudsman's primary function in this area is reviewing the decisions of public authorities to ensure they are properly made and that relevant information which is not exempt is released.

We also provide advice and guidance about the operation of the RTI Act to public authorities, ministers, RTI users and members of the public.

My office's activities in relation to the operation of the RTI Act in 2025–26 included:

- responding to enquiries from public authorities and potential applicants
- handling complaints about issues to do with the administrative action of public authorities connected to RTI under the *Ombudsman Act 1978*
- concluding an investigation into issues around personal information management when implementing RTI decisions
- publishing a monthly Delegate Newsletter to RTI decision-makers, circulating recent external review decisions, RTI news and practice tips
- publishing a monthly Decision Bulletin further circulating published external review decisions to the wider RTI community
- providing briefings and guidance about the implementation of recommendations made in March 2026 after concluding the investigation into personal information being released in error by public authorities implementing RTI decisions
- publishing external review decisions online for educational and transparency purposes
- providing access to published guidelines and a practice manual
- issuing a formal response to recommendations made by the Independent Review of Tasmania's Right to Information Framework and starting to implement accepted recommendations
- starting the project of updating guidelines issued under s49(1) of the RTI Act
- collating and refining data provided to the National Dashboard about information access across Australia to improve the accuracy of data reported
- participating in the Association of Australian Information and Access Commissioners forum and associated working groups, sharing national insights.

The right to information sector continues to be crucial to the effective functioning of Tasmania's system of government. Its usage continues to expand, as is evidenced by the 94% increase in external review applications during the year.

The positives

- Continued progress on the elimination of the external review backlog, with average days open falling to 150.
- Significant engagement from public authorities with my own-motion investigation into the inadvertent release of personal information during the RTI process, showing a willingness to improve practices and address risks.

> **We have continued to reduce the backlog of external reviews, with average days open continuing to fall over the year.**

- The Tasmanian Government and the Ombudsman have accepted and committed to actioning many of the recommendations in the *Independent Review of Tasmania's RTI Framework Report* issued in September 2025, which should lead to improvements in the RTI sector.
- Continued high levels of positive engagement from public authorities with my office's early resolution efforts to reduce the need for formal decisions and more quickly resolve matters for applicants.

The ongoing challenges

- The worsening backlog at DECYP in processing applications for applicants' own personal information, which has caused major delays and distress for applicants (more detail above in Topical Issues).
- Timeliness in general in the RTI scheme, with 32% of applications for external review initially being received due to a decision not being provided within the statutory timeframe. The external review process itself remains slow, though this has been improving (see Performance for more detail).
- The 94% increase in the number of external review applications received, which strains the resources of my office, jeopardising progress on clearing the backlog.
- The tight fiscal situation in the Tasmanian Government, with cost saving measures reducing staffing available to process and review RTI applications.
- Increasing use of AI tools by applicants in drafting applications, correspondence and submissions. This is a challenge across the RTI sector. Documents are longer and more complex, they contain errors and made-up information and AI is making persistent or unreasonable communication worse.
- Failings in personal information management during the RTI process. An Ombudsman investigation into the inadvertent release of personal information revealed a 30–40% error rate in files audited at four public authorities and a widespread lack of documented processes to reduce risk around personal information disclosure (more detail below)
- Limited training and up-to-date guidance materials to assist RTI delegates, particularly those new to the sector.

Performance

The current recurrent funding of the RTI team provides for three full-time staff – a Principal Officer, a Senior Investigation and Review Officer and an Intake and Assessment Officer.

I have continued to find savings to employ several more staff on temporary contracts to help reduce the historical backlog of external review applications. This has been assisted by the grant of $200,000 additional funding for the 2025–26 financial year to comply with Recommendation 17.8(4)(b) of the report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in Institutional Settings. The use of these

savings and additional funding allowed us to employ 2.3 full-time equivalent Investigation and Review Officers during the year.

We have continued to reduce the backlog of external reviews, with average days open continuing to fall over the year. However, this progress is jeopardised by a major increase in the number of external review requests – up 94% from 67 to 130. If these higher numbers continue, it is likely my office will take longer to respond to requests unless it receives more funding. I am continuing to monitor the situation and review my processes to find further efficiencies to combat this new challenge.

One of the main ways we resolve external reviews early and informally is the Preliminary View process. A Preliminary View is a document indicating the likely outcome of an external review. It is sent to the parties when a public authority appears to have clearly misapplied the legislation, or when a review request appears to have no real substance. It has continued to be an effective way to resolve matters more quickly.

I note, however, this process has had an effect on the decisions we issue. In 2025–26, we issued no formal decisions that fully upheld a public authority's decision. This is because we issued Preliminary Views in the matters that would likely have ended that way. In those matters, the applicant had a chance to make submissions. After considering them, we declined the review for lack of substance and closed the file.

The RTI team has continued to produce high-quality work and achieve excellent outcomes. They faced the challenges of staffing shortages, a major increase of applications and an ongoing backlog with resilience, professionalism and sustained commitment. I thank them for their valuable contributions and important work.

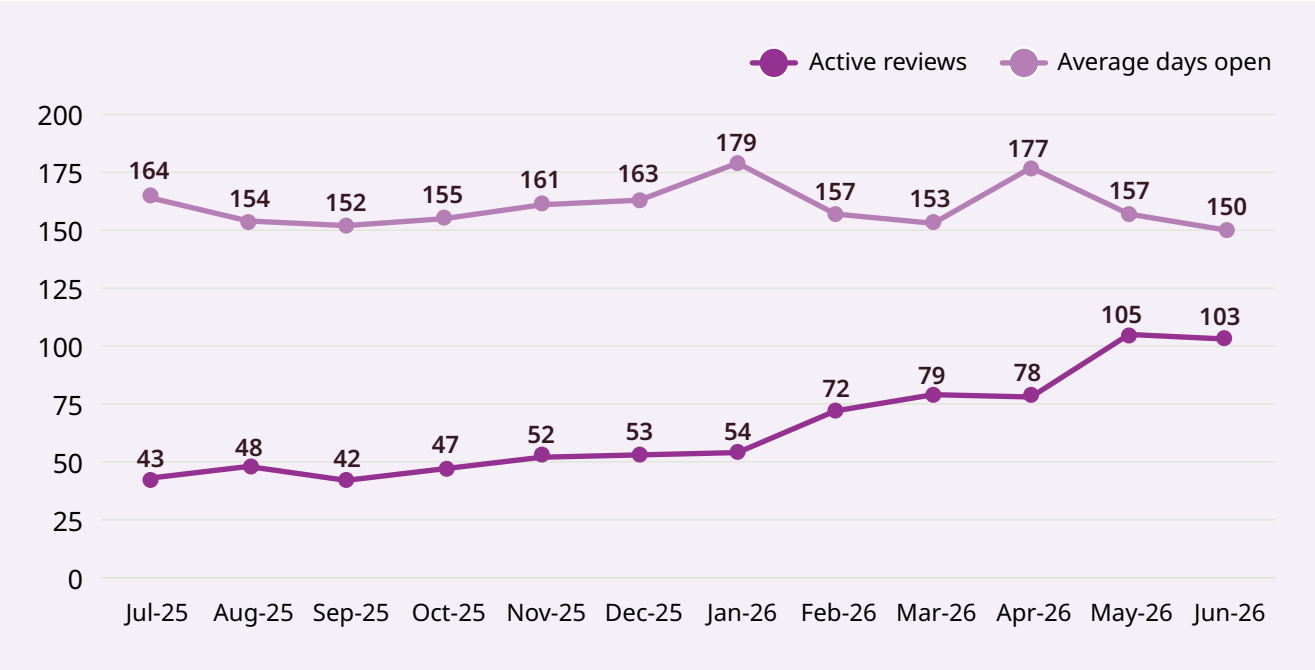
I acknowledge, however, that responses to applications for external review remain slow, and planned projects to update guidance materials remain uncompleted. I recognise and regret the negative impact this has on applicants and RTI practitioners. My office will continue to prioritise clearing the backlog and updating guidance materials next year.



Figure 2 Total right to information external reviews 2023–24, 2024–25, 2025–26



Figure 3 External reviews: average days open and active reviews by month



Priorities

Priorities for 2025–26 were to:

- continue to reduce the backlog of external review requests, with a goal of having no unfinalised external reviews over 12 months old by 30 June 2026
- review and reissue current guidelines, and issue new ones as required
- begin updating the RTI Manual, as required under s49(3) of the *Right to Information Act 2009*, to ensure it is a useful resource for users with relevant external review decisions referenced
- seek extra funding to maintain staffing levels at an optimal level, which should enable my external review and educational functions to be fully effective.

I am pleased to report we achieved or made progress with almost every priority.

We made progress on reducing the backlog of external review requests, with average days open falling to 150 and all external reviews over 12 months old, bar three, closed by 30 June 2026. The oldest open external review at the end of the financial year was received on 23 May 2025. All three of these older files were initially received as deemed refusals following a failure of the relevant public authority to issue a decision within the legislative timeframe, which contributed to the longer time for these matters to be finalised.

We made major progress on updating the guidelines, though this project was not fully completed by year end. The update of the RTI Manual was deferred to 2026–27. Delays to both these projects were due to staffing shortages and a focus on finalising the investigation into the release of personal information in error by public authorities.

My office sought ongoing funding to enable the employment of a greater number of staff on a permanent basis and to secure staffing levels in the RTI team that would enable sustainable high performance. Unfortunately, this was not granted and challenges with recruitment and staffing shortages linked to high turnover in non-ongoing contracts negatively impacted performance.

Our priorities for 2026–27 are to:

- continue to reduce the backlog of external review requests, with a goal of having no actionable unfinalised external reviews over 12 months old by 30 June 2027 and further reduction in the average days open for actionable external reviews
- complete the project of updating guidelines issued under s49(1) of the RTI Act
- begin updating the RTI Manual, as required under s49(3) of the RTI Act, to ensure this is a useful resource for users with relevant external review decisions referenced
- continue to seek extra funding to achieve sustainable ongoing staffing in the RTI team to support high performance, particularly noting the 94% increase in external review applications received in 2025–26.

