

Commissioner for Complaints

Quarterly Report Statistical Data

1 October 2004 – 31 December 2004

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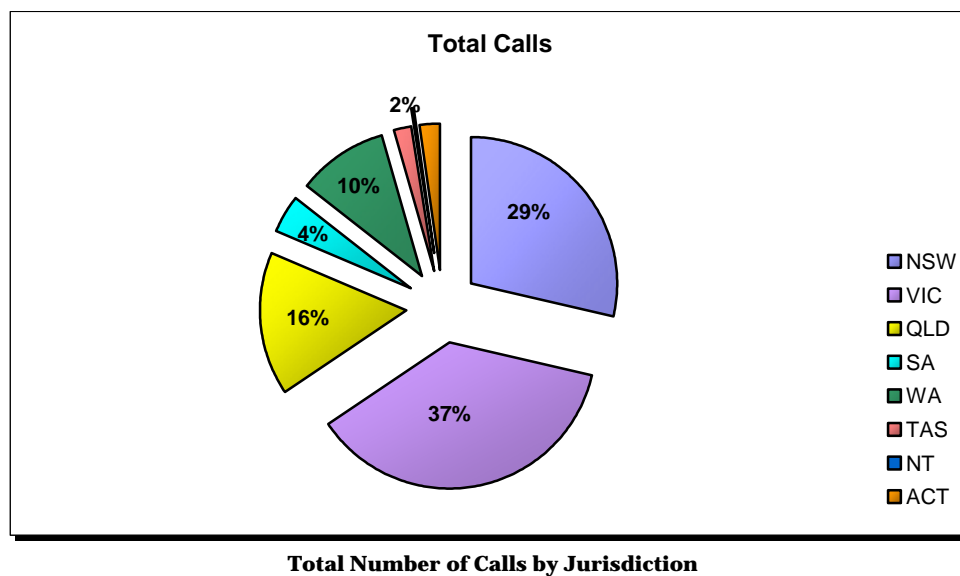
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National Statistics

This report provides information relating to the operation of the Scheme and covers the reporting period 1 October-31 December 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

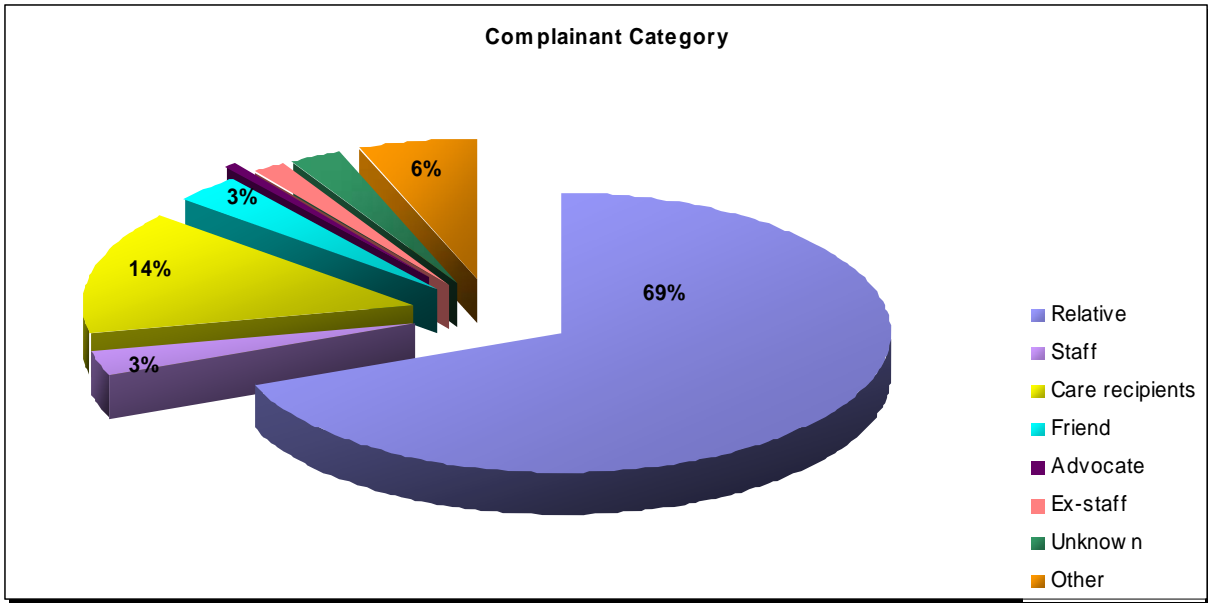
During this reporting period the Scheme dealt with a total of 1,483 calls. Compared to the last reporting quarter this is a reduction in the number of calls recorded nationally, however, the data indicates that the Scheme receives a reduced number of calls each October-December reporting quarter. The 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 number of calls recorded nationally.



