

Strengthening community services legislation

The NSW Ombudsman, Bruce Barbour, today welcomed important changes to community services legislation that will strengthen the safeguards for vulnerable people.

Key changes in the Community Services (Complaints, Reviews and Monitoring) Amendment Bill 2014 will enable the Ombudsman to:

- publicly report on, and make recommendations about, any systemic issues relating to the provision of community services by service providers as he thinks fit, and
- more effectively undertake research to prevent or reduce the likelihood of the deaths of children and people with disability in care, through provisions to:
 - work in partnership with others on research or other projects to find ways to reduce or remove risk factors associated with preventable deaths, and
 - provide information to others, where appropriate, to facilitate such research.

'The *Community Services (Complaints, Reviews and Monitoring) Act 1993* is important legislation that enables my office to examine the delivery of community services in NSW through complaints, reviews, inquiries and other key functions,' Mr Barbour said. **'I am pleased that in its 21st year, the Act is being strengthened to improve outcomes for vulnerable people and enhance my ability to publicly report on significant issues.'**

Submissions by the disability sector and the Ombudsman to the statutory review of the Act in 2008 emphasised the need to amend the legislation to give greater scope to the Ombudsman to report publicly on systemic issues arising from a review or an inquiry.

'We provide as much information as we can to all interested parties, to the extent that we have been able to within existing legislative requirements. However, these changes to the Act make it much easier for us to ensure that the public is informed about critical issues affecting the delivery of community services,' Mr Barbour said.