Summary of external review requests

Table 12 Summary of right to information reviews

Public Authority	Received	Closed	Closure reason
State Government Department	**77**	**43**	
Department of State Growth (now Building Tasmania)	9	5	1 – decision (varied) 1 – withdrawn 3 – resolved between the parties
Department for Education, Children and Young People	23	12	5 – decision (varied) 4 – declined 3 – resolved between the parties
Department of Health	11	9	0 2 – decision (varied) 4 – resolved between the parties 1 – declined 1 – withdrawn 1 – invalid
Department of Justice	1	1	1 – declined
Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania	6	1	1 – withdrawn
Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management	26	12	5 – decision (varied) 7 – declined
Department of Premier and Cabinet	1	2	1 – decision (varied) 1 – declined
Department of Treasury and Finance	0	1	1 – decision (varied)
Local Government Council	**34**	**16**	
Break O'Day Council	1	0	0
Brighton Council	2	5	5 – declined
Central Coast Council	3	1	1 – withdrawn
Circular Head Council	1	1	1 – decision (varied)
City of Hobart	4	2	1 – decision (varied) 1 – resolved between the parties
City of Launceston	8	0	0
Clarence City Council	1	0	0
Devonport City Council	3	1	1 – decision (varied)
Dorset Council	1	0	0
George Town Council	3	3	1 – decision (set aside) 1 – resolved between the parties 1 – withdrawn
Kentish Council	1	0	0

Public Authority	Received	Closed	Closure reason
Northern Midlands Council	0	1	1 – declined
Southern Midlands Council	1	0	0
West Tamar Council	1	2	1 – withdrawn 1 – declined
Statutory Authority or Other Body	**19**	**13**	
Environment Protection Authority	3	0	0
Homes Tasmania	1	0	0
Integrity Commission	1	1	1 – invalid
Legal Aid Commission of Tasmania	1	0	0
Monetary Penalties Enforcement Service	1	0	0
Office of the Premier	3	1	1 – invalid
Office of the Tasmanian Racing Integrity Commissioner	2	0	0
Parliament of Tasmania	2	1	1 – invalid
Sustainable Timber Tasmania	1	0	0
Tasmanian Planning Commission	0	1	1 – declined
Tasracing Pty Ltd	0	2	2 – decision (varied)
TasTAFE	1	2	1 – external review decision
The Legal Profession Board of Tasmania	1	1	1 – invalid
The Office of Tasmanian Assessment, Standards and Certification (TASC)	0	1	1 – declined
University of Tasmania	2	3	2 – decision (varied) 1 – declined
Grand total	**130**	**72**	

Case examples – notable decisions and early resolution work

Please note that all external review decisions are published at ombudsman.tas.gov.au

H and Department for Education, Children and Young People

This matter related to an applicant, H, who sought information about sexual abuse which occurred in their childhood. The information was the subject of a report to the public authority which has now become the Department for Education, Children and Young People (DECYP). The external review considered whether exemptions claimed by DECYP applied, and whether all relevant information was located.

We determined that additional information could be released to H, due to the strong public interest in victim-survivors being given relevant information about the response to their complaints of abuse. Our office was also able to help H raise concerns regarding a missing recording of an interview and other documents. DECYP then located these after a further search and released them in full to H. H was very appreciative of the assistance to obtain this further information.

Adam Holmes and the Department of Premier and Cabinet

Mr Holmes sought assessed disclosure under the RTI Act of information relating to a document titled *Legal Fees related Ministers or Members of Government* which had been tabled in a Legislative Council Budget Estimates Committee in 2024. He specifically sought details of legal services provided, to whom, and relevant invoices. It eventually reached external review and this decision considered whether the Department of Premier and Cabinet (the Department) was correct to rely upon s22(4) to neither confirm nor deny the existence of some of the information relevant to Mr Holmes' request. In submissions to Ombudsman Tasmania, the Department set out its reasons for relying on s22(4), noting its view that even confirming the existence of the information it considered exempt under s30(1) of the Act would breach secrecy provisions in other legislation.

The Ombudsman did not accept that the Department was right to use s22(4). The information had already been publicly confirmed to exist through official channels, so refusing to confirm or deny that it existed was somewhat absurd. The proper course of action was to assess the requested information for release in the usual way: consider whether any exemption or refusal provision applied, and explain the conclusions in a decision. The Ombudsman acknowledged that, given the circumstances, it may only have been possible to give brief, non-specific reasons. However, the RTI Act is clear that discretions conferred should be exercised so as to release the maximum amount of official information, so this was still the better approach. The Ombudsman found that only a small amount of the relevant information was actually exempt under s30(1) because releasing it could prejudice the operation of other law enforcement legislation.

Own-motion investigation finalised – March 2026

In March 2026, the Ombudsman finalised an own-motion investigation under the *Ombudsman Act 1978* reviewing the release of personal information in error by public authorities implementing decisions on assessed disclosure applications.

Why was the investigation conducted?

This investigation was initiated by the former Ombudsman after he become aware of multiple incidents of public authorities releasing personal information in error when responding to requests for information under the RTI Act. One incident involved the erroneous release of personal information relating to children who were in State care due to sexual abuse concerns; another involved the release of private contact details of members of the public raising concerns with a local government authority.

How was the investigation conducted?

The investigation sought information from all Tasmanian public authorities fully subject to the RTI Act about whether they had documented processes to guide staff on how to accurately implement decisions under the Act and respond to privacy breaches. The investigation also included a targeted audit of City of Hobart and the Department for Education, Children and Young People due to the known incidents at these agencies. The departments of Health and Police, Fire and Emergency Management were also audited because they receive a high volume of information requests and hold a significant amount of personal information. In these audits, we reviewed 10 randomly selected files from each public authority to assess whether personal information found to be exempt in the relevant decision had actually been redacted in information released.

Findings

Audited public authorities were found to be releasing personal information in error in 30–40% of the files audited at each authority. The investigation also found that very few public authorities had any written guidance requiring quality assurance before releasing information or on how to respond to privacy breaches consistently and appropriately. We also found instances of ineffective redaction methods and unclear naming conventions.

Why this is of concern

The Ombudsman found that the high error rate and lack of procedural guidance to reduce the chance of errors or to respond appropriately was a widespread issue requiring change. The inappropriate release of personal information, such as names, addresses and personal contact details, can result in significant adverse consequences being suffered by those affected. The release of personal information can impact on the privacy of individuals, and in some circumstances expose them to the risk of physical or psychological harm. It may also result in a breach of principles in the *Personal Information Protection Act 2004.*

The Ombudsman's recommendations

The Ombudsman made the following recommendations to reduce the likelihood of personal information being released in error by public authorities when implementing decisions under the Act:

1. *All public authorities should document and implement procedures which mandate additional checking of the information intended to be released under the Right to Information Act 2009 when this contains personal information assessed as being exempt under s36 of that Act.*

2. *All public authorities should develop a written guidance document to inform their staff as to how to respond to the inadvertent release of personal information identified as exempt under s36 of the Right to Information Act 2009. This should contain an expectation that, if practicable, the affected individuals be notified of the breach and the type of information released, and be informed of their rights under the Personal Information Protection Act 2004 to complain about the release of their personal information.*
3. *All public authorities should undertake an audit of their past 30 decisions or those made within the last 12 months under the Right to Information Act 2009 (whichever is fewer) in which information was found to be exempt under s36. This audit should ascertain if any personal information has been released in error and if process changes are needed to reduce commonly occurring errors. Appropriate steps should be taken to rectify any breaches of the Personal Information Protection Act 2004 if these are identified in the audit.*
4. *Any public authorities which regularly deal with information relating to children and victim-survivors of sexual abuse, specifically but not limited to the Department for Education, Children and Young People, should conduct an additional review of the appropriateness of their information disclosure practices. This review should focus on whether these practices limit harm and do not cause additional trauma, in recognition of the sensitivity of the personal information of which they are the custodians.*
5. *All public authorities should review their redaction methods and naming conventions regarding documents to be released under the Right to Information Act 2009 to ensure that these are effective and that personal information is not inadvertently released.*

Ongoing monitoring

The Ombudsman has asked all public authorities subject to this investigation to advise whether they support these recommendations in full or in part, and to provide a timeline for implementing them. Ombudsman Tasmania will report on the uptake and implementation of these recommendations in 2026–27.

The Ombudsman's full investigation report can be found on the Right to Information publications page on our website at **ombudsman.tas.gov.au**.

Section 9

Energy Ombudsman Act 1998



Year at a glance

Points of interest for the year

- **The number of complaints received and resolved increased compared with last year.**
- **Billing problems accounted for 57% of all complaint issues.**
- **Credit-related complaints were up by 95% on 2024–25.**
- **Average time to resolve cases improved, with 77% of complaints resolved within 30 days.**



600 **Total approaches**
All complaints and enquiries received

Complaints



263
complaints received



239
complaints closed

Enquiries



337
enquiries received



332
enquiries closed

Time taken to close complaints and enquiries



65%
1 week or less **(372)**

12%
8 to 30 days **(68)**

12%
1 to 6 months **(67)**

11%
More than 6 months **(64)**

Overview

This year we experienced a 30% increase in the number of complaints compared to the previous year. Despite this, the team maintained a strong focus on resolving complaints and enquiries promptly: 600 cases were opened, and 571 cases were closed – a clearance rate of 95%.

The team also achieved its strongest case closure performance in the past three years, with more than three-quarters (77%) of complaints closed within 30 days. The proportion of complaints taking between one and six months to close decreased significantly to 12% (2024–25: 31%). This improvement reflects our early engagement, strong working relationships with energy providers and a continued focus on efficient complaint handling. Looking ahead, the team will continue to streamline its processes, work constructively with energy providers and identify opportunities to improve service delivery.

The rollout of smart meters across the National Energy Market has been a significant change for Tasmania's energy sector. Under recent amendments to the National Energy Retail Rules, a customer can no longer opt out of a smart meter exchange. While the rollout is nearing completion, the office continues to receive complaints relating to smart metering, meter exchanges, data accuracy, remote readings and administrative errors associated with the new meters.

Smart meters are playing an important role in supporting the increasing uptake of rooftop solar, battery storage and electric vehicles. These technologies provide consumers with greater choice and control over their energy use, but they also contribute to more complex complaints. The office is increasingly dealing with matters involving technical issues, multiple market participants and complex regulations.

Affordability remains a significant concern for many Tasmanians and complaints about credit matters increased by 95% compared to the previous year. Ongoing cost-of-living challenges, increased reliance on payment assistance and debt management arrangements and reduced access to energy bill relief grants compared with the previous year all appear to have contributed to this trend. The increase in complaints highlights the importance of ensuring consumers can access support as they navigate a rapidly changing energy landscape.

These emerging trends are expected to become an increasingly important area of work for the office. To support consumers navigating the evolving energy market, a newly established Engagement Officer role within the team will focus on improving community awareness and helping Tasmanians understand their energy rights and responsibilities over the next year.



