



Republic of Trinidad and Tobago



Equal Opportunity Commission
Promoting Equality



Annual Report 2014

“TRANSITIONS AND TRANSFORMATIONS”



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Chairman's *Remarks*



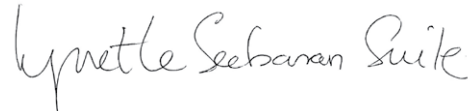
*I*t is with humility and great anticipation that I accepted the appointment by the President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago as Chairman of the Equal Opportunity Commission. In so doing I acknowledge the excellent pioneering work of the first two Commissions under the distinguished Chairmanship of Professor Emeritus John Gaffar La Guerre.

The Commission is the designated state machinery to realise the human rights and equal opportunity guaranteed to all citizens by the Bill of Rights in our Constitution. The current Board has resolved not only to streamline the current Complaints Procedure and make it more customer centric but also to proactively work towards the elimination of discrimination by public advocacy, research and lobbying the government to keep the Act under review.

To this end we have already recommended the inclusion of sexual orientation to be added to our already existing recommendations for age discrimination and discrimination on the grounds of illness including HIV status to be prohibited by the Act.

Although having taken up our instruments only in August 2014 the Commission has already heightened its profile on the media and, in December 2014 hosted an important public seminar on Gender and Human Rights. We are also currently completing a re-visioning and strategic planning exercise to take the Commission's work to the year 2018.

On behalf of the Vice-Chairman Dr. Beverly Beckles, Commissioners Dr. Indira Rampersad, Mr. James Chin Chuck and Mr. Eric Colin Cowie, I pledge our best efforts at heightening and broadening the work of the Commission in the spirit of equality and human rights over our term in office.



Lynette Seebaran- Suite
Chairman
Equal Opportunity Commission

Chief Executive Officer's *Remarks*



Devanty Dianne Maraj-Ramdeen
Chief Executive Officer,
Equal Opportunity Commission

The year 2014 saw the all-encompassing theme of transitions and transformations for the EOC. However, this was embraced with optimism as the old analogy would have it... change is the only constant. As we assimilated to these transitions we faced both accomplishments and challenges as an organisation with a unique service to the public. The EOC experienced two significant developments that impacted directly on the Commission's operations. Firstly, the Commissioners' tenures came to an end by April and the appointment of the new Board of Commissioners not until the end of the third quarter of the year. The lack of Commissioners for a few months affected some functions, nevertheless, the staff of the EOC remained focused on the mandate as established in Act No. 69 of 2000 as we continued to receive complaints, conduct investigations, perform public outreach, provide public education, produce publications, conduct recruitment, provide training and development and perform other administrative duties.

The second significant change began in March 2014 with the outfitting of the new offices and the final relocation of the Commission's main offices in October 2014 to the Central Courtyard Building, on Manic Street, Chaguanas. The new location provides spacious accommodation, which allowed several job positions to be filled. The move proved to be more challenging than anticipated but with the co-operation and dedication of the staff it was achieved.

The past year also left us with several major accomplishments worth mentioning. In March 2014, the Legal Department revised and re-submitted several amendments to the Equal Opportunity Act No. 69 of 2000. The proposed amendments included areas such as 'age' as a status ground to be protected from discrimination, a more expansive definition of 'disability' to include illnesses such as HIV and including co-habitants under 'marital status', among other things. These proposed amendments are being processed by the Ministry of the Attorney General and are currently at the public consultation stage.

Further, in keeping with the mandate under Section 27(1) (f) of the Act "to prepare and to publish appropriate guidelines for the avoidance of discrimination", in July 2014, the EOC published its first handbook titled, "Guidelines for Employers in Trinidad and Tobago". This project was done in collaboration with several departments, including Legal, Corporate Communications, and Human Resources and was spearheaded by the CEO. We launched this publication at the Trade and Investment Convention 2014 where the EOC was an exhibitor and got the opportunity to infiltrate the private sector of Trinidad and Tobago. This publication is available in hard copy and can also be downloaded from the EOC's website.

On 14 May, 2014 the Human Resources Unit was strengthened with the addition of a Human Resource Specialist on a short term basis. This addition allowed for the completion of the Six (6) Year Contract Staffing Plan which was submitted for review to the Ministry of Public Administration in May 2014. In November 2014 the first phase of this Plan was approved by Cabinet. The second phase, for new contract positions, was still under review by the close of the year. Another project which the Human Resource Unit embarked on was the sourcing and implementing of a Performance Management and Appraisal System (PMAS) which began in 2014 and will be completed in 2015. Despite this, the Human Resource Unit still does not have the capacity to adequately service the EOC's growing needs.

We employed the services of the Government Human Resource Services (GHRSS) to recruit and select persons to fill three (3) key positions by the last quarter of the year. The positions recruited were the Senior Legal Officer, Information Communication and Technology Manager and Conciliator/Mediator. The officers selected joined the EOC during the period late December 2014 to early January 2015.

One of the major challenges that we faced in 2014 was that of adequate funding. One would be hard-pressed to find any public sector entity that receives all of its desired funding, and organisations have to do their best with whatever limited resources are given to them. At the start of the financial year we were provided with a list of allocations under various votes and based on this we planned a number of activities. However during the year and up to the end of the year we experienced great difficulty in getting releases of funds and many activities had to be abandoned.

Overall, the year 2014 was one of change which we embraced with the hope and expectation that our new circumstances will stimulate enthusiasm and positively impact our drive to become a customer oriented and purpose driven human rights organisation. Our successes were encouraging and our challenges taught us valuable lessons. We look forward to the year 2015 as a year of promise which will bring further growth and development as the premier human rights organisation in the region.



Devanty Dianne Maraj-Ramdeen
Chief Executive Officer,
Equal Opportunity Commission

Annual *Reporting*

Annual *Report*

The Equal Opportunity Commission submits its sixth (6th) Annual Report on activities for the year ended December, 2014. This report is prepared in compliance with Sections 53 and 54 of the Equal Opportunity Act Chapter 22:03 which states:

Section 53 “The Commission shall within three months after the end of each calendar year submit to the Minister a report of its operations during that year.”

Section 54 “The Minister shall cause the report of the Commission to be laid in Parliament.”

This Report is submitted to the Attorney General, pursuant to Section 52 of the Equal Opportunity Act, Chapter 22:03 [Act No. 69 of 2000 as amended] on the 31 March, 2015.

Mandate

The Equal Opportunity Commission is created by section 26(1) of the Equal Opportunity Act Chapter 22:03 [Act No 69 of 2000 as amended], (“the Act”) and is guided in its mandate by the terms and provisions of the Act.

The Act seeks, among other things, to prohibit certain kinds of discrimination and to promote equality of opportunity between persons of different statuses.

In particular, the Act applies to:

- (i) Discrimination with respect to the following four broad categories:
 - Employment
 - Education
 - The Provision of Goods and Services and
 - The Provision of Accommodation

If that discrimination is on the grounds of a person’s status (that is any one or more of the following characteristics: their sex, race, religion, disability, origin including geographical origin, ethnicity and marital status) or for reasons of victimisation (as defined by section 6)

And

- (ii) Offensive Behaviour, that is, actions that are done in public that may be considered “offensive” in that it is reasonably likely to offend, insult, humiliate or intimidate another person or groups of persons, or it is done because of the gender, race ethnicity, origin, or religion of the other person or some or all of the other persons in the group and is done with the intention of inciting gender, racial or religious hatred (section 7).

The Act recognises the importance of the removal of all barriers to the free flow of resources of talent, opportunities and aspirations so that each individual can contribute to the national endeavor and expect a fair response in return.

What are the Functions of the Commission?

The functions of the Commission are set out in section 27 (1) of the Act as follows:

- to work towards the elimination of discrimination;
- to promote equality of opportunity and good relations between persons of different status;
- to keep under review the working to the Act and any relevant law and when so required by the Minister, or where necessary draw up and submit to the Minister proposals for amending them;
- to receive, investigate and as far as possible, conciliate allegations of discrimination;
- to develop, conduct and foster research and education programmes and other programmes for the purpose of eliminating discrimination and promoting equality of opportunity and good relations between persons of different status;
- to prepare and publish appropriate guidelines for the avoidance of discrimination;
- to do any other thing conducive or incidental to the carrying out of its functions.

Strategic *Priorities* of the Commission

- To secure an effective legislative and regulatory framework for equality and human rights;
- To build a society without prejudice, promote good relations and foster a vibrant equality and human rights culture;
- To promote understanding and awareness of rights and duties and deliver timely and accurate advice and guidance to individuals and employers;
- To build an authoritative and responsive organisation.

Organisational *Core Values*

- Respect - for each other and the public
- Accountability - to the public
- Honesty - is the best policy
- Integrity - in our conduct
- Transparency - to the world and can withstand scrutiny
- Responsibility - to the task
- Commitment - to the job
- Loyalty - to the EOC
- Teamwork - we are all in this together
- Recognition - of occasions and of achievements

Structure of the Commission

The Commission comprises five (5) Commissioners including a Chairperson and a Vice-Chairperson. The Commissioners for the term 2014-2017 are as follows:

- Mrs. Lynette Seebaran-Suite – Chairperson
- Dr. Beverly Ann-Marie Beckles – Vice Chairperson
- Dr. Indra Rampersad – Commissioner
- Mr. James Chin Chuck - Commissioner
- Mr. Eric Colin Cowie - Commissioner

The Commission is also divided into six **(6) departments/units** that report to a Chief Executive Officer ('CEO').

These are as follows:

- Legal Department
- Communications Department
- Administration Department
- Information Technology Department
- Conciliation Unit
- Research Unit

The CEO is responsible for planning, organising, coordinating activities and resources for all the operational functions of the Commission.

Report on Complaints Received by the Commission



This report provides details of complaints received by the Equal Opportunity Commission in 2014. Under section 27(1) (c) of the Equal Opportunity Act Chapter 22:03.

Section 27(1) (d) of the Act, the Commission is mandated “to receive, investigate and as far as possible, conciliate allegations of discrimination” as are lodged with it by members of the public.

This section of the Report presents the following:

- (A) Data on complaints that have been lodged with and investigated by the Commission in 2014. The results are compared with statistical data that was collated for the period 2012 to 2014. This information would be analysed by demographic data, geographic data, category and status of complaint, type of respondent and knowledge of the work and services of the Commission.
- (B) Information on Complaints that have been referred to conciliation in 2014.
- (C) Information on section 36 summary prosecutions before the Magistrates Court for 2014.
- (D) Information on matters that have been referred to the Equal Opportunity Tribunal in 2014.

Overview of Process:

Part VII of the Act deals with complaints and vests certain powers in the Commission.

- **Lodging a complaint:** The process begins when a member of the public lodges a complaint, which must be in writing [section 30(1)]. This should be done within six months of the date of the offending action [section 30(2)] but the Commission may accept a complaint outside of this period if there are exceptional circumstances [section 30(3)].
- **Investigating complaint:** The Commission is mandated to investigate all complaints lodged [section 32]. The Commission is empowered to send a notice in writing to any party to furnish specified information by a specified date [section 33]. Where upon investigation, no evidence of discrimination has been found, the Commission shall write to the complainant and inform of this and the reasons for this finding [section 34].
- **Conciliating complaint:** However where the Commission has found that the subject matter may be resolved by conciliation, it is obligated to make all reasonable steps to have same conciliated [section 35]. The Commission may by notice request the attendance of the complainant, respondent and any other person with relevant information or who is likely to assist the resolution of the matter. If the parties are able to reach an amicable resolution at conciliation, an Agreement is usually drawn up, and signed, and it can be registered with the Equal Opportunity Tribunal where it becomes an Order of the Court [section 38].
- **Prosecuting defaulters:** Recall that the Commission may send a Notice under section 33 to produce information and/or a Notice under section 35 to attend conciliation. Section 36 provides for a process to criminally sanction parties who fail and/or refuse to

Report on Complaints Received by the Commission (continued)

comply with either of these notices. A summary complaint can be lodged before the Magistrates Court, and the party can be summoned to Court as a defendant; if the party cannot advance reasonable justification for this failure or refusal, they can be convicted and sentenced:

- In the case of an individual to a fine of \$1,000.00 per day or
- In the case of a body corporate to a fine of \$5,000.00 per day

for each and every day that they have failed and/or refused to comply.

- **Referring complaints to Tribunal:** Per section 29, if
 - (a) attempts to resolve the matter by conciliation have not been successful, or
 - (b) after the completion of the investigation the Commission had felt that the matter could not have been resolved by conciliation and did not so refer it,

but the Commission is satisfied that there was likely a breach of the Act, the Commission will with the consent of the Complainant:

- (i.) prepare a report relating to the investigation with its recommendations,
- (ii.) send a copy of the report to the parties to the complaint,
- (iii.) publish the report, and
- (iv.) make said report available for inspection by the public.

If the matter remains unresolved, the Commission may with the consent and on behalf of the complainant, refer the matter to the Equal Opportunity Tribunal for hearing and adjudication.

Complaints Received and Investigated in 2014

The Commission received 126 complaints in 2014, which is 70 less than it received in 2013 (196), and represents a drop of about 36%. It is also less than what was received in 2012 (163).

When disaggregated by month, it is observed that there was a peak in the last quarter of 2012 into the first quarter of 2013:

- 63 in the last quarter of 2012, compared to 47 in the third quarter
- 66 in the first quarter of 2013, compared 48 in the second quarter

129 complaints were received in that 6-month period, which was more than was received in all of 2014. This may be due to the fact that the Commission engaged in a television advertisement campaign that started in the third quarter of 2012 but was discontinued by the second quarter of 2013. While a large number of complaints were received, it was noted at that time that not many of them fell within the statutory jurisdiction of the Commission. For this reason the Commission discontinued the mass advertisement campaign and decided to focus on more structured public awareness. It will be noted below, that the complaints that were received in 2014, though fewer in number, were more relevant to the Commission's statutory mandate.

In both 2013 and 2014 about 60% of the complaints were received in the first half (114 in 2013 which is about 58% and 75 in 2014 which is about 60%). The number of complaints tapered down during the second half of both years. Only 1 complaint was received in October 2014, compared to 13 and 18 for that corresponding month in 2013 and 2012 respectively; this low amount can be attributed to the fact that the Commission moved offices during October 2014 and there was unanticipated downtime. Two interesting phenomena are worth noting:

- For all three years, an almost identical number of complaints were received in the month of November: 14 in 2012 and 2013, and 15 in 2014.
- The number of complaints received in December of one year almost mirrors the number received in January of the next year: 31 in December 2012 and 33 in January 2013, as well as 11 in both December 2013 and January 2014.