Of the 1,483 calls recorded, 237 (16 per cent) were registered as complaints and 1,246 (84 per cent) were registered as information calls.

Recorded Complaints

The number of complaints recorded during October-December 2004 is slightly lower than the previous quarter but similar to the numbers recorded in October-December 2003, and the first two quarters in 2004. The majority (96 per cent) of the 237 complaints recorded during the reporting period related to aged residential care services, however, seven complaints (three per cent) related to Community Aged Care Packages (CACPs) and three complaints related to flexible care services.



Complainant Category

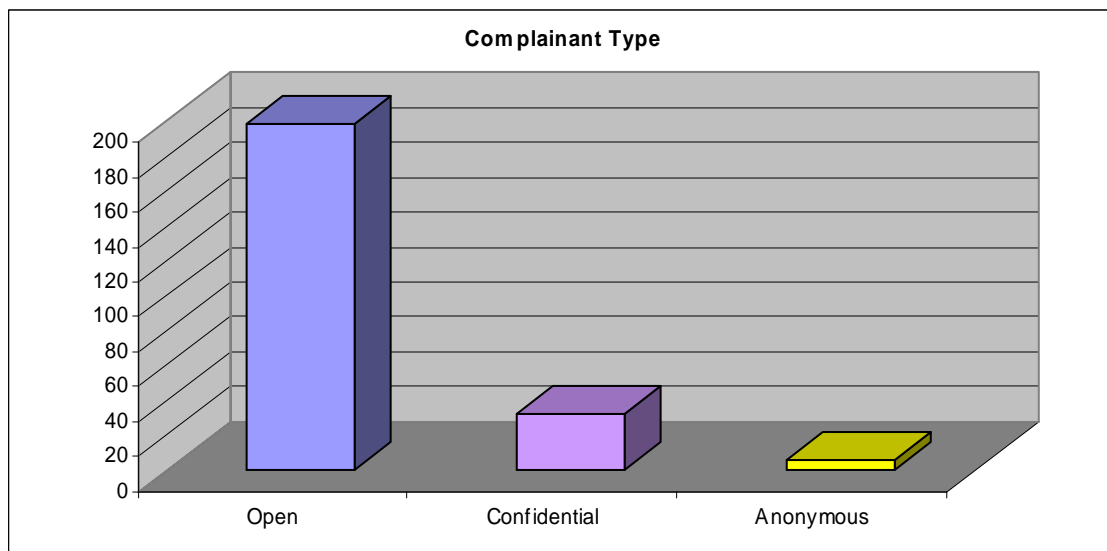
As in previous reports, the relatives of residents (69 per cent) lodged the majority of complaints recorded nationally. Across Australia, care recipients lodged 14 per cent of complaints, friends and staff each lodged three per cent of complaints, ex staff lodged two per cent and one advocate is listed as registering a complaint. Three per cent of complaints were registered as 'unknown' and a further six per cent were recorded as 'other'.

Site Visits

During the reporting period the database records that officers undertook a total of 53 site visits either as part of the preliminary assessment or ongoing management of the issues raised. A total of 52 facilities were visited and issues relating to 53 individual complaints were discussed.

