



# **Commissioner for Complaints**

## **Quarterly Report Statistical Data**

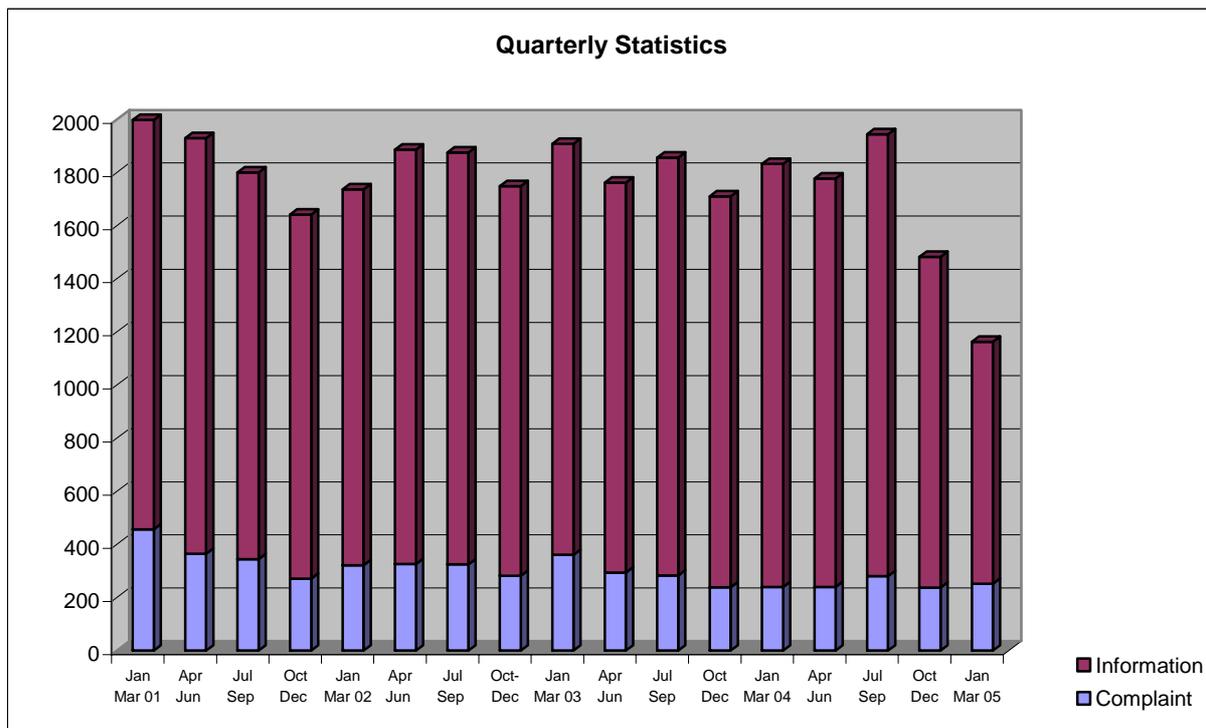
**1 January 2005 – 31 March 2005**

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## National Statistics

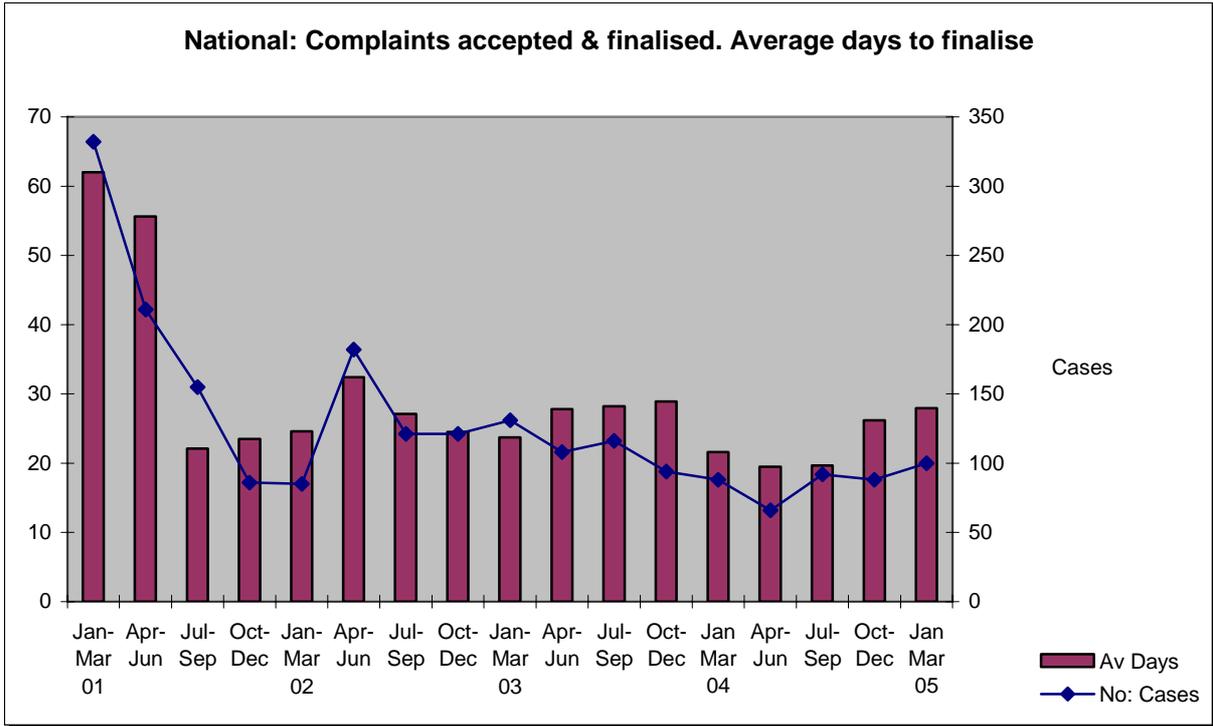
The data show that the number of complaints and information calls recorded each quarter is proportionately similar. The data also show that, during the current reporting quarter, the