

Appendix J

Complaints Graphs

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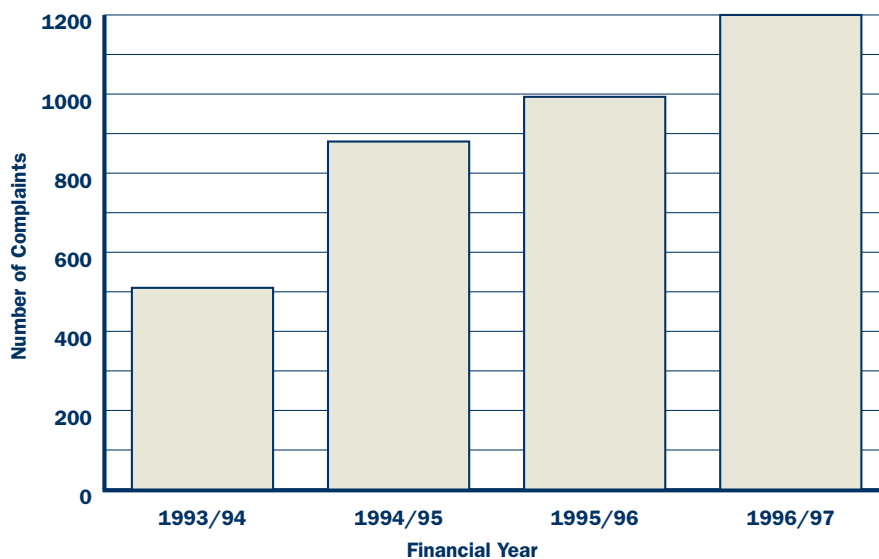
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The graphs presented here illustrate the complaints made to the Privacy Commissioner. They also show the resources available to process complaints and illustrate the growing complaints queue. The graphs have been chosen to illustrate general trends. Further specific figures may be obtained from annual reports. The Commissioner's financial and reporting year is 1 July to the 30 June the following year and complete series of figures exist for 1993/94 through to 1996/97. It has sometimes been possible to display figures through to 31 December 1997 or the end of March 1998.

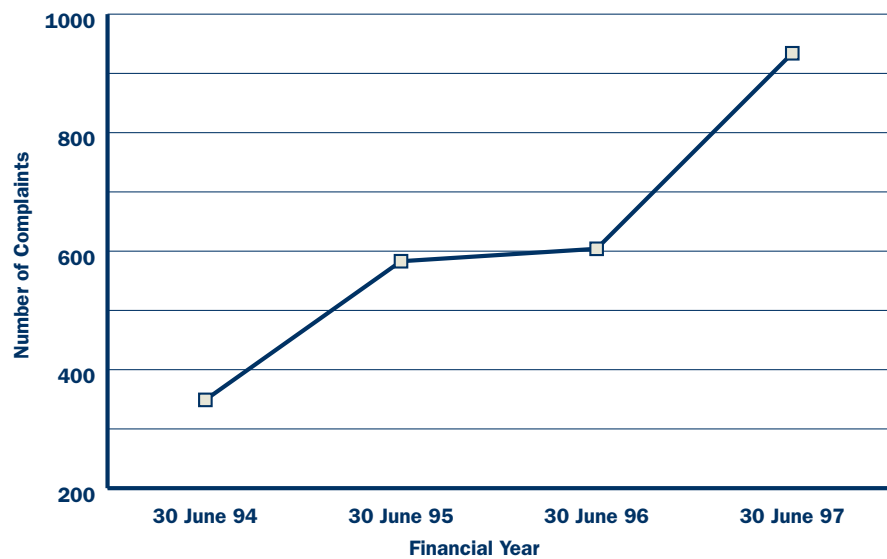
A: INCOMING COMPLAINTS

Figure J1: Complaints received



This illustrates the growth of complaints since the jurisdiction commenced on 1 July 1993. At some point the jurisdiction will mature and complaints plateau off.