Report on Complaints Received by the Commission
(continued)

NUMBER OF COMPLAINTS RECEIVED BY MONTH - JANUARY 2012 TO DECEMBER 2014

Month	2014	2013	2012
January	11	33	12
February	06	17	04
March	15	16	06
April	10	16	08
May	20	08	09
June	13	24	15
July	12	22	15
August	06	12	09
September	09	10	23
October	01	13	18
November	15	14	14
December	08	11	31
Total	126	196	163

Table 1

Demographic Data on the Complainants: Sex, Age, Race/Ethnicity

The data indicates that for the period January 2012 to December 2014, more men than women lodged complaints. Out of a total of 485 complaints that were lodged:

- 279 were lodged by males, or about 57%
- 199 by females, or about 41% and
- 7 by a group or about 1%,

However, when the data is disaggregated annually, there has been a consistent increase in the percentage of female complaints from 36% in 2012 to 41% in 2013 to 48% in 2014 which is almost even to the percentage of male complainants (51%). Complaints lodged by groups have remained in the region of 01% to 02%.

SEX OF THE COMPLAINANT 2012-2014

Type	2014	2013	2012	Total for all 3 years
Male	64 (51%)	112 (57%)	103 (63%)	279
Female	61 (48%)	80 (41%)	58 (36%)	199
Group	01 (<01%)	04 (02%)	02 (01%)	07
Total by year	126 (100%)	196 (100%)	163 (100%)	485

Table 2

The Commission only began compiling data on the age of complainants in mid-2012 so that for the purposes of annual comparison, we rely on calendar year 2013 only. It is to be noted that in both years, an almost similar percentage of persons refused to give age information – 12% in 2013 and 15% in 2014. From those who gave information, the following can be noted:

- In both years, the cluster of persons aged 36 to 55 accounted for around 55% of all complaints lodged: In 2013, 109 complaints were lodged by this cluster which was about 55.5% of the total, and in 2014 this cluster lodged 68 complaints or about 54% of the total.
- In 2013 the cluster of persons aged 46 to 55 lodged more complaints than any other cluster (about 20% of all complaints lodged), but in 2014 they were the third highest group (around 20.6%) behind the 26-35 and 36-45 clusters which each amounted to about 21% of complaints lodged.
- From a percentage standpoint, in 2014 there was an increase in the number of complaints lodged by younger persons who would fall within the working population: the cluster of persons aged 26 to 45 amounted to about 43% of all complaints lodged, compared with 36% in 2013. However from a numerical standpoint, this cluster lodged less complaints in 2014: 54 in 2014 compared with 70 in 2014.

Report on Complaints Received by the Commission
(continued)

- Correspondingly, there was a decrease in 2014 in the percentage of complaints lodged by older persons who would fall within the working population: the cluster of persons aged 46 to 65 amounted to about 32.5% of all complaints lodged in 2014 but in 2013 they amounted to 39%. There was also a drop in the number of these persons lodging complaints in 2014: 31 in 2014 compared to 77 in 2014.
- An almost identical number of complaints were lodged by persons over age of 65 in both years: 09 in 2013 which was about 05% of complaints lodged and 08 in 2014 which was about 06% of complaints lodged.
- In both years around 10 or less complainants were under the age of 25: 10 in 2013 which amounted to about 05% of complaints lodged, and 08 in 2014 which amounted to about 06% of complaints lodged.

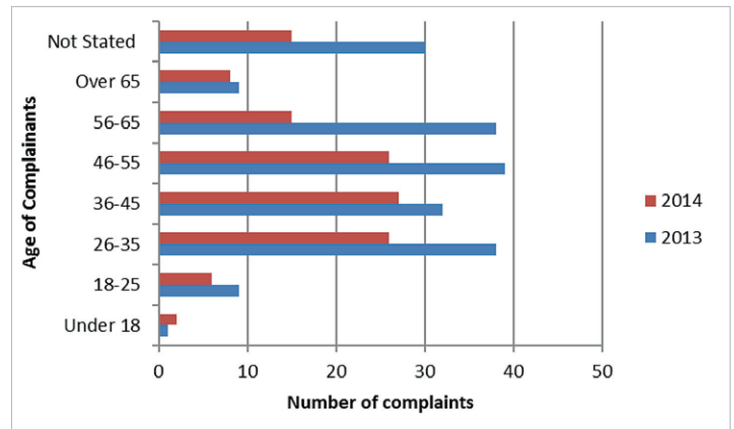


Table 4

Overall in 2014 there has been a drop in the number and percentage of complaints lodged by persons 46 years old and over: from 86 in 2013 which was about 44% of all complaints received, to 49 in 2014 which was about 39% of all complaints received. Going forward this is a trend that merits closer monitoring.

AGE OF THE COMPLAINANT 2013-2014

Age	2014	% of the Annual Total	2013	% of the Annual Total
Under 18	02	1.6%	01	Less than 1%
18-25	06	4.8%	09	4.5%
26-35	27	21%	38	19%
36-45	27	21%	32	16%
46-55	26	20.6%	39	20%
56-65	15	12%	38	19%
Over 65	08	6.3%	09	5%
Not Stated	15	12%	30	15%
Total	126	100%	196	100%

Table 3

Race/Ethnicity of the Complainant 2014

With respect to the racial composition of persons who lodged complaints in 2014:

- 62 persons self-identified as being of African origin, which was about 49.2% of complaints
- 45 persons self-identified as being of East Indian origin, which was about 35.7% of all complaints
- 18 persons self-identified as being of mixed origin which is about 14.3% of all complaints
- 01 person self-identified as being of White/French Creole origin, and no persons self-identified as being of Chinese or Syrian/Lebanese origin.

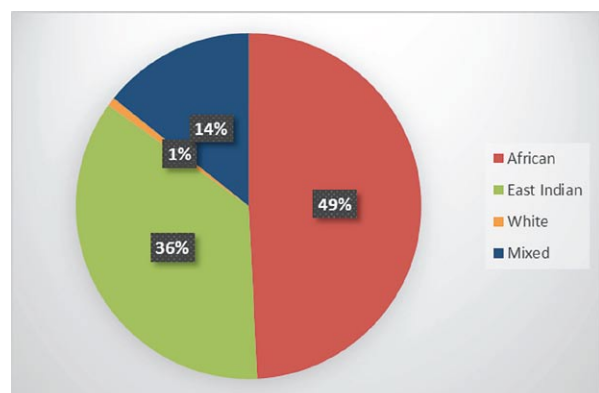


Figure 1

Report on Complaints Received by the Commission (continued)

According to 2011 Census data published by the Central Statistical Office, the following groups account for the following percentage composition of the population of Trinidad and Tobago:

- Persons of East Indian origin – 35.4%
- Persons of African origin – 34.2%
- Persons of Mixed origin – 23.3%
- Persons of the following origins: White/French Creole, Portuguese, Chinese and Syrian/Lebanese – 01%

Compared with national statistics, it would seem that:

- There is greater tendency towards persons of African origin lodging complaints: that is, persons from this group account for 34.2% of the national population but 49.2% of complainants.
- There is an almost equivalent tendency towards persons of East Indian origin lodging complaints; that is, this persons from this group account for 35.5% of the population and 35.7% of complaints lodged.
- There is a lesser tendency towards persons of mixed origin lodging complaints; that is, persons from this group account for 23.3% of the population but only 14.3% of complaints lodged.
- Persons of White/French Creole, Portuguese, Chinese and Syrian/Lebanese ancestry underutilise the Commission's complaints process.

Geographic Data on the Complainants

This data is based on the 'home addresses' that the complainants stated on their complaint form. It may not relate to location of the alleged act of discrimination, for example – someone may live in Arima but complain about an alleged act of discrimination that took place at their workplace in Port-of-Spain. However it does indicate the extent to which persons throughout Trinidad and Tobago are aware of the Commission and have utilised its services. The information as provided was grouped according to the regional corporations and municipal corporations.

Geographical Origin of Complainant 2012-2014 (By Regional and Municipal Corporations)

Area	2014	2013	2012	Total
Not stated	1	4	-	5
Port of Spain	11	9	12	32
San Fernando	15	23	16	54
Arima	10	6	7	23
Chaguanas	23	24	27	74
Point Fortin	2	1	2	5
Diego Martin	5	11	11	27
Couva/Talparo/Tabaquite	7	10	8	25
Princes Town	4	8	2	14
Mayaro/Rio Claro	0	7	3	10
Penal / Debe	4	7	5	16
San Juan/ Laventille	11	19	20	50
Sangre Grande	2	5	1	8
Tunupuna/Piarco	14	24	22	60
Siparia	4	8	7	19
Tobago	12	30	20	62
Other	1	-	-	1
Total	126	196	163	485

Table 5

During the period January 2012 to December 2014:

- 12% of complaints were lodged by persons living the North-West region of Trinidad (Port-of-Spain and Diego Martin).
- 29% of complaints were lodged by persons living in the North-East Region (San Juan, Tunapuna, Arima and Sangre Grande)
- 24.3% of complaints were lodged by persons living in the Southern Region (San Fernando, Pt Fortin, Debe, Sparia and Mayaro)
- 20.4% of complaints were lodged by persons living in the Central Region (Chaguanas and Couva) and
- 12.8% were lodged by persons from Tobago.

Report on Complaints Received by the Commission (continued)

In 2014, the data indicated that the geographical origin of complainants was more-or-less consistent with the 3-year average (give or take one percentage point), with the exception of Central Trinidad and Tobago:

- 16 complainants were from North-West Trinidad, which is about 12.7% of all complaints for that year;
- 37 complainants were from North-East Trinidad, which is about 29%;
- 29 complainants were from South Trinidad, which is about 23%;
- 30 complainants were from Central Trinidad, which is about 23.8%, and is 3.4 percentage-points higher than the 3-year average (20.4%);
- 12 complaints were from Tobago, which is about 09.5% and is 3.3 percentage points lower than the 3-year average (12.8%);

The drop in complaints from Tobago is significant when one considers that the year before, 30 complaints were received from Tobago, which was 15.3% of all complaints received that year, and is 2.5 percentage points higher than the 3-year average (12.8%).

Also, in 2014 the Commission received no complaints from the Mayaro/ Rio Claro Region, whereas in 2013, 07 complaints were received from that region, which was about 03.6% of all complaints received that year.

Moreover it is to be noted that in all three years, complaints from Point Fortin, Siparia and Penal/Debe have been relatively low: 40 in total, amounting to about 08% of all complaints received. In each year only 01 or 02 complaints were received from persons in Point Fortin, and between 04 to 08 complaints were received from persons in Siparia and from persons in Penal/Debe.

These trends point to a need for the Commission to broaden its outreach activities in Tobago, Point Fortin, Siparia and Penal/Debe.

Category and Status of Discrimination Alleged

In order to understand the information presented under this heading, it is important to appreciate what kinds of behaviour the Equal Opportunity Act and by extension, the Commission, is concerned about. In Parts II to V the Act defines “discrimination” and specifies the fields in which the Act is and is not to apply. According to section 4, the Act is concerned with discrimination in relation to the following four broad categories:

- **Employment**
- **The Provision of Goods, Services and Facilities**
- **The Provision of Education**
- **The Provision of Accommodation**

but it only applies if that discrimination is

- discrimination on the **ground of status** as defined in section 5, or
- discrimination by way of **victimisation** as defined in section 6.

The Act is also concerned with a separate category of action known as “**offensive behaviour**” as defined in section 7.

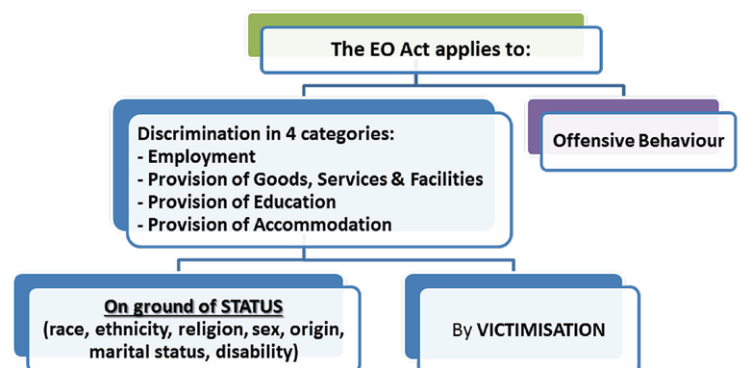


Figure 2

A ‘status’ is a personal characteristic that the Act gives protection to. Currently there are 7 status grounds that are protected: Sex, Race, Ethnicity, Religion, Marital Status, Origin, including geographical origin and Disability.

Report on Complaints Received by the Commission
(continued)

Category of Discrimination

Of the 485 complaints lodged over the period January 2012 to December 2014:

- 371 alleged discrimination with respect to employment, which is about 76.5% of all complaints received;
- 52, or about 10.7% alleged discrimination with respect to the provision of goods, services and facilities;
- 18 or about 3.7% alleged discrimination with respect to the provision of education;
- 03 persons alleged discrimination with respect to the provision of accommodation, which is less than 01%; and
- 45 persons alleged ‘other’ or did not allege one of the four categories, which is about 8.7%

Category	2014	2013	2012
Employment	106 (84%)	137 (70%)	127 (80%)
Goods, Services and Facilities	13 (10.3%)	23 (12%)	16 (10%)
Education	04 (03%)	11 (5.5%)	03 (0.2%)
Accommodation	02 (1.5%)	01 (0.5%)	0 (0%)
Other	01 (<0.1%)	24 (12%)	17 (10.4%)
Total	126 (100%)	196 (100%)	163 (100%)

Table 6

In 2014, employment continued to occupy the largest share of the pie at 84% of all complaints lodged; this was up from 70% of all complaints lodged in 2013. In 2013 there was a drop in the percentage share of employment complaints from 2012 where it was 80% and there was a rise in the percentage share of other categories: goods and services went up from 10% in 2012 to 12% in 2013, and education went up from less than 01% in 2012 to 5.5% in 2013. It was hoped that this trend would continue,

but in 2014 there was a resurgence in the percentage share of employment complaints and a drop in the percentage share and numbers of complaints with respect to goods and services and education.