Affordability remains a significant concern for many Tasmanians, and complaints about credit matters increased by 95% compared to the previous year.

Summary of complaints and enquiries

Table 13 Enquiries

Enquiries	2023–24	2024–25	2025–26	Variance
Received	336	342	337	-1%
Closed	383	353	332	-6%

	2024–25	2025–26	Variance
Out-of-jurisdiction enquiries closed	31	44	42%

There was a small decrease in the overall number of enquiries for 2025–26. However, out-of-jurisdiction enquiries increased by 42%. These mostly related to private energy providers, electricians and/or bottled gas. While these matters fall outside of jurisdiction, the office continues to provide information, referrals and guidance to consumers where possible to help them resolve their concerns.

Table 14 Complaints

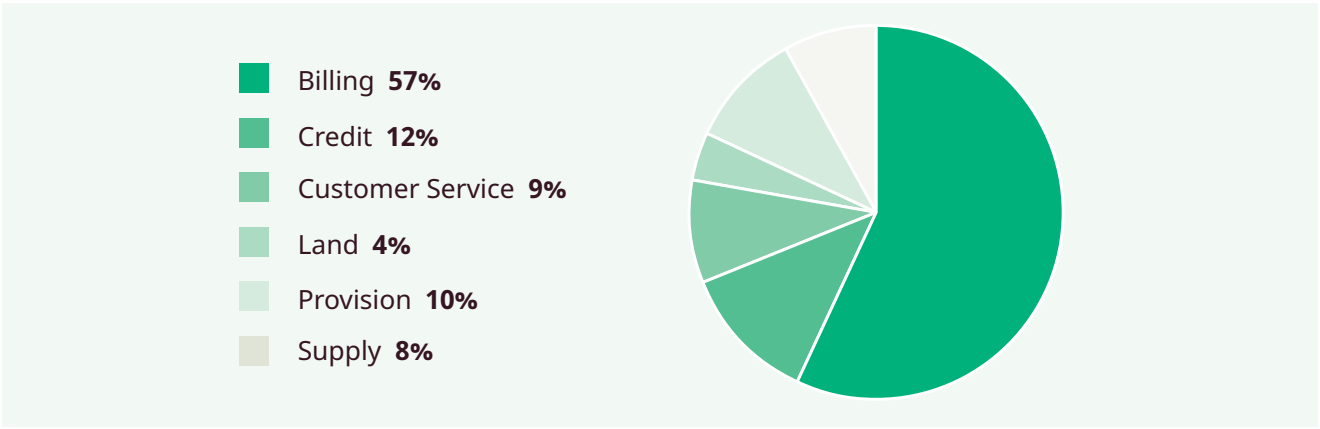
Complaints	2023–24	2024–25	2025–26	Variance
Received	244	202	263	30%
Closed	263	235	239	2%

There was a significant increase (30%) in complaints received during the year. While this growth was driven by a range of factors, the increase appears to reflect the combined impact of ongoing cost-of-living pressures, the rollout of smart meters and consumers' growing adoption of new energy technologies.

Table 15 Summary of issues

Issue	2023–24	2024–25	2025–26	Variance
Billing	266	205	182	-11%
Credit	19	20	39	95%
Customer Service	38	28	30	7%
Land	15	20	14	-30%
Provision	12	19	31	63%
Supply	10	21	25	19%
Total	**360**	**313**	**321**	**3%**

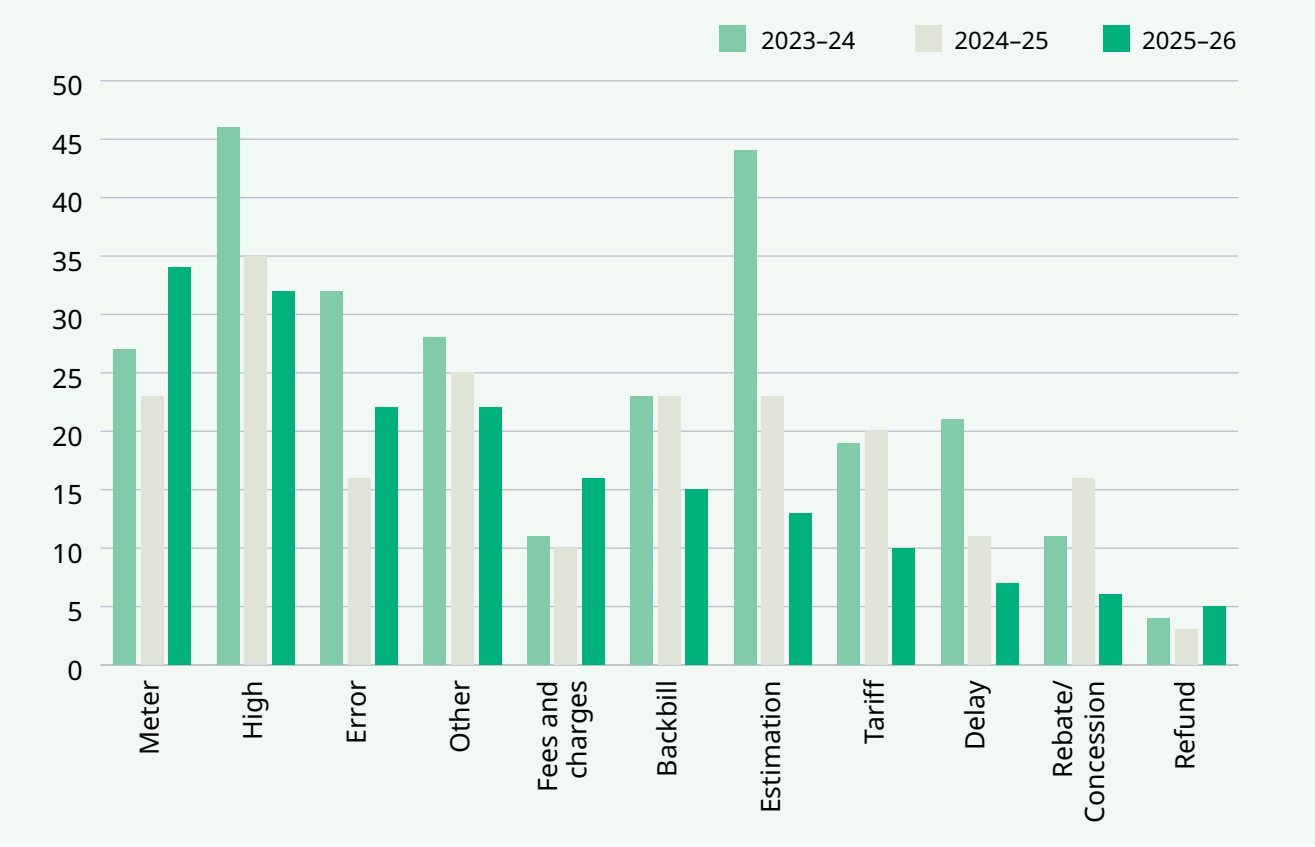
Figure 4 Summary of issues



While billing remained the largest issue, billing complaints decreased by 11% compared to the previous year. In contrast, credit-related complaints increased by 95%, reflecting growing consumer concerns about payment difficulties, debt management and financial vulnerability.

The subcategory issues within billing complaints are outlined below.

Figure 5 Billing subcategory issues: three-year comparison



High bills remained one of the most common billing issues raised during the year, reflecting ongoing consumer concern about energy affordability. Meter-related billing complaints also increased significantly, rising by 48% in 2025–26 to the highest level recorded over the past three years. Many of these complaints were associated with the final stages of Tasmania's smart meter rollout and involved concerns about remote meter readings, meter faults, data accuracy and requests to opt out of meter exchanges. The reduction of complaints about bill estimation (-43%) is unsurprising given that smart meters now remove the need for physical meter reads in most cases.

Closure reasons

Table 16 Complaint closure reasons

Provider	Withdrawn, dismissed, out of jurisdiction	Resolved and referred back to higher level	Total
Aurora Energy	34	115	**149**
TasNetworks	11	36	**47**
1st Energy	4	27	**31**
Solstice Energy	3	3	**6**
Momentum Energy	0	2	**2**
CovaU Energy	0	2	**2**
Energy Locals	0	2	**2**
Grand total	**52**	**187**	**239**

Most complaints closed during the year resulted in a successful resolution. Of the 239 complaints finalised, 78% were resolved through facilitated or negotiated outcomes, while 22% were withdrawn, dismissed or found to be outside jurisdiction. Resolutions included remedies such as *ex gratia* payments, waivers of charges, apologies, service commitments and detailed explanations accepted by complainants. These outcomes highlight the effectiveness of the office's dispute resolution processes in achieving fair and practical outcomes for energy consumers.

Table 17 Time taken to resolve complaints and enquiries

Timeframe	2023–24		2024–25		2025–26	
1 week or less	203	31%	287	49%	372	65%
8 to 30 days	200	31%	83	14%	68	12%
1 to 6 months	113	17%	185	31%	67	12%
More than six months	130	20%	33	6%	64	11%

The time taken to resolve complaints improved considerably during the year, with almost two-thirds of complaints finalised within one week. This is a substantial improvement on previous years and reflects both improved operational efficiency and a greater focus on resolving matters at the earliest opportunity.

The proportion of complaints requiring between eight and 30 days and between one and six months to resolve, also declined. While there was a modest increase in complaints taking longer than six months to resolve, these matters generally involved complex investigations or systemic issues that required extended enquiries. Despite this increase, the overall timeliness data indicates that consumers are receiving outcomes more quickly, with 77% of complaints resolved within 30 days compared with 63% in 2024–25 and 62% in 2023–24.

Case summaries

1st Energy – June 2026

Request to opt out of a smart meter exchange

We received a complaint from Ms L about her request to opt out of a smart meter exchange citing health concerns related to radiofrequency emissions.

We explained to Ms L that the rollout of smart meters is an initiative of the Australian Energy Market Commission, which introduced rules requiring smart meters to be installed across Australia by 2030. In addition, recent amendments to the National Energy Retail Rules (the Rules) removed a customer's ability to opt out of a smart meter installation. As long as appropriate notice is given, a customer will not be able to refuse.

My Investigation Officer undertook enquiries with 1st Energy and it agreed to exchange Ms L's meter at a later date. Ms L understood she could not opt out altogether.

To address Ms L's radiofrequency concerns, my Investigation Officer explained she may request that the communications functionality of the meter be disabled. If disabled, the meter will no longer transmit data remotely or emit radiofrequency signals associated with wireless communications. However, without the communications function, the meter would need to be read manually. As a result, the meter provider may charge a fee for meter reading.

