



Commissioner for Complaints

Quarterly Report Statistical Data

1 July 2004 – 30 September 2004

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National Statistics

This report provides information relating to the operation of the Scheme and covers the reporting period 1 July-30 September 2004. The report provides an update on the statistical information, issues and trends identified in previous reports. The statistical information for the following graphs is derived from various reporting elements of the Scheme's database.

Total Number of Calls

During this reporting period the Scheme dealt with a total of 1,944 calls. The following figure shows the breakdown of calls recorded in each jurisdiction, that is the number of complaints and information calls, shown as a percentage of the total 1,944 calls recorded nationally.

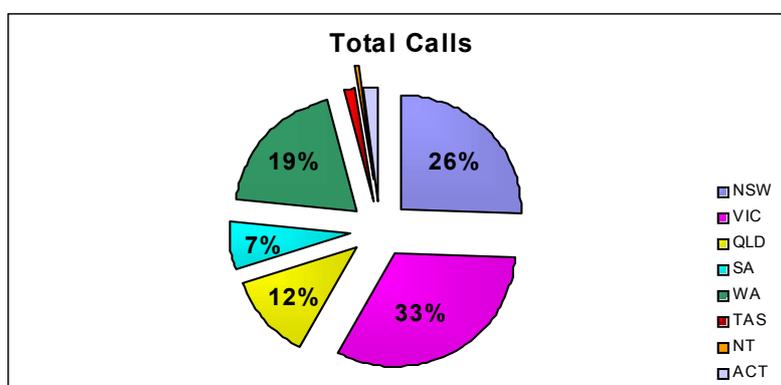


Fig 1: Total Number of Calls by Jurisdiction

There was a slight increase in the overall number of calls received during this quarter. The increase was found to be in both the numbers of complaint and information calls received. It is not known if the increase in complaint calls is due to the forthcoming election and an increased focus on aged care or, if the increase in information calls is an artefact of changed work practices or an actual increase in people seeking information. Of the 1,944 calls recorded, 280 (14 per cent) were registered as complaints and 1,664 (86 per cent) were registered as information calls.

Recorded Complaints

The majority (97 per cent) of the 280 complaints recorded during the reporting period related to aged residential care services, however, six complaints (two per cent) related to Community Aged Care Packages (CACPs) and one complaint related to flexible care services. As in previous reports, the relatives of residents (69 per cent) lodged the majority of complaints recorded nationally.

Across Australia, care recipients lodged nine per cent of complaints and staff of aged care services six per cent of complaints. Friends, ex staff and advocacy services each lodged two per cent of complaints. Five per cent of complaints were registered as 'unknown' and a further five per cent were recorded as 'other'.

Site Visits

During the reporting period the database records that officers undertook a total of 72 site visits either as part of the preliminary assessment or ongoing management of the issues raised. A total of 64 facilities were visited and issues relating to 72 individual complaints were discussed.

Complainant Type

Of the 280 complaints recorded nationally during the reporting period, 226 (80 per cent) were registered as open complaints, 41 (15 per cent) as confidential complaints and 13 (5 per cent) as anonymous complaints.

Note that a proportion of complainants who initially lodge a confidential complaint with the Scheme subsequently amend the status of their complaint and request that the issues being dealt with are managed as an open complaint.

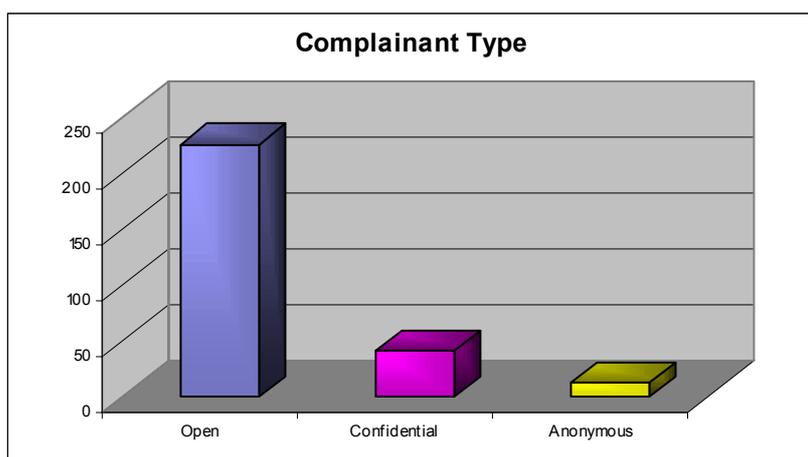


Fig 2: Complainant Type and Volume

Issue Priorities

Complaint issues are assessed as either urgent or complex. During the reporting period five issues were assessed as urgent. A further 202 issues were assessed as complex. It should be noted that there is an unexplained discrepancy between the number of complaints and the number of prioritised issues recorded. It is thought that this divergence relates to poor data input.