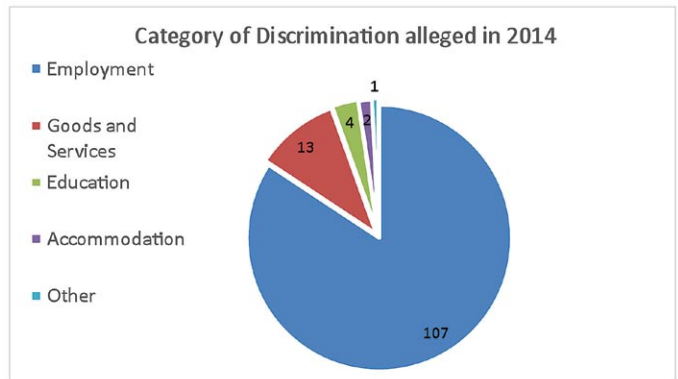


Figure 3

Also noteworthy is the decline in the number of ‘other’ complaints which did not fall within the four broad categories. From a high of 24/ 12% in 2013 it has dropped to 01/ less than 01% in 2014 which would suggest that persons are more aware of the focus of the Commission’s jurisdiction.

Status/ Victimization Alleged:

60 of the complaints lodged identified a single status ground (or victimisation). A further 33 persons alleged two or more grounds. For example, more often than not, both race and ethnicity are alleged together although these are two different (but related) concepts. From the onset, what is significant is the number of complaints received in 2014 where persons alleged a status ground (one or more, including victimisation); this amounted to 93 complaints which was about 74% of all complaints received, when compared to 22 complaints in 2013 or about 11.2% of all complaints received for that year. Numerically, this was an increase by about four-fold, and this is even more impressive when one considers that there was a noteworthy drop in total number of complaints received for the year. This gives considerable support to the view that persons are more aware of the focus of the Commission’s jurisdiction, and as such are less likely to lodge complaints that do not fall within the Commission’s remit.

Report on Complaints Received by the Commission
(continued)

Total Number of Complaints that alleged a status ground 2012 to 2014

	2014	2013	2012
Total Number of complaints received	126	196	163
Of which, total number than alleged one or more status ground	93 (74%)	22 (11.2%)	34 (20.1%)

Table 7

The 93 complaints where persons alleged a status can be dissected as follows.

Race and/or Ethnicity	<p>30 complaints (24% of all received) involved an allegation of racial and/or ethnic discrimination:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 11 persons alleged race alone and a further one person alleged race with political affiliation (which is not a recognised status); • 02 persons alleged ethnicity alone and a further one person alleged ethnicity with age (which is not a recognised status); • 02 persons alleged race and ethnicity alone (as a combination); • 01 person alleged race and ethnicity along with disability; • There were 06 claims involving sex: 04 persons alleged race and ethnicity along with sex, and 02 further persons alleged race only along with sex; • There were 06 claims involving origin: one person alleged race only and origin and one other person alleged ethnicity only and origin; one person alleged both race and ethnicity along with origin, a further 02 persons alleged race, ethnicity, religion and origin, and one person alleged race, ethnicity, origin, sex, victimisation and offensive behaviour;
Sex	<p>23 complaints (18% of all received) involved an allegation of sex discrimination:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 persons alleged sex only; • 07 persons alleged sex and race, of which 02 also alleged ethnicity, and of this 02, one went on to allege religion; • 01 additional person alleged sex with race, ethnicity, religion, victimisation and offensive behaviour • 04 persons alleged sex and victimisation, of which 01 person went to allege origin as well; • 01 person alleged a combination of sex and marital status; • 01 person alleged sex along with HIV illness (treated as a disability).

Report on Complaints Received by the Commission
(continued)

The 93 complaints where persons alleged a status can be dissected as follows. (continued)

Origin	22 complaints (17.5% of all received) involved an allegation of discrimination on the basis of origin: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 12 persons lodged complaints on the basis of origin alone; interestingly 04 of these persons were of Trinidadian origin and claimed that they suffered discrimination in Tobago: 01 at a hotel and 03 at THA-based employment; • 06 persons alleged origin in combination with one or more of race and/or ethnicity and religion; • 04 complaints claimed origin along with sex and victimisation, one of the two went on to claim race/ethnicity and offensive behaviour.
Disability	13 complaints (10% of all received) involved an allegation of disability discrimination: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 09 complainants alleged disability on its own; • 02 persons alleged disability along with victimisation; • 01 person alleged disability along with race and ethnicity; • 01 person alleged sex along with HIV illness (treated as a disability).
Religion	11 complaints (09% of all received) involved an allegation of discrimination on the basis of religion: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 06 complaints alleged religion in its own; • 03 person alleged religion along with race/ethnicity and origin; • 01 person alleged religion along with geographical origin; • 01 person alleged religion along with race/ethnicity and sex
Marital Status	02 complaints (1.5% of all received) involved an allegation of discrimination on the ground of marital status: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 01 person alleged marital status only; • 01 person alleged a combination of marital status and sex.
Victimisation	18 complaints (14% of all received) involved an allegation of victimisation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 09 complaints alleged victimisation on its own; • 02 persons alleged victimisation along with disability; • 02 persons alleged victimisation along with offensive behaviour, one of whom went on to allege sex, race and ethnicity as well; • 05 complaints alleged victimisation with a combination of one or more of : sex, race, ethnicity and origin (two of the complaints were lodged by the same individual but with respect to two separate incidents and at two different points in time).

Table 8

Report on Complaints Received by the Commission
(continued)

It is to be repeated that many persons alleged two or more status grounds. As such the numbers presented in the above Table may not easily add up and there is an obvious overlap, for example, under 'Disability' the 02 persons who alleged disability along with victimisation, would be the same 02 persons who alleged victimisation along with disability under the heading 'Victimisation'.

Data on the Respondents

(The person or entity against whom the complaint was lodged)

Unlike the Ombudsman which is concerned with actions or decisions of public authorities, or the Integrity Commission which is concerned with persons in public life, the provisions of the Equal Opportunity Act and the jurisdiction of the Commission extends to both the public and private sector. The Commission is empowered to enquire into matters originating from both sectors that may arise under the broad categories of employment, the provision of goods and services, education and the provision of accommodation.

In 2013, 92% of the complaints that were lodged were against public sector bodies and 11% were against the private sector. In 2014 the trend of public sector dominance continued, but there was a decline in the percentage share to 74% and an increase in both the percentage share and numbers of complaints lodged against the private sector. In 2014 the private sector now accounted for almost 25% of complaints lodged and the number of complaints went up from 11 in 2013 to 31, which was almost triple.

Type of Respondents 2013 and 2014

CATEGORY	2014	2013
NGO/Other organisation	02 (1.6%)	04 (02%)
State/ Public Sector	93 (74%)	180 (92%)
Private	31 (24.6%)	11 (5.6%)
Individual	0	01 (<01%)
Total complaints for year	126 (100%)	196 (100%)

Table 9

By public sector we mean:

- Ministries or Departments of the Central Government e.g. the Ministry of National Security, the Board of Inland Revenue;
- Service Commissions, that is Public Service, Police Service, Teaching Service, Judicial and Legal Service and Statutory Authority Service Commissions;
- Regional Administrative and Municipal Bodies, in particular, Regional Corporations and Regional Health Authorities ('RHA');
- State Enterprises, that is corporations and bodies that are owned and/or controlled by the State and/or financed by the public purse, e.g. Petrotrin, National Gas Company;
- Bodies that exist by or under any Statute or Law and/or exercise public and/or regulatory powers e.g. the Central Bank, the Chagauramas Development Authority, the Airports Authority
- Educational and Vocational institutions that are funded by the public purse e.g. the UWI or the UTT

Report on Complaints Received by the Commission
(continued)

Of the 93 complaints that are considered public sector, 35, representing 28% of all complaints lodged, were against the Central Government of Trinidad and Tobago:

- 24 complaints, or about 19% of all complaints, named a Ministry or Division of Central Government as the respondent; of this 02 named the Police Service and another 03 named the Fire Service as respondents;
- A further 09 complaints named a Service Commission as the Respondent;
- 02 complaints named a Judicial Body as a respondent.

With respect to complaints against public authorities:

- 02 complaints named a regional or municipal corporation from Trinidad (that is, not including Tobago House of Assembly (THA) bodies) as the respondent;
- 04 complaints named a Regional Health Authority from Trinidad (that is, not including the Tobago Regional Health Authority (TRHA) as the respondent);
- 02 complaints were lodged against public transportation authorities (such as the Airports Authority and/or the Port Authority) and a further 04 complaints were lodged against publicly-owned transportation entities (such as Caribbean Airlines Ltd and/or Public Transport Service Corporation);
- 10 complaints, which represents 08% of all complaints received, named a Tobago entity as respondent (that is the THA or a department or division of the THA, or the TRHA, one of which was against a special-purpose enterprise set up and owned by the THA;

There were 10 complaints, representing 08% of all complaints received, that were lodged against State Enterprises in the energy sector: 07 were lodged against an entity engaged in petroleum exploration and refining, 01 against an entity involved in the natural gas sector and 02 were against an entity engaged in the marketing of petroleum products.

There were 07 complaints lodged against two publicly-funded tertiary education institutions; it is interesting to note that the 04 complaints that were lodged against one university were lodged by employees or former employees, whereas the 03 complaints that were lodged against the other university were by students or prospective students.

It is important to emphasise that the above simply presents information on who the complaints were lodged against; it does not necessarily mean that there has been finding for or against any party.



The Equal Opportunity Act Chap. 22:03 empowers the Commission to refer a matter to Conciliation where it finds that the subject matter of the complaint may be resolved by this process. Conciliation is facilitated in-house by the Conciliation Unit at the Commission. There is no cost attached to this process at the Commission, unless the disputing parties opt to hire representation.

Twenty-four (24) matters were referred for Conciliation in calendar year 2014.

A summary of the complaints is as follows:

1	A trainee claimed discrimination due to the training being terminated
2	A former employee claimed discrimination when not rehired after interviewing for her former job.
3	An employee claimed discrimination in being consistently bypassed for promotion and that a particular individual was instead being favoured.
4	A job applicant alleged discrimination in that no reasonable adjustment/ accommodation was made for her during assessments for recruitment.
5	An individual alleged that the manner in which she received services was discriminatory.
6	A former employee claimed discrimination in the denial of benefits.
7	A former employee claimed discrimination in the employer's decision to terminate the contract of employment.
8	An employee claimed discrimination in the terms and conditions of employment.
9	A former employee claimed discrimination in the decision to terminate contract of employment.
10	An employee claimed to have suffered detriment on the job resulting in discrimination and victimisation.
11	An employee claimed discrimination in not being transferred to a higher position and in the subsequent termination of employment.

Report on Complaints Referred to Conciliation
(continued)

12	A former employee claimed discrimination in the decision to terminate the contract of employment.
13	An employee claimed discrimination due to the terms and conditions of employment that were allegedly tailored to their detriment.
14	An employee claimed discrimination in being overlooked for promotion
15	A trainee claimed discrimination in employer's failure to offer a contract of employment after the training had ended.
16	An employee alleged that the employer's refusal to offer training amounted to discrimination.
17	An employee claimed discrimination in the terms and conditions of employment afforded to him.
18	A now former employee claimed victimisation as the employee was overlooked for promotion while employed.
19	A former employee claimed discrimination in the non-renewal of her contract of employment.
20	A former employee claimed discrimination in the terms and conditions afforded to her and the subsequent termination of employment.
21	An employee claimed discrimination in the denial of promotion and lack of flexibility and accommodation in the workplace.
22	A former employee claimed discrimination in termination of the contract of employment.
23	A former employee claimed discrimination in not being appointed to a higher post and victimisation in the subsequent termination of the contract of employment.
24	A former employee claimed discrimination in the treatment meted out to him on the job and subsequent termination of the contract of employment.

Table 10

Upon analysis of these matters that were referred, twenty- three (23) of the twenty- four (24) matters were in the **category of employment** and one (1) matter was in the **category of the provision of goods and services**.

The matters that pertain to the category of employment however spanned the entire spectrum of the “employment relationship” as complaints were referred from job applicants, trainees, current employees and even former employees.

Report on Summary Prosecutions for Non-Compliance



It was previously reported that in 2013 the Commission laid summary complaints in the Port-of-Spain Magistrates Court against:

- The Teaching Service Commission and the Director of Personnel Administration (both were named as defendants with respect to one matter);
- The Chief of Defence Staff, Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force (two complaints with respect to two matters);
- Ms. Charleen Phillips, Ag Executive Officer, Statutory Authorities Service Commission (three complaints with respect to three matters); and
- Mr. Vivek Dinanath trading as “the Game Shop”.

No new matters were laid in 2014.

The matters against the Teaching Service Commission, the Chief of Defence Staff and the Statutory Authorities Services Commission were resolved.

The matter against Mr. Dinanath proceeded to trial on Thursday 10 April 2014 before Her Worship Chief Magistrate Marcia Ayers-Cesar.

Mrs. Tisha Branche, Investigating Officer, gave evidence on behalf of the Commission as did Mr. Khalfani Jeffrey, the Commission's driver. Mr. Dinanath gave evidence on his own behalf.

The Commission's evidence was that one Mr. Vince Skeete lodged a complaint of discrimination in the termination of his employment, against Mr. Dinanath, who operated a business under the name 'The Game Shop'. The Commission sent him a notice pursuant to section 33 to provide information by a given date, to which there was no compliance. Two further notices were sent. The third was dated 6 November 2013; it was hand-delivered to his place of business, and he was asked to respond by 26 November 2013. Again, he neither acknowledged nor responded.

In his evidence, Mr. Dinanath admitted that he did not respond to the Commission's Notices. He said that the Mr. Skeete was never in his employ so that he felt that he had nothing to respond to.

Her Worship pointed out that the Commission in their Notices took great length to explain their statutory powers and the consequences that could happen if he did not respond. Her Worship stated that if it was felt that the allegations that were made against him were untrue or misconceived, he should have written to or visited the Commission's office, neither or which he did.

Her Worship found Mr. Dinanath guilty of failing and/or refusing to comply with the requirements of a section 33 Notice. His failure began on 27 November 2013 (the day after which his last response was due) and continued to the date of hearing (10 April 2014). This amounted to one hundred and thirty-five (135) days and applying the fine of one thousand dollars (\$1,000.00) per day (that is, the fine payable by an individual), **his total penalty amounted to one hundred and thirty-five thousand dollars (\$135,000.00)**. Her Worship ordered that Mr Dinanath pay a fine in this amount and gave him a period of two (2) months in which to do so; **in default he was to serve twenty-four (24) months imprisonment with hard labour**. It is to be noted that this fine is payable to the State and not to the Commission.

This is the first Magistrates' Court prosecution for an offence under section 36 of the Act that went all the way to completion.