total number of calls received by the Scheme was lower than that registered in previous quarters mainly because of a reduction in the number of information calls recorded by the Scheme. In part this is the result of changes instituted in Queensland and Western Australia to separately record information calls that fell outside the Scheme's jurisdiction.



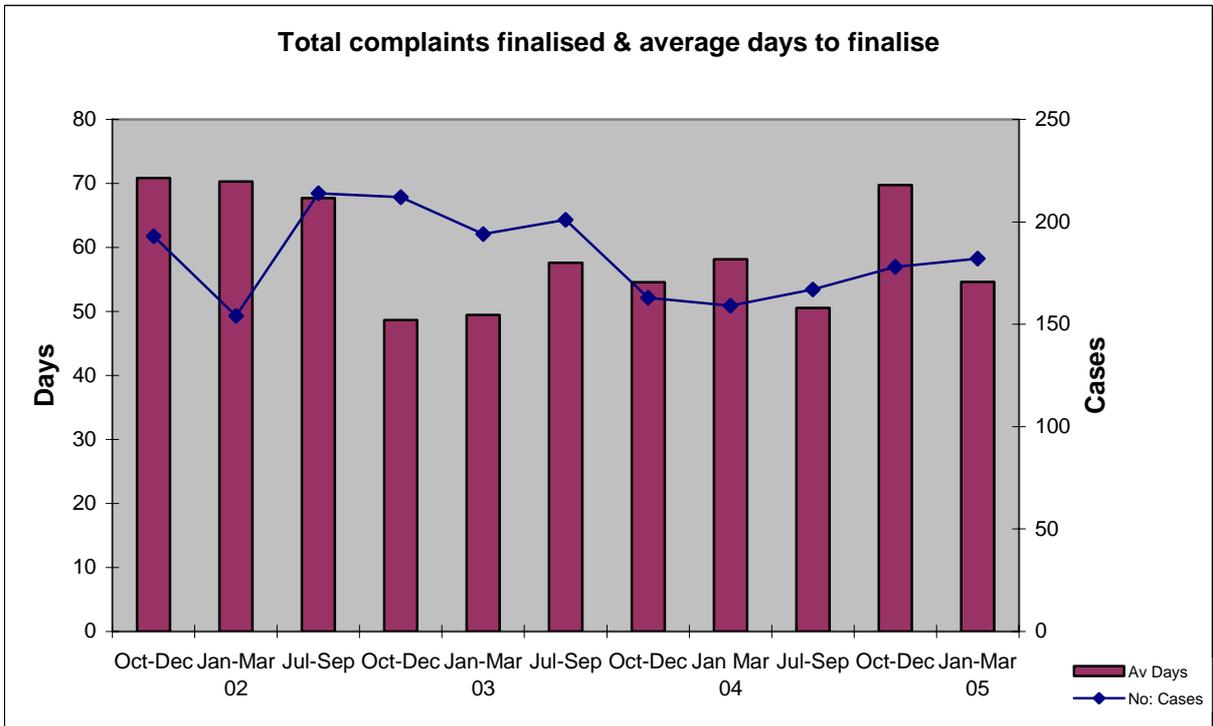
**Quarterly statistics January 2001 – March 2005**

