

SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS
AUSTRALIAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

Question No. 2

Senator Wright asked the following question at the hearing on 16 October 2012:

Senator WRIGHT: Does the commission receive complaints from people in detention regarding their treatment by authorities?

Prof. Triggs: It does.

Senator WRIGHT: Can you give me a sense of how frequent those sorts of concerns might be raised with the commission—for instance, the number in the last—

Prof. Triggs: Historically, as in particularly in the last two or three years, the numbers have been quite high. However, in the last 12 months there has been quite a noticeable drop in those complaints. We think because of increased movement of people from detention into community settlement and that has had what we believe is a very noticeable impact on the number of complaints.

Senator WRIGHT: It sounds to me as though you are talking there about the detention of asylum seekers or people coming to Australia. I am also interested in the broader issue of concerns, complaints or grievances raised by people within either mental health institutions or criminal justice institutions in Australia. Do you receive complaints from people in those institutions?

Prof. Triggs: We do receive some complaints, but I do not have the numbers or proportion of those relative to other kinds of complaints from detention. I think it is relatively small.

Senator WRIGHT: Can I ask you to take on notice that sort of data for the last two years—

Prof. Triggs: I will certainly take that on notice.

Senator WRIGHT: And I would like to see whether there has been an increase or a drop.

The answer to the honourable senator's question is as follows:

COMPLAINTS RECEIVED BY REPORTING YEAR – PEOPLE IN DETENTION

COMPLAINTS RECEIVED	2010-2011	2011-2012		2012-2013
		1 July 2011 – 31 Dec 2011	1 Jan 2012 – 30 June 2012	
Immigration detention	116			1 July 2012 – 31 October 2012
		158	122	27
Criminal Justice institutions	16	35		
Mental Health institutions	-	-		
TOTAL	132	315		

In this exchange with Senator Wright, referring to complaints received from people in immigration detention, Commission President, Professor Gillian Triggs said that 'in the last 12 months there has been quite a noticeable drop in those complaints'. Professor Triggs would like to clarify that the more correct timeframe for a noticeable drop in this type of complaint is six months. Please see additional immigration detention figures provided above.