Report on Matters Referred to the Equal Opportunity Tribunal



According to the Equal Opportunity Act, where the matter cannot or has not been resolved by Conciliation the Commission shall:

- (a) prepare a report relating to the investigation with its recommendations;
- (b) send a copy of the report to the parties to the complaint;
- (c) publish the report; and
- (d) make the report available for inspection by the public

If after fulfilling the above statutory requirements the matter remains unresolved, the Commission with the consent of the Complainant shall initiate proceedings before the Equal Opportunity Tribunal.

In 2014, the Commission referred the following three (3) matters to the Tribunal:

Date of Publication	Complainant	Respondent	Category	Grounds
01 May 2014	Afroza Bhanji	SuperPharm Limited	employment	ethnicity, race, religion, victimisation
10 October 2014	Kerwin Simmons	Trinidad and Tobago Water and Sewerage Authority	employment	race
10 October 2014	Vidya S. Maharaj	Immigration Division, Ministry of National Security	provision of goods, services and facilities	ethnicity, religion, origin

Table 11

In each of these three (3) matters, a report was published, copies were sent to the parties, and are available for inspection by members of the public at the front desk of the Commission's office.

All three matters remained unresolved, and with the consent of the Complainant, proceedings were initiated before the Tribunal, and are currently before the Court.

All three (3) matters contain allegations of discrimination on the basis of status grounds including race, religion, ethnicity and origin.

The case of Vidya S Maharaj is the first matter in the category discrimination in the provision of goods, services and facilities

that has ever been referred to the Tribunal. In fact, all matters that have been referred to the Tribunal in the past have been in the category of employment, and this was the first non-employment matter to have ever been referred.

Further the complaint of Afroza Bhanji against SuperPharm Ltd is the first matter referred to the Tribunal against a private sector business. All previous matters sent to the Tribunal were against what we have termed 'public sector', that is Service Commissions, Government Ministries and Divisions, Statutory Authorities and State Enterprises. For example, the complaint lodged by Vidya S. Maharaj was against a Government Department, and the complaint lodged by Kerwin Simmons was against a public authority.

Report from the Legal Department



Legal Department

This report provides details of work of the Legal Department (inclusive of Investigations) of the Equal Opportunity Commission.

Departmental Matters

The Legal Department comprises:

- (i) The Legal Staff, who are Attorneys-at-Law in good standing with the Law Association of Trinidad & Tobago. They provide advice and guidance to the Commissioners, its management and staff, and are particularly responsible for advising on the Commission's statutory mandate, and for supervising the investigating of complaints of discrimination that are lodge with the Commission. The Staff compliment is as follows:
 - The Head of the Unit: This position was re-designated to Director, Legal Services, and was filled in August 2013 by the incumbent Head of the Unit.
 - One (1) Senior Legal Officer: This post was created in late 2012 and is expected to be filled in the first quarter of 2015.
 - One (1) Legal Officer II: This post has been vacant since late 2012 and is expected to be advertised in the first quarter of 2015.
 - Two (2) Legal Officers I: Both posts were filled in January 2013 but one officer left in

March 2014. The vacancy is expected to be filled in the first quarter of 2015.

- (ii) The Investigating Staff who investigate complaints lodged by members of the public. They interview complainants and gather information and evidence. Additionally they interact with and provide guidance to members of the public. They are required to have an undergraduate degree which should comprise disciplines such as Sociology, Psychology, Research Methods, Public Sector Management and Security Administration. The Staff compliment is as follows:
 - One Supervisor of Investigations: This post was created in late 2012 and is expected to be advertised in the first quarter of 2015.
 - Five Investigating Officers: All five posts were filled at the beginning of 2014; two vacancies arose during the course of the year, only one of which was filled.
- (iii) Two (2) Business Operations Assistants ('BOA') who perform a variety of clerical/secretarial and administrative support duties. The contracts of employment for both officers came to an end in the second half of 2014. The positions are expected to be filled in early 2015 at latest.

In 2014 the Department worked in the following areas, which are detailed elsewhere in this Report:

- Receiving and Investigating Complaints;
- Prosecuting persons who did not comply with the Commission's section 33 notices;
- Drafting 'guidelines for employers'
- Preparing and submitting to the Commissioners, proposals for amending the Equal Opportunity Act;
- Education and information sessions, in conjunction with the Corporate Communications Department;
- Outreach sessions, once per month in San Fernando, Sangre Grande and Tobago.

Report from the Legal Department
(continued)

In the 2013 Annual Report the following were identified as targets for 2014:

- We hoped to computerise our data;
- We hoped to focus more on staff training and development.

Unfortunately these objectives were not realised and remain as targets to be achieved in 2015.

In the 2013 Annual Report it was also indicated that we hoped to critically reassess our workflow and systems and further streamline our internal processes. Some work was done on this exercise, and one of the results has been that we were able to refer twenty-four (24) matters to conciliation, the highest ever in a calendar year. In 2013, only six (06) matters were referred so that the increase in 2014 was four-fold. However the work on our internal realignment is incomplete, stymied by some of the departures that took place during the year and unplanned downtime caused by the move to Chagaunas. New staff is expected to join in early 2015 and the process is expected to continue and be completed by the first half of the year.

In 2014 there were no new summary prosecutions instituted before the Magistrates Court as it seemed that Respondents were now more 'willing' to comply with timelines (or if they were having a difficulty, they made the effort to contact the department and ask for an extension). By the end of 2014 it seemed that the problems that led to the need for these prosecutions had largely disappeared; we believe that because of these prosecutions, persons now saw the Commission in a more serious light.



High Court Matter CV 2014-00477: Equal Opportunity Commission –v- The Attorney General of Trinidad and Tobago and The Director of Personnel Administration.

In late 2013 the Commissioners had approved a recommendation from the Legal Department that we approach the High Court by way of an "Interpretation Summons" seeking guidance on a number of legal issues that had arisen in enforcing **the Equal Opportunity Act**. By Claim Form filed on 6 February 2014, the Commission sought determination from the High Court, pursuant to its inherent role and/or jurisdiction to interpret and construe Acts of Parliament, on four questions of law.

The first question sought construction on whether for the purposes of **the Equal Opportunity Act**, the respective Service Commissions could be considered 'employers' with respect to those functions that were exclusively vested in it. Sections 121, 123 and 125 of the Constitution vest in the respective Service Commissions (Public, Police and Teaching) the powers -

- to appoint persons to hold or act in offices including power to make appointments on promotion and transfer and
- to confirm appointments, and
- to remove and exercise disciplinary control over persons holding or acting in such offices and
- to enforce standards of conduct on such officers

Report from the Legal Department
(continued)

These were part of the functions of an employer, and this Commission [EOC] has over time received a number of complaints from public officers alleging discrimination by the Service Commissions in the performance of one or more of these functions. However in response to section 33 Notices that were sent to them, the Service Commissions have taken the position that section 8 of *the Equal Opportunity Act* refers to employers and prospective employers and they are neither with respect to public officers.

The second question sought construction on whether the processes provided from section 30 to 39 had to be sequential such that where a matter has been referred for conciliation and was not resolved the only next steps are those listed in section 39(1), that is, the preparation and publication of a report and where there is consent, the eventual referral to the Tribunal. In other words, if conciliation is unsuccessful, could the Commission resume its investigation, or must it only go on to prepare and publish a report.

The third question followed from the second. It sought construction on whether the Commission can resume an investigation if after preparing and publishing a report it became apparent that an investigation was incomplete in some way.

The fourth question followed from the third and asked whether, in the event that the Commission cannot resume an investigation and/or in any event generally, where proceedings have been initiated before the Equal Opportunity Tribunal, could a complainant raise issues that were not investigated by the Commission.

The matter came up for hearing before the Honourable Mr Justice Ronnie Boodoosingh. Written arguments were filed and exchanged and there was an oral hearing on 17 July 2014.

His Lordship delivered a written judgment on 16 October 2014. In answering the four questions posed, His Lordship said as follows:

Q1: With respect to a complaint lodged under the Equal Opportunity Act, the Service Commission should be considered as employers with respect to the employer functions for which they have remit. The Service Commission argued that although certain functions were vested exclusively in them they were not the employers of public officers; the employer was the State. However His Lordship observed at paragraphs 49 and 50:

"49. To say that the Service Commission is not the employer but the State is and therefore it is the State which should be the proper party to the complaint really serves no practical purpose. Where the Service Commission is directly responsible for a matter complained about under sections 8 or 9 any investigation by the EOC of a complaint brought against the 'State' in such a circumstance would invariably lead right back to the Service Commission.

50. The Act must be construed in a purposive and practical way. The term 'employer' has to be construed in keeping with the scheme and purpose of the Act. A purposive interpretation in this context must look to the intention of the Act to promote equal opportunity. Artificial barriers should not be placed in the way of its functioning. What the Act provides is an additional layer or avenue of protection against discrimination. It does not take away a person's right to come to court for judicial review or constitutional relief."

Report from the Legal Department
(continued)

Q2 and Q3: With respect to whether or not the Commission can resume an investigation if conciliation has ended or if a report has been prepared and published, His Lordship said that there was nothing in scheme of the Act that allowed for this. By contrast, section 39(1) was clear on the procedure to be followed once conciliation has been attempted and has been unsuccessful: the Commission must proceed to prepare, send and publish its report of its investigation and recommendations. Further, once this has been done, the Commission has discharged its statutory duty and is considered *functus officio*; the only other thing that the Commission can do is to initiate proceedings before the Equal Opportunity Tribunal once the complainant has consented to this.

Q4: His Lordship did not agree that a complainant could raise before the Equal Opportunity Tribunal issues that were not dealt with by the Commission. The Tribunal did not have unlimited or inherent jurisdiction and was empowered only to deal with such matters as are referred to it by the Commission. Thus they could not permit fresh matters not previously investigated and referred by the Commission to be added to the subject of a hearing before it.

In his concluding comments, His Lordship made observations about the importance of the Act and the Commission, which merit repeating:

67. The Equal Opportunity Act was implemented for a purpose. It was to address the offensive practice of discrimination. Discrimination strikes at the heart of notions of equality, dignity and respect for all human beings. It impedes the development of a merit based society. It can lead to acute social tension and unrest. We all know

of our painful history of different groups and individuals, at different times, being subject to discrimination. We have since come a long way, but there is still a good way to go. The Act affords us, as a country, the opportunity to chip away at some aspects of the discriminatory treatment of persons. The court cannot accede to technical arguments about who is strictly an employer when the Act is plainly intended to cover the operations of the various bodies that the Act has identified.

68. It is hoped that the observations made here will lead to a better understanding of the powers and functions of the Equal Opportunity Commission and the Equal Opportunity Tribunal. The proper functioning of these bodies are vital to ensuring that we eliminate discriminatory practices which stand in the way of realising a fair and just society for all of our citizens.

69. The Act must be seen as an important means, albeit imperfect, to enhance the avenues open to citizens to have complaints of discrimination investigated and acted upon. Public officials and bodies must resist the inclination to put up unjustified barriers, which frustrate the operation of the Act. Rather they must shift their focus to eliminating systems, processes and practices that discriminate against citizens of this country."

It bears mentioning that all Court matters involving the Commission – whether prosecutions before the Magistrates Court or the Interpretation Summons before the High Court – were handled exclusively by the Commission's in-house legal team.

Report from the Research Unit



educational programmes for the purpose of eliminating discrimination and promoting equality of opportunity and good relations between persons of different status.”

More specifically the Unit has responsibility to:

- Review patterns and trends in complaint cases with a view to identifying discriminatory practices and make recommendations to combat such practices.
- Assess the inequalities experienced by vulnerable groups in the country and research and present suggestions to combat.
- Conduct research on issues relevant to discrimination and equal opportunities to guide the operations of the Commission in terms of policies and priorities.
- Keep abreast of public policy issues and international developments affecting equal opportunities, examining these issues and recommending solutions or way forward.
- Maintain effective relationships with relevant stakeholders on policy and research issues.
- Build and strengthen relationships with local and international organisations and bodies advocating human rights.

This report provides details of the work of the Research Unit of the Equal Opportunity Commission in 2014.

The Research Unit of the Equal Opportunity Commission commenced operations in June 2010, with the appointment of a Research Officer II (Ag). The Research Unit aims to carry out research, analysis and provide information that would support the work of the Commission to accomplish its mandate, vision and mission.

Section 27 (1) (e) of the Equal Opportunity Act lists one of the functions of the Commission which is relevant to research, as follows, “to develop, conduct and foster research and

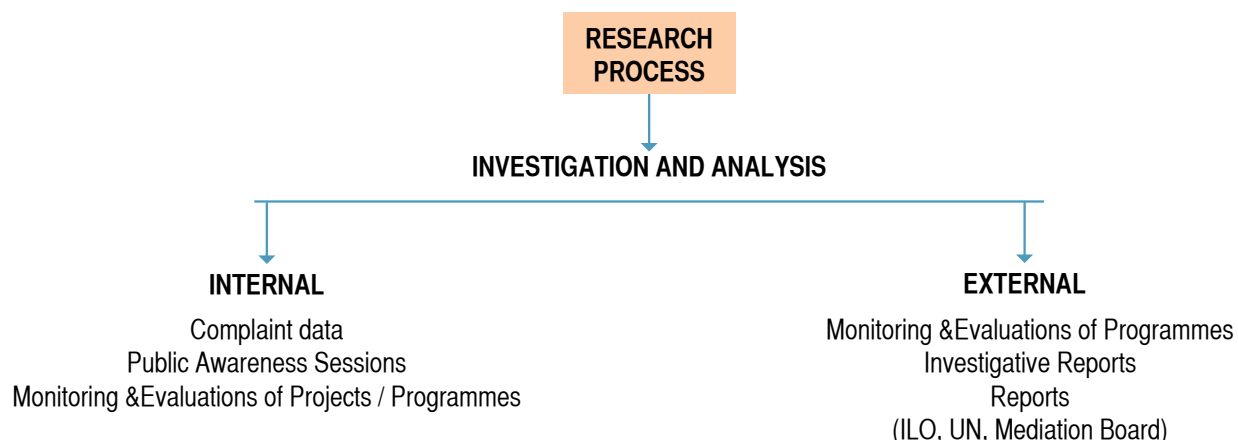


Figure 1

Report from the Research Unit
(continued)

Research Agenda

The Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC) has a legal duty to monitor and evaluate progress towards equality and human rights, taking into account, disability, ethnicity/race, employment, marital status, gender and religion. The Commission undertakes and supports work across the range of equality grounds to facilitate evidence-based policy formulation and to support the work of the Commission. The Research Unit performs its duties mainly through investigation, analysis and evaluations in both the internal and external environment.

