

## SPEAKING OUT FOR YOUTH: NSW OMBUDSMAN RELEASES NEW RESOURCE

The NSW Ombudsman is pleased to announce the launch of *'Guidelines for Dealing with Youth Complaints'*, a specially developed resource for any agency in the country that deals with young people. A firm believer that young people have a voice that should be heard and opinions that should be considered, NSW Ombudsman Bruce Barbour expressed his hope that this comprehensive, 12 page resource will help agencies engage more effectively with young people. ***'As a result of using these Guidelines we are keen that agencies have the opportunity not only to improve their practices but also make better and more inclusive decisions,'*** said Mr Barbour.

The NSW Ombudsman is free, fair, impartial and independent of the government of the day and exists to promote good conduct and fair decision-making in the interests of the NSW community.

One of the main functions of the Ombudsman is to investigate and resolve complaints. However, complaint systems are often designed by and for adults and can be intimidating and confusing for young people. For this reason, the guidelines were developed along with a training program for Ombudsman staff to improve the service they provide to young people that access the office.

Many key youth agencies have encouraged and supported the development of the *Guidelines*. James McDougall, the Director of the National Children's & Youth Law Centre called the *Guidelines* a landmark publication. ***'This is a clear and practical aid that should be required reading for any government or community agency that makes decisions that impact on children and young people,'*** he said, ***'and the office of the NSW Ombudsman is to be congratulated.'***

The *Guidelines* offer agencies suggestions on how to communicate with young people, help them overcome barriers and how to adjust agency complaint practices to be more accessible to young people.

To receive copies of the *Guidelines for Dealing with Youth Complaints* contact the NSW Ombudsman on 9286 1000 or go to [www.ombo.nsw.gov.au](http://www.ombo.nsw.gov.au).

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