



**Office of the
Health Complaints Commissioner
2007**

700-0609020 / 700- 0701009 – Ambulance service – refusal to transport – whether refusal reasonable

Section 23(1)(a) of the Health Complaints Act 1995 – that a health service provider acted unreasonably by not providing a health service. Finalised February 2007.

The Ambulance Service is an emergency service and the issue raised by this complaint is whether the Ambulance Service personnel acted appropriately when they did not convey the complainant, an elderly woman from her home to hospital.

It transpired that the complainant had called for an ambulance on 16 occasions since January 2006, had been transported to a hospital on 7 of those occasions, but had not been admitted. The conclusion was that the refusal to transport the complainant to hospital was reasonable and the complaint was not substantiated. The complainant was advised that the ambulance service is an emergency service and that she should discuss her health concerns and needs with her general practitioner. It was also clear that there were domestic stressors and it seemed that calling the ambulance was a means by which the elderly woman was able to leave the home. She was told to contact the Royal Hobart Hospital's social services section or Housing Tasmania, which might alleviate some of her stresses. The complainant was also provided with the name of a senior officer in the Ambulance Service to contact should any further concerns arise.

A secondary issue was that one of the ambulance officers had been rude to the complainant. This complaint was substantiated and it appears that this particular officer has come under notice before and had been counselled. The Ambulance Service apologised to the complainant.

The second complaint related to an incident in January 2007 when officers refused to transport her to the hospital. The complainant complained about the officer's attitude alleging that they were rough. As the complainant had been provided with a senior contact person within the organisation who was aware of her situation and concerns, the complaint was dismissed.