Research Priorities for 2014

The Research Unit's research priorities for 2014 set targets for the delivery of outputs and the development strategies for maximising the contribution of the projects and associated activities to the attainment of the goals of the Commission and focussed on three main areas:

- I. Public Awareness
- II. Monitoring and Evaluation
- III. Investigative Surveys

Research Outcomes:

- Increased capability to monitor attitude change of the public
- Access to data to inform future educational programmes
- Provide bench marks for future studies
- Increased efficiency of the Commission service delivery
- Improved effectiveness of Commission services

Research Limitations of 2014

There was not enough information and data on the extent and nature of experiences of discrimination by all the groupings

protected by the legislation. There is also the meager availability of statistical data for measuring inequalities and the limitations regarding the collection and processing of sensitive data. In addition, the proposed investigative research initiatives that were stated in the annual report of 2013 were not implemented due to changes in the direction of the research agenda as stipulated by the new Commissioners of the Commission for 2014.

Evaluation of the Public Awareness Programmes of the EOC 2014

The Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC) is committed to promoting the concept of equal opportunities through education and publicity programmes to raise awareness and promote better understanding of equal opportunities concepts.

The Research Unit of the Commission was requested to perform an evaluation of the Public Awareness Sessions which were conducted by the staff of the Legal Department of the Commission for 2014. The overall aim of the evaluation was to assess the Programme's achievement in terms of its objectives, in order to:

- Evaluate the quality of the presentation
- Assess knowledge of the Commission and the services offered and
- To judge whether the sessions met the expectations and objectives of the participants as well as the organisers.

Data

The data evaluated comprised the evaluation forms that were distributed at the sessions. The indicators were grouped according to high - Excellent (5) and low- poor (1). This method provided a means to disaggregate the data and address perceptions and opinions. A comparison of public awareness sessions for the period 2013 and 2014 is outlined on page 32.

Report from the Research Unit
(continued)

Comparison of Data from Public Awareness Programmes for 2013 -2014

Comparison of Data		
	2013	2014
Number of questionnaires evaluated	187	133
Did the programme meet the expectations of the persons attending the sessions?		
Yes	86.63%	63.9%
No	11.76%	30.1%
Not stated	1.60%	30.1%
Have persons ever visited the EOC's website?		
Yes	24.06%	33.83%
No	74.87%	66.17%
Not stated	1.07%	0%
Knowledge of the Work of the EOC		
Yes	36.36%	48.87%
No	62.03%	48.87%
Not stated	1.60%	2.26%
Provision of Information on the EOC		
Newspaper	10.70%	17.29%
Television	13.90%	9.77%
Website	11.76%	17.29%
Bill board	4.28%	9.02%

Table 1

Major Findings

1. The Total number of questionnaires for the period were:
2013= 187 2014 = 133
2. In 2013, the Public Awareness sessions were held for Employers and Employees of PETROTRIN, Columbus Communications, the Eastern Regional Health Authority; Administrators of the Tobago House of Assembly; and students of the Barrackpore West Secondary School.

3. The participants at the public awareness sessions for 2014 comprised: staff of the EOC and EOT; students from Bishops Centenary School (Form Five); Employers and employees of the Environmental Commission, Ministry of Science and Technology and the Employers Consultative Association. There was also a session held for members of the Defence Force of Trinidad and Tobago.

Report from the Research Unit
(continued)

4. Overall, the participants approved of the Public Awareness session conducted by the Legal Department of the EOC with 86.63% and 63.9% approval rating for 2013 and 2014 respectively. There was however, a reduction in the percentage approval rate in 2014, which is due to an increase in the number of “Not Stated” responses in the questionnaires.
 5. There was a positive 9.7% increase in the number of persons who visited the Commission’s website and a 8.7% reduction in the number of persons who have “never” visited the website.
 6. To deliver the Commission messages to the general public, the main sources of information were from the Newspaper, Website and Billboard which showed increased awareness in 2014.
 7. The majority of participants at the sessions were aware of one or more Commission’s educational, promotional and publicity activities in the past months mainly through the traditional methods of the print and electronic media. The findings also showed that other effective channels included the billboards and the internet.
- Ministry of Science and Technology
 - Employers Consultative Association
 - Defence Force Seminar
 - In- house public awareness session for staff of EOC and EOT
 - Statistical Report of the Commission Complaints data for 2014
 - Research Unit’s Budget Estimates Submission 2014/2015
 - Drafting of Documents on:
 - Guidelines on Formulating an Operational Plan
 - The Procurement Criteria for Consulting Services to conduct an Impact Assessment 2014
 - Cell Phone Usage Policy
 - Evaluation Form for the document “Guidelines for employers in Trinidad and Tobago”
 - Training Course Evaluation Form for the EOC Human Resources Department
 - Request for Information:
 - Mediation Board Report 2014
 - Preparation of “Comments on the HR Proposal for Ministry of Public Administration for the next 3-6 years
 - Report on the ILO Conventions ratified by Trinidad and Tobago
 - Statistical Report on the quarterly analysis of the Commission’s complaint data
 - Report on the Evaluation of the Public Awareness Programmes conducted by the Commission 2014
 - Statistical Analysis of data on Tobago 2008-2014
 - Research information for the Commission’s Seminar on “Human Rights and Gender”.

Research Activities for the period January 2014- December 2014

- Compilation of statistical data and information for the Commission’s 2013 Annual Report
- Formulation of the Commission’s Evaluation Forms that were used to conduct the specific evaluations for 2014
- Evaluation of the Public Awareness/Sensitisation Programmes conducted for :
 - Bishops Centenary School
 - Environmental Commission

Report from the Communications Department



Communications Department

This report provides details of the work of the Communications Department of the Equal Opportunity Commission in 2014.

Under section 27(1) (a) of the Equal Opportunity Act Chapter 22:03 [Act No 69 of 2000 as amended], the Commission is mandated “to work towards the elimination of discrimination”.

By section 21(1) (b) the Commission is required “to promote equality of opportunity and good relations between persons of different status generally”. Further section 27(1) (e) charges the Commission “To develop, conduct and foster research and educational programmes and other programmes for the purpose of eliminating discrimination and promoting equality of opportunity and good relations between persons of different status.”

The Communications department for the year 2014 continued one of its core functions in accordance with the Act, which is to develop, foster and research educational programmes for the purpose of eliminating discrimination and promoting equality.

The Communications department continued to work with its recommendation for a communications strategic plan 2013. The plan was developed around the analysis of complaints received by the EOC, which showed throughout the years that the vast majority of complaints received did not accord with a “status” as

laid down in the Act. The communications plan proposed that the campaign be tailored to target audiences on the four (4) major categories of discrimination and how it relates to the seven (7) different statuses using segmented audiences and different targeted media. It was also proposed that a tracer/impact study be conducted and the findings be used to propose other strategic measures for the way forward.

The Communications department was faced with a major challenge of not having its full three year 2013-2016 Communications plan approved as the term for the Commissioners came to an end in April and May 2014 and remained without Commissioners for several months.

However, with the guidance and support of the Office of the CEO and Legal department we continued to provide and facilitate awareness sessions upon requests from stakeholders both at the public and private sector organisations.

The plan commenced with the execution of Internal Communication on the theme of ***The Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC) and You***. The educational campaign included the EOC and the Equal Opportunity Tribunal (EOT) which then extended to our line ministry, the Ministry of the Attorney General (MOAG) followed by other statutory bodies that falls under the MOAG.

Another presentation titled ***A comparative analysis of Equal Opportunity Commissions*** was conducted in house by the legal department proposing a Human Rights Commission as the way forward for Trinidad and Tobago.

With the statistics showing Employment as a major category of alleged discrimination there was a special focus on completing an Employers Handbook. The Commission’s first publication with the intention of informing employers and prospective employers about: Anti-discrimination law in the specific category of Employment; Prohibited practices in employment; Ways in which

Report from the Communications Department
(continued)

to avoid the practice of discrimination and actions contrary to the Equal Opportunity Act and What to expect if a complaint is made against one as an employer.

The handbook titled ***Guidelines for Employers in Trinidad and Tobago*** was launched at the Trade and Investment Convention (TIC) in July 2014 where many employers received both hard and soft copies of the handbook. The Employers Guidelines was also made available and remains accessible on the Commissions' website.

With the swearing in of the new term of Commissioners in August 2014 there was some optimism that the Communications department would then have the approval in moving forward with its educational campaign. The new Commissioners swiftly scheduled last quarter events which began with the introduction of the Commission's new board of Commissioners and the Tobago House of Assembly (THA) on addressing equal opportunity concerns as related to Tobago. The Commissioners of the Equal Opportunity Commission met with the Chief Secretary, Orville London and members of the Tobago House of Assembly where it was proposed that the Equal Opportunity Commission, the Tobago House of Assembly and other Tobago stakeholders work together to forge a lasting relationship beneficial to all within our society. This was followed by another seminar held in Tobago in November 2014 to reintroduce the EOC with some of Tobago's major stakeholders such as the Tobago Chamber of Industry and Commerce, the Hotel Association, Tobago Development and the Regional Health Authority.

The year 2014 saw various articles generated both from the press and online media from the general public not only illustrating their awareness of the Commission but also their understanding of what areas were covered and not covered under the Act. There was increased lobbying from advocate groups for the inclusion of Sexual Orientation and the revising of the broad term of what is considered a "Disability" in the Act.

The new board of Commissioners brought change with the exercising of one of the Act's core function, which is to keep under review the working of the Act and any relevant law and when so required by the Minister, or otherwise thinks it necessary, draw up and submit to the Minister proposal for amending them.

The EOC hosted a breakfast seminar on Human Rights Day, 10 December 2014, which explored the broad theme of Human Rights and Gender.

The seminar introduced the EOC as a participant and activist in the gender conversation in keeping with our statutory mandate to work towards the elimination of discrimination and promote equality of opportunity and good relations between persons and groups of different status generally.

It was held to commemorate, the end of the 16 Days of Activism from 25 November, 2014, against Gender-Based Violence against women and girls around the world together with Human Rights Day, on 10 December 2014.

The Communications department looks forward to 2015 new and continued initiatives with the proposed planning and strategic exercise scheduled for the Board of Commissioners and Management of the Commission for 2015. It is anticipated that this exercise would further direct the Communications department in executing its research and public education programmes. We continue to support the mandate of the Commission through strategic communications in fulfilling its mission and vision both internally and externally to the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

Report from the Communications Department
(continued)

Public Education Programmes

January



17 January, 2014 - Staff of the Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC) and Equal Opportunity Tribunal (EOT) - Internal Awareness Session.

Theme: *The Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC) and You.*

Presenters

Georgia Rae Mottley (Investigating Officer)
Stephanie Dhanisingh (Investigating Officer)
Keisha Mclean Woods (Investigating Officer)
Tisha Branche (Investigating Officer)
Christal Chapman (Legal Officer I)
Aleyya Gafoor-Ali (Legal Officer I)

Coordinators

Devanty Dianne Maraj-Ramdeen (CEO)
Ria Mohammed Pollard (Manager, Corporate Communications)
Crista Daniel (Corporate Communications Officer)
Iyaana Hope (Business Operations Assistant II)
Sherwyn Williams (OJT)

February



7 February, 2014 - Public Service Association.

Theme: *The Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC) and You.*

Venue: *Conference Room, 89 Abercromby Street, Port of Spain.*

Presenters

Christal Chapman (Legal Officer I)
Aleyya Gafoor-Ali (Legal Officer I)

Coordinators

Devanty Dianne Maraj-Ramdeen (CEO)
Ria Mohammed Pollard (Manager, Corporate Communications)
Sherwyn Williams (OJT)

March



27 March, 2014 - MoAG Heads of Departments Meeting Seminar.

Theme: *The Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC) and You.*

Venue: *Ministry of the Attorney General, MoAG Conference Room, Cabildo Chambers, 23-27 St. Vincent Street, Port-of-Spain.*

Presenters

Haran Ramkaransingh (Director, Legal Services)

Coordinators

Devanty Dianne Maraj-Ramdeen (CEO)
Ria Mohammed Pollard (Manager, Corporate Communications)
Crista Daniel (Corporate Communications Officer)

Report from the Communications Department
(continued)

Public Education Programmes (continued)

April



2 April, 2014 - Bishops Centenary High School.

Theme: *The Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC) and You.*

Venue: *Robert Street, Woodbrook, Port of Spain.*

Presenters

*Keisha Mclean Woods (Investigating Officer)
Christal Chapman (Legal Officer I)
Aleyya Gafoor-Ali (Legal Officer I)*

Coordinators

*Devanty Dianne Maraj-Ramdeen (CEO)
Ria Mohammed Pollard (Manager, Corporate Communications)
Iyaana Hope (Business Operations Assistant II)
Sherwyn Williams (OJT)*

April



11 April, 2014

Theme: *Comparative Analysis on Equal Opportunity Commissions around the World.*

Venue: *EOC's Conference Room, 1st Floor Ceramic (Trinidad) Building, #37 Wrightson Road, Port of Spain.*

Presenters

Christal Chapman (Legal Officer I)

Coordinators

*Ria Mohammed Pollard (Manager, Corporate Communications)
Crista Daniel (Corporate Communications Officer)
Iyaana Hope (Business Operations Assistant II)
Sherwyn Williams (OJT)*

April



30 April, 2014 - The Environmental Commission.

Theme: *The Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC) and You.*

Venue: *Conference Room, 1st Floor E.F. "Telly" Paul Building, St. Vincent Street, Port of Spain.*

Presenters

*Aleyya Gafoor-Ali [Legal Officer I]
Tisha Branche [Investigating Officer]
Keisha Mclean Woods [Investigating Officer]*

Coordinators

*Devanty Dianne Maraj-Ramdeen (CEO)
Ria Mohammed Pollard (Manager, Corporate Communications)
Crista Daniel (Corporate Communications Officer)*

Report from the Communications Department
(continued)

Public Education Programmes (continued)

May



8 May, 2014 - Ministry of Science and Technology.

Theme: *The Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC) and You.*

Venue: *Robert Street, Woodbrook, Port of Spain.*

Presenters

Sarona Samaroo (Investigating Officer)

Tisha Branche (Investigating Officer)

Aleyya Gafoor-Ali (Legal Officer I)

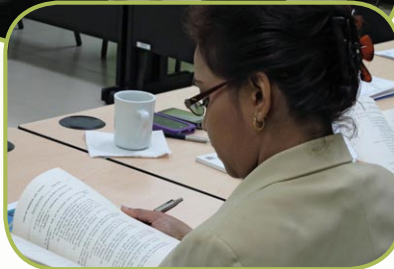
Coordinators

Devanty Dianne Maraj-Ramdeen (CEO)

Ria Mohammed Pollard (Manager, Corporate Communications)

Crista Daniel (Corporate Communications Officer)

June



5 June, 2014 - The Employers Consultative Association.

Theme: *Rights and Responsibilities of Employers under the Equal Opportunity Legislation.*

Venue: *ECA's Training Centre #17 Samaroo Road, Aranguez Roundabout North, Aranguez.*

Presenters

Haran Ramkaransingh [DLS]

Coordinators

Devanty Dianne Maraj-Ramdeen (CEO)

Ria Mohammed Pollard (Manager, Corporate Communications)

Crista Daniel (Corporate Communications Officer)

June



24 June, 2014 - Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force.

Theme: *The Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC) and You.*

Venue: *TTDF Headquarters, Airways Road, Chaguramas.*

Presenters

Stephanie Dhanisingh (Investigating Officer)

Keisha Mclean Woods (Investigating Officer)

Aleyya Gafoor-Ali (Legal Officer 1)

Coordinators

Devanty Dianne Maraj-Ramdeen (CEO)

Ria Mohammed Pollard (Manager, Corporate Communications)

Crista Daniel (Corporate Communications Officer)

Report from the Communications Department
(continued)

Public Education Programmes (continued)

July



2 July - 4 July, 2014 - TTMA Trade and Investment Convention 2014.

Theme: The Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC) and You.

