

Ombudsman releases latest OIA data

5 September 2018

Chief Ombudsman Peter Boshier today released his latest Official Information Act data, which shows there has been a rise in the number of complaints received.

The number of OIA complaints received by this office in the first six months of 2018 increased from 673 to 697 when compared to the last reporting period from July to December 2017.

Mr Boshier says the increase may be partly attributed to the electoral cycle.

“Traditionally complaints ease off as an election approaches and then pick up again once a new government is formed.”

Most of these complaints were in response to agencies refusing or delaying their responses to requests.

Four hundred and sixty-six complaints came from private individuals; more than three times as many as received from media organisations.

In terms of outcomes, the Office of the Ombudsman completed 722 OIA complaints in the first six months of 2018. Around 27% of the complaints were resolved without needing to form a final opinion.

“I am very pleased to report that we were able to resolve a good number through our early resolution process despite the often contentious nature of OIA complaints.”

“My office was also successful in achieving remedies for 249 complaints.”

The remedies range from agencies agreeing to reconsider their decisions, apologise or provide financial remedies.

“I have now published 2 years’ worth of data and overall there has been a significant rise in the number of complaints received.”

The number of complaints has increased by 30 per cent when comparing the current reporting period with the period between July and December 2016 when we received 538 complaints.

“This may reflect increasing confidence in the ability of my office to deal with issues. We have managed to clear a backlog of complaints and we are very much focussed on more timely investigations and resolutions”.

“My office will continue to play its role in informing and educating the public sector on how the OIA works and how they can be more efficient and accessible to New Zealanders.”

“I am greatly encouraged to see agencies using this data to assess and monitor their OIA performance.”

At the same time as the Office published its complaints and outcomes data, the State Services Commission published its data on OIA requests and response times.

For more information: Mark Torley, 027 275 5733, mark.torley@ombudsman.parliament.nz.

View the Ombudsman’s data on OIA complaints for January to June 2018 [here](#)

Questions and answers on the Ombudsman’s OIA data

What’s the data about?

The data released by the Office of the Ombudsman concerns OIA complaints and complaint resolution from January to June 2018. It includes information on:

- the number of complaints received by Minister or agency
- the nature of the complaint and type of complainant (media, private individual, etc)
- the outcome of the complaint, including whether any administrative deficiency was identified and if so the remedy.

How do the different agencies compare?

- The data doesn’t enable a direct comparison among agencies, as complaints data on its own doesn’t give the full picture. The number of complaints one agency receives may be a very small proportion of its total number of OIA requests.
- The purpose of the data is to provide information on the overall number and type of complaints received by the Ombudsman, and the outcome of an investigation. This will be useful for showing trends over time, and we encourage agencies to use the data for self-review purposes.

What are most complaints about?

- Most complaints concerned the refusal of an official information request. One hundred and eighty-four complaints were about a refusal in full; 157 were about a refusal in part. One hundred and forty-two complaints were about a delay in decision.

Who makes the most complaints?

- Individual members of the public made 466 complaints—nearly two-thirds of the total. Next were media, who made 138 complaints in the first six months of 2018.