

OFFICE ACCOMMODATION STRATEGY 2006 - 2009

PREFACE

An Office Accommodation Strategy determines whether accommodation assets should be enhanced, maintained or disposed of. It requires agencies to assess whether their accommodation holdings support their current and future service delivery strategies and meets the required occupational health and safety and industrial standards. Agencies are also required to reduce their space utilisation and ensure that any lease negotiations are conducted in line with government accommodation policies.

Office accommodation is the physical workspace needed to accommodate the people and technology required to develop, implement and administer the delivery of an organisation's services. Office accommodation is located, configured and fitted out in response to the business needs of the agency, and successful office accommodation management involves coordinating and aligning the physical workspace with the business needs on a continuing basis.

MISSION/CORPORATE GOALS

The NSW Ombudsman is an independent and impartial watchdog body. Our job is to make sure that the public and private sector agencies and employees we watch over fulfil their functions properly. We help agencies to be aware of their responsibilities to the public, to act reasonably and to comply with the law and best practice in administration.

We are independent of the government of the day and accountable to the public through the NSW Parliament. Our work is governed by a range of legislation including the Ombudsman Act 1974, the Community Services (Complaints, Reviews and Monitoring) Act 1993 and the Police Act 1990.

The basic charter of the office is to receive, investigate and report on complaints about the administrative conduct of public sector agencies, to oversee and monitor the handling of child abuse allegations and alleged misconduct of police officers and, where appropriate to make findings and recommendations.

We want to see fair, accountable and responsive administrative practice and service delivery in NSW. We work to promote in our own organisation and those we oversight:

- good conduct,
- fair decision making,
- protection of rights, and
- provision of quality services

The goals of the office are to:

- Help organisations meet their obligations and responsibilities and promote and assist the improvement of their service delivery.
- Deal effectively and fairly with complaints and work with organisations to improve their complaint handling systems.

NSW Ombudsman policy number:	11e
Date created:	27 August 2004
Last updated:	30 August 2006
Version number:	3
Related policies:	Total Asset Management; Corporate Plan, Results and Services Plan, Asset Strategy, Capital Investment Strategy, Asset Maintenance Strategy, Asset Disposal Strategy, Office Accommodation Strategy
This policy does not supersede any other policy.	22 August 2004

- Be a leading watchdog agency.
- Be an effective organisation.

The implementation of these goals is supported by a number of business plans that provide more detailed direction to staff. Our Office Accommodation program is included in the business plan for Purpose 4 – be an effective organisation. Specifically, goal 4.4.2 that states that we will ‘Act lawfully and implement relevant government policies’. The development and implementation of internal policies or plans for addressing Government environmental and asset management policies is one way of addressing this goal.

Our Values

The public has a right to quality service from the administrator. In everything we do we will:

- provide the same high quality service that we encourage other organisations to offer.
- be fair, impartial and independent, and act with integrity and consistency.
- be accessible and responsive to all who approach us, and seek solutions and improvements that will benefit the broader NSW community.
- be a catalyst for change and a promoter of individuals’ rights.

SERVICE DELIVERY

Our Results and Services Plan outlines the following services delivered by the Ombudsman:

- Investigating and resolving complaints
- Assessing notifications, reviewing the handling of complaints and monitor investigations
- Keeping systems under scrutiny
- Advice or refer
- Hear appeals
- Reviewing the implementation of certain legislation

A more detailed explanation of these services, service measures and planned results can be found in the Results and Services Plan, Corporate Plan and Team Business Plans.

ORGANISATIONAL ANALYSIS

Our mandate is to improve the conduct and decision-making of agencies within our jurisdiction. Traditionally, we fulfilled this mandate by responding to complaints and overseeing investigations – recommending improvements to the way agencies perform in relation to individual matters and broader issues.

Over the years our functions have become much wider. We now oversee the investigation of complaints about police, the handling of child abuse allegations and convictions by persons and agencies within jurisdiction, and the use of powers to conduct controlled operations. We review the delivery of community services, the causes and patterns of deaths of certain children and people with a disability in care, the determination of FOI applications and the operation of a number of new pieces of legislation conferring additional powers on police and correctional officers.

Our office helps agencies in the public sector, and some in the private sector, to address problems that arise in the exercise of their functions and the discharge of their responsibilities. We do this by assisting them to identify problems in their system and operations, recommending solutions and improvements to the way they function.

Our Results and Services Plan (copy attached) outlines our emerging and strategic issues. These issues include continual increase in the number of complaints that we receive and the cuts to our budget that will have an impact on how we do our work.

The office achieved a 3½ star ABGR rating and as part of our office energy management strategic plan we are working towards attaining a 4.5 star rating by July 2007.