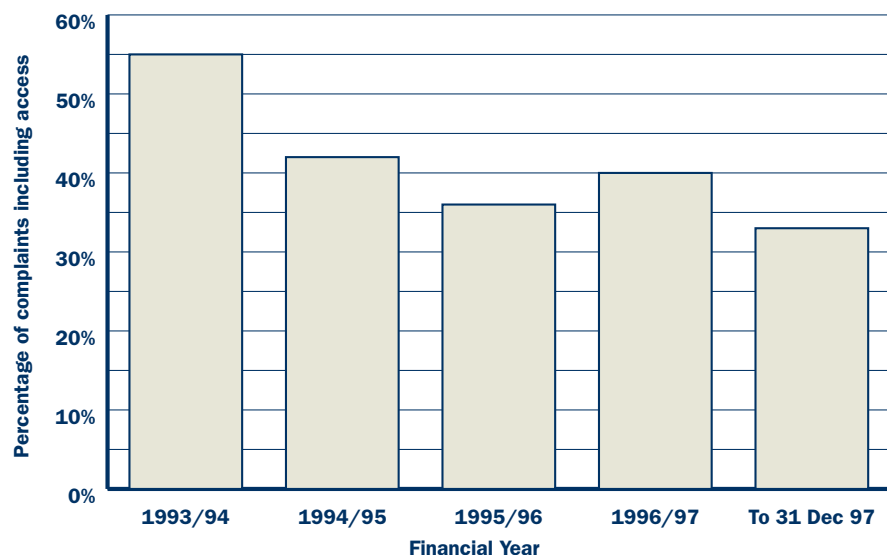
Figure J2: Complaints carried forward at year end



The number of complaints on hand comprised the total of new complaints received *and* those carried forward from the previous year. The number of complaints carried forward has continued to grow because of the number of new complaints outstripping the number of complaints closed (see graph J3).

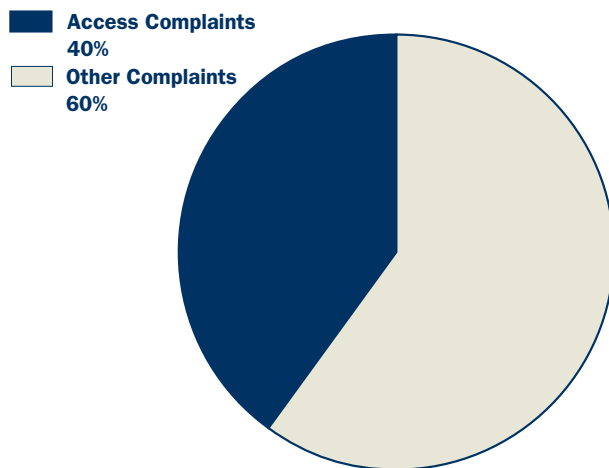
B: NATURE OF COMPLAINTS

Figure J3: Complaints which include access as a percentage of total annual complaints



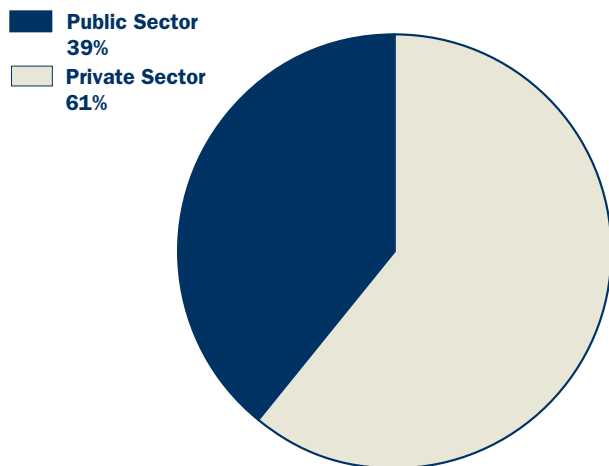
The single largest category of complaints are those concerning access to personal information. Access rights existed in the public sector and were transferred into the Privacy Act. From the start this part of the jurisdiction was “up and running”. Access complaints have become a smaller percentage of total complaints in later years as people become more familiar with other entitlements under the Act. This and the following graph illustrate complaints which include access as an issue – some of the same complaints also included other issues such as accuracy or disclosure.

