



OMBUDSMAN FOR BERMUDA

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Hamilton, Bermuda

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Ombudsman for Bermuda's Annual Report 2018 Tabled

Victoria Pearman, Ombudsman for Bermuda, has submitted her Annual Report for 2018 to the Speaker of the House of Assembly in accordance with her statutory duty under the Ombudsman Act 2004. The Report was tabled in the House of Assembly this morning and is available to the public.

The Annual Report 2018 presents the Ombudsman's yearly update to the public on the work of her Office. In 2018 the Ombudsman's Office handled 309 cases, including 166 new complaints, 98 new enquiries and 45 outstanding complaints that remained open as of 1st January 2018.

The Annual Report 2018 includes an update on the long-awaited opening of the Land Title Registry Office. It provides selected anonymised case summaries covering various administrative matters, including immigration policy, educational services, social benefits and land tax. The Office shares helpful suggestions obtained from public authorities and general useful information, such as the Government's outreach to invite the public's feedback on proposed policies or initiatives.

It highlights some of the Office's work during 2018, including that the Ombudsman:

- opened a systemic investigation into delays in hearing applications by the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board, which reportedly has been affecting the timeliness of victims of crimes receiving compensation;
- progressed an investigation into the adequacy of the Government's communication about public bus cancellations and delays;
- progressed the systemic investigation into senior abuse reporting and in the Annual Report 2018 provides the Office's first detailed update;
- continued to follow-up with the Bermuda Monetary Authority on consumer banking issues oversight and provides another update on those ongoing efforts; and
- continued to review with the Bermuda Hospitals Board its progress on implementing previous recommendations made. The implementation of a centralised BHB e-mail system to include community physicians was completed in 2018 – an initiative which will benefit users of King Edward VII Memorial Hospital's emergency department.



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The Ombudsman noted in her Message, “Good communication is a guiding principle for an ombudsman. As a way to reduce costs and also improve efficiency, the Government introduced an electronic version of the Official Gazette on 1st November 2018. Some would argue that: the world changes and people have to adapt; people are responsible for their learning; and progress cannot be slowed for those who are resistant or slow to change.”

Ms. Pearman further commented, “If we are not careful, there is the potential to disenfranchise those who rely on traditional, non-digital methods of communication. Progress does not mean leaving many of the Bermuda public behind. Good communication is using the widest means, properly and effectively. This is a position I will continue to advocate for.”

The Annual Report 2018 also describes the Office’s advocacy for important improvements to public service delivery. A notable outcome was a commitment for all government departments soon to implement internal complaint handling processes, including that their service-users are directed to the Office if they have unresolved complaints.

In addition to championing good administrative practice amongst the Public Service, the Annual Report 2018 describes internal efforts to increase the Office’s efficiency and effectiveness. During the current term, the Office has succeeded in steadily decreasing the number of individual complaints that remain unaddressed at the end of each reporting year. In 2018 the Office also introduced new performance measures whose outcomes will be reported on at the end of the 2019/20 budget year.

The Ombudsman expressed her thanks to those who bring their complaints and enquiries to the Office and to the Public Service. She stated that, “By bringing matters to our attention, it alerts us to challenges, some of which otherwise might not come to our attention. It also may lead to improvements for the wider community. We do not take your trust for granted. My thanks to the hardworking, knowledgeable members of the Public Service who understand the importance of us fulfilling our duties to ensure accountability and work with us toward this end.”

The Office encourages the public to share their comments about the Annual Report 2018 and the Office’s services. A survey is enclosed in the Report, along with a postage-free envelope, and is available [online](#). The Report can be downloaded from [ombudsman.bm](#), along with all previous reports published by the Office. Limited print copies of the Report are for the public at the Office of the Ombudsman located at: Dundonald Place, Suite 102, 14 Dundonald Street West, Hamilton HM 09.

For more information, contact the Office at 296-6541 or info@ombudsman.bm.

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Enclosed: Bermuda Ombudsman Annual Report 2018; photos (2) of cover and the Ombudsman

Editor's Note:

- The Office of the Ombudsman for Bermuda is an independent, non-government office that provides an impartial form of alternative dispute resolution which is less formal and more flexible and accessible than going through the Courts.
- The Office of the Ombudsman's staff assists to resolve complaints about the administrative actions of public authorities, including government departments, boards and bodies established or funded by the Legislature.
- The Ombudsman Act 2004 is the governing legislation.
- Section 24 of the Ombudsman Act 2004 requires that, within six months of the end of the year, the Ombudsman shall submit an Annual Report to the Speaker of the House of Assembly, with a copy to the Governor and the President of the Senate.
- Sections 15-17 of the Ombudsman Act 2004 lay out the process by which the Ombudsman may make recommendations further to an investigation to which the authority is required to respond. Pursuant to section 24 and 17, the Ombudsman may submit a special report to Parliament outlining an authority's: (1) failure to notify the Ombudsman of action proposed to be taken; (2) failure to take any action; (3) action that in the Ombudsman's opinion has been inadequate or inappropriate.
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