The next figure shows the average number of days taken to finalise complaints accepted during all reporting periods from the January-March 2001 quarter. The data indicates a slight increase in the number of cases accepted and finalised and a corresponding increase in the national average number of days taken to finalise these cases. While it may be argued that this result reflects the complexity of complaints the data does not support this view, nor does the data indicate the recent legislative changes have contributed to significant efficiencies in the resolution of complaints. The data indicates that the national average number of days taken to resolve complaints lodged during this quarter was 27.93 days (100 complaints) compared with 21.66 days to resolve matters lodged and finalised during the same quarter last year (87 complaints). It is likely that the Scheme's processes, including the many appeal processes contributes to the disparity in the number of cases resolved and average number of days taken to finalise complaints each quarter.

Each quarter the Scheme finalises a number of complaints that were accepted prior to the beginning of the current reporting period. The second figure on the next page depicts the total number of complaints finalised in a period and the average number of days to finalise all complaints resolved during the period. Between 1 January 2005 and 31 March 2005 the Scheme finalised a total of 182 complaints. This figure includes complaints finalised via negotiation, mediation, determination as well as complaints that were not accepted, withdrawn or where the Scheme made a decision to cease to deal with the matter.



**Cases accepted and finalised during each quarter**

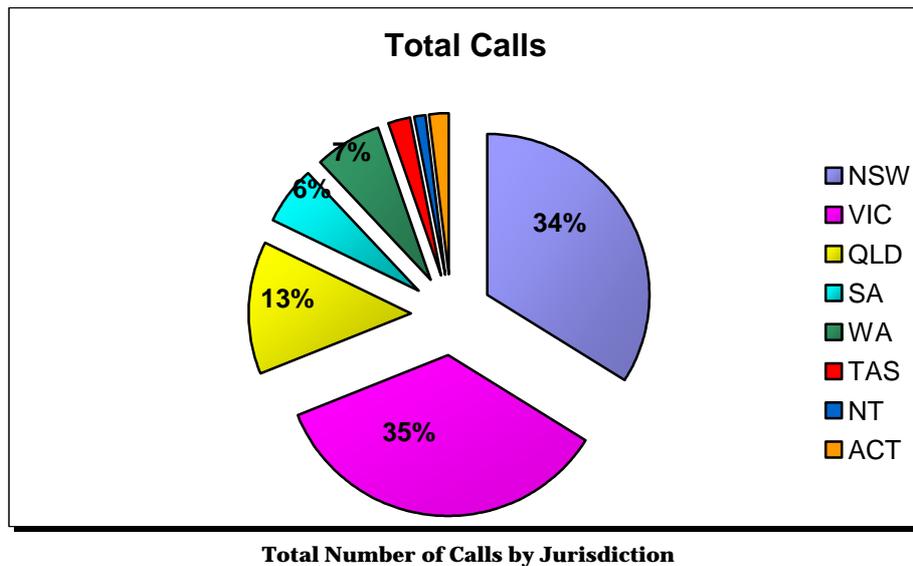


**Total number of complaints finalised during the quarter and average days to finalise**

This report provides information relating to the operation of the Scheme and covers the reporting period 1 January-31 March 2005. 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

