



Ombudsman identifies Ballarat region's most common complaints

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An analysis of complaints received by Ombudsman Victoria has revealed parking fines, rates and charges, motor vehicle registration, building permits and local council administration are the issues of concern to residents in the Ballarat district.

The snapshot coincided with Victorian Ombudsman George Brouwer's visit to Ballarat today to meet with government and community leaders to discuss ways of ensuring continuous improvement in public administration.

Mr Brouwer said the visit presented an opportunity to inform the public about the function of his office.

"While most people now appreciate my role regarding State Government departments and local government, they may not be aware of the full range of my powers in areas like VicRoads, universities, Government schools, prisons and the RSPCA."

The Ombudsman has jurisdiction over more than 600 public sector agencies, including 73 local municipal and shire councils.

The analysis showed Ombudsman Victoria received 83 complaints about the seven councils in the Ballarat region for the 2004-2005 financial year. The councils were Central Goldfields, Hepburn, Moorabool, Golden Plains, Pyrenees, Ararat and Ballarat.

State-wide there were 1303 complaints about local governments.

Mr Brouwer indicated the complaints were not necessarily bad news for local councils. "An increase in complaints is to be expected as people become aware of my office," he said.

Concerns about VicRoads registration practices also remain high, with Ombudsman Victoria receiving 205 complaints state-wide in the past year.

Mr Brouwer said the visit would give his office a greater appreciation of the matters affecting people in Ballarat and surrounding districts.

"In the past year we have provided assistance and advice on making complaints to thousands of people. Even when something falls outside my jurisdiction, we may be able to recommend someone who can help."

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