

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

Outcome Number: 3.1 Access and Information

Question No: SQ15-000806

Topic: Aged Care Complaints

Hansard page: Written

Senator Helen Polley asked:

Question:

Will the processes for providers to respond to complaints be changing?

How will the Government maintain the independence of the Aged Care Commissioner? How will this independence be maintained if staff are still employed and located within DSS? Will the Aged Care Commissioner be given more power to investigate case content?

Answer:

The requirements for providers under the *Aged Care Act 1997*, the *Complaints Principles 2014* and within funding agreements will not change as a result of the transition of the Aged Care Complaints Scheme (the Scheme) to the Aged Care Commissioner (the Commissioner) on 1 January 2016.

Following the transition, the operation of the Scheme will be the responsibility of the Commissioner.

The Commissioner is an independent statutory office holder, who reports directly to the Assistant Minister for Social Services. Staff members currently working in the Office of the Aged Care Commissioner are employed by the Department of Social Services (the Department). The independence of the Office of the Aged Care Commissioner will be maintained as staff will take direction from and report to the Commissioner.

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