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NSW Ombudsman **Annual Report 2007-2008**

Government watchdog fixes problems

The NSW Ombudsman today tabled his Annual Report for 2007-2008.

The Ombudsman's role is to help keep government accountable by ensuring agencies act lawfully, reasonably and fairly.

“Much of our work involves fixing problems, improving poor communication and correcting bad decisions” the Ombudsman, Bruce Barbour, said.

“Organisations can get too caught up in their own processes without properly considering the circumstances of the people they are dealing with. No one should have to jump through unnecessary hoops to get a fair outcome.”

Cases where we have made a difference include:

- A woman had her driver's licence cancelled after her details got confused with another person who had cancelled their licence. She was stopped by police for a random breath test and was shocked when they fined her for driving unlicensed. After we got involved, her licence was reinstated and a request for waiving the fine was arranged (**case study 5**).
- A local council was responsible for damaging a home owner's sewer pipes. The owner was told to repair the pipes and apply for reimbursement. The refund was delayed by conflict in council over who was liable. It was only after our investigation that the home owner got a \$6000 refund and an apology from the council (**case study 68**).
- A student with a visual disability had been unable to get large print papers from his university for his exams. Following our inquiries, the university agreed to let the student sit a special examination, and he was given a written apology. The university also acted to avoid a similar situation occurring in the future (**case study 55**).
- After her leaking roof had not been fixed for months, a Department of Housing tenant deliberately stopped paying rent for three weeks to draw attention to the problem. The Department responded with a termination notice, and she asked for our help. Our inquiries revealed there were no procedures for following up outstanding repairs. Following our involvement,

the roof got fixed and the Department apologised to the tenant (**case study 59**).

“The Ombudsman continues to provide an important safety net for people when things go wrong” Mr Barbour said.

Issues of interest

Fixing a wrongly cancelled licence	Case study 5	P58
Conciliating a long running dispute	Case study 31	P90
Ensuring prisoners can access essentials	Case study 52	P128
Helping a disabled student with exam paper problems	Case study 55	P134
Checking on wheelchair accessible taxis	Case study 58	P137
Getting a leaking roof fixed	Case study 59	P137
Getting payment for damaged sewer pipes	Case study 68	P141
Fixing a case of mistaken identity	Case study 74	P150