Complainant Type

Of the 237 complaints recorded nationally during the reporting period, 199 (84 per cent) were registered as open complaints, 32 (13.5 per cent) as confidential complaints and 6 (2.53 per cent) as anonymous complaints. Readers should 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.



Complainant Type and Volume

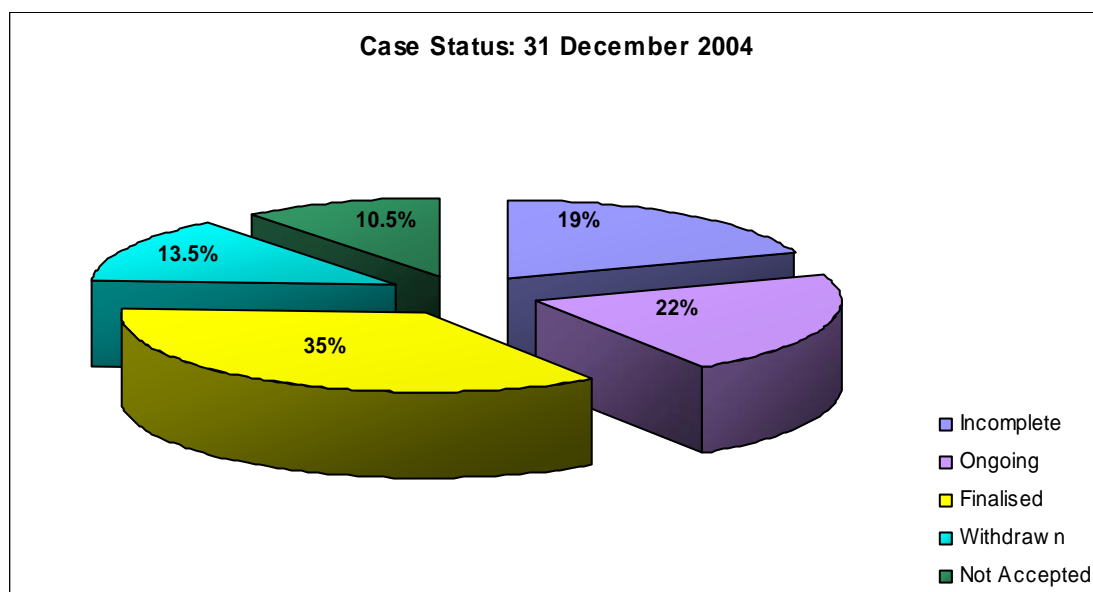
Issue Priorities

Complaint issues are assessed as either urgent or complex. During the reporting period seven issues were assessed as urgent. A further 224 issues were assessed as complex. It should be noted that there is a small, 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 received and finalised within a period. During the reporting period the Scheme finalised 88 cases. The average number of days to finalise complaints received within the reporting period was 26.19 days.