Figure J4: Ratio of complaints which include access to other complaints



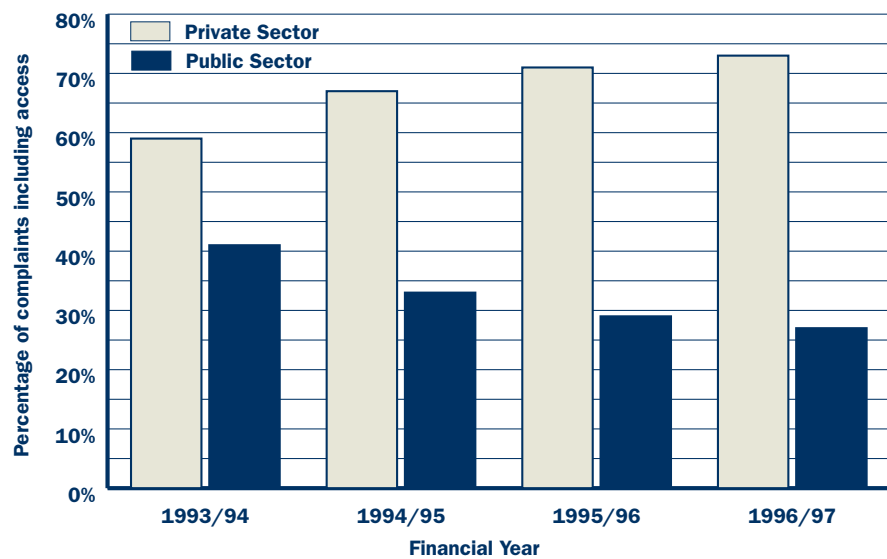
All complaints received to 30 June 1997 have been totalled to present this figure.

Figure J5: Public/private sector breakdown of complaints



Complaints received to 31 December 1997 have been totalled for this graph. Complaints may be made against agencies regardless of whether they are in the public or private sectors. However, complaints received are coded as to which sector is relevant. These figures should be taken as a general indication only given the difficulty of coding in some cases and certain broad categorisations adopted by the office (for example, all education-related complaints are categorised as public sector notwithstanding that this is not always the case).

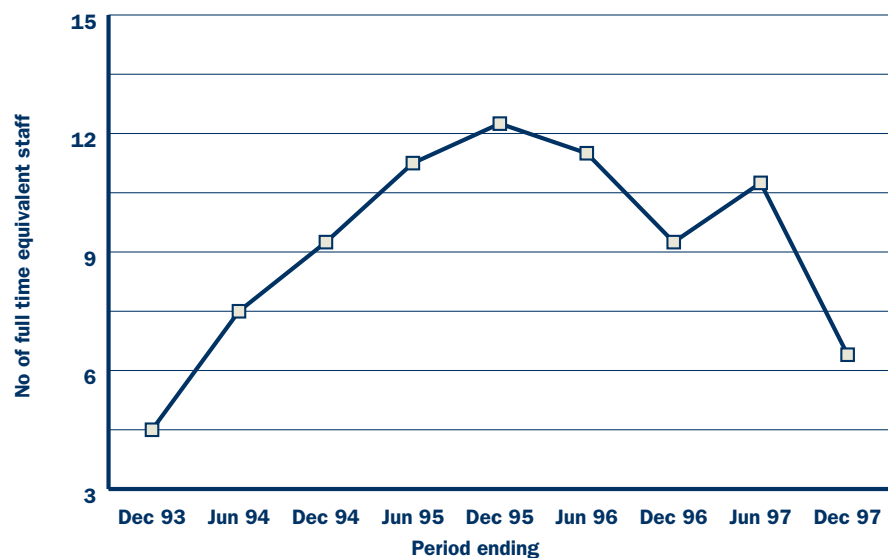
Figure J6: Complaints which include disclosure by sector



Complaints which include disclosure are the largest category after access complaints. This graph shows the proportion of complaints lodged against public and private sector agencies which concern disclosure. An increasing proportion of the disclosure complaints received by the office have concerned private sector agencies.

