

## Head 114 — OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN

**Controlling officer:** The Ombudsman will account for expenditure under this Head.

Estimate 2024–25 ..... **\$133.2m**

### Controlling Officer's Report

#### Programme

##### Complaints Administration

This programme contributes to Policy Area 30: Complaints Against Maladministration (The Ombudsman).

#### Detail

|                           | 2022–23<br>(Actual) | 2023–24<br>(Original) | 2023–24<br>(Revised) | <b>2024–25<br/>(Estimate)</b>     |
|---------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Financial provision (\$m) | 129.5               | 129.7                 | 134.3<br>(+3.5%)     | <b>133.2</b><br>(–0.8%)           |
|                           |                     |                       |                      | (or +2.7% on<br>2023–24 Original) |

#### Aim

2 The aim is to redress grievances and address issues arising from maladministration in the public sector and to bring about improvement in the quality and standard of and promote fairness in public administration, through independent and impartial investigation.

#### Brief Description

3 The Ombudsman is responsible for resolving complaints of maladministration lodged by the public with her through inquiries, investigations, mediation and other forms of assistance. The Ombudsman may, of her own volition, initiate direct investigation into areas of suspected maladministration. The Office generally met its objectives and targets in 2023.

4 The key performance measures in respect of complaints administration are:

##### Targets

The performance of the Office of The Ombudsman can be measured by the extent of public awareness and acceptance of the Office, the thoroughness of investigations, the efficiency with which complaints are resolved, and the degree of acceptance and recognition of the effectiveness of recommendations made for the redress of grievances.

##### Indicators

Key indicators of performance are the number of complaint cases and enquiries received; the number of complaint cases investigated or concluded through inquiries and mediation; the number of direct investigations completed; and the number of recommendations accepted by government departments/public bodies either directly or after discussion in the legislature. The reporting year of the Office ends on 31 March. The performance figures for the last three reporting years are:

|  | <i>Reporting Year</i> |                     |                             |
|--|-----------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------|
|  | 2020–21<br>(Actual)   | 2021–22<br>(Actual) | <b>2022–23<br/>(Actual)</b> |
| enquiries received.....  | 7 505                 | 8 851               | <b>9 279</b>                |
| complaints received.....   | 29 814#               | 4 934#              | <b>5 357#</b>               |
| complaints carried forward from the previous reporting year .....    | 899                   | 692                 | <b>594</b>                  |
| total no. of complaints for processing .....                         | 30 713                | 5 626               | <b>5 951</b>                |
| complaints concluded by full investigation.....                      | 167                   | 92                  | <b>141</b>                  |
| complaints concluded by inquiry.....                                 | 2 480                 | 2 432               | <b>2 112</b>                |
| complaints concluded by mediation.....                               | 179                   | 215                 | <b>305</b>                  |
| complaints assessed and closed.....                                  | 27 195                | 2 293               | <b>2 765</b>                |
| total no. of complaints completed                                    |                       |                     |                             |
| complaints .....   | 30 021                | 5 032               | <b>5 323</b>                |
| percentage over the total no. of complaints for processing (%) ..... | 98                    | 89                  | <b>90</b>                   |

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|   | <i>Reporting Year</i> |                     |                     |
|---|-----------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
|   | 2020–21<br>(Actual)   | 2021–22<br>(Actual) | 2022–23<br>(Actual) |
| complaints carried forward to the next reporting year .....           | 692                   | 594                 | <b>628</b>          |
| no. of direct investigations completed .....                          | 9                     | 8                   | <b>9</b>            |
| no. of recommendations made .....                                     | 194                   | 139                 | <b>211</b>          |
| no. of recommendations accepted as at end of respective<br>year ..... | 168                   | 129                 | <b>187</b>          |

# The majority of complaints received in the year 2020–21 was secondary cases of topical complaints on particular social issues. Discounting the topical complaints, the numbers of complaints received in 2020–21, 2021–22 and 2022–23 were 4 659, 4 794 and 5 124 respectively.

***Matters Requiring Special Attention in 2024–25***

5 During 2024–25, the Office will continue to:

- enhance community awareness of the role and services of The Ombudsman;
- foster improvement in the quality and fairness in public administration;
- enhance transparency, efficiency and quality of the work of the Office; and
- build professional capacity through enhanced staff development and knowledge management.

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### ANALYSIS OF FINANCIAL PROVISION

| <b>Programme</b>               | <b>2022–23<br/>(Actual)<br/>(\$m)</b> | <b>2023–24<br/>(Original)<br/>(\$m)</b> | <b>2023–24<br/>(Revised)<br/>(\$m)</b> | <b>2024–25<br/>(Estimate)<br/>(\$m)</b>                   |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|--|---|
| Complaints Administration..... | 129.5                                 | 129.7                                   | 134.3<br>(+3.5%)                       | 133.2<br>(–0.8%)<br><br>(or +2.7% on<br>2023–24 Original) |

#### Analysis of Financial and Staffing Provision

Provision for 2024–25 is \$1.1 million (0.8%) lower than the revised estimate for 2023–24. This is due to the decreased provision for operating expenses.

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| Sub-head<br>(Code)       | Actual<br>expenditure<br>2022–23 | Approved<br>estimate<br>2023–24 | Revised<br>estimate<br>2023–24 | <b>Estimate<br/>2024–25</b> |                |
|--------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------|
|                          | \$'000                           | \$'000                          | \$'000                         | <b>\$'000</b>               |                |
| <b>Operating Account</b> |                                  |                                 |                                |                             |                |
| Recurrent                |                                  |                                 |                                |                             |                |
| 000                      | Operational expenses .....       | 129,476                         | 129,655                        | 134,307                     | <b>133,191</b> |
|                          | Total, Recurrent.....            | 129,476                         | 129,655                        | 134,307                     | <b>133,191</b> |
|                          | Total, Operating Account .....   | 129,476                         | 129,655                        | 134,307                     | <b>133,191</b> |
| <hr/>                    |                                  |                                 |                                |                             |                |
|                          | Total Expenditure .....          | 129,476                         | 129,655                        | 134,307                     | <b>133,191</b> |

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### Details of Expenditure by Subhead

The estimate of the amount required in 2024–25 for the salaries and expenses of the Office of The Ombudsman is \$133,191,000. This represents a decrease of \$1,116,000 against the revised estimate for 2023–24 and an increase of \$3,715,000 over the actual expenditure in 2022–23.

#### *Operating Account*

#### Recurrent

**2** Provision of \$133,191,000 under *Subhead 000 Operational expenses* is for the payment of subvention to the Office of The Ombudsman to cover its salaries, allowances and other operating expenses.