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Ombudsman reports slow progress with interagency work

In 2002, a cross-agency Senior Officers Group was formed to improve the outcomes for people with an intellectual disability in contact with the criminal justice system.

The NSW Ombudsman, Bruce Barbour, today tabled a report in Parliament that examines the progress of the Senior Officers Group towards meeting its objectives.

“People with an intellectual disability are over-represented and face significant disadvantage in all areas of the criminal justice system,” said Mr Barbour. **“While NSW government agencies have recognised that a comprehensive interagency approach is necessary to meet the needs of these individuals, we have concerns about the progress of this collaborative work.”**

The Ombudsman’s report notes that:

- The progress of the Senior Officers Group has been slow.
- While a number of significant initiatives have commenced in the five years since the Senior Officers Group was formed, key areas of work have yet to be finalised or progressed to a point where they can be evaluated.
- Given the significant and financial cost of poor inter-departmental collaboration, more needs to be done to strengthen cross-agency service delivery for offenders with an intellectual disability.

“In our view, the community would expect greater progress by the Senior Officers Group than what has been achieved over the past five years,” Mr Barbour said. **“Continued and sustained commitment by the relevant agencies is needed to advance the agreed collaborative work, and to improve the outcomes for this vulnerable group of people.”**

In 2010, the Senior Officers Group will undertake a review of its progress, including evaluations of the impact of its work. The Ombudsman, through a recommendation to the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care, as lead agency of the Senior Officers Group, will continue to closely monitor progress.

Copies of the Ombudsman’s report are available at: www.ombo.nsw.gov.au

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