

Senate Community Affairs Committee
ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
SOCIAL SERVICES PORTFOLIO
2015-16 Budget Estimates Hearings

Outcome Number: 3.5 Workforce and Quality

Question No: SQ15-000388

Topic: Aged Care Complaints

Hansard page: Written

Senator Helen Polley asked:

In relation to the changes to the aged care complaints scheme: can you explain how the complaints handling process is being simplified?

What changes will there be for consumers?

Please outline the new system

Will the Aged Care Commissioner be given more power to investigate case content?

Answer:

From 1 January 2016, the Government will increase the independence of aged care complaints handling arrangements by transferring responsibility for the Aged Care Complaints Scheme (the Scheme) from the Department of Social Services (the Department) to the Aged Care Commissioner (the Commissioner).

Consumers will still be able to raise concerns with the Scheme about the care and services provided by Australian Government funded aged care services. The mechanism for handling complaints will not change prior to the transition of the Scheme. No major changes to complaints handling processes are anticipated when the Commissioner assumes responsibility for the operations of the Scheme after 1 January 2016.

The independence of aged care complaints handling arrangements will be increased, as complaints management for Australian Government funded aged care services will be separated from the funder. This reflects best practice in complaints handling.

The Commissioner's functions to examine the decisions and processes of the Scheme will cease when the Commissioner takes responsibility for the Scheme. These functions will no longer be required due to the increased independence of the Scheme. However, consumers' capacity to seek review by the Scheme will remain. Consumers will also still be able to raise concerns regarding the processes undertaken in the resolution of complaints with the Commonwealth Ombudsman.

The Aged Care Commissioner's revised powers under the *Aged Care Act 1997* and subordinate legislation will extend those currently held by the Secretary of the Department of Social Services in relation to complaints handling.