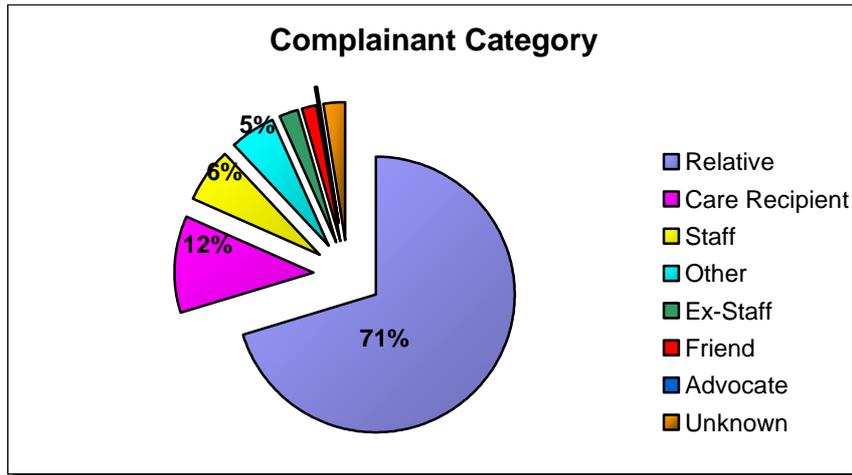
During this reporting period the Scheme dealt with a total of 1,162 calls. Compared to the last reporting quarter this is a reduction of 321 calls recorded nationally. The following figure shows the breakdown of calls recorded in each jurisdiction, that is the number of complaints and information calls, shown as a percentage of the total number of calls recorded nationally.



Of the 1,162 calls recorded, 251 (22 per cent) were registered as complaints and 911 (78 per cent) were registered as information calls. Thus the ratio of complaints to information calls is higher this quarter than the previous reporting period.

## Recorded Complaints

The majority (96 per cent) of the 251 complaints recorded during the reporting period related to aged residential care services. Eight complaints (three per cent) related to Community Aged Care Packages (CACPs) and one complaint related to flexible care services.



**Complainant Category**

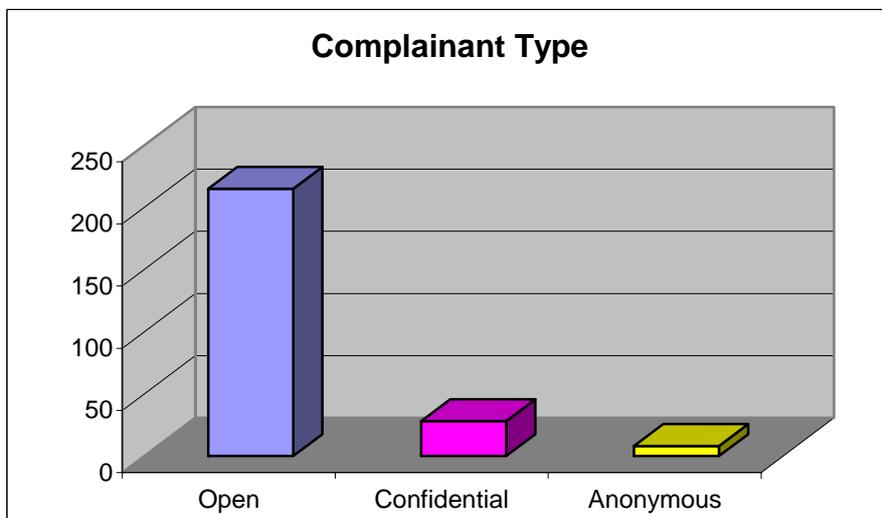
As in previous reports, the relatives of residents (71 per cent) lodged the majority of complaints recorded nationally. Across Australia, care recipients lodged 12 per cent of complaints, staff lodged six per cent, ex staff and friends each lodged two per cent and one advocate is listed as registering a complaint. Two per cent of complaints were registered as 'unknown' and a further five per cent of complainants were recorded as 'other'.