Ms L was also advised that smart meters are required to meet Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency (ARPANSA) radiofrequency exposure standards. She was also directed to ARPANSA's website for additional independent information about smart meters and radiofrequency exposure.

The enquiries undertaken by my Investigation Officer resulted in a detailed explanation provided to Ms L and temporary delay of the meter exchange. As the decision to deploy smart meters is not an administrative error, no further investigation was undertaken.

Aurora Energy – October 2025

Catch-up billing

We received a complaint about a significant catch-up electricity bill issued after an advanced meter was installed. Mr B advised us that he had previously received bills that were generally consistent with his expectations and was shocked to receive a bill for approximately $12,700. He disputed the accuracy of the bill and considered the consumption recorded on the removed basic meter to be excessive.

My Investigation Officer made enquiries with both Aurora Energy and TasNetworks. The information obtained by us established that Mr B's electricity account had been billed using estimated meter readings since August 2018. The primary reason recorded for the estimated readings was the presence of dogs at the property, which prevented TasNetworks meter readers from safely accessing the meter. Aurora Energy advised Mr B on his bills that the charges were based on estimated readings. However, Aurora Energy had made no direct contact about accessing Mr B's meter since November 2021.

The Ombudsman considered that Aurora Energy had not tried hard enough to obtain an actual meter reading, as required under the National Energy Retail Rules. However, Mr B also had a responsibility to provide safe and unhindered access to the meter.

As both parties contributed to the circumstances leading to the catch-up bill, my Investigation Officer recommended the bill be shared between the parties. Aurora Energy accepted the recommendation and applied a credit of $3,674.58 to Mr B's account, which was approximately 50% of the charges accrued after November 2021. Aurora Energy also implemented a new process to ensure it follows up with customers who receive consecutive estimated bills over a long period.

Aurora Energy – May 2026

Cross-metering

Mr K, a tenant of a multi-tenancy building, complained when he discovered he had been assigned to the wrong electricity meter since 2020. Mr K became aware of the issue after returning from an overseas trip and receiving an unexpectedly high electricity bill. As the property had been vacant during his absence, he expected his energy consumption to be minimal and contacted his energy retailer and landlord to investigate.

The landlord engaged an electrical contractor to inspect the metering arrangements. This identified that two meters within the building had been crossed, resulting in each customer being billed for the other's electricity consumption.

By the time the complaint reached my office, the retailers responsible for both affected customers had corrected the meter registration details in the National Electricity Market, ensuring future bills would be issued against the correct meters.

However, one customer had been incorrectly billed for approximately five years. The matter was further complicated by the fact that he had previously been a customer of 1st Energy and transferred to Aurora Energy after he became aware of the metering error.

Retailers are not generally required to proactively identify if a customer is linked to the correct meter. However, my Principal Officer made enquiries that revealed Aurora Energy ought reasonably to have been aware of the issue since 2019. Another tenant at the property had made enquiries about the metering back then.

Historical billing information was obtained from both retailers and compared against the consumption recorded on the correctly assigned meter. This analysis identified an approximate billing discrepancy of $500. In recognition of the circumstances, Aurora Energy agreed to apply a credit of that amount to the customer's account as a customer service gesture.

TasNetworks – December 2025

High-voltage infrastructure dispute

Owners of a farming property discovered, during a proposed subdivision process, that a 22kV high-voltage overhead powerline supplying their property was located above their large machinery shed. TasNetworks' approval was needed as a condition of the planning permit for subdivision.

TasNetworks advised us that, as owner of the powerline, it had to maintain minimum safety clearances and could not permit structures within 6 metres of either side of the line. While TasNetworks did not object to the subdivision, it advised us that approval would be conditional upon either relocating the powerline or relocating/removing the shed.

The owners made a complaint to our office. They disputed that they should bear the cost of rectifying the issue. The shed had been built by a previous owner and there was no registered easement on the property's title to alert them when they bought the land.

Following extensive investigation and negotiation, TasNetworks agreed to register an easement on the property title at its own cost. The easement formally recognised the machinery shed as an approved encroachment beneath the powerline. TasNetworks also absorbed all associated surveying, legal and registration costs.

The outcome secured the ongoing rights of the current and future landowners, enabled the subdivision to proceed and avoided the need for the owners to relocate the shed or fund alterations to the powerline.

Section 10

Official Visitor programs



Overview

The Office of the Ombudsman administers two official visitor programs: Prison Official Visitors and Mental Health Official Visitors. Both programs are governed by Tasmanian law.

Prison Official Visitors

What do Prison Official Visitors do?

Prison Official Visitors help make sure that people in prison and people held in custody are treated fairly.

The Official Visitors check:

- the conditions in prisons
- how prisons are managed
- how correctional officers and other staff treat prisoners and detainees
- whether prisoners and detainees' concerns are being addressed.

Official Visitors can also help prisoners and detainees with their concerns and complaints. The Ombudsman is the Coordinator of the Prison Official Visitors Program. The Minister for Justice appoints Official Visitors under the *Corrections Act 1997*.

Official Visitors:

- are appointed for 3 years
- work independently
- can visit prisons and speak with prisoners and detainees
- can report concerns to the Minister for Justice or the Director of Prison Services.

Where do Official Visitors visit?

At 1 July 2025, there were six Prison Official Visitors. Official Visitors visited the prison facilities 74 times in 2025–26. Lockdown and infectious illness caused another eight scheduled visits to be cancelled.

Official Visitors visited all prison facilities in Tasmania, including the:

- Hobart Reception Prison
- Launceston Reception Prison
- Risdon Prison Complex
- Southern Remand Centre.

Official Visitors are regular members of the Tasmanian community and have different backgrounds, skills and experiences. This helps them understand the prison environment from different perspectives.

How do Official Visitors work?

Corrective Services and correctional officers recognise the important role of Official Visitors. Official Visitors are given good cooperation by prison management and staff. Visitors have unrestricted access to prisoners and detainees except when there are significant lockdowns. This means they can speak with prisoners and detainees privately about their concerns. Many everyday problems can be dealt with during a visit. At the end of each visit, Official Visitors speak with prison managers about what they have seen and any action that may be needed.

Official Visitors can also help prisoners and detainees make a formal complaint to the Ombudsman. They can provide an Ombudsman complaint form and explain how to use it. Complaint forms are also available from prison officers and prison management. However, some prisoners may find it difficult to ask for a form without help.

Why are regular visits important?

The regular visits that Official Visitors make help them to:

- see what is happening in the prison
- identify changes over time
- follow up on concerns raised by prisoners and detainees
- check whether concerns are being addressed.

Under section 10(7) of the *Corrections Act 1997,* the Coordinator of the Official Visitors must provide an annual report to the Minister. The report explains the work and activities of the Official Visitors.

Mental Health Official Visitors

What do Mental Health Official Visitors do?

Mental Health Official Visitors help ensure the rights and wellbeing of people receiving mental health care under the *Mental Health Act 2013.* They monitor:

- how people are assessed
- the treatment they receive
- the care they receive
- the conditions in which they are cared for.

The Ombudsman is the Principal Official Visitor.

Where do they visit?

Mental Health Official Visitors visit approved mental health facilities every month. This includes the secure mental health unit at the Wilfred Lopes Centre.

Official Visitors can also visit other places where services are provided under the Mental Health Act.

What do they look at?

Official Visitors check that patients are informed of their rights and that these rights are respected. They also check that facilities are suitable for patients. They pay particular attention to:

- recreation
- activities and work
- training
- rehabilitation
- the quality and availability of these services.

Official Visitors made 66 visits that are required under the Act to approved facilities in 2025–26. Additionally, the program took more than 100 complaints by email, phone and letter. Of the 225 complaints received from all sources to June 2026, 79% of complainants were seen in person by a Mental Health Official Visitor at least once, and some were visited multiple times.

How do they deal with concerns?

Official Visitors listen to patients and can receive complaints or concerns. They may refer matters to the Principal Official Visitor when:

- a patient makes a complaint
- they believe the Mental Health Act may not have been followed
- they believe another matter needs to be investigated.

The Principal Official Visitor can then consider whether further action or investigation is needed.

Annual reporting

Under section 166 of the *Mental Health Act 2013,* the Principal Official Visitor must provide a report to the Minister for Health at the end of each financial year. The report explains the work and activities of the Mental Health Official Visitors.

Financial Statements 2025–26



Contents

Contracts and Consultancies Awarded	65
Statement of Certification	66
Office of the Ombudsman and Health Complaints Commissioner Statement of Comprehensive Income for the year ended 30 June 2026	67
Office of the Ombudsman and Health Complaints Commissioner Statement of Financial Position as at 30 June 2026	68
Office of the Ombudsman and Health Complaints Commissioner Statement of Cash Flows for the year ended 30 June 2026	69
Office of the Ombudsman and Health Complaints Commissioner Statement of Changes in Equity for the year ended 30 June 2026	70
Notes to and forming part of the Financial Statements for the year ended 30 June 2026	71

Contracts and Consultancies Awarded

The Office of the Ombudsman and Health Complaints Commissioner ensures that Tasmanian businesses are given every opportunity to compete for Agency business. It is the Office's policy to support Tasmanian businesses whenever they offer best value for money.

Office of the Ombudsman and Health Complaints Commissioner

- Spark Strategy was engaged to facilitate a strategic planning workshop and use the information from this workshop to draft a formal strategic plan for all functions of the Ombudsman and Health Complaints Commissioner – complete payment $15,000.
- The Project Lab, a Tasmania based consultancy, are currently engaged to facilitate organisational design, technology uplift, change management, and employee consultation for all functions of the Ombudsman and Health Complaints Commissioner. The contract will be finalised in 2026-27 – part payment $63,800.

Statement of Certification

The accompanying Financial Statements of the Office of the Ombudsman and Health Complaints Commissioner are in agreement with the relevant accounts and records and have been prepared in compliance with Treasurer's Instructions issued under the provision of the *Financial Management Act 2016* to present fairly the financial transactions for the year ended 30 June 2026 and the financial position as at the end of the year.

At the date of signing, we are not aware of any circumstances which would render the particulars included in the financial statements misleading or inaccurate.