Venue: The Centre of Excellence, Macoya, Trinidad and Tobago.

Coordinators

Devanty Dianne Maraj-Ramdeen (CEO)
Ria Mohammed Pollard (Manager, Corporate Communications)
Crista Daniel (Corporate Communications Officer)
Haran Ramkaransingh (Director, Legal Services)
Aleyya Gafoor-Ali (Legal Officer I)
Tisha Branche (Investigating Officer)
Keisha Mclean Woods (Investigating Officer)
Stephanie Dhanisingh (Investigating Officer)
Sarona Samaroo (Investigating Officer)
Charlene Renaud (Business Operations Assistant III)

August



7 August, 2014 - The Employers Consultative Association (ECA).

Theme: Discrimination- Complaints and Duties of the Employer.

Venue: ECA's Training Centre, #17 Samaroo Road, Aranguez Roundabout North, Aranguez.

Presenters

Haran Ramkaransingh (Director Legal Services)

Coordinators

Devanty Dianne Maraj-Ramdeen (CEO)
Ria Mohammed Pollard (Manager, Corporate Communications)
Crista Daniel (Corporate Communications Officer)

November



Tobago Seminar - EOC's visit to Tobago to meet with stakeholders at two (2) separate meetings.

Courtesy Call with Tobago House of Assembly

Theme: The Equal Opportunity Commission and You.

Venue: Tobago House of Assembly, Division of Tourism and Transport, #12 Sangster Hill, Scarborough, Tobago.

Presenters

Lynette Seebaran-Suite (Chairman, EOC)
Haran Ramkaransingh (Director, Legal Services)

Coordinators

Mrs. Devanty Dianne Maraj-Ramdeen (CEO)
Mrs. Ria Mohammed Pollard (Manager, Corporate Communications)

Report from the Communications Department
(continued)

Public Education Programmes (continued)

November



12 November, 2014 - Meeting with Business, Tourism and Administrative Sector

- Tobago Regional Health Authority
- Tobago Chamber of Industry and Commerce
- Ministry of Tobago Development
- Tobago Hotel and Tourism Association

Theme: The Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC) and You.

Venue: Conference Room, Coco Reef Resort and Spa, Crown Point, Tobago.

Presenters

Lynette Seebaran-Suite (Chairman, EOC)
Haran Ramkaransingh (Director, Legal Services)

Coordinators

Mrs. Devanty Dianne Maraj-Ramdeen (CEO)
Mrs. Ria Mohammed Pollard (Manager, Corporate Communications)

December



6 December, 2014 - Statutory Authorities Service Commission.

Theme: The roles and functions of the Equal Opportunity Commission as it relates to Employment.

Venue: Point Lisas Room, Hyatt Regency Trinidad, 1 Wrightson Road, Port of Spain.

Presenters

Aleyya Gafoor-Ali (Legal Officer 1)

December



10 December, 2014 - Breakfast Seminar: Human Rights and Gender.

Theme: Human Rights and Gender.

Venue: Diamond/Topaz Room, Hyatt Regency Trinidad, 1 Wrightson Road, Port of Spain.

Presenters

Lynette Seebaran-Suite (Chairman, EOC)
Dr. Peter Weller
Professor Patricia Mohammed
Professor Rose Marie Bell-Antoine

Coordinators

Lynette Seebaran-Suite (Chairman, EOC)
Devanty Dianne Maraj-Ramdeen (CEO)
Ria Mohammed Pollard (Manager, Corporate Communications)
Crista Daniel (Corporate Communications Officer)

Report from the General Administration Department



General Administration Department

This report provides details of the work of the General Administration Department of the Equal Opportunity Commission in 2014.

The General Administration Department is currently staffed by the following members:

- Administrative Officer IV (Ag.)
- Clerk IV
- Accounting Assistant (Ag.)
- Receptionist/Telephone Operator
- Driver/Messenger
- Office Support Assistant

Our purpose is to provide daily support, for all internal members of the Equal Opportunity Commission and by extension our external clients, the public.

Our daily activities would involve the administrative and financial support to the Chairman and Board, Chief Executive Officer and our internal managers and their support staff under: Head Legal, Corporate Communications, Information Technology, Human Resources, Research and Mediation.

Accommodation

The Equal Opportunity Commission moved to its new official residence at 55-57 Manic Street, Chaguanas in October 2014, under the stewardship of the out-going Acting Administrative Officer IV, Mr. Gandalal Naipaul who proceeded on pre- retirement

leave and this required the extra drive to provide all office support needs to each department in the functioning of their duties, in a clean and safe environment for both staff and the public. Having taken over the reins of Acting Administrative Officer IV by mid December 2014, we are still faced with in house challenges, but we continue to address these with great urgency.

Accounts Section

During the period January 2014 – December 2014 the Equal Opportunity Commission obtained releases in the sum of ten million, three hundred and twenty-four thousand, seven hundred and twenty dollars (TTD \$10,324,720.00) from the Budget Division, Ministry of Finance. This sum was in relation to Goods and Services (02/003) and Minor Equipment (03/003).

Out of these releases the sum of eight million, eight hundred and seventy-six thousand and forty-six dollars (\$8,876,046.00) was spent under 02/003 – Goods and Services (this consisted of Fixed cost \$3,652,777.00 and Variable cost \$5,223,269.00) and seven hundred and eighty-four thousand and ninety-six dollars (\$784,096.00) was spent under 03/003 – Minor Equipment.

A total of nine million, six hundred and sixty thousand, one hundred and forty-two dollars (\$9,660,142.00) was utilised by the Equal Opportunity Commission for 2014.

The Ministry of Finance, Budget Division, released the sum of ten million, three hundred and twenty-four thousand, seven hundred and twenty (\$10,324,720.00) dollars, for the calendar year 2014 and the actual expenses incurred was in the sum of nine million, six hundred and sixty thousand, one hundred and forty-two dollars (\$ 9,660,142.00).

The following is a breakdown of the actual expenses incurred for 2014:

Total Fixed costs	\$ 3,652,777.00
Variable Costs	\$ 5,223,269.00
<u>Total Minor Equipment</u>	<u>\$ 784,096.00</u>
Total Expenditure	\$ 9,660,142.00

(All figures have been rounded off to the nearest dollar)

Report from the General Administration Department
(continued)

Equal Opportunity Commission Statement of Expenses for the Annual year

Fixed Cost	TTD
Rent/Lease	3,450,000.
Janitorial Services	202,777.
Total Fixed Cost	\$ 3,652,777.
Variable Cost	TTD
Travelling & Subsistence	45,567.
Electricity	274,563.
Telephone	352,612.
Stationery	104,612.
Books	12,059.
Materials	299.
Maintenance Vehicle	7,646.
Maintenance Equipment	4,930.
Contract Employment	2,740,583.
Training	85,877.
Official Entertainment	1,200.
Repair and Maintenance building	8,175.
Contract Services	98,516.
Security	339,267.
Postage	1,200.
Medical	2,368.
Travelling -Direct charges	138,675.
Promotion/Publicity/Printing	702,744.
Hosting of Conference	302,368.
Total Variable Cost	\$ 5,223,269.
Minor Equipment	TTD
Office Equipment	697,440.
Furniture	50,444.
Other Minor Equipment	36,212.
Total Minor Equipment	784,096.
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	\$ 9,660,142.

(All figures have been rounded off to the nearest dollar)

Table 1

Report from the Human Resource Unit



This report provides details of the work of the Human Resource Unit of the Equal Opportunity Commission in 2014.

In 2014 the Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC) was staffed with thirty-four (34) members comprising of contract employees (including short term contracts), public service employees and officers under the purview of the Salary Review Commission (SRC).

The Human Resource (HR) Unit is led by the Chief Executive Officer and comprises of one (1) Human Resource Officer I (Ag.) and one (1) Human Resource Specialist who is employed on a short term basis. The major challenge of the Human Resource (HR) Unit is that it is understaffed and therefore unable to adequately meet the growing needs of the Commission.

The core functions of the Human Resource Unit are recruitment and selection, training and development, human resource planning, employee relations, administrative human resource service and performance management. During the year 2014, the HR Unit was kept fully occupied with all of these functions and the following are highlights of some achievements.

The services of the Government Human Resource Services (GHR) were employed for the recruitment of three (3) senior positions which concluded late in the year. There were six (6) resignations which impacted on the ability of the EOC to adequately serve the public. Several contracts also came to an end during the year.

The Commission continued to recognise that the provision of training and development for its employees was vital to improving effective execution of functions and services to the public. In 2014 the Human Resource Unit coordinated several training programmes for the staff of the Commission via the Public Service Academy, Chief Personnel Officer (CPO) and other private institutions. Please see below Table on page 41 – for a list of training provided to staff in 2014.

Report from the Human Resources Unit (continued)

Name of Training	Participants (Position)	No. of persons trained
Anger Management	Business Operations Assistant II & Investigating Officer	2
Cabinet Note Writing	Chief Executive Officer	1
Certificate in Industrial Relations Management	Chief Executive Officer	1
Certificate in Legal Studies	Business Operations Assistant II	1
Conference on Global Equality & Diversity	Commissioners, Chief Executive Officer, Legal Staff, Investigating Officers, Manager Corporate Communications & Corporate Communications Officer	10
Conflict Resolution	Human Resource Officer	1
Content Management for the Maintenance of Website	Network & Security Administrator, System Support Technician, Corporate Communications Officer, Business Operations Assistant II & Graphic Artist (OJT)	5
Developing Leadership Skills for Middle Level Officers	Information and Communications Technology Manager	1
Discipline Procedures in the Public Service	Chief Executive Officer & Human Resource Specialist	2
Diversity, Inclusiveness and Non-Discrimination in the World of Work	Chief Executive Officer	1
Forensic of Credential and CV Fraud	Chief Executive Officer & Human Resource Officer	2
Health & Wellness Access & Equality for All	Investigating Officer & Legal Officer I	2
Inventory Management	System Support Technician	1
Microsoft Operations Framework 4.0 with Certification	Network & Security Administrator	1
Performance Appraisal & Management System (PMAS)	All Managers & Supervisors	10
Presentation Skills for Senior Managers	Investigating Officer	1
Project Management Toolkit Series: Preparation of Logical Frameworks	Network & Security Administrator	1
Time & Commitment Mapping	Legal Officer I & Corporate Communications Officer	2
Vetting Cabinet Notes	Chief Executive Officer	1

Report from the Human Resources Unit (continued)

Of particular importance was the training provided to managers and supervisors to equip them with the knowledge and skills required to facilitate the implementation of a Performance Management and Appraisal System (PMAS) in the Equal Opportunity Commission. This training was provided to enable managers to manage, monitor and improve performance of the employees and by extension add value to the services offered by the EOC. This four (4) day workshop was facilitated by the staff of the Human Resource Management Services Division of the Office of the Chief Personnel Officer (CPO) in July, 2014. The implementation of the PMAS is expected to be completed in the first quarter of 2015.

The Human Resource Unit, led by the Chief Executive Officer completed the Six (6) Year Contract Employment Staffing Plan Phase 1 (retention of existing positions) and Phase 2 (creation of new positions) in May 2014. This was submitted for approval to the Public Management and Consulting Division (PMCD), Ministry of Public Administration and in August 2014 Phase 1 was approved by PMCD and then by Cabinet in November 2014. The EOC is currently awaiting approval for Phase 2 by PMCD, which will subsequently be submitted for approval by Cabinet.