Average Time to Resolve Complaints

The database provides information regarding new cases both received and finalised within a period. During the reporting period the Scheme finalised 92 cases. The average number of days to finalise complaints received within the reporting period was 19.68 days.

At the end of the reporting period the data show that, nationally, 28 per cent of cases were incomplete, 16 per cent were ongoing, 33 per cent had been finalised. Sixteen per cent had been withdrawn and seven per cent were not accepted.

Complaint Issues

Previous reports gave an account of complaint issues based on 58 common issues. These issues were recorded in four main clusters: administration, consumer rights, environment and level of care. These keywords were not applied consistently and the list of keywords was revised and reduced to 13 keywords with agreed definitions.

The changes were implemented on 28 February 2004 and aim to:

- ensure that data are reported more effectively and with more utility and validity;
- assist the identification of key concerns in a complaint for reporting purposes;
- improve consistency in keyword application within and across jurisdictions;
- ensure that operational definitions for concerns are available when choosing keywords; and
- avoid multiple keyword application that often reduces the usefulness and clarity of reports.

Officers now apply one keyword to each separate issue and, wherever possible, are encouraged to create one issue per case. That is, choose the one keyword that outlines the principal concern underlying the issue and thereby the case. Second issues are created only if absolutely necessary and then, only if a different keyword is applied. Figure 3 shows the most frequently recorded complaint issues during this reporting quarter.

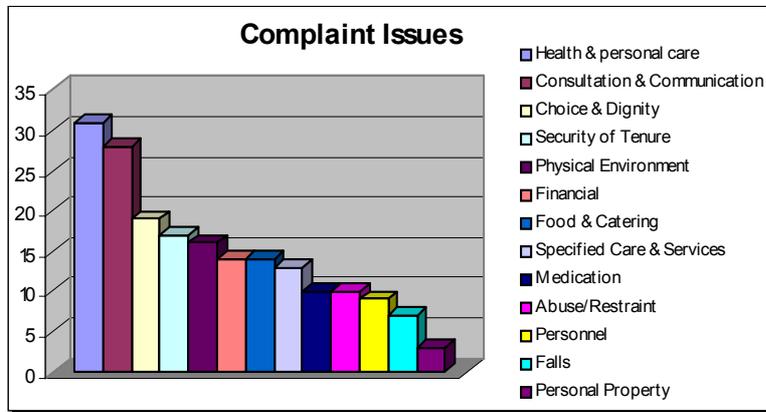


Figure 3: Most frequently recorded complaint issues.

It will be important to closely monitor the use and application of the revised keywords to ensure that the Scheme is not losing valuable information and to confirm that issues and trends are captured effectively. The database identifies that only 191 issues were categorised for the 280 complaints recorded during the period.

Non acceptance of Complaints and Appeals

Based on *last status change* the database indicates that, across Australia, a total of 29 complaints were not accepted by the Scheme during the period ending 30 September 2004. Nine of these complaints were received prior to 1 July 2004.

During this quarter, the Commissioner for Complaints was asked to provide advice in relation to six appeals against the non-acceptance of a complaint.

Referrals and Committee Hearings by State and Territory

During the reporting period twelve matters were referred for determination and seven matters remained outstanding from the previous quarter. In four cases the decision to refer for determination was made by the delegate during the assessment phase. One complaint was withdrawn prior to the scheduled hearing and, in one instance the Commissioner dissolved the committee and discontinued dealing with the complaint. Complaints Resolution Committees (Committees) heard a total of eleven cases during the period and have partly heard one other, the remaining five cases are scheduled to be heard in the October-December reporting quarter.

The complaints involved a range of issues including restricted access, security of tenure, medication management, fees and charges, communication, clinical care, physical environment, nutrition and hydration, falls and management.

Determination Reviews by State and Territory

Two determinations were appealed during the period. The review of the complaint originating in Western Australia has been conducted and the Review Panel confirmed the decision of the original

committee. The second review, relating to a New South Wales complaint, will be conducted during the next quarter.

Information Statistics

During the reporting period 85.5 per cent of the calls registered by the Scheme (1,664) were recorded as information calls. All jurisdictions recorded a higher percentage of information calls when compared to the number of complaints registered.

The majority of callers (91.5 per cent) were seeking general information, however, 4.5 per cent of calls (140) sought information outside the jurisdiction of the Scheme.