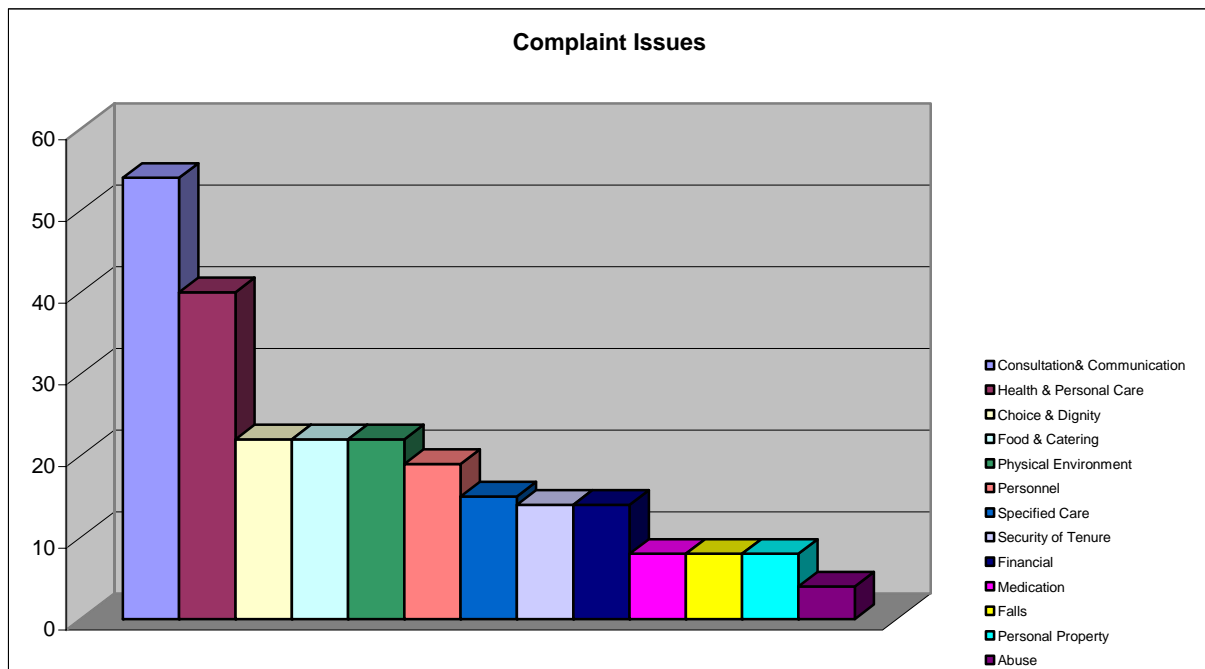
At the end of the reporting period the data show that, nationally, 19 per cent of cases were incomplete, 22 per cent were ongoing, 35 per cent had been finalised, 10.5 per cent were not accepted and 13.5 per cent had been withdrawn.



Case Status: End of the reporting period

Complaint Issues

The Scheme uses 13 key words to record complaint issues. Officers 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 7 shows the most frequently recorded complaint issues during this reporting quarter.



Most frequently recorded complainant issues

The database identifies that only 221 issues were categorised for the 237 complaints recorded during the period. This again illustrates poor data input. Complaints registered necessarily comprise at least one issue and, given the complexity of complaints, it is expected that the number of issues would exceed the number of complaints. It will be important to closely monitor the use and application of the 13 revised keywords to ensure that the Scheme is not losing valuable information and to confirm that issues and trends are captured effectively.

Referrals

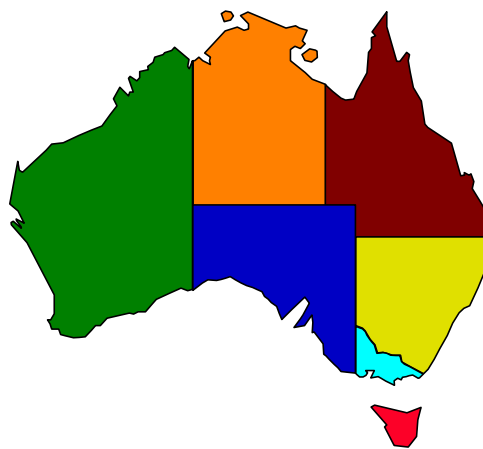
It should be noted that a complaint may have a number of elements/issues for resolution and a referral made to an external agency does not necessarily mean that officers take no further action with regard to the complaint.

The database identifies a total of 49 referrals made during the reporting period. The statistical report identifies that 29 complaint issues were referred to other sections of the department for further action. One matter was referred for determination, 13 for mediation, two issues were referred to the Police and four were listed as referred to 'other'.

Non acceptance of Complaints and Appeals

Based on *last status change* the database indicates that, across Australia, a total of 39 complaints were not accepted by the Scheme during the reporting period. Thirteen of these complaints were received prior to 1 October 2004.

During this quarter, the Commissioner was asked to provide advice in relation to six appeals against the non-acceptance of a complaint. Two appeals were lodged in Victoria, Queensland and New South Wales respectively. The Commissioner recommended that the decisions in Queensland and New South Wales be confirmed. One appeal in Victoria related to a significant number of issues. The Commissioner recommended confirming all but one of the decisions to not accept issues. The Commissioner's decision in relation to the second appeal will be reported during the next reporting period.



