

Chief Ombudsman says Annual Report highlights significant progress

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An increased clearance rates for complaints is the highlight of the Chief Ombudsman's Annual Report 2017/18 tabled in Parliament this afternoon.

"Last year, we made significant progress in clearing a backlog of aged complaints, previously a bugbear both for the Office and the public", says Chief Ombudsman Peter Boshier.

"This is shown in our overall net complaints clearance rate of 110% for the year, and we exceeded our forecasts by clearing 75 percent of complaints within three months, and 92 percent within six months.

"New Zealanders have the right to expect a lot from us. They want us to resolve complaints as early as possible; they want us to be assertive yet helpful; they should feel confident that any complaint will be dealt with fairly, robustly and confidentially.

"We have clearly shown we can do this. Last year we were quicker and more efficient in resolving complaints, but with no reduction in the quality or efficacy of our work.

"We have significantly raised our public profile through the publication of our investigations, more guidance material, and our extensive training and assistance for government agencies. We are now preparing to expand our role to inspecting places of detention in private aged care facilities which will allow us to monitor the treatment of some of the most vulnerable people in our society".

In the year that marked the 35th anniversary of the Official Information Act and 30th anniversary of the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act coming into force, Mr Boshier says the focus for government agencies has now started to turn to proactive release of information.

"This is a pleasing trend as it underscores the transparency and accountability of agencies, and gives the public more confidence in the workings of government.

"We have been promoting the principle of availability, often through proactive release, and encouraging agencies to answer the question 'Why shouldn't I release this information?', as opposed to asking 'Why should I release this information?'".

The Annual Report is available on the website of the [Office of the Ombudsman](#).

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Key facts for the 2017/18 year

- Overall net clearance rate of 110 percent for complaints.
- 92 percent of all complaints and other contacts completed within six months.
- 90 percent of all requests and enquiries under the Protected Disclosures Act completed within three months.
- Visited 39 places of detention with 87 percent of visits unannounced. From these visits, made 149 recommendations for improvement, 137 of which were accepted or partially accepted.
- Published 42 new pieces of guidance material.
- Concluded investigations of the 12 individual agencies identified in the self-initiated investigation of OIA practices of central government agencies and commenced four more.
- Provided advice on 341 occasions to public sector agencies, mainly in relation to the processing of official information requests. This represents an 85% increase from last year.

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