

Thursday, 12 November 2020

## 19-20 Annual Report: conciliations and investigations increase

Important changes to the Office of the Health and Community Services Complaints Commissioner's (HCSCC) work practices has seen an increase in conciliations and investigations and fewer contacts staying open for longer than 365 days.

HCSCC Associate Professor Grant Davies said because of the changes, contacts are being assessed more in line with the *Health and Community Services Complaints Act 2004* (the Act) meaning more complaints are moving into conciliation and investigation.

"Data from 2019-20 show 110 matters were referred into conciliation – up from 10 in 2018-19 – the highest number of conciliations since the HCSCC was established in 2005," Associate Professor Davies said.

"Conciliation, at its heart, is designed to restore relationships.

"We ask the parties to sign confidentiality agreements because conciliation is a privileged process.

"That means, with one or two exceptions, nothing disclosed in that process may be used outside it.

"It is a powerful resolution tool; particularly when the consumer has an ongoing relationship with the service provider and it enables the parties some control over the outcome."

There has also been an increase in the number of investigations conducted by the HCSCC.

An investigation is done where serious and/or systemic matters arise from the complaint and they are not amenable to other forms of complaints resolution.

Associate Professor Davies said using investigations more frequently was another step towards aligning the procedures of the HCSCC more closely with the Act.

"We performed 79 investigations in the financial year, up from 16 in 2018-19", he said.

"While direct resolution – the process of a consumer and service provider working on a solution without the involvement of the HCSCC – is still something we facilitate, the move towards conciliation and investigation more closely reflects the purpose and intent of the Act.

"The HCSCC also finalised 99.2 per cent of all contacts within 365 days, an increase of nearly one percent from 2018-19 (98.3 percent).

“Overall, I am very happy with the progress we’ve made as an organisation in the 2019-20 financial year, despite the significant challenges the year has presented.”

Other highlights from the Annual Report, which was tabled in Parliament today, include:

- A total of 2298 contacts. This is a reduction of just under 10 percent which can be attributed to the way in which the HCSCC managed disrupted working arrangements during the height of South Australia’s Coronavirus pandemic. Trends prior to, and immediately after the altered work arrangements, indicated the HCSCC was on track for an increase in contacts.
- An increase in the amount of community services contacts.
- 45 contacts about Unregistered Health Care Workers;
- Further improvements to the HCSCC website and collateral;
- Development of a [new logo and brand](#) which were launched on 1 July 2020 (2020-21 Financial Year).
- A prohibition order against Kambô practitioners [Two Wolves – One Body](#). Kambô is the practice of using the poisonous skin secretion of a frog called Phyllomedusa bicolor, which is found in the Amazon basin, for cleansing rituals.
- Banning an individual from [distributing capsulated bitter sweet almonds](#) following assertions made about their efficacy in fighting cancer.

The HCSCC is also pleased to release a [companion document](#), which expands on the information contained in the Annual Report.