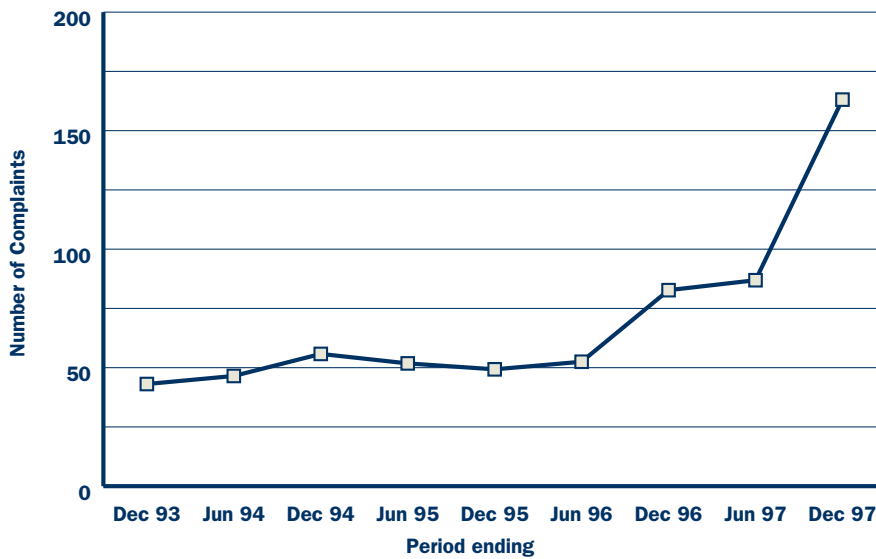
C: RESOURCES DEPLOYED AND COMPLAINTS QUEUE

Figure J7: Number of investigators



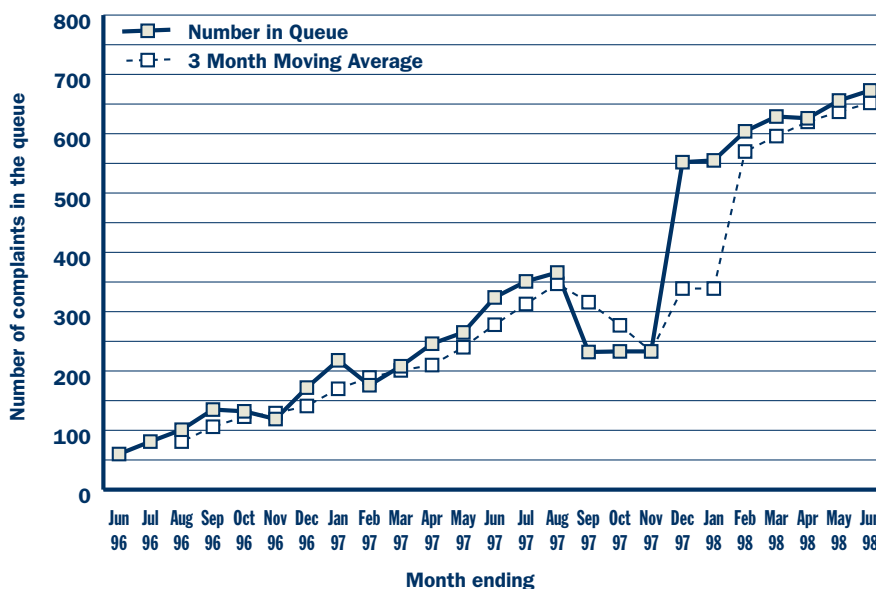
This graph shows the number of investigation personnel for the four years from December 1993. The number of full time equivalent positions is presented since the office uses part-time employees and contractors to supplement full time personnel. The figures also take account of extended staff absences. The graph begins six months after the commencement of the complaints jurisdiction and shows the numbers building to the end of 1995. With the office beginning to mature, staff departures began to feature. Staff were not always immediately replaced, and in later years, sometimes not replaced at all, due to funding difficulties. The apparent dramatic fall in the final months of 1997 is explained by the coincidence of staff departures, a staff member taking maternity leave, and two staff taking 3 months professional legal studies at the same time (the latter two returning in mid-December).

