

Reaching our target audience: *making the ombudsman more accessible*

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Introduction

Communication with potential users of our services is a constant challenge

- we need to understand who is contacting us and who is not contacting us
- we need dedicated staff and resources for outreach work, eg community development worker, Indigenous worker, communications officer
- we have similar target groups, so we need to share ideas, resources, activities to maximise our reach.

Identify our target audience

Analyse available information

- complaints data, systemic issues
- complainant demographics
- complainant surveys
- socio economic & demographic research (ABS, Prof Vinson)
- stakeholder intelligence/feedback

Develop strategies

Build relationships with key stakeholders

- other complaints bodies, government agencies/ industry, 'gatekeepers', particularly community agencies

Consult to identify needs & ways to reach target groups

- eg how do particular groups or communities receive their information?

Have a flexible approach & look for opportunities

- forums, workshops, meetings, networks, stalls at community events, specific 'weeks' eg Anti Poverty Week, NAIDOC week

Taylor information

Beyond brochures...

- develop specific information and resources: fact sheets, posters, translated information, kids colouring in sheet, *and* brochures
- regular publications: newsletter, email alerts
- website as a recognised source of information and useful links
- user test before distribution (eg online scorecard)
- flexible distribution strategies: email, face to face, mail outs, libraries, government and community agencies
- promotional 'goodies': stress balls, fridge magnets, pens, bags
- maintain a database of key contacts

Other forms of information

What's the best communication for the target group, eg do they receive information through community newspapers, community radio?

- radio: advertising, announcements, interviews (local & regional, SBS)
- newspapers and newsletters: local & regional papers advertising and editorial, specialist papers eg seniors

Service development

- identify and address accessibility issues: to our offices, to information, to other services (interpreters, NRS)
- investigation/complaints handling staff participate in outreach visits
- staff training: cross cultural communication, working with interpreters, plain language writing

Evaluation

Evaluation strategies

- translated materials: use certified translators, do some independent checking
- user test resources with the target audience (eg online scorecard)
- feedback forms, surveys
- trends from complaints and referrals: subsequent contact/complaints
- anecdotal feedback
- resource and publication orders
- website traffic: popular pages, downloads, online complaints and orders

EWON work with CALD communities

- SBS radio campaign to established and emerging communities in 2005, 2006, 2007
- website: translated online information in 12 languages and in language online complaint forms
- fact sheets in 17 languages: translated and back translated/ independently checked
- launch of campaigns with community leaders in relevant venues.
- workshops and presentations with interpreters
- affordability and sustainability forums in partnership with Migrant Resource Centres
- community festivals and events eg Arabic Carnivale

EWON work with CALD Indigenous communities

- initial pilot project, including snapshot survey of EWON customers (7% identified ATSI)
- seconded Indigenous Officer
- consulted with Indigenous government & community contacts
- resource developed with Wiradjuri artist: painting & story used to produce brochure, poster, fridge magnet and kids colouring in sheet
- visits to rural, regional and remote communities (with local providers)
- Koori interagency meetings
- contact with Indigenous officers in frontline government agencies: Centrelink, Fair Trading, Community Services, Dept Housing
- NAIDOC week, reconciliation week, stalls and community events
- established permanent Indigenous Project Officer position
- Good Service Committee and Forums in partnership with other Ombudsmen, Fair Trading, Anti Discrimination Board, Legal Aid
- Koori Radio campaigns

EWON work with prisoners and their families

- systemic issues identified through casework: complaints from welfare officers, families of prisoners and people recently released
- consultation and collaboration with Dept Corrective Services and key agencies
- training for prison Welfare Officers
- Attendance at prison pre-release 'expos'- stall, info distribution, take complaints and enquiries
- tailored fact sheet developed and distributed to prisons and support services

ANZOA joint youth postcard project

Speak Up – everyone has a right to complain!

- joint project with the Australian & NZ Ombudsman Association (designed and project managed by EWON)
- postcard was targeted at young people and promoted the concept of “ombudsman” and the right to complain
- launched during Youth Week 2006

Joint youth postcard project

- over 70,000 postcards distributed nationally via AvantCard outlets (universities, TAFEs, cafes shops, cinemas etc) plus each scheme had individual distribution strategies
- feedback positive
- cards can be used for a range of purposes
- the card followed the KISS principle which applies to all our information – messages should be simple, clean, accessible.

Other target groups

Other groups who need information about dispute resolution services:

- people with a disability
- the aged
- private and public housing tenants
- regional and remote communities
- small business

Ombudsman cooperation

- Ombudsman offices are targeting similar groups, particularly the vulnerable and disadvantaged.
- we share resources to maximise resources (eg youth card); community forums (eg EWON, BFSO, TIO); outreach events (eg stalls at community events with NSW & Cth Ombudsman)
- we share ideas through ANZOA (Aust & NZ Ombudsman Association)
- we are interested in similar and consistent messages.