



Embargoed to 2.30pm 4/7/2018

OMBUDSMAN AUDIT REPORT ON GOVERNMENT COMPLAINT HANDLING FINDS GOOD PROGRESS AND SOME CONCERNS

Ombudsman Wayne Lines today tabled in the Parliament of South Australia his audit report titled **'An assessment of state agencies' complaints management systems'**.

'Until very recently complaints were seen by many government agencies as an indicator of a failure to meet their service delivery standards and damaging to their reputation. They are now seen in government across Australia as integral to improving service delivery and customer satisfaction', said Mr Lines.

'My Office has handled over 13,000 enquiries from the public this financial year. More than 4,000 of these were complaints about state government agencies and local government. A significant part of my role is to ensure that state government agencies are responding promptly and appropriately to the more than 25,000 complaints they receive each year. My aim is to minimise complaints to my Office and maximise good complaint handling by the agencies themselves', he said.

The audit survey found that all 13 state government departments now had policies and procedures available for members of the public to make complaints. Reported strengths are stronger complaint valuing cultures within agencies; a more consistent application of complaint handling policies and procedures to enable complaints and evidence of appropriate responses to complaints. There were examples of services improved or changed as a result of complaints.

Deficiencies were identified such as inadequate record keeping and reporting practices. It was evident that agencies needed to improve access to their complaint management systems for individuals from known vulnerable groups and to further develop their responses to unreasonable complainant conduct.

The report makes three recommendations to be supervised by the Senior Management Council of government. The recommendations propose renewal of the Premier's Circular on Complaint Management in the SA Public Sector (including adherence to the Australian Standard on complaint management); improved complaint management and access for disadvantaged and vulnerable people and the development of departmental Strategic Planning goals to deliver service improvements linked to complaints.

The full report is available at www.ombudsman.sa.gov.au/publications/audit-reports

Media contact: Ombudsman Wayne Lines - 8226 8699 or ombudsman@ombudsman.sa.gov.au