



NEWS RELEASE

HEALTH SERVICES COMMISSIONER 2002/2003 ANNUAL REPORT

The Office of the Health Services Commissioner received 40% more telephone inquiries than last financial year. A total of 7,907 inquiries were received compared to 5,525 last year. The introduction of the *Health Records Act 2001* (HRA) which came into effect on 1 July 2002 resulted in 2093 of the calls.

'Interestingly, the increase in the number of inquiries only resulted in an increase of 68 accepted cases (1327) over the previous year (1259),' Health Services Commissioner Beth Wilson said.

'A possible explanation may be that once a health service provider's obligations in relation to health privacy have been clarified, either by a call to or from this Office, the matter is easily resolved and only the more complex cases are forwarded to the HSC'.

Ms Wilson identified *Informed Financial Consent* as an issue of major public interest.

'Some complainants believed they had been misled by advertising and had paid high prices, particularly in the fields of Optical Dispensing and Impotency Clinics, without the desired outcomes. If the costs had been fully explained, and informed consent given, then the number of complaints lodged could be minimised.

'If I cannot resolve these issues, the complainant can apply to the Victorian Civil And Administrative Tribunal for the matter to be heard through its Civil List. This is a relatively simple and affordable alternative option for complainants,' Ms Wilson said.

For copies of the annual report please contact the Office of the Health Services Commissioner on 8601 5222.

If you wish to speak to the Commissioner ring her on 0417 525 149.

27 November 2003