Figure J8: Complaints on hand per investigator



This graph should be read together with the graph showing the incoming complaints (figure J1), and the number of investigation personnel (figure J7). The trend is plain. Until June 1996 the increasing investigation personnel kept up with the increasing number of complaints. The position has deteriorated since and has manifested itself in the complaints queue (see figure J9). That the final leap in complaints on-hand per investigator in the final six months was partly reversed in the immediately following period (not shown) when staff on legal professional studies returned to work. The graph does not illustrate complaints actually allocated to Investigators – each Investigator is given a manageable allocation with the balance held in the queue.

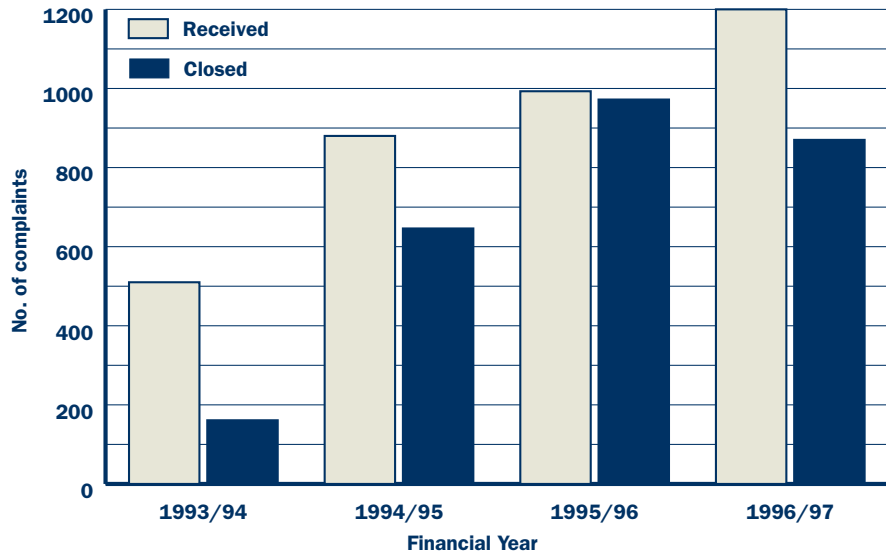
Figure J9: Complaints queue



A complaints queue was instituted in 1996. This graph shows the queue as a trend with the contributing factors, the complaints received and closed, presented on a monthly basis. The drop in late 1997 is partly explained by the employment, on a short-term contract basis, of an experienced investigator to address certain files and a staff project to close old files. As can be seen, without the availability of on-going investigation personnel available, the previous trend has reasserted itself in 1998.

