

Senate Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs

**INQUIRY INTO THE IMPACT OF CHANGES TO SERVICE DELIVERY MODELS ON THE ADMINISTRATION
AND RUNNING OF GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS**

Answers to Questions on Notice

Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman

Question 1

Senator Green asked the following question on 1 November 2019:

Could you let us know if you've got any updated figures on those complaints [from the Department of Home Affairs] and what the main issues are that are raised by those complainants.

The response to the honourable Senator's question is as follows:

In the period July to September 2019, the Office received 397 complaints about the Department of Home Affairs. A complaint may be about one or more issue. The complaints about the Department of Home Affairs raised 147 issues regarding temporary, bridging and protection visas and 103 issues regarding citizenship and permanent visas. Common themes included dissatisfaction with decisions or administrative processes relating to visa and citizenship applications and delays in processing times.

Question 2

Senator Green asked the following question on 1 November 2019:

And are you able to make recommendations to the contractor as well or do you have to make those recommendations to the department and the department has to then go and speak to the contractor?

The response to the honourable Senator's question is as follows:

The Commonwealth Ombudsman has jurisdiction under the *Ombudsman Act 1976* (Cth) to investigate complaints about services provided to the public under a contract with a Commonwealth government agency.

The Ombudsman is able to make recommendations about the actions of a contracted service provider, however under the Ombudsman Act these recommendations are made to the department, rather than directly to its contracted service provider.

The Ombudsman is also able to provide comments and suggestions to a department about the actions of a contracted service provider under the Ombudsman Act.

Question 3

Senator Carr, Chair, asked the following question on 1 November 2019:

In terms of the complaints you've received, how many of them relate to the questions that arise from contract providers?

The response to the honourable Senator's question is as follows:

In relation to the Department of Home Affairs, the area where we receive the most complaints involving contracted service providers is immigration detention.

In the period July to September 2019, the Office received 397 complaints about the department. These complaints raised 29 issues about the actions, decisions or conduct of contracted detention service providers, including medical services, property, conditions of detention, visitor management, safety and security, removals and transfers.