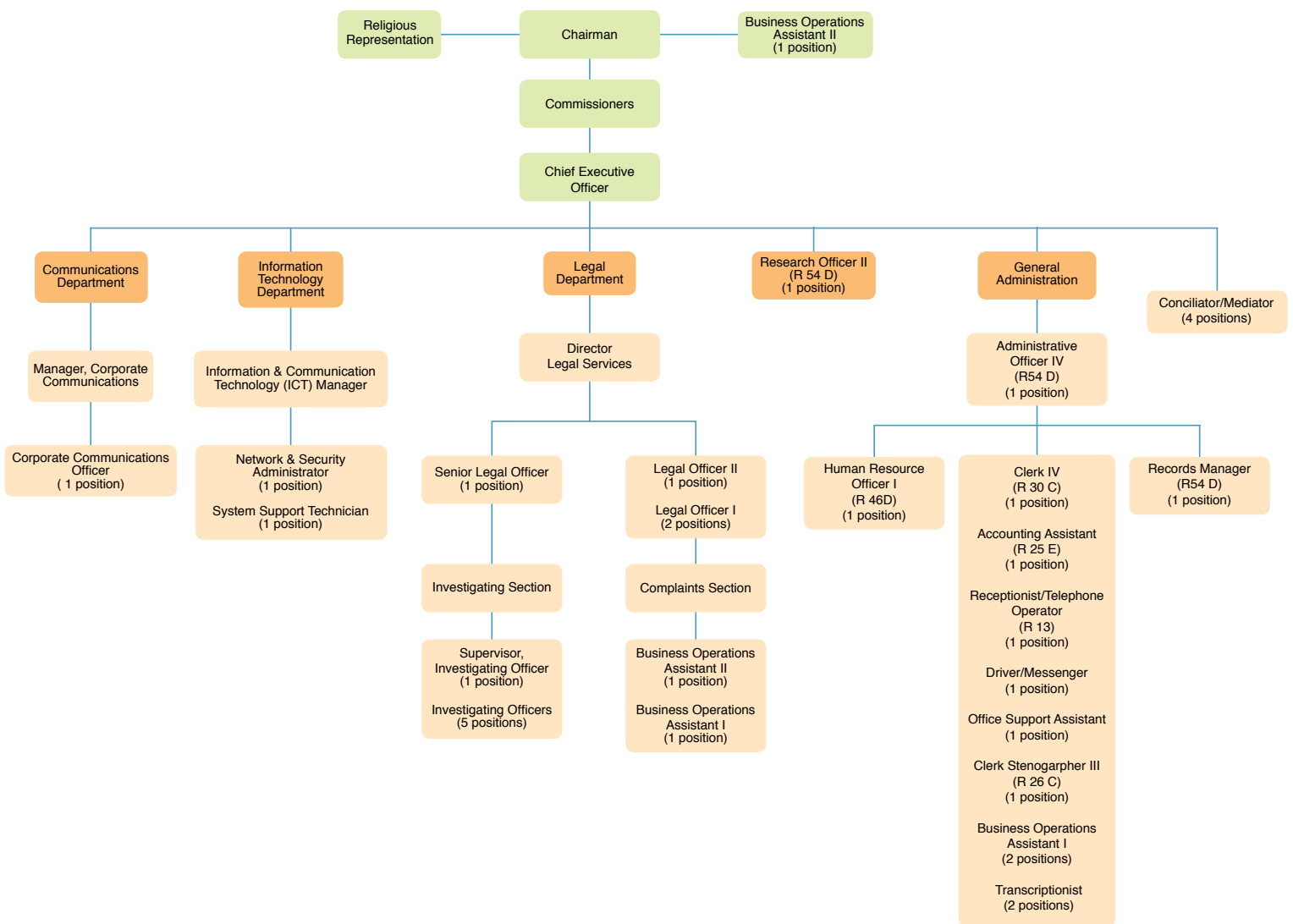
In August 2014 the HR Unit together with the North West Regional Health Authority (NWRHA) conducted a Mini Health Fair at the EOC's office. Staff received blood pressure screening, cholesterol

testing, blood glucose testing, HIV testing and counselling, body mass index (BMI) and nutrition discussions and mental health screening. Also, during the month of August, 2014 the Ministry of Health was invited to conduct a Vaccination Day Exercise where the medical staff provided Chicken Pox, Tetanus, Hepatitis B and Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccines to the staff of the EOC.

In December 2014 the EOC said goodbye to Mr Gandamal Naipaul, Clerk IV, Acting Administrative Officer IV, who gave invaluable service to the government and people of Trinidad and Tobago. Mr Naipaul devoted thirty-five (35) years to the Public Service and proceeded on pre-retirement leave in December, 2014 and will officially retire in April 2015.

As we look forward to 2015 the Human Resource Unit will be engaging in a strategic and coherent approach to the management of the Commission's most valued resource – its employees. We will continue to provide exemplary human resource management services in order to realise the full potential of our employees and to create a team of efficient members who will be a true asset to the Commission and by extension the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

Equal Opportunity Commission - Organisation Chart



Report from the Information Technology (IT) Department



Information Technology (IT) Department

This report provides details of the work of the Information Technology (IT) Department of the Equal Opportunity Commission in 2014 and the direction for 2015.

Overview

The Information Technology (IT) Department provides appropriate Information and Communication technologies that enables the EOC to access information and services they require to do their jobs more effectively and achieve their business goals. During the annual year of 2014, the department maintained its technical staff of a System Support Technician (joined August 2013) and a Network and Security Administrator (joined September 2013) however, the department faced some difficulty with staffing at the management level with the absence of an IT Manager. This had a huge impact on the delivery of IT projects and the overall strategic direction for that year. After a long wait, the issue was resolved and an IT Manager joined the team in February of 2015.

IT Project: Relocation to Chaguanas

Over the last year, one of the biggest projects for the IT Department was the move from its previous office location in Port of Spain, to the new location in Chaguanas. The new building was fitted with networking equipment which was acquired during the course of the year. This equipment included Layer 3 network switches, routers and PBX systems which better supported the demands of the organisation.

The department however, faced some initial budget and resourcing issues during the move including limited technical expertise, inadequate power, lighting and networking fixtures for the building. In light of these challenges, some IT related projects had to be put on hold or moved to the next financial year. The outstanding projects of the IT Department for the upcoming year are as follows:

- Improve the Surveillance Systems of the Building including the parking lot
- Work with our voice / phone providers and reduce the monthly operational and rental cost
- Work with our internet providers to improve the services provided and reduce rental cost
- Expand our network capabilities by adopting the best practices for a secure Wi-Fi infrastructure
- Expand the security of our building access facilities by utilising proximity access cards
- Improve the Email services to employees with better flexibility and availability in a mobile environment
- Update the organisation's software with the latest version to take advantage of the new and improved features

ICT Strategic Direction

One of the objectives of The Equal Opportunity Commission is to improve the levels of service to the public. To help deliver this objective, the IT department must now transition itself to be more focused on service delivery than just a technology focused operation.

"The IT Service delivery model refers to the processes and practices employed by an organisation to ensure consistent deliver of reliable, cost effective and consistently high quality of service to the staff of the EOC."

Traditional IT departments spends most of its time resolving system failures, service outages, etc., however most staff don't really focus on inner workings of services but just the general experience of using these services. To achieve this, the IT

Report from the Information Technology (ICT) Department (continued)

department will consider different cloud solutions to assist with the monitoring and maintenance for some of its services, while they focus on the business operations of the organisation through technology.

Technology is rapidly evolving and the department recognises the general trends of leveraging cloud for delivery of some of its services, thus reducing its overall capital expenditure and becoming more focused on supporting the business.

Special Projects for 2015

The diagram below shows how organisation networks are evolving to be more secure and cost effective

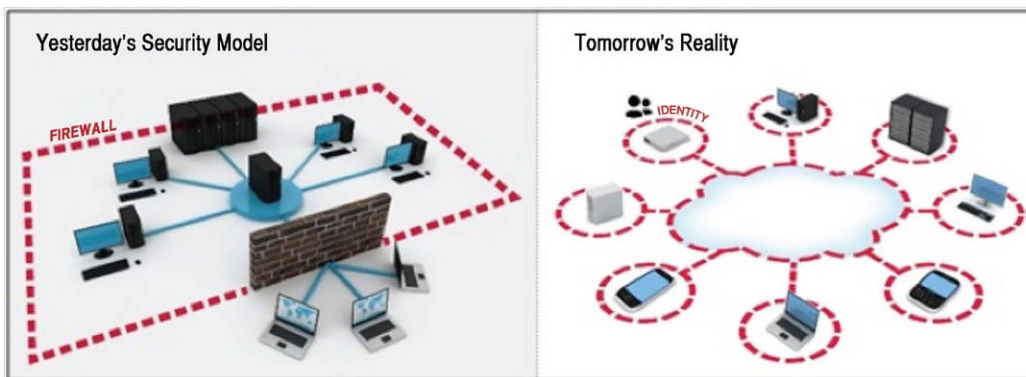


Figure 1

Below lists special projects by the IT Department that is aimed at improving the service of the Commission internally and to the general public.

- Implement a Legal and Case Management System for tracking complaints of the Commission
- Improving the Website making it more interactive with the General Public
- Integrate all solutions on a common collaborative portal for all departments to access securely

With these special projects implemented, The IT Department of the Equal Opportunity Commission will keep to its strategic direction by becoming more focused on the day to day business operations especially as it relates to complaints.

The diagram below shows the architectural network design to implement the special projects listed above.

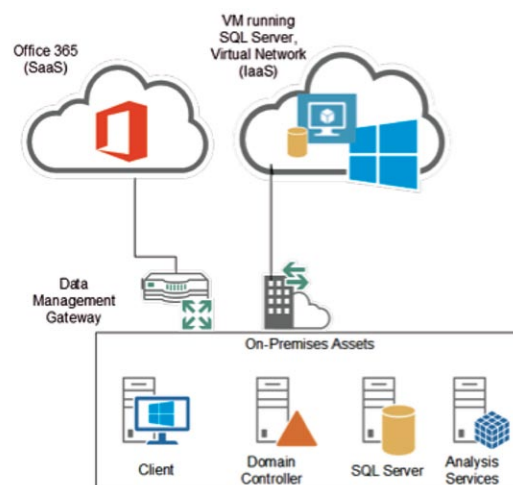


Figure 2

Review of the Equal opportunity Act



Under section 27(1)(c) of the *Equal Opportunity Act Chap 22:03* the Commission is mandated “to keep under review the working of the Act and any relevant law and, when required or otherwise thinks it necessary, to draw up and submit proposals for amending them.”

Following a review in 2010, proposals were initially sent to the Attorney General by letter dated 19 July 2010. An Amendment Bill was drafted and laid in the 1st Session of the 10th Parliament on 1 June 2011 as the *Equal Opportunity Amendment Bill (No 2) 2011*. The Bill lapsed on 17 June 2011 and has not been re-laid. The Commission took the opportunity to reassess the proposals and under cover of letter dated 26 February 2014, the Commission advised the Attorney General that:

- some of the proposed amendments should be pursued
- some of the proposed amendments should no longer be pursued
- some of the proposed amendments should be reformulated and
- other new amendments are now proposed and respectfully, should be included.

A report was attached in which these recommendations were detailed. In summary, the major proposals are:

A. **Amendments proposed in the 2011 Bill that should be pursued**

1. **Include co-habitants in marital status:** The Act provides for protection from discrimination on the

ground of ‘marital status’ and this is defined to mean being one of the following: single, married, married but separated, divorced or widowed. The 2011 Bill proposed an amendment to include half-blood relationships and Cohabitants (as defined in the Co-habitational Relationship Act Chap 45:55) in the definitions of ‘family’ and ‘marital status’ which the Commission felt was still relevant and necessary.

2. **Change the threshold for receiving late complaints:** Section 30 of the Act provides that a complaint of discrimination shall be lodged within 6 months of the alleged act of discrimination, but the Commission may accept a complaint outside of this time ‘in exceptional circumstances’. The 2011 Bill proposed an amendment to change the words ‘in exceptional circumstances’ to ‘if it is reasonable to do so’, and to add a new subsection (4) to empower the Commission to accept complaints that relate to matters that occurred between January 2001 to April 2008. The Commission supports this.
3. **Include a duty to assist:** The 2011 Bill proposed the inclusion of a new section 30B which provided that the Commission has a duty to assist persons who wish to lodge a complaint. The Commission supports this.
4. **Allow the Tribunal to grant interim injunctions:** The 2011 Bill proposed the inclusion of a new section 32A which allowed the Commission to apply to the Equal Opportunity Tribunal (the ‘Tribunal’) for an interim injunction. The Commission supports this.
5. **Allowing for appeals to the Tribunal:** Under the present schemata of the Act, if upon investigating a complaint, the Commission found no evidence of discrimination, it informs the complainant accordingly and closes off the matter. This brings the matter to an end. The 2011 Bill proposed an amendment to allow a complainant to request that their matter be referred

Review of the Equal Opportunity Act
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to the Tribunal if they disagree with the Commission's decision that there is no evidence of discrimination. The Commission supports this.

6. **Allow the Commission to institute contempt proceedings:** Under the existing provisions of the Act, if a matter has been referred to conciliation and an agreement has been reached, the agreement is drawn up, signed and registered with the Equal Opportunity Tribunal. The 2011 Bill proposed an amendment to allow the Commission to initiate contempt proceedings before the Tribunal that where there has been a breach of an agreement. The Commission supports this.

B. Amendments proposed in the 2011 Bill that should no longer be pursued:

1. **Remove the proposed prescribed forms:** The 2011 Bill proposed that the form on which a complaint should be lodged should be provided for in an Appendix to the Act but the Commission did not think it desirable that the forms to be used should be cemented in statute, as this would not allow for flexibility in revising and restructuring the form.
2. **Remove the proposed requirement that the Commission inform a Respondent that there was no case of discrimination:** The 2011 Bill proposed that where the Commission has found no evidence of discrimination to support the complainant's allegations, the Commission should be mandated to write to a respondent and inform them of this. While the Commission felt that this should be part of a good customer-relations process, it was not felt desirable that this be mandated in statute. Firstly this may be useless, as there are instances when, based on the existing information supplied by a complainant, the Commission was able to dispose of a complaint without ever writing to a respondent, and secondly, there may be instances where the Commission may think it appropriate and

necessary to revisit an earlier decision, and it should have the freedom to do so.

3. **Remove the proposed extra steps in sanctioning a party for non-compliance:** Under the present the Act, the Commission is empowered to send a notice to any person to provide information by a certain date and a notice to a party to attend conciliation. If someone fails and/or refuses to comply with either such notice, the Commission can institute a summary prosecution before the Magistrates Court. The 2011 Bill proposed that in the case of non-compliance by a respondent, the Commission would issue a certificate, apply to the Equal Opportunity Tribunal for an ex parte order and then thereafter file a summary complaint before the Magistrates Court. The Commission did not see the need to encumber the process with the extra steps of issuing a certificate and applying to the Tribunal for an order and recommended that this be removed.
4. **Removing the proposal that conciliation is deemed unsuccessful after 28 days:** The 2011 Bill proposed that conciliation should be deemed unsuccessful if a matter is unresolved after twenty-eight days. While the Commission agreed that the process should be done with due expedition, it was not felt that a limitation period should be cemented in statute. Conciliation is a voluntary process where the parties seek to arrive at a mutually acceptable resolution between themselves, and the parties may need more than 28 days to consider proposals, respond, and have meaningful dialogue.

C. Amendments proposed in the 2011 Bill that ought to be reformulated:

1. **HIV/AIDS as well as other illnesses ought to be included as part of disability:** The 2011 Bill proposed that HIV/AIDS ought to be added as a status ground. However, Disability Discrimination Legislation in other countries (in particular, in the **Americans With**

Review of the Equal Opportunity Act (continued)

Disability Act 1990 (as amended in 2008) and **United Kingdom Equality Act 2010**) provide for HIV/AIDS as a disability rather than a separate status ground, and the Commission believes that this approach should be favoured. Further these other legislation provide that certain other diseases ought to be deemed disabilities as well, in particular, cancer and multiple sclerosis, and certain conditions, ought not for reasons of public policy, be given protection, such as paedophilia, kleptomania, compulsive gambling. The Commission favoured this approach.