### Site Visits

During the reporting period the database records that officers undertook a total of 78 site visits either as part of the preliminary assessment or ongoing management of the issues raised. A total of 68 facilities were visited and issues relating to 75 individual complaints were discussed.

### Complainant Type

Of the 251 complaints recorded nationally during the reporting period, 215 (86 per cent) were registered as open complaints, 28 (11 per cent) as confidential complaints and 8 (3 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**

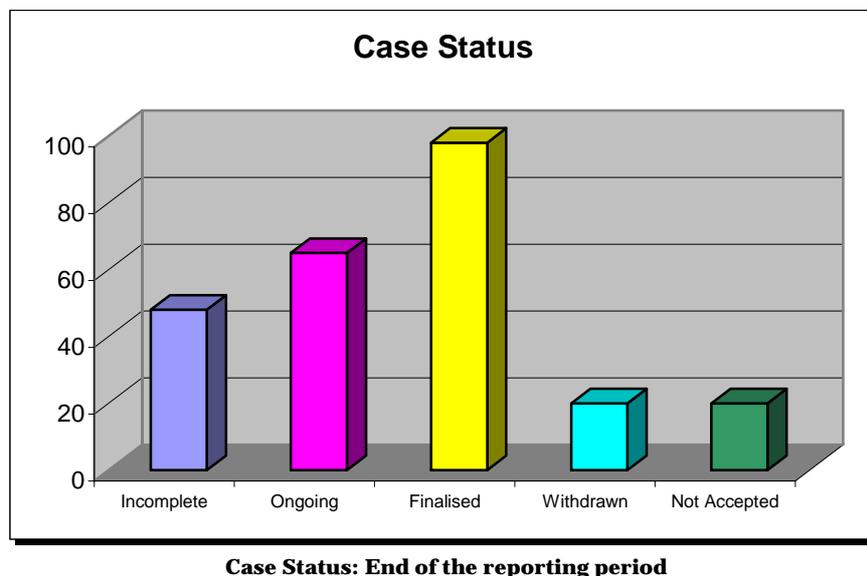
## Issue Priorities

Complaint issues are assessed as either urgent or complex. During the reporting period four issues were assessed as urgent. A further 296 issues were assessed as complex.