Appeals against Non Acceptance

Application for Reconsideration of a Decision to Cease Dealing with a Complaint

On 21 December 2004 the Scheme in Queensland sought advice from the Commissioner after receiving a request for reconsideration of a decision to cease dealing with a complaint. On 23 December 2004 the Commissioner recommended that the decision to cease dealing with the complaint be confirmed.

Referrals and Committee Hearings by State and Territory

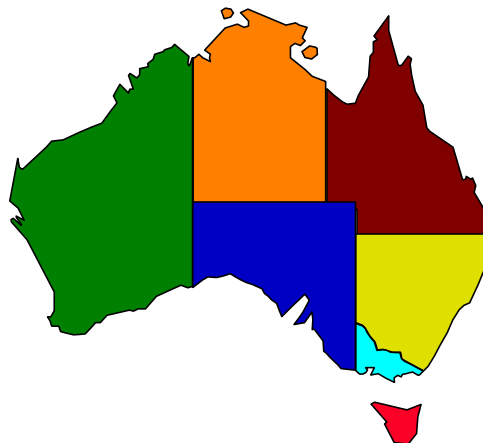


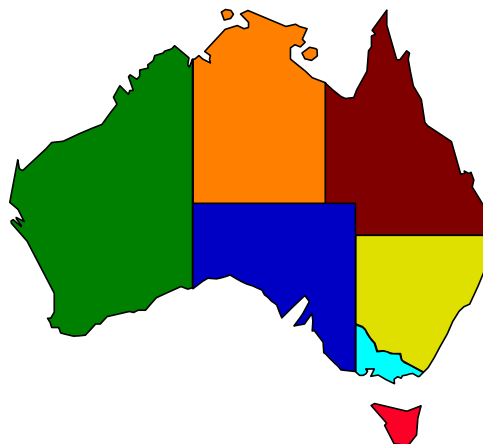
Fig 12: Committee hearings this quarter

During the reporting period six hearings were conducted, including the second day of a hearing begun in the previous period. Four cases remain outstanding from the previous quarter and a further four complaints were referred for determination during this reporting period. In three cases the decision to refer for determination was made by the delegate during the assessment phase.

The complaints involved a range of issues including security of tenure, medication management, clinical care, complaint process, behaviour management, staff attitudes, communication, clinical care, privacy, equipment and restricted access.

Determination Reviews by State and Territory

Five determinations were appealed during the period. The Review Panel confirmed the decision of the original committee in the New South Wales matter. In the cases originating in Queensland the Review Panel confirmed one decision, the second was confirmed with a minor variation and in the third case the complainant withdrew the application for review. The review of the complaint originating in Western Australia is yet to be conducted.



Determination Reviews by State and Territory

Information Statistics

During the reporting period 84 per cent of the calls registered by the Scheme (1,246) 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 (77.45 per cent) were seeking general information. The percentage of callers seeking information outside the jurisdiction of the Scheme (22.55 per cent or 281) was significantly higher than that recorded in previous reporting period (4.5 per cent).

The Scheme recorded the category of 455 callers seeking information and the category of 791 callers was listed as unknown. Of the 455 callers able to be classified, seven per cent were listed as other. Fifty-nine per cent of callers identified themselves as relatives, 14 per cent as currently employed staff, 11 per cent as care recipients, four per cent as ex-staff, three per cent as friends and two per cent as advocates.

The database shows that the time taken to manage an information call was recorded in all but 137 calls. Of those recorded 551 (50 per cent) of information calls received by the Scheme nationally were concluded in less than 15 minutes. Thirty-five per cent of calls (389) took between 15 and 30 minutes, 14 per cent (156) between 30 minutes and one hour and one per cent of calls (14) were concluded between one and three hours.

Officers are able to register the nature of information calls using the same keywords that are applied in the recording of information about complaints. However, during the last quarter the database indicates that issues were recorded in only ten instances. Three issues related to personnel, two to food and catering. The other issues recorded were security of tenure, medication management, health and personal care, abuse and consultation and communication.