Dr Grant Davies
OMBUDSMAN

15 September 2026

Statement of Comprehensive Income for the year ended 30 June 2026

	Notes	2026 Budget $'000	2026 Actual $'000	2025 Actual $'000
Income from continuing operations				
Revenue from Government				
Appropriation revenue – operating	2.1	5 314	5 029	4 591
Other Revenue from Government	2.1	258	258	260
Grants		75	-	-
Revenue from Energy Entities	2.2	792	705	947
Other revenue	2.3	-	30	-
Total revenue from continuing operations		**6 439**	**6 022**	**5 798**
Expenses from continuing operations				
Employee benefits	3.1	5 455	5 018	4 380
Depreciation and amortisation	3.2	72	80	80
Supplies and consumables	3.3	898	934	999
Other expenses	3.4	103	246	250
Total expenses from continuing operations		**6 528**	**6 278**	**5 709**
Net result from continuing operations (net operating balance)		**(89)**	**(256)**	**89**
Comprehensive result		**(89)**	**(256)**	**89**

This Statement of Comprehensive Income should be read in conjunction with the accompanying notes.

Budget information refers to original estimates and has not been subject to audit.

Explanations of material variances between budget and actual outcomes are provided in Note 1 of the accompanying notes.

Statement of Financial Position as at 30 June 2026

	Notes	2026 Budget $'000	2026 Actual $'000	2025 Actual $'000
Assets				
Financial assets				
Cash and deposits	7.1	454	436	465
Receivables	4.1	50	33	16
Non-financial assets				
Property, plant and equipment	4.2	366	266	346
Other assets	4.3	-	156	145
Total assets		**870**	**891**	**972**
Liabilities				
Payables	5.1	17	25	16
Employee benefits	5.2	900	1 200	1 047
Other liabilities	5.4	-	13	-
Total liabilities		**917**	**1 238**	**1 063**
Net assets/(liabilities)		**(47)**	**(347)**	**(91)**
Equity				
Accumulated funds		(47)	(347)	(91)
Total equity		**(47)**	**(347)**	**(91)**

This Statement of Financial Position should be read in conjunction with the accompanying notes.

Budget information refers to original estimates and has not been subject to audit.

Explanations of material variances between budget and actual outcomes are provided in Note 1 of the accompanying notes.

Statement of Cash Flows for the year ended 30 June 2026

	Notes	2026 Budget $'000	2026 Actual $'000	2025 Actual $'000
Cash flows from operating activities		Inflows (Outflows)	Inflows (Outflows)	Inflows (Outflows)
Cash inflows				
Appropriation receipts – operating		5 314	5 029	4 591
Appropriation receipts – other		258	258	260
Grants		75	-	-
GST receipts		120	88	167
Revenue from Energy Entities		792	696	949
Other revenue		-	30	1
Total cash inflows		**6 559**	**6 101**	**5 968**
Cash outflows				
Employee benefits		(4 798)	(4 228)	(3 672)
Superannuation		(640)	(618)	(539)
GST payments		(120)	(96)	(135)
Supplies and consumables		(898)	(974)	(1 033)
Other cash payments		(103)	(214)	(266)
Total cash outflows		**(6 559)**	**(6 130)**	**(5 645)**
Net cash from/(used by) operating activities	7.2	**-**	**(29)**	**323**
Cash flows from investing activities				
Cash outflows				
Payments for leasehold improvements		-	-	-
Net cash from/(used by) investing activities		**-**	**-**	**-**
Net increase/(decrease) in cash held and cash equivalents		**-**	**(29)**	**323**
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the reporting period		**454**	**465**	**142**
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the reporting period	7.1	**454**	**436**	**465**

This Statement of Cash Flows should be read in conjunction with the accompanying notes.

Budget information refers to original estimates and has not been subject to audit.

Explanations of material variances between budget and actual outcomes are provided in Note 1 of the accompanying notes.

Statement of Changes in Equity for the year ended 30 June 2026

	Accumulated surplus/ deficit $'000	Total equity $'000
Balance as at 1 July 2025	**(91)**	**(91)**
Total comprehensive result	(256)	(256)
Total	**(256)**	**(256)**
Balance as at 30 June 2026	**(347)**	**(347)**

	Accumulated surplus/ deficit $'000	Total equity $'000
Balance as at 1 July 2024	**(181)**	**(181)**
Total comprehensive result	89	89
Total	**89**	**89**
Balance as at 30 June 2025	**(91)**	**(91)**

This Statement of Changes in Equity should be read in conjunction with the accompanying notes.

Notes to and forming part of the Financial Statements for the year ended 30 June 2026

Note 1 Explanations of Material Variances between Budget and Actual Outcomes 72

1.1 Statement of Comprehensive Income 72
1.2 Statement of Financial Position 72
1.3 Statement of Cash Flows 73

Note 2 Revenue 73

2.1 Revenue from Government 73
2.2 Revenue from Energy Entities 74
2.3 Other revenue 74

Note 3 Expenses 75

3.1 Employee Benefits 75
3.2 Depreciation and Amortisation 77
3.3 Supplies and Consumables 77
3.4 Other Expenses 78

Note 4 Assets 78

4.1 Receivables 78
4.2 Property, Plant and Equipment 79
4.3 Other Assets 80

Note 5 Liabilities 81

5.1 Payables 81
5.2 Employee Liabilities 81
5.3 Superannuation 82
5.4 Other liabilities 82

Note 6 Commitments and Contingencies 83

6.1 Schedule of Commitments 83
6.2 Contingent Assets and Liabilities 84

Note 7 Cash Flow Reconciliation 84

7.1 Cash and Deposits 84
7.2 Reconciliation of Net Result to Net Cash from Operating Activities 85

Note 8 Financial Instruments 85

8.1 Risk Exposures 85
8.2 Categories of Financial Assets and Liabilities 88
8.3 Comparison between Carrying Amount and Net Fair Values of Financial Assets and Liabilities 88

Note 9 Output Group Information 89

Note 10 Events Occurring After Balance Date 89

Note 11 Significant Accounting Policies 89

11.1 Objectives and Funding 89
11.2 Basis of Accounting 90
11.3 Reporting Entity 90
11.4 Functional and Presentation Currency 90
11.5 Changes in Accounting Policies 91
11.6 Foreign Currency 91
11.7 Comparative Figures 91
11.8 Rounding 91
11.9 Office Taxation 91
11.10 Goods and Services Tax 91

Note 1 Explanations of Material Variances between Budget and Actual Outcomes

Budget information refers to original estimates as disclosed in the 2025-26 Budget Papers and is not subject to audit.

Variances are considered material where the variance exceeds the greater of 10 per cent of Budget estimate and $125,000.

1.1 Statement of Comprehensive Income

	Note	2026 Budget $'000	2026 Actual $'000	Variance $'000	Variance %
Grants	(a)	75	-	(75)	(100)
Other expenses	(b)	103	246	143	>100

Notes to Statement of Comprehensive Income variances

a) The budgeted grants revenue is commonwealth funding available for the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (OPCAT) project. Due to delays in recruiting and vacancy of positions, the grants revenue was not utilised in the financial year.

b) The variance reflects the under classification in budget and utilisation of salary savings to facilitate non budgeted expenses for organisational improvement including; consultation services for organisation efficiencies, training and equipment upgrades to mitigate WHS risk.

1.2 Statement of Financial Position

Budget estimates for the 2025-26 Statement of Financial Position were compiled prior to the completion of the actual outcomes for 2024-25. As a result, the actual variance from the Original Budget estimate will be impacted by the difference between estimated and actual opening balances for 2025-26. The following variance analysis therefore includes major changes between 2025-26 Budget to Actual balances and between the 30 June 2025 and 30 June 2026 actual balances.

	Note	2026 Budget $'000	2026 Actual $'000	2025 Actual $'000	Budget Variance $'000	Actual Variance $'000
Other assets	(a)	-	156	145	156	11
Employee benefits	(b)	900	1 200	1 047	300	153

Notes to Statement of Financial Position variances

a) This reflects an increase in prepayment commitments than budgeted.

b) Increase is the result of long-term state service employees with high leave balances, in additional to salary increases.

1.3 Statement of Cash Flows

	Note	2026 Budget $'000	2026 Actual $'000	Variance $'000	Variance %
Employee benefits	(a)	(4 798)	(4 228)	(570)	12%

Notes to Statement of Cash Flows variances

a) This variance is reflective of resource vacancy and a reimbursement of workers compensation payments

Note 2 Revenue

Income is recognised in the Statement of Comprehensive Income when an increase in future economic benefits related to an increase in an asset or a decrease of a liability has arisen that can be measured reliably.

Income is recognised in accordance with the requirements of AASB 15 *Revenue from Contracts with Customers* or AASB 1058 *Income of Not-for-Profit Entities*, dependent on whether there is a contract with a customer defined by AASB 15.

2.1 Revenue from Government

Appropriations, whether operating or capital, are recognised as revenues in the period in which the Office gains control of the appropriated funds as they do not contain enforceable and sufficiently specific obligations as defined by AASB 15. Except for any amounts identified as carried forward, control arises in the period of appropriation.

Revenue from Government includes revenue from appropriations.

Section 23 of the Financial Management Act allows for an unexpended appropriation at the end of the financial year, as determined by the Treasurer, to be issued and applied from the Public Account in the following financial year. The amount determined by the Treasurer must not exceed five per cent of an Agency's appropriation for the financial year.

The Budget information is based on original estimates and has not been subject to audit.

	2026 Budget $'000	2026 Actual $'000	2025 Actual $'000
Continuing operations			
Revenue from Government			
Appropriation revenue – recurrent			
Current year	5 314	5 029	4 591
Total	**5 314**	**5 029**	**4 591**
Revenue from Government – other			
Appropriation Rollover under section 23 of the *Financial Management Act 2016*	258	258	260
Total	**258**	**258**	**260**
Total revenue from Government	**5 572**	**5 287**	**4 851**

2.2 Revenue from Energy Entities

Revenue from energy entities is recognised in the period in which the Office gains control of the funds. A membership fee is payable by each energy entity, within the meaning of the *Energy Ombudsman Act 1998.* A complaint levy is payable based on the number of complaints and enquiries received by the Ombudsman against an entity during the previous calendar year, as a proportion of the total number of complaints and enquiries received by the Ombudsman during that period.

	2026 $'000	2025 $'000
Energy Entities Membership and Complaint Levy Fees	705	947
Total	**705**	**947**

2.3 Other revenue

Revenue from other sources is recognised when the Office gains control of the funds and it is probable that the inflow of funds has occurred and can be reliably measured.

	2026 $'000	2025 $'000
Office lease landlord contribution	30	-
Total	**30**	**-**

The Office received a contribution associated with its office accommodation at Level 6, 27 Elizabeth Street, Hobart. The contribution was received in lieu of carpet replacement works under the accommodation arrangements for the premises.