## Average Time to Resolve Complaints

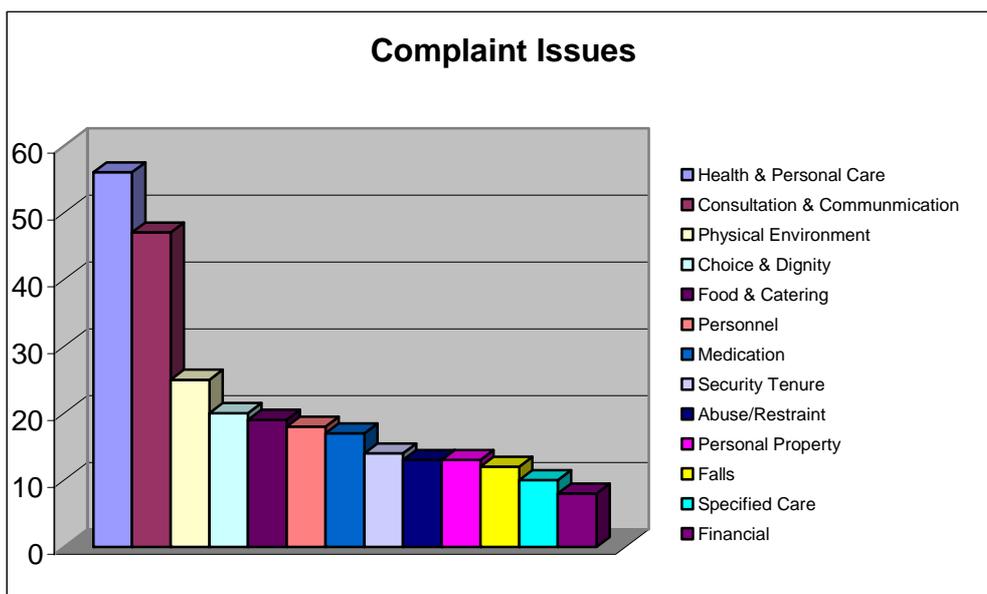
The database provides information regarding new cases both received and finalised within a period. During the quarter the Scheme finalised 100 cases that were lodged during the reporting period. The average number of days to finalise complaints received within the reporting period was 27.93 days. However, during the quarter the Scheme finalised a total of 182 complaints. The average number of days to finalise all complaints, including those lodged prior to 1 January 2005, was 54.63 days.

At the end of the reporting period the data show that, nationally, 19 per cent of cases were incomplete, 26 per cent were ongoing, 39 per cent had been finalised, eight per cent were not accepted and eight per cent had been withdrawn. While the database does not provide a report on decisions to cease to deal with complaints a search of current cases indicates that the Scheme ceased to deal with three complaints between 1 January and 31 March 2005.



## 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. The next figure shows the most frequently recorded complaint issues during this reporting quarter.



Most frequently recorded complainant issues

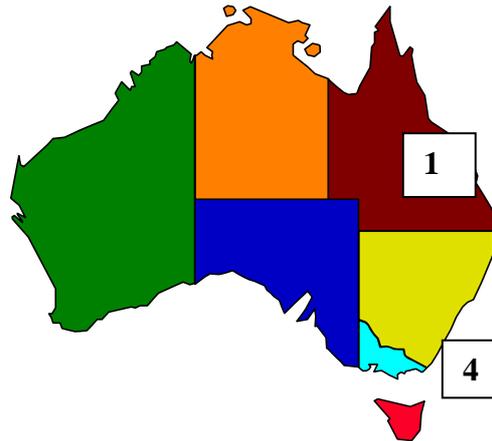
The database identifies that only 238 issues were categorised for the 251 complaints recorded during the period. This again illustrates poor data input and is in contrast to the number of issue priorities recorded elsewhere on the database. Complaints registered necessarily comprise at least one issue 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.

## Non acceptance of Complaints and Appeals

Based on *last status change* the database indicates that, across Australia, a total of 25 complaints were not accepted by the Scheme during the reporting period. Five of these complaints were received prior to 1 January 2005.

Victoria, Queensland and Tasmania were the only jurisdictions to record any non-accepted complaints. Twenty-one of the complaints not accepted (84 per cent) originated in Victoria, three in Queensland and one in Tasmania.

During this quarter, the Commissioner for Complaints was asked to provide advice in relation to five appeals against the non-acceptance of a complaint. This equates to 20 per cent of all non acceptances recorded during the period. Four appeals were lodged in Victoria (19 per cent of non-acceptances in this State). The Commissioner recommended that three of these decisions be confirmed and in the other matter recommended that the decision in relation to one issue be confirmed and in the other set aside. One appeal was lodged in relation to a non-acceptance decision in Queensland. The Commissioner recommended that this decision be confirmed. The Commissioner also finalised an appeal lodged in Victoria at the end of the previous quarter. The Commissioner recommended that the decision in relation to two of the four issues be confirmed and the other two be set aside and replaced with a decision to accept those matters.