2. **A more comprehensive definition of disability:** The definition of disability ought to be amended to bring it closer to what is contained in the two aforementioned pieces of legislation, where emphasis is placed on the day-to-day and long-term effects of disability on a person, rather than on their medical condition. Concurrently, the proposed amendments with respect to 'reasonable adjustment/ accommodation' would have to be revisited given that to some extent it already exists via the exception for 'unjustifiable hardship'.

D. New or additional amendments that ought to be included:

1. **Status should not be limited to only one protected characteristic:** "Status" as defined in the existing section 3 suggests that it must be an individual characteristic (for example, a person's race, a person's religion). The Commission recommended that "status" should mean any one or more of the listed characteristics, given that in our society, a person may be discriminated against not because of an individual characteristic, but because of a combination of characteristics that apply to them.
2. **Age ought to be added as a status ground, and hand-in-hand certain exceptions ought to be provided for:** The Commission has previously proposed that age be

added as a "status" and this has been incorporated into the 2011 Bill. However it was recognised that there are instances when it is acceptable for legislation or policy to provide for an entitlement or obligation to be based on a person's age, for example, the minimum age to obtain a driving permit or purchase cigarettes or alcohol. In the absence of a specified minimum or maximum age, decisions would have to be made by some person or entity on a case-by-case basis; this opens the door to subjectivity and arbitrariness even in the best of cases and corruption and abuse in less-altruistic situations. The Commission recommended that using sections 33 to 43 of the Australian Age Discrimination Act No 68 of 2004 as a guide, provision ought to be made for exceptions where decisions or considerations based on age would not be considered discriminatory. Additionally, provision ought to be made exempting employment promotions based on seniority and mandatory retirement ages.

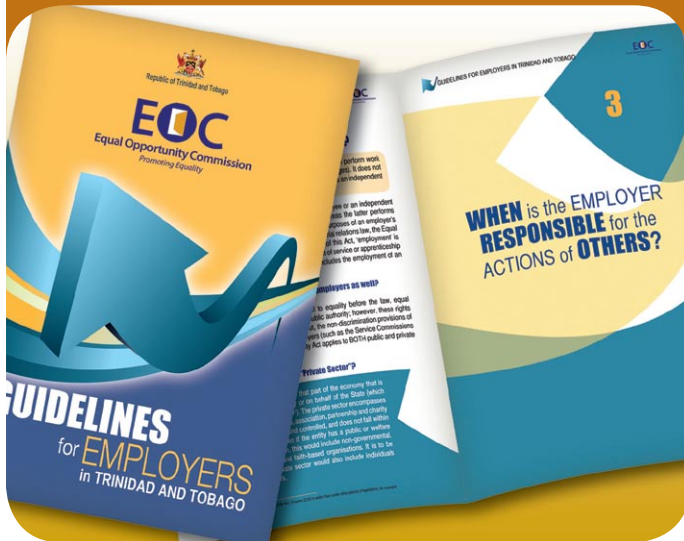
3. **Allowing the Commission to discontinue an investigation where it is frivolous, vexatious or has already been adequately dealt with:** The current section 32 mandates the Commission to investigate all complaints lodged with it. Read in conjunction with section 34, it would seem that a matter can only be discontinued where after an investigation the Commission has found no evidence of discrimination. The Commission recommended that it should be empowered to discontinue an investigation where it is of the opinion that the complaint is:
 - (i) trivial, frivolous, vexatious or not made in good faith, misconceived or lacking in substance
 - (ii) involves a subject matter that has been adequately dealt with by another court, tribunal, public body, entity or forum
 - (iii) involves a subject matter that would be more appropriate for another Court, tribunal, public body, entity or forum

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4. **Power to request documents:** The current section 33 empowers the Commission to request information via notice in writing. Given that information may be contained in documents, the Commission has regularly requested documents and has not had a difficulty receiving any. However the Commission recommended that for the sake of clarity, it should also be expressly empowered to request documents as well.
 5. **Expanding the range of persons who may be convicted:** The current section 36 provides that persons who have failed and/or refused to provide information to the Commission can be summarily convicted, but only either an individual or a body corporate could be sentenced by way of fine. There are, however, many entities who are regularly asked to provide information, who are neither individuals nor bodies corporate, for example Ministries, Government Departments, Service Commissions, faith-based organisations, community-based organisations, non-governmental organisations. The Commission has expressed concern that if the Act is not modified to capture all of these persons then the Act itself becomes discriminatory in that while it recognises where the offence can be committed by anyone, only some are subjected to sanction while others can walk away with impunity. The Commission recommended that all entities be brought under the sanction.
 6. **'Referring' a matter to the Tribunal, rather than 'initiating proceedings':** The current section 39(2) provides that where a complaint before the Commission is unresolved (and the Commission has taken certain steps), the Commission shall 'initiate proceedings' before the Equal Opportunity Tribunal on behalf and with the consent of the complainant. The Commission would prefer that the section be amended to task the Commission with 'referring' the matter rather than 'initiating proceedings' as the latter has led to a number of practical difficulties.
 7. **Empowering the Commission to give assistance to persons before the Tribunal:** While the Commission does not want to bear the obligation to institute proceedings in all matters, it would like to give effect to the intent of the framers of the Act and provide assistance to some complainants in taking their matter before the Tribunal. It is to be noted that Commissions in other jurisdictions do this (e.g. Hong Kong). The Commission would like to have this power expressly stated in the Act. The mechanics as to how it should be exercised should be left to the Commission to formulate and modify over time.
 8. **Extending the privilege of things said in conciliation to proceedings before other Courts:** The current section 40 provides that evidence of anything said or done in the course of conciliation proceedings shall not be admissible in proceedings before the Tribunal. The Commission has recommended that this privilege extend to any other Court and not just limited to the Tribunal as there are unresolved complaints that the complainant would prefer to take to another Court for example the Industrial Court (through a Trade Union) or the High Court rather than to the Tribunal, as the complainant may feel that the other Courts may offer a more appropriate remedy.
- Subsequent to this proposals being sent, the Commission, by letter dated 15th October 2014, the Commission sought to include the following additional proposal:
9. **Sexual Orientation** ought to be added as a Status ground for protection.

In December 2014, the Attorney General referred the Commission's proposals of February 2014 to the Law Reform Commission. That Commission has sent the proposals out to select stakeholders for consultation and feedback. The Equal Opportunity Commission looks forward to a prompt resolution of that process and to the drafting and tabling of the necessary amendment Bill before Parliament.

Preparation and Publication of Guidelines



Under section 27(1) (f) of the Equal Opportunity Act Chapter 22:03 [Act No 69 of 2000 as amended], the Commission is mandated “to prepare and publish appropriate guidelines for the avoidance of discrimination.”

The Guidelines for Employers booklet was prepared by the Legal and Corporate Communications Departments in 2013 and was published 2014.

Under the guidance of the Commissioners and the Chief Executive Officer, the Legal Department and Corporate Communications Departments will continue to work together to create and publish appropriate publications for dissemination to all stakeholders in 2015.

Inter-Departmental *Activities*



Administrative Professionals Week luncheon at Hilton Trinidad and Conference Centre.



CRICKET!!!
EOC vs. EOT
at Lange Park
Cricket Grounds.



Performance Appraisal and Management Training (PMAS) facilitated by the Office of the Chief Personnel Officer (CPO).

Inter-Departmental *Activities*



Mini Health Fair



*EOC's Cocktail
reception at
Hilton Trinidad
and Conference
Centre.*



EOC's Christmas Parang Lime at Eoc's Manic St. office.



Profiles of the Commissioners



Mrs. Lynette Seebaran-Suite
Chairman,
Equal Opportunity Commission

Chairman – Mrs. Lynette Seebaran-Suite has over 35 years experience as a litigator. She is currently the principal of her own firm, Lynette Seebaran and Company. Mrs. Seebaran-Suite has been an advocate for the rights of women and girls, and an avid supporter of the rule of law, due process and social justice. She was highly influential in the national discourse which led to the passage of the Sexual Offences Act in 1986 and spearheaded the national debate leading to the passage of the Domestic Violence Act in 1986, and its amendment in 1991. She also headed the public debate which highlighted the mischief of sexual harassment in the workplace and which has led to the adoption in many workplaces of codes of behaviour.

Over the years Mrs. Seebaran-Suite has been a member of several statutory bodies, such as the Law Reform Commission, the National Commission on the Status of Women, YTEPP and is a past Chairman of the Port Authority. For many years she was Legal Advisor to the Cooperative Credit Union League of Trinidad and Tobago and acted as a Director of the League's Stabilisation Fund. She was a board member of the Trinidad Publishing Company Ltd (publisher of the Guardian Newspaper) for more than a decade and during that period served as its legal advisor.

She has also been a member of various ethics committees of CAREC. She heads ASPIRE, which partners with the Family Planning Association in promoting the sexual and reproductive health and rights of women, girls and men in Trinidad and Tobago and regionally. She is the author of many reports and papers on women and children issues and has attended and presented at numerous international and regional conferences.

Mrs. Seebaran-Suite acted as Secretary of the Bar Association for several terms in the 1980's and is currently engaged in establishing a Family Law Association. She currently sits on the Council of the Law Association and was its nominee on the Medical Council of Trinidad and Tobago over the period 2010 to 2013.

At the 50th Independence Awards in 2012, Mrs. Seebaran-Suite was awarded the Medal for the Development of Women Gold, for her contributions in the area of law. She is married to Engineer Professor Emeritus Winston Suite and is the mother of a daughter, Dara-Chameli who recently graduated in the UK as a medical doctor.



Dr. Beverly Ann-Marie Beckles
Vice-Chairman,
Equal Opportunity Commission

Vice-Chairman - Beverly Ann-Marie Beckles, PhD.

holds a Doctoral Degree in Organisation and Management with Honours from Capella University, Minneapolis, USA and a Masters in Rehabilitation Administration from Mc Laren School of Business, University of San Francisco, USA.

Dr. Beckles is the Chief Executive Officer of the National Centre for Persons with Disabilities (NCPD). She has thirty (30) years experience in the field of disability. As a defender of inclusion of persons with disabilities in all walks of life, her work has been key to the development of National Policy for Persons with Disabilities in seven Caribbean Countries. Her work involves close contact with governments, international agencies and civil societies in the promotion of equal opportunity for persons with disabilities. Dr. Beckles is highly respected in her field as demonstrated by her involvement in a multiplicity of public and private scenarios.

She is a past Director of the Global Applied Disability Research & Information Network on Employment and Training (GLADNET), an international organisation based at Cornell University, USA, past chair and member of the National Coordinating Committee on Disability. Dr. Beckles has received several acknowledgements for her work in the field of disability nationally, regionally and internationally. In 1993, she received a National Award in the recognition of community service for persons with disabilities and an international award from Goodwill Industries Inc. in recognition of extensive contribution to persons with disabilities in the Caribbean. She has also received awards from other internationally recognised institutions and has the distinction of being the 1st recipient of the Inter-American Development Bank's Award for Social Entrepreneurship (1999).



Dr. Indira Rampersad
Commissioner,
Equal Opportunity Commission

Commissioner - Indira Rampersad, PhD. holds a Bachelor of Arts in Language in Literature; a Diploma in International Relations; a Certificate in Translation from Spanish to English; a Master of Philosophy in Latin American Literature; a Master of Philosophy in International Relations and a Ph.D in Political Science.

She has been awarded two Fulbright scholarships for study in the United States, one at the Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, Illinois, to explore the American Political System, the other to undertake her Ph.D in Political Science at the University of Florida, Gainesville, where she majored in International Relations and minored in Public Policy. Her doctoral dissertation focused on American foreign policy to Cuba on which she has published and presented at many academic and non-academic fora. Her research now extends to Latin American and Caribbean Politics and International Relations, American foreign policy, alternative energy, food security and crime with specific emphasis on the Caribbean.

Dr. Rampersad speaks Spanish fluently and has undertaken extensive research throughout the United States including Miami, Ft. Lauderdale, New York and Washington D.C. Her research has also taken her to Latin America namely Venezuela, the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, Panama, Columbia, Brazil and Cuba. She has also been an election observer for the Organisation of American States in Grenada and El Salvador.

She has also been writing a regular column for the Trinidad Sunday Guardian and the New York based Guyana Journal. In addition, she is a regular media commentator on national, regional and international issues.

Dr. Rampersad is now based at the Department of Behavioural Sciences at the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine, Trinidad, where she is a Lecturer in International Relations.



Mr. James Chin Chuck
Commissioner,
Equal Opportunity Commission

Commissioner - Mr. James Chin Chuck is a former employee of the Telecommunication Service of Trinidad and Tobago (TSTT) where he led the charge of innovating new products. This portfolio ranged from managing existing products to generating products and services from inception to commercialisation.

His experience spans the private sector of banking, insurance, credit union and one of the largest conglomerates in food and financial services. He has been able to contribute to various companies in

the areas of strategic direction, marketing strategies, competitive intelligence of emerging technologies and driving customer satisfaction programmes.

Mr. Chin Chuck holds a BSc in Management Specialisation from the University of the West Indies St Augustine with a focus in Marketing, Finance and Management Information Systems. He is currently pursuing a MBA from the Australian Institute of Business.



Mr. Eric Colin Cowie
Commissioner,
Equal Opportunity Commission

Commissioner - Mr. Eric Colin Cowie is a retired career banker having moved through the ranks at RBC Royal Bank. During this time he amassed extensive experience in the banking industry and developed skills and competencies in general management, change management leadership, coaching and mentoring, communication and people management.

Mr. Cowie is an alumnus of Presentation College, San Fernando and completed several modules in the bank's Executive Development Programme as well as other specialised training programmes conducted by the UWI School of Business and Applied Studies Limited (trading as ROYTEC) on behalf of the Wilfred Laurier University, Canada. Mr Cowie also pursued

studies in communications, economics, statistics, human resource management, sales, leadership, organisational behaviour, credit training, financial accounting and effective negotiation skills.

During his tenure Mr. Cowie would have been the recipient of commendations for excellence in business performance and teamwork and has served as mentor and coach to several of the current RBC Royal Bank branch managers. He was also instrumental in getting the bank involved in cultural and sponsorship activities via participation in the Tobago Heritage Festival as well as its now decade long involvement with the island's leading steel orchestra RBC Redemption Soundsetters.



Equal Opportunity Commission

Promoting Equality

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