Note 3 Expenses

Expenses are recognised in the Statement of Comprehensive Income when a decrease in future economic benefits related to a decrease in asset or an increase of a liability has arisen that can be measured reliably.

3.1 Employee Benefits

Employee benefits include, where applicable, entitlements to wages and salaries, annual leave, sick leave, long service leave, superannuation and any other post-employment benefits.

(a) Employee costs

	2026 $'000	2025 $'000
Wages and salaries	3 434	3 100
Annual leave	299	358
Long service leave	103	103
Sick leave	178	133
Superannuation – defined contribution scheme	630	566
Superannuation – defined benefit scheme	8	-
Other employee expenses	366	120
Total	**5 018**	**4 380**

Superannuation expenses relating to defined contribution schemes are paid directly to superannuation funds at a rate of 12 per cent (2024-25: 11.5 per cent) of salary, which is the Superannuation Guarantee rate set by the Australian Government. In addition, the Office is also required to pay into the Public Account a "gap" payment equivalent to 3.45 per cent (2024-25: 3.45 per cent) of salary in respect of employees who are members of contribution schemes.

Superannuation expenses relating to defined benefit schemes relate to payments into the Public Account. The amount of the payment is based on an employer contribution rate determined by the Treasurer, on the advice of the State Actuary. The current employer contribution is 12.95 per cent (2024-25: 12.95 per cent) of salary.

(b) Remuneration of Key Management Personnel

2026	Short-term benefits		Long-term benefits			
	Salary $'000	Other Benefits	Super-annuation $'000	Leave Benefits $'000	Termination Benefits $'000	Total $'000
Key management personnel						
Dr Grant Davies, Ombudsman (from 14 July 2025)	273	110	31	24	-	438
Richard Connock, Ombudsman (to 13 July 2025)	9	8	2	(146)	146	19
	282	**118**	**33**	**(122)**	**146**	**457**

2025	Short-term benefits		Long-term benefits			
	Salary $'000	Other Benefits	Super-annuation $'000	Leave Benefits $'000	Termination Benefits $'000	Total $'000
Key management personnel						
Richard Connock, Ombudsman	303	27	35	12	-	377
	303	**27**	**35**	**12**	**-**	**377**

Key management personnel are those persons having authority and responsibility for planning, directing and controlling the activities of the agency, directly or indirectly.

Remuneration during 2025-26 for key personnel is set by the State Service Act 2000. Remuneration and other terms of employment are specified in employment contracts. Remuneration includes salary, allowances and other non-monetary benefits. Long term employee expenses include annual and long service leave, superannuation obligations and termination payments. Short-term benefits include motor vehicle and car parking fringe benefits in addition to any other short-term benefits. Other benefits include reportable fringe benefits, reimbursement of approved relocation and establishment expenses incurred in connection with the commencement of employment, all other forms of employment allowances, payments in lieu of leave, non-monetary benefits and any other compensation paid and payable. Fringe benefits have been reported at the grossed up reportable fringe benefits amount. The Fringe Benefits Tax (FBT) year runs from 1 April to 31 March each year, any FBT attributable to key management personnel is reported on that basis. Long term employee expenses include long service and superannuation obligations.

It should be noted that because annual and long service leave liabilities are calculated by discounting future cashflows (detailed in Note 5.2) which may change from year to year, it is possible for key personnel to accrue negative leave benefits in any particular financial year, or they may utilise more leave than they accrue in any particular financial year.

Acting Arrangements

When members of key management personnel are unable to fulfil their duties, consideration is given to appointing other members of senior staff to their position during their period of absence. Individuals are considered members of key management personnel when acting arrangements are for more than a period of one month.

(c) Related Party Transactions

There are no related party transactions requiring disclosure.

3.2 Depreciation and Amortisation

All applicable Non-financial assets having a limited useful life are systematically depreciated over their useful lives in a manner which reflects the consumption of their service potential. Depreciation is provided for on a straight line basis, using rates which are reviewed annually.

(a) Depreciation

	Major Depreciation period	2026 $'000	2025 $'000
Leasehold improvements	14 years	80	80
Total		**80**	**80**

3.3 Supplies and Consumables

	2026 $'000	2025 $'000
Audit fees – financial audit	21	20
Motor vehicle lease expense	25	27
Rent of premises	303	293
Consultants	109	163
Property services	55	58
Maintenance	4	8
Communications	20	23
Information technology	271	262
Travel and transport	60	58
Advertising and promotion	1	13
Other supplies and consumables	65	74
Total	**934**	**999**

Audit fees paid or payable to Audit Tasmania for the audit of the Office's financial statements were $21,200 ($20,000 for 2024-25).

3.4 Other Expenses

Expenses from activities other than those identified above are recognised in the Statement of Comprehensive Income when a decrease in future economic benefits related to a decrease in asset or an increase of a liability has arisen that can be measured reliably.

	2026 $'000	2025 $'000
Salary on costs	57	34
Service Level Agreement – Department of Justice	161	159
Other expenses	28	57
Total	**246**	**250**

Note 4 Assets

Assets are recognised in the Statement of Financial Position when it is probable that the future economic benefits will flow to the Office and the asset has a cost or value that can be measured reliably.

4.1 Receivables

The Office recognises receivables at amortised cost using the effective interest method. Any subsequent changes are recognised in the net result for the year when impaired, derecognised or through the amortisation process. The Office recognises an allowance for expected credit losses for all debt financial assets not held at fair value through profit and loss. The expected credit loss is based on the difference between the contractual cash flows and the cash flows that the entity expects to receive, discounted at the original effective interest rate.

For trade receivables, the Office applies a simplified approach in calculating expected credit losses. The Office recognises a loss allowance based on lifetime expected credit losses at each reporting date. The Office has established a provision matrix based on its historical credit loss experience for trade receivables, adjusted for forward-looking factors specific to the receivable.

	2026 $'000	2025 $'000
Sales of goods and services	9	-
Tax assets	24	16
Total	**33**	**16**
Settled within 12 months	33	16
Total	**33**	**16**

For ageing analysis of the financial assets past due but not impaired, refer to Note 8.1.

4.2 Property, Plant and Equipment

(i) Valuation basis

All Non-current physical assets including any work in progress, are recorded at historic cost less accumulated depreciation. All assets within a class of assets are measured on the same basis.

Cost includes expenditure that is directly attributable to the acquisition of the asset. The costs of self constructed assets includes the cost of materials and direct labour, any other costs directly attributable to bringing the asset to a working condition for its intended use, and the costs of dismantling and removing the items and restoring the site on which they are located.

When parts of an item of property, plant and equipment have different useful lives, they are accounted for as separate items (major components) of property, plant and equipment.

(ii) Subsequent costs

The cost of replacing part of an item of property, plant and equipment is recognised in the carrying amount of the item if it is probable that the future economic benefits embodied within the part will flow to the Office and its costs can be measured reliably. The carrying amount of the replaced part is derecognised. The costs of day to day servicing of property, plant and equipment are recognised in profit or loss as incurred.

(iii) Asset recognition threshold

The asset capitalisation threshold adopted by the Office is:

Leasehold improvements	$10,000.

Assets valued at less than $10,000 are charged to the Statement of Comprehensive Income in the year of purchase (other than where they form part of a group of similar items which are material in total).

(a) Carrying amount

	2026 $'000	2025 $'000
Leasehold Improvements		
At cost	792	792
Less: Accumulated depreciation	(526)	(446)
Total	**266**	**346**
Total property, plant and equipment	**266**	**346**

(b) Reconciliation of movements

	2026 $'000	2025 $'000
Carrying amount at 1 July	**346**	**425**
Depreciation	(80)	(80)
Carrying amount at 30 June	**266**	**346**

4.3 Other Assets

Other assets comprise of prepayments. Prepayments relate to actual transactions that are recorded at cost with the asset at balance date representing the un-utilised component of the prepayment.

	2026 $'000	2025 $'000
Other current assets		
Prepayments	156	145
Total	**156**	**145**
Utilised within 12 months	156	145
Total other assets	**156**	**145**

Note 5 Liabilities

Liabilities are recognised in the Statement of Financial Position when it is probable that an outflow of resources embodying economic benefits will result from the settlement of a present obligation and the amount at which the settlement will take place can be measured reliably.

5.1 Payables

Payables, including goods received and services incurred but not yet invoiced, are recognised at amortised cost, which due to the short settlement period, equates to face value, when the Office becomes obliged to make future payments as a result of a purchase of assets or services.

	2026 $'000	2025 $'000
Accrued expenses	25	16
Total	**25**	**16**
Settled within 12 months	25	16
Total	**25**	**16**

Settlement is usually made within 30 days.

5.2 Employee Liabilities

Key estimate and judgement

Liabilities for wages and salaries and annual leave are recognised when an employee becomes entitled to receive a benefit. Those liabilities expected to be realised within 12 months are measured as the amount expected to be paid.

Other employee entitlements are measured as the present value of the benefit at 30 June, where the impact of discounting is material, and at the amount expected to be paid if discounting is not material. The Office assumes that all staff annual leave balances less than 20 days will be settled within 12 months, and therefore valued at nominal value, and balances in excess of 20 days will be settled in greater than 12 months and therefore calculated at present value.

A liability for long service leave is recognised, and is measured as the present value of expected future payments to be made in respect of services provided by employees up to the reporting date. The Office makes a number of assumptions regarding the probability that staff who have accrued long service leave, but are ineligible to take it will remain with the Office long enough to take it. For those staff eligible to take their long service leave, the Office assumes that they will utilise it on average, evenly over the following ten years. All long service leave that will be settled within 12 months is calculated at nominal value and all long service leave that will be settled in greater than 12 months is calculated at present value.

	2026 $'000	2025 $'000
Accrued salaries	183	134
Annual leave	343	330
Long service leave	538	442
Superannuation	136	141
Total	**1 200**	**1 047**
Settled within 12 months	539	529
Settled in more than 12 months	661	518
Total	**1 200**	**1 047**

5.3 Superannuation

Defined contribution plans

A defined contribution plan is a post employment benefit plan under which an entity pays fixed contributions into a separate entity and will have no legal or constructive obligation to pay further amounts. Obligations for contributions to defined contribution plans are recognised as an expense when they fall due.

Defined benefit plans

A defined benefit plan is a post employment benefit plan other than a defined contribution plan.

The Office does not recognise a liability for the accruing superannuation benefits of Office employees. This liability is held centrally and is recognised within the Finance General Division of the Department of Treasury and Finance.