The building owners have implemented a water saving strategy throughout the building. Building Management also introduced a recycling program. The recycling program includes paper, glass, aluminium and P.E.T. bottles. The office audits this program as part of our Waste reduction and purchasing plan.

NEEDS ANALYSIS

Asset Criteria

The space allocation plan for future growth requirements for all new or expanded activities is to better utilise the existing space.

When we relocated to our current premises we retained the fit out of the previous tenant with some changes for OH&S reasons and to accommodate the Community Services Commission when it was amalgamated with the office in 2002. We have identified a need for some changes to our fit out, particularly if we extend our lease beyond its current term. These changes include adopting a more open plan approach – demolishing offices and replacing them with workstations.

This financial year in order to accommodate additional staff we are proposing to demolish some existing offices and convert the area into open plan workstations.

Cost forecast	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Rent (including car park rental, outgoings and cleaning)	1,806,000	1,861,000	1,941,000
Capital (eg. carpet and fit out)	\$100,000	Nil	Nil
Total	1,906,000	1,861,000	1,941,000

CURRENT STATUS

The office accommodation portfolio consists of the following premises:

- Level 23, 580 George Street Sydney 1,300m²
- Level 24, 580 George Street Sydney 537m²
- Level 26, 580 George Street Sydney 1,296m²

We are currently six years into a ten-year lease with an option to extend the lease for a further five years. The current premises meet our asset criteria ie. service dependency, utilisation, capacity, location, functionality and disabled access. It would not be our intention to relocate from our current premises in the foreseeable future. The rental costs, which are consistent with current market rentals, our occupancy costs are:

- Rent for building \$1,602,639
- Car park rental \$34,797
- Outgoings \$57,843
- Cleaning fees \$58,210
- Occupancy cost per person (including special purpose areas) \$9,377
- Occupancy cost per person (excluding special purpose areas) \$8,442
- Gross rental per m² \$560

We employ 187 staff based in one location in the Sydney CBD. As outlined above, we lease 3133 m², which translates to an average space per person of 16.75 m². However, this figure can be reduced further when we exclude our hearing rooms, external training room and shared/common areas – space that was categorised by the former Department of Public Works and Services as special purpose areas and not to be included in our utilisation rates. These areas occupy approximately 314 m² and when deducted make our space utilisation 15.07 m² per person. Our average space usage is within the State Government targets of 15 - 17 m² per person.

We have made a significant investment in the security of our premises with particular improvements being made to perimeter and reception security. We are satisfied that we comply with occupational health and safety (OH&S) and industrial standards as well as the information security standard AS7799. We were certified under AS7799 in December 2002, and recertified to the new standard in August 2005.

Our fit out was recently upgraded as a result of OH&S concerns and it is anticipated that, based on the status quo, only minor modifications will be required during the life of this plan. Our fit out, excluding the special purpose areas, is mainly workstations and offices with limited storage facilities. We have a strategy in place to transfer files that are semi-active or inactive into archival storage at the Government Records Repository. We also store bulk printing off-site at a low-cost storage.

We identified the carpet on level 23 as an OH&S risk. This carpet is approximately 20 years old and worn and thin in parts causing minor trip hazards we are currently in the process of replacing the carpet.

We recently reconfigured and rewired all of our existing emergency and exit lighting within our tenancy in order to comply with the Australian Standard 2293.2 clause 4.3 allowing the facilitation of test sequence without de-energising general lighting within the tenancy.

OFFICE ACCOMMODATION ACTIONS

1. Reduce space utilisation

Our average space utilisation ratio to benchmark is 15.07 m² per person (16.75 m² per person including non-utilisation/special purpose areas ie. hearing rooms, interview rooms and training room). As this is within the Government space utilisation target of 15m² - 17 m² per person, we plan to maintain this ratio. If staffing levels increase, we plan to demolish offices and adopt a more open plan environment.

2. Lease negotiations

As required under government policy we will engage the Department of Commerce to undertake all lease negotiations and where necessary rent reviews. A number of our rent reviews are fixed increases, and will therefore not require any significant or technical negotiations with the building owner.

3. Meet occupational health and safety and other standards

Our fitout was recently upgraded as a result of OH&S concerns and we will continue to assess our obligations under various legislative and industrial instruments. If required, we will modify our fitout to comply with these standards.

ASSOCIATED STRATEGIES

The following strategies are to be read in conjunction with this strategy:

- Results and Services Plan
- Total Asset Management 2006 -2009
- Capital Investment Strategy 2006 - 2009
- Asset Maintenance Strategy 2006 - 2009
- Asset Disposal Strategy 2006 - 2009

- Waste Reduction and Purchasing Plan
- Energy Management Strategic Plan

OMBUDSMAN APPROVAL

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "B. A. Barbour". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "B" and a long, sweeping underline.

Bruce Barbour
OMBUDSMAN