

consultation and scrutiny reporting

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The Ombudsman's office maintains contact with the community in a variety of formal and informal ways. This aspect of our work is important in raising public awareness of the right to complain to the Ombudsman and building confidence in the role of the office in managing and investigating complaints about ACT Government departments and agencies and ACT Policing.

Significant activities included:

- an information stall at Contact Canberra 2007 (part of the National Multicultural Festival)
- Neighbourhood Dispute Management Network—we provided an information session on the role of the Ombudsman to the government and community groups who are part of the Neighbourhood Dispute Management Network run by the Conflict Resolution Service
- lecturing on the role of the Ombudsman in police complaints to the Criminal Practices course of the Legal Workshop at the Australian National University.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE INQUIRIES AND REPORTS

No completed inquiries of Legislative Assembly Committees related to the operations of the ACT Ombudsman office.

LEGISLATIVE REPORT

The role of the ACT Ombudsman is performed under the *Ombudsman Act 1989* (ACT). The Ombudsman also has specific responsibilities under the *Freedom of Information Act 1989* (ACT) and is authorised to deal with whistleblower complaints under the *Public Interest Disclosure Act 1994* (ACT).

In 2004–05 we reported that a review of the *Ombudsman Act 1976* (Cth) was being undertaken, with a view to putting proposals to government for the enactment of a new Act. We noted that the ACT Government would be consulted in the course of this review.

The Ombudsman's review of the Ombudsman Act (Cth) was submitted to the Prime Minister early in 2006. The review has made a number of suggestions for amendment to the Act to make complaint–investigation processes simpler and more efficient. The Australian Government is considering its responses. When those responses are known, the Ombudsman will liaise with the ACT Government about any changes that may be needed for the Ombudsman Act (ACT) to ensure consistency, and any other amendments that may be considered desirable.

As reported in detail in the section *Complaints – ACT Policing*, the legislative regime covering the handling of complaints about the AFP changed during 2006–07. The Complaints Act was repealed on 30 December 2006 and replaced with Part V of the *Australian Federal Police Act 1979* and amendments to the Ombudsman Act (Cth).