

## MEDIA POLICY

### PREFACE

We aim to be an effective, accessible and responsive organisation. Having a constructive relationship with the media is one way of achieving this.

### PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to outline the office's approach to communicating with the media.

### RESPONSIBILITY

This policy applies to the Ombudsman and all staff of the office, whether by way of appointment, secondment, contract, temporary arrangement or on a fee-for-service basis. Any individual having employee functions or acting in an employee capacity, including a volunteer, is a member of staff.

### LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

*Ombudsman Act 1974*

### DEFINITIONS

Not applicable.

### POLICY STATEMENT

#### 1. *General*

Our relationship with the media must be carefully managed to balance the need to maintain confidentiality in relation to much of our work with the need to inform the public about our work and issues of public interest.

Generally, staff are free to speak about our aims and objectives, the office and the nature of our work, but must be careful what is said about investigations, complaints generally and our systemic and project work.

#### 2. *Principles*

To ensure a consistent and professional approach, the office speaks with one official public voice through the Ombudsman.

We understand the valuable role the media plays in spreading information and comment about our work, and we will do our best to provide the media with information they request.

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Version number:	3
Related policies:	Code of conduct, Disclosure of information policy, Privacy management policy.
File Reference:	ADM/4977
This policy supersedes all previous media policies.	

### **3. How to deal with media requests**

All requests from the media for background information, interviews, help or comment are to be directed to the Project Officer (Community Relations).

Staff are not to provide public statements to the media without the approval of the Ombudsman. All prepared media statements must be approved by the Ombudsman.

Current investigations will generally not be discussed until and unless a public report on the matter has been tabled in Parliament.

If the media ask whether the office has received a matter, the office may confirm receipt of the matter in general terms but will not enter into discussion or reveal details of the complaint or complainant.

When a person states publicly that they have sent a complaint to the Ombudsman, and comment is sought by the media, the office will confirm receipt of the matter. No further details will be given.

When a person states publicly that they have sent a complaint to the Ombudsman or that the office is investigating a certain person or group, and that has not happened, the office will, if circumstances warrant, deny receipt of the complaint.

In all other matters, whether the office will comment or not and the exact content of any comment, will be determined by the Ombudsman.

### **4. Public comment on the work of the office**

The Code of Conduct provides that staff must not engage in public comment, whether through public speaking engagements, comments to newspaper, radio or television journalists, letters or articles to newspapers or other publications that:

- comments on the work of the office without prior permission or delegated authority of the Ombudsman, or
- is the expression of private views but by implication is capable of being perceived as official comment from this office.

Staff can disclose official information that is ordinarily given to members of the public seeking that information. Comments about any other work of the office must relate to information that has already been made public.

Restrictions on public comment and obligations to observe and protect confidentiality still apply when staff are no longer employed by the Ombudsman.

### **OMBUDSMAN APPROVAL**



Bruce Barbour  
**OMBUDSMAN**