5.4 Other liabilities

	2026 $'000	2025 $'000
Employee benefit liabilities – on-costs		
Workers' compensation premiums	13	-
Total	**13**	**-**
Expected to settle wholly within 12 months	5	-
Expected to settle wholly after 12 months	8	-
Total	**13**	**-**

Note 6 Commitments and Contingencies

6.1 Schedule of Commitments

Commitments represent those contractual arrangements entered by the Office that are not reflected in the Statement of Financial Position.

	2026 $'000	2025 $'000
By type		
Lease Commitments held with Finance-General		
Office accommodation	1 253	1 645
Motor vehicle fleet	65	32
Total commitments held with Finance-General	**1 318**	**1 677**
Other commitments		
Short-term and/or low-value leases	69	88
Other Commitments	-	11
Total other commitments	**69**	**99**
Total commitments	**1 387**	**1 776**
By maturity		
Lease Commitments held with Finance-General		
One year or less	377	365
From one to five years	941	1 275
More than five years	-	37
Total operating lease commitments	**1 318**	**1 677**
Other commitments		
One year or less	27	39
From one to five years	42	60
More than five years	-	-
Total other commitments	**69**	**99**
Total	**1 388**	**1 776**

The Lease Commitments held with Finance-General include buildings, motor vehicles and information technology equipment leases. All amounts shown are inclusive of GST where applicable. The building lease agreement was signed by the Department of Treasury and Finance (Treasury) and payment arrangements for the Office to reimburse Treasury have been put in place.

The Office has entered into a number of operating lease agreements for property, plant and equipment, where the lessors effectively retain all the risks and benefits incidental to ownership of the items leased. Equal instalments of lease payments are charged to the Statement of Comprehensive Income over the lease term, as this is representative of the pattern of benefits to be derived from the leased property.

6.2 Contingent Assets and Liabilities

Contingent assets and liabilities are not recognised in the Statement of Financial Position due to uncertainty regarding any possible amount or timing of any possible underlying claim or obligation.

(a) Quantifiable contingencies

A quantifiable contingent asset is a possible asset that arises from past events and whose existence will be confirmed only by the occurrence or non-occurrence of one or more uncertain future events not wholly within the control of the entity.

A quantifiable contingent liability is a possible obligation that arises from past events and whose existence will be confirmed only by the occurrence or non-occurrence of one or more uncertain future events not wholly within the control of the entity; or a present obligation that arises from past events but is not recognised because it is not probable that an outflow of resources embodying economic benefits will be required to settle the obligation.

At 30 June 2026 the Office had no contingent assets or liabilities.

Note 7 Cash Flow Reconciliation

Cash means notes, coins, any deposits held at call with a bank or financial institution, as well as funds held in the Specific Purpose Account, being short term of three months or less and highly liquid. Deposits are recognised at amortised cost, being their face value.

7.1 Cash and Deposits

Cash and deposits include the balance of the Specific Purpose Accounts held by the Office and other cash held, excluding those accounts which are administered or held in a trustee capacity or agency arrangement.

	2026 $'000	2025 $'000
Specific Purpose Account balance		
S528 Office of the Ombudsman Operating Account	436	465
Total cash and deposits	**436**	**465**

7.2 Reconciliation of Net Result to Net Cash from Operating Activities

	2026 $'000	2025 $'000
Net result	(256)	89
Depreciation and Amortisation	80	80
Decrease (increase) in Receivables	(17)	34
Decrease (increase) in Prepayments	(11)	(60)
Increase (decrease) in Employee entitlements	153	181
Increase (decrease) in Payables	9	(1)
Increase (decrease) in Other liabilities	13	-
Net cash from (used by) operating activities	**(29)**	**323**

Note 8 Financial Instruments

8.1 Risk Exposures

(a) Risk management policies

The Office has exposure to the following risks from its use of financial instruments:

- credit risk; and
- liquidity risk.

The Head of Agency has overall responsibility for the establishment and oversight of the Office's risk management framework. Risk management policies are established to identify and analyse risks faced by the Office, to set appropriate risk limits and controls, and to monitor risks and adherence to limits.

(b) Credit risk exposures

Credit risk represents the loss that would be recognised if counterparties failed to perform as contracted. Exposure to credit risk is considered to be minimal.

Financial Instrument	Accounting and strategic policies (including recognition criteria and measurement basis)	Nature of underlying instrument (including significant terms and conditions affecting the amount. Timing and certainty of cash flows)
Financial Assets		
Receivables	Receivables are recognised at amortised cost, less any expected credit losses, however, due to the short settlement period, receivables are not discounted back to their present value.	It is Office policy to issue invoices with 30 day terms of trade.
Cash and deposits	Deposits are recognised at amortised cost, being their face value.	Cash means notes, coins, any deposits held at call with a bank or financial institution, as well as funds held in the Public Account.

The Office does not have any concentration of credit risk. The Office monitors receivables on a monthly basis and follow up procedures are undertaken for all debts that are overdue. Action taken is dependent on the length of time the debt is overdue.

The carrying amount of financial assets recorded in the Financial Statements, net of any allowances for losses, represents the Offices maximum exposure to credit risk. The Office does not hold any collateral or other security over its receivables.

The Office extends 30 day credit terms for sundry receivables, and receives standard commercial credit terms for sundry creditors.

Except as detailed in the following table, the carrying amount of financial assets recorded in the Financial Statements, net of any allowances for losses, represents the Office's maximum exposure to credit risk without taking into account of any collateral or other security:

	2026 $'000	2025 $'000
Receivables	33	16
Total	**33**	**16**

Receivables age analysis – expected credit loss

The simplified approach to measuring expected credit losses is applied, which uses a lifetime expected loss allowance for all trade receivables.

The expected loss rates are based on historical observed loss rates adjusted for forward looking factors that will have an impact on the ability to settle the receivables. The loss allowance for trade debtors as at 30 June are as follows.

Expected credit loss analysis of receivables as at 30 June 2026	**Not past due $'000**	**Past due 1-30 days $'000**	**Past due 31-60 days $'000**	**Past due 61-90 days $'000**	**Total $'000**
Expected credit loss rate (A)	-	-	-	-	-
Total gross carrying amount (B)	-	-	-	9	9
Expected credit loss (A x B)	-	-	-	-	-

Expected credit loss analysis of receivables as at 30 June 2025	**Not past due $'000**	**Past due 1-30 days $'000**	**Past due 31-60 days $'000**	**Past due 61-90 days $'000**	**Total $'000**
Expected credit loss rate (A)	-	-	-	-	-
Total gross carrying amount (B)	-	-	-	-	-
Expected credit loss (A x B)	-	-	-	-	-

(c) Liquidity risk

Liquidity risk is the risk that the Office will not be able to meet its financial obligations as they fall due. The Office's approach to managing liquidity is to ensure that it will always have sufficient liquidity to meet its liabilities when they fall due.

Financial Instrument	Accounting and strategic policies (including recognition criteria and measurement basis)	Nature of underlying instrument (including significant terms and conditions affecting the amount. Timing and certainty of cash flows)
Financial Liabilities		
Payables	Payables are recognised at amortised cost, which due to the short settlement period, equates to face value, when the Office becomes obliged to make future payments as a result of a purchase of assets or services.	Payables, including goods received and services incurred but not yet invoiced arise when the Office becomes obliged to make future payments as a result of a purchase of assets or services. The Office's terms of trade are 30 days.

Monitoring of revenue and expenditure forecasts and current cash balances is undertaken by the Office on a monthly basis.

The following tables detail the undiscounted cash flows payable by the Office by remaining contractual maturity for its financial liabilities. It should be noted that as these are undiscounted, totals may not reconcile to the carrying amounts presented in the Statement of Financial Position:

2026 **Maturity analysis for financial liabilities**	**1 Year $'000**	**Undiscounted Total $'000**	**Carrying Amount $'000**
Financial liabilities			
Payables	25	25	25
Total	**25**	**25**	**25**

2025 **Maturity analysis for financial liabilities**	**1 Year $'000**	**Undiscounted Total $'000**	**Carrying Amount $'000**
Financial liabilities			
Payables	16	16	16
Total	**16**	**16**	**16**

8.2 Categories of Financial Assets and Liabilities

	2026 $'000	2025 $'000
Financial assets		
Cash and cash equivalents	436	465
Receivables at Amortised cost	33	16
Total	**469**	**481**
Financial Liabilities		
Financial liabilities measured at amortised cost	25	16
Total	**25**	**16**

8.3 Comparison between Carrying Amount and Net Fair Values of Financial Assets and Liabilities

	Carrying Amount 2026 $'000	Net Fair Value 2026 $'000	Carrying Amount 2025 $'000	Net Fair Value 2025 $'000
Financial assets				
Cash in Specific Purpose Accounts	436	436	465	465
Receivables	33	33	16	16
Total financial assets	**469**	**469**	**481**	**481**
Financial liabilities				
Trade creditors	25	25	16	16
Total financial liabilities	**25**	**25**	**16**	**16**

The Office does not have any financial assets or financial liabilities carried at fair value through the profit and loss or any available for sale financial assets.

Note 9 Output Group Information

The Office of the Ombudsman and Health Complaints Commissioner is a single Output which is the fulfilment of the statutory responsibilities of the Ombudsman and Health Complaints Commissioner. The summary budgeted and actual revenues and expenses for this Output are the same as in the Statement of Comprehensive Income and the net assets are the same as the Statement of Financial Position. As a result the inclusion of a separate Output Schedule is not necessary.

Note 10 Events Occurring After Balance Date

There have been no events subsequent to balance date which would have a material effect on the Office's Financial Statements as at 30 June 2026.

Note 11 Significant Accounting Policies

11.1 Objectives and Funding

The Office of the Ombudsman and Health Complaints Commissioner (the Office) operates under the *Ombudsman Act 1978* and is responsible for the enquiry and investigation into complaints regarding the administrative actions of Tasmanian government agencies, local councils and a broad range of other public authorities. The Ombudsman also has a number of other responsibilities including being the Health Complaints Commissioner under the *Health Complaints Act 1995,* the Energy Ombudsman under the *Energy Ombudsman Act 1998*, the Coordinator of the Official Visitors Scheme under the *Corrections Act 1997*, the Principal Official Visitor under the *Mental Health Act 2013* and implementing the *Right to Information Act 2009*, the *Personal Information Protection Act 2004* and the *Public Interest Disclosures Act 2002*. The Office therefore also investigates complaints under these Acts.

By providing impartial investigations and seeking to resolve individual grievances, the Office aims to:

- promote fairness and equity;
- improve the quality of public administration; and
- improve health and energy services provided to the Tasmanian community.