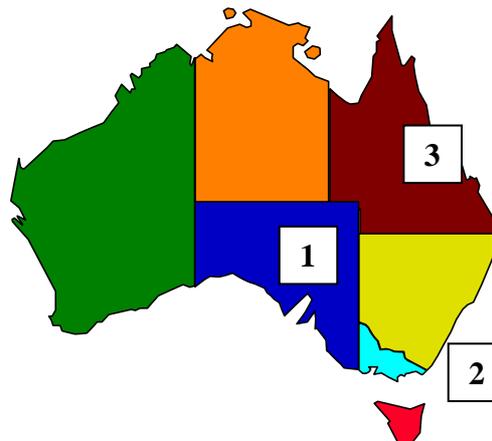


**Appeals against Non Acceptance**

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

The Scheme in Western Australia sought advice from the Commissioner after receiving a request for reconsideration of a decision to cease dealing with a complaint. The Commissioner recommended that the decision to cease dealing with the complaint be confirmed.

### **Referrals and Committee Hearings by State and Territory**



**Committee hearings this quarter**

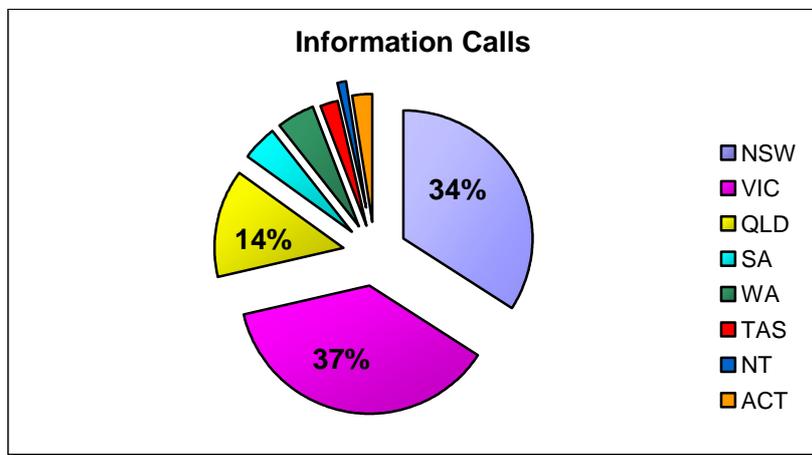
During the reporting period six hearings were conducted and a further seven cases were referred for determination. The complaints involved a range of issues including security of tenure, medication management, clinical care, continence, nutrition & hydration, wound care, skin care, infection control, management and staff attitudes, restricted access, communication and privacy.

### **Determination Reviews by State and Territory**

One determination was appealed during the period and the Review will be conducted at the beginning of the next quarter. A Review Panel confirmed the decision of the original committee in relation to a complaint originating in Western Australia which had been referred during the previous reporting period.

## Information Statistics

During the reporting period 73 per cent of the calls registered by the Scheme (911) were recorded as information calls. All jurisdictions recorded a higher percentage of information calls when compared to the number of complaints registered. The following figure shows a percentage breakdown of the total number of information calls received during the period.



Total number of information calls by jurisdiction

The majority of callers (84 per cent) were seeking general information. Sixteen per cent of callers (16 per cent) sought information outside the jurisdiction of the Scheme. As noted elsewhere Western Australia and Queensland have revised the management and recording of information calls. Whilst complaints officers continue to respond to all information calls only those relating to matters falling within the Scheme's jurisdiction are recorded on the database. ....

The Scheme recorded the category of 461 callers seeking information. Of these, seven per cent were listed as 'other'. Fifty-eight per cent of callers identified themselves as relatives, 13 per cent as currently employed staff, 15 per cent as care recipients, two per cent as ex-staff, four per cent as friends and one per cent as advocates.

The database shows that the time taken to manage information calls was recorded in 677 cases. Of those recorded 308 (45 per cent) of information calls received by the Scheme nationally were concluded in less than 15 minutes. Thirty-eight per cent of calls (260) took between 15 and 30 minutes, 14 per cent (94) between 30 minutes and one hour and two per cent of calls (15) were concluded between one and three hours.

The database no longer records the nature of information calls.