

19: Official Visitors

Official Visitors provide independent oversight of services for people in government operated and community facilities who are dependent on service providers. The Official Visitor Scheme can help people get better services for their mental health by helping them access an independent complaints process and managing grievances.

Who are Official Visitors and what do they do?

Official Visitors are trusted people in the community who are carefully selected for their role due to their experience and qualifications in the area in which they are appointed.

Official Visitors are not subject to the direction of anyone else in relation to the exercise of a function under the *Official Visitor Act*. This independence allows Official Visitors to safeguard standards of treatment and care and advocate for the rights and dignity of people being treated under the *Mental Health Act*.

Official Visitors can help by resolving grievances and issues with service providers or institutional authorities.

May receive complaints

An official visitor may receive complaints from an 'entitled person' at a 'visitable place'.

An entitled person means a person receiving treatment, care or support for mental disorder or a mental illness —

- at a visitable place; or
- at a place other than a visitable place under an order under this Act

A visitable place means:

- a mental health facility; or
- a long-term residential accommodation facility or respite facility at which a

person receiving treatment, care or support for mental disorder or a mental illness may stay; or

- a place in a correctional centre where a detainee is receiving treatment or care for mental disorder or a mental illness for the period in which the treatment, care or support is given to the detainee.

Can I make a complaint if I don't live in a visitable place?

Yes, not only are Official Visitors empowered by law to meet and talk with entitled people in visitable places to hear their concerns and help them resolve any complaints, they may also meet with people who are subject to an order under the Mental Health Act regardless of whether they live at a 'visitable place'.

For example, a person subject to a psychiatric treatment order who is living in their own home could access the services of the Official Visitor.

How can I make a complaint or contact the Official Visitor?

Official Visitors make regular visits to visitable places. An entitled person residing at a visitable place may speak to an Official Visitor during one of their visits or arrange a visit by an Official Visitor by contacting the Official Visitor hotline on 1800 150 036.

The Official Visitors scheme is administered by the ACT Public Trustee and Guardian. Further information about the scheme is available at [Public Trustee and Guardian \(act.gov.au\)](http://act.gov.au)

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