

How to make a complaint

You can make your complaint by:

- ▶ letter, fax or e-mail
- ▶ using an online complaint form available on our website
- ▶ phoning the Office for assistance from staff.

It would be helpful if you could provide:

- ▶ a copy of your letter of request or details of your oral request
- ▶ a copy of the agency's reply to your request.

If you have not received a reply to your request, provide details of when and where you made it. If you need assistance, telephone the nearest Office of the Ombudsmen or use our free-phone number.

What happens when you make your complaint?

It will be acknowledged promptly and you will be kept informed throughout the investigation.

An Ombudsman will seek the agency's response to your complaint. If information has been withheld, an Ombudsman will view it.

An Ombudsman will form an opinion on whether your request has been dealt with correctly. If it is considered that your complaint cannot be upheld, you will have an opportunity to respond to that view before a final decision is made. Where appropriate, an Ombudsman may make a recommendation to the agency.

Telephone enquiries may be made to deal with your complaint quickly.

Contacting the Ombudsmen

Complaints free phone: 0800 802 602

Email: complaint@ombudsmen.govt.nz

Website: www.ombudsmen.govt.nz

Office enquiries: 8.30am to 5.00 pm Monday to Friday

AUCKLAND

Level 10, 55-65 Shortland Street

PO Box 1960

AUCKLAND

Phone: (09) 379 6102

Fax: (09) 377 6537

WELLINGTON

Level 14, 70 The Terrace

PO Box 10152

WELLINGTON

Phone: (04) 473 9533

Fax: (04) 471 2254

CHRISTCHURCH

Level 6, 764 Colombo Street

PO Box 13482

CHRISTCHURCH

Phone: (03) 366 8556

Fax: (03) 365 7935

This pamphlet is available in Maori, Samoan and Mandarin Chinese.

Other Ombudsmen pamphlets cover making complaints about central and local government agencies, prisons and tertiary education institutions and the Protected Disclosures