

Latest OIA, LGOIMA data released

4 March 2020

The Chief Ombudsman Peter Boshier has released his latest Official Information Act (OIA) and Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act (LGOIMA) data.

The number of OIA complaints received by the Ombudsman in the six months from 1 July to 31 December 2019 was 771, an increase of 78 (11%) from the previous six months. The number of LGOIMA complaints received was 199, an increase of 34 (20%).

“The number of OIA complaints we receive does fluctuate, but over the past few years they have been rising. Likewise, the number we complete fluctuates. It depends on the complexity of the complaint and how much time and resources are required to close them,” says Mr Boshier.

“The number of LGOIMA complaints has increased from a fairly low base, but as this is only the second set of full data we have published for local government, it is too early to see any trends.”

Another reason that complaint numbers are higher during the period is that fewer are lodged early in the New Year.

“The July to December figures have been higher than the first six months of the year in each of the past three years, which would suggest the Christmas-New Year holiday season has an effect.”

Mr Boshier said there could be several other reasons for the increasing number of complaints being lodged with his Office.

“The data shows the greatest number of complaints relate to refusals to release information, either in part or in full. We encourage agencies to answer the question ‘Why shouldn’t I release this information?’, rather than asking ‘Why should I release this information?’.

“But I would add the general increase could also be an outcome of the public being more aware of their rights under the law. This could mean they are more likely to complain because they may have greater expectations of what they could or should be provided.

“Both the OIA and LGOIMA are ‘living’ pieces of legislation, and agencies need to adapt to providing what information people want now and in a way they expect it to be delivered. It is notable that more than 62% of OIA and 81% of LGOIMA complaints are from individuals, while complaints from the media represent only 22% and 12% of complaints respectively.

“Regardless, the guiding principle of the Ombudsman is that all complaints are dealt with fairly, in the letter and in the spirit of the law, and as quickly as practicable – I will ensure this continues to happen into 2020.”

ENDS

About the data

The data released by the Ombudsman concerns both OIA and LGOIMA complaints received and complaints completed from 1 July to 31 December 2019. 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). For the complaints completed, the data also includes the outcome of the complaint.

The data does not enable a direct comparison among agencies, as complaints data on its own does not give the full picture. The number of complaints received by the Ombudsman may be a very small proportion of the total number of OIA or LGOIMA requests received by an agency.

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.

At the same time as the Ombudsman published complaints and outcomes data, the State Services Commission published its data on OIA requests received by agencies and their response times.

View the Ombudsman's data on OIA and LGOIMA complaints on the website's [Resources and publications section](#).

The State Services Commission timeliness statistics can be viewed [here](#).

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Complaints received	Received	Company / association / incorporated society	Individual	Media
LGOIMA	199	12	162	24
OIA	771	57	483	172
Received – reasons	Delay in decision	Incomplete / inadequate response	Refusal in full	Refusal in part
LGOIMA	40	28	68	31
OIA	160	48	276	128
Complaints completed	Completed	Company / association / incorporated society	Individual	Media
LGOIMA	169	4	144	20
OIA	701	42	450	144