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NSW Ombudsman

## **Removing nine words: legal professional privilege and the NSW Ombudsman**

Ombudsman Bruce Barbour today tabled a Special Report entitled *Removing nine words: legal professional privilege and the NSW Ombudsman*.

The report outlines the need for an amendment to the Ombudsman Act to prevent agencies from refusing to provide information during an investigation on the grounds of legal professional privilege.

**“I am disappointed that government agencies continue to rely on claims of legal professional privilege to avoid providing us with information”** the Ombudsman said. **“But what is even more disappointing is the government’s continued failure to respond to my requests for the Ombudsman Act to be amended to stop them from doing so.”**

**“I am not questioning the importance of the privilege. I am advocating for its proper use. It is not in the public interest for it to be used as an obstructive tool in the face of fair, reasonable and appropriate scrutiny by an independent watchdog body.”**

**“I have raised this matter on numerous occasions over the last two and a half years – to no avail”** Mr Barbour said. **“This is not difficult. All that is required is the removal of nine words, repeated twice, from the Act. The amendment will bring us into line with other watchdog bodies in New South Wales, as well as all other Parliamentary Ombudsman across the country.”**