The Custodial Inspector is appointed by the Governor of Tasmania under the *Custodial Inspector Act 2016.* The purpose of the Custodial Inspector is to provide independent, proactive, preventative and systemic oversight of custodial centres. The focus of the Inspector is on systemic issues relating to the management, control and security of the State's prisons and youth detention centre and the care and welfare of prisoners and detainees.

The Office activities are classified as controlled as they involve the use of assets, liabilities, revenues and expenses controlled or incurred by the Office in its own right.

The Office is predominantly funded through Parliamentary appropriations. The financial report encompasses all funds through which the Office controls resources to carry on its functions.

11.2 Basis of Accounting

The Financial Statements are a general purpose financial report and have been prepared in accordance with:

- Australian Accounting Standards (AAS) issued by the Australian Accounting Standards Board (AASB) and Interpretations; and
- The Treasurer's Instructions issued under the provisions of the *Financial Management Act 2016*.

The Financial Statements were signed by the Head of Agency on 15 September 2026.

Compliance with the AAS may not result in compliance with International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS), as the AAS include requirements and options available to not-for-profit organisations that are inconsistent with IFRS. The Office is considered to be not-for-profit and has adopted some accounting policies under the AAS that do not comply with IFRS.

The Financial Statements have been prepared on an accrual basis and, except where stated, are in accordance with the historical cost convention. Material accounting policy information is consistent with the previous year.

The Financial Statements have been prepared as a going concern. The continued existence of the Office in its present form, undertaking its current activities, is dependent on Government policy and on continuing appropriations by Parliament for the Office's administration and activities.

11.3 Reporting Entity

The Financial Statements include all the controlled activities of the Office. The Financial Statements consolidate material transactions and balances of the Office.

11.4 Functional and Presentation Currency

These Financial Statements are presented in Australian dollars, which is the Office's functional currency.

11.5 Changes in Accounting Policies

(a) Impact of new and revised Australian Accounting Standards and Interpretations

There were no new or revised Standards and Interpretations issued by the Australian Accounting Standards Board that have a material impact on the reporting of the Office's operations for the current annual reporting period.

(b) Impact of new and revised Australian Accounting Standards and Interpretations yet to be applied

The Office has considered the new accounting standards and assessed that they will not have a material impact on the financial statements once adopted in future reporting periods.

11.6 Foreign Currency

Transactions denominated in a foreign currency are converted at the exchange rate at the date of the transaction. Foreign currency receivables and payables are translated at the exchange rates current as at balance date.

11.7 Comparative Figures

Comparative figures have been adjusted to reflect any changes in accounting policy or the adoption of new standards. Details of the impact of changes in accounting policy on comparative figures are at Note 11.5.

Where amounts have been reclassified within the Financial Statements, the comparative statements have been restated.

11.8 Rounding

All amounts in the Financial Statements have been rounded to the nearest thousand dollars, unless otherwise stated. Where the result of expressing amounts to the nearest thousand dollars would result in an amount of zero, the financial statement will contain a note expressing the amount to the nearest whole dollar.

11.9 Office Taxation

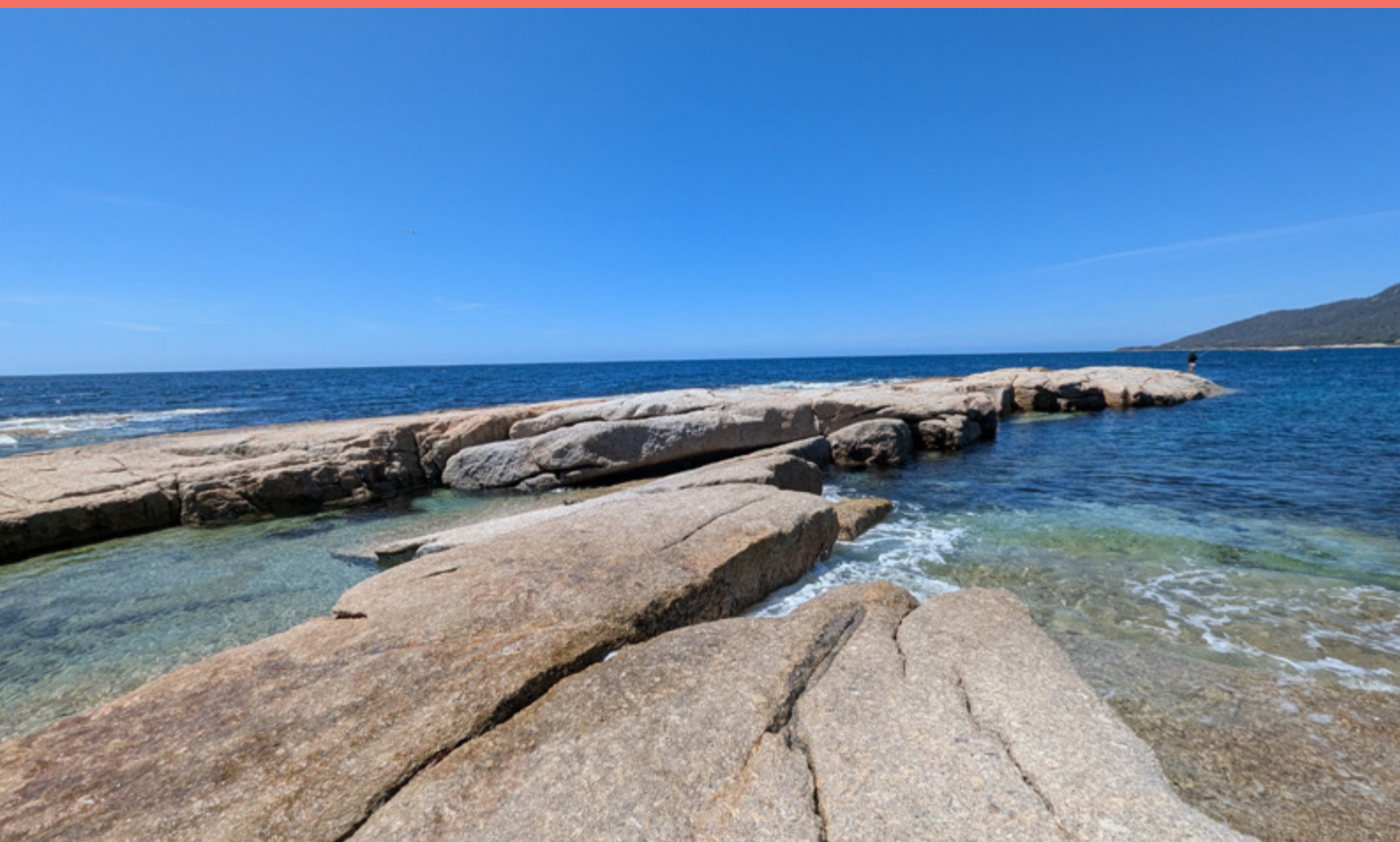
The Office is exempt from all forms of taxation except Fringe Benefits Tax, and is not registered for the Goods and Services Tax. All taxation issues are managed by the Department of Justice on the Office's behalf.

11.10 Goods and Services Tax

Revenue, expenses and assets are recognised net of the amount of Goods and Services Tax, except where the GST incurred is not recoverable from the Australian Taxation Office. Receivables and payables are stated inclusive of GST. The net amount recoverable, or payable, to the ATO is recognised as an asset or liability within the Statement of Financial Position.

In the Statement of Cash Flows, the GST component of cash flows arising from operating, investing or financing activities which is recoverable from, or payable to, the Australian Taxation Office is, in accordance with the Australian Accounting Standards, classified as operating cash flows.

Independent Auditor's Report



Audit Tasmania

Independent Auditor's Report

To the Members of Parliament

Office of the Ombudsman and the Health Complaints Commissioner

Report on the Audit of the Financial Statements

Opinion

I have audited the financial statements of Office of the Ombudsman and the Health Complaints Commissioner (the Office), which comprises the statement of financial position as at 30 June 2026, statements of comprehensive income, changes in equity and cash flows for the year then ended, notes to the financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies and the statement of certification signed by the Ombudsman.

In my opinion, the accompanying financial statements:

(a) present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the Office as at 30 June 2026 and its financial performance and its cash flows for the year then ended

(b) is in accordance with the *Financial Management Act 2016* and Australian Accounting Standards.

Basis for Opinion

I conducted the audit in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards. My responsibilities under those standards are further described in the *Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements* section of my report. I am independent of the Office in accordance with the ethical requirements of the Accounting Professional and Ethical Standards Board's APES 110 *Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants (including Independence Standards)* (the Code) that are relevant to my audit of the financial statements in Australia. I have also fulfilled my other ethical responsibilities in accordance with the Code.

The *Audit Act 2008* further promotes the independence of the Auditor-General. The Auditor-General is the auditor of all Tasmanian public sector entities and can only be removed by Parliament. The Auditor-General may conduct an audit in any way considered appropriate and is not subject to direction by any person about the way in which audit powers are to be exercised. The Auditor-General has for the purposes of conducting an audit, access to all documents and property and can report to Parliament matters which in the Auditor-General's opinion are significant.

I believe that the audit evidence I have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinion.

Responsibilities of the Ombudsman for the Financial Statements

The Ombudsman is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial statements in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards and the financial reporting requirements of the Section 42 (1) of the *Financial Management Act 2016* and for such internal control as determined necessary to enable the preparation of the financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the Ombudsman is responsible for assessing the Office's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless he Office's operations to be ceased as a result of an administrative or the Ombudsman intends to cease operations, or has no realistic alternative but to do so.

Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements

My objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes my opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with the Australian Auditing Standards will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of the financial statements.

As part of an audit in accordance with the Australian Auditing Standards, I exercise professional judgement and maintain professional scepticism throughout the audit. I also:

- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the Office's internal control.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by the Ombudsman.
- Conclude on the appropriateness of the Ombudsman's use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the Office's ability to continue as a going concern. If I conclude that a material uncertainty exists, I am required to draw attention in my auditor's report to the related disclosures in the financial statements or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify my opinion. My conclusion is based on the audit evidence obtained up to

the date of my auditor's report. However, future events or conditions may cause the Office to cease to continue as a going concern.

- Evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial statements, including the disclosures, and whether the financial statements represent the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

I communicate with the Ombudsman regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that I identify during my audit.



Stephen Morrison
Chief Financial and Sustainability Auditor
Delegate of the Auditor-General

16 September 2026
Hobart



Ombudsman Tasmania

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