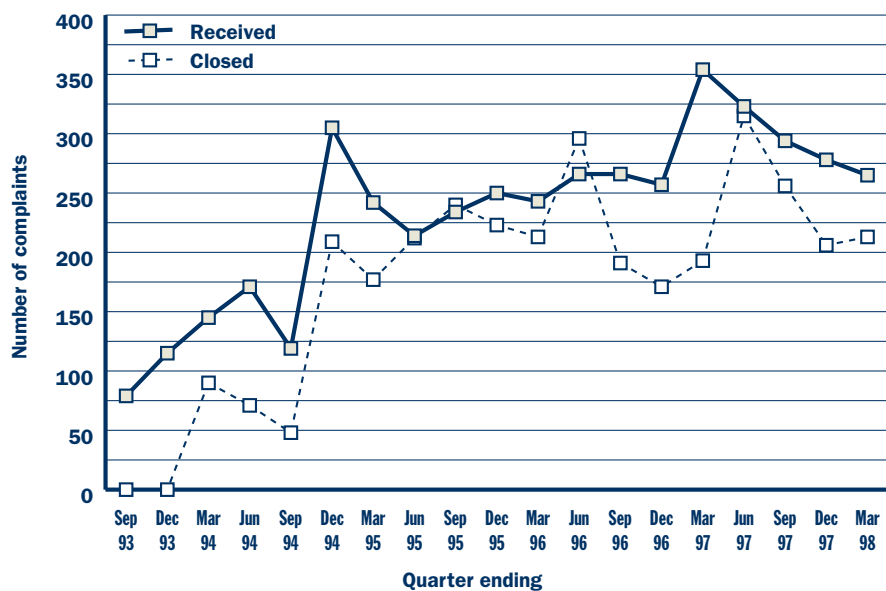
D. CLOSURE AND COMPLAINT OUTCOMES

Figure J10: Complaints received/closed on annual basis



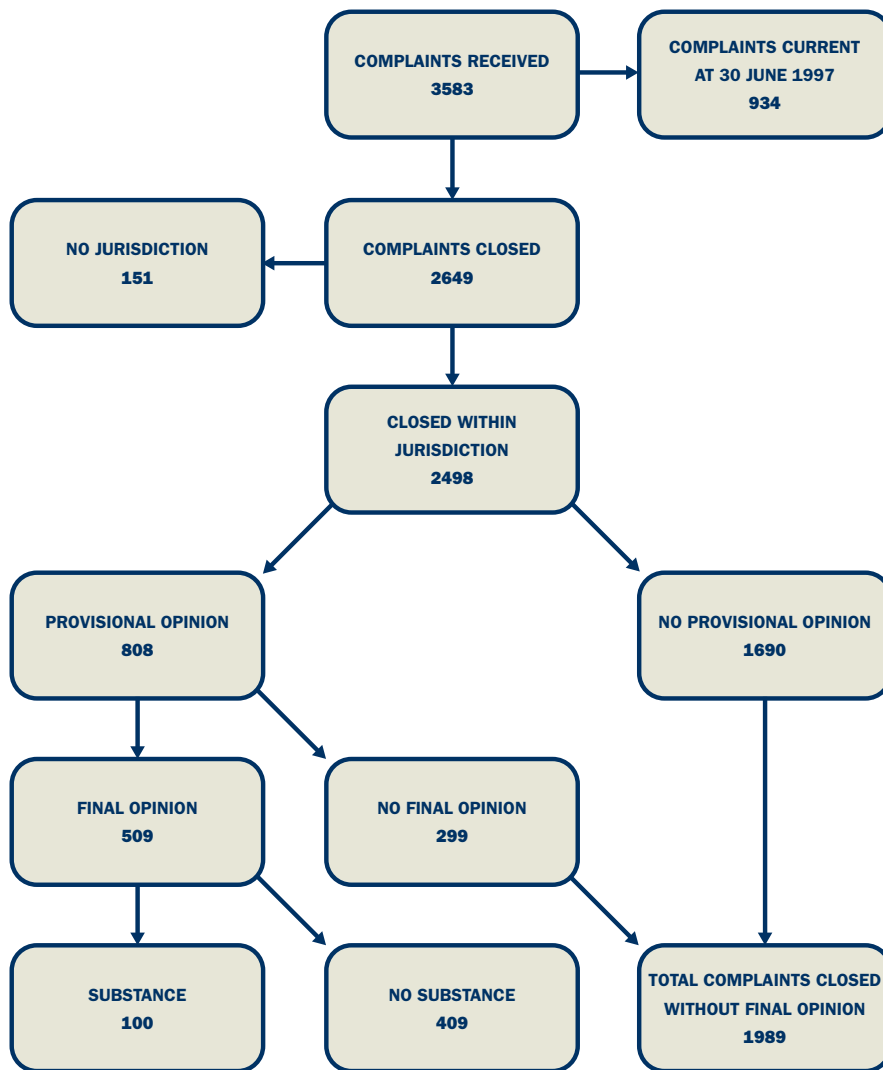
This gives the “big picture” on a yearly basis as to the volume of incoming complaints and the office’s performance in dealing with them. As already noted, the number of complaints has continued to rise. It has never been possible to close complaints files to meet the rate of incoming complaints although this was most nearly achieved in 1995/96. The significant feature is the difference between the number of complaints received and those closed. This difference is passed on to the following year and constitutes an increasing backlog.

Figure J11: Complaints received/closed on quarterly basis



This graph shows more detail than the previous graph. The figures are presented on a quarterly basis and illustrate the nine months since the close of the 1996/97 year. Since July 1996 there has never been a quarter in which fewer than 250 complaints have been received.

Figure J12: Analysis of complaints received to 30 June 1997



This graph shows the status of the 3583 complaints received in the first 4 years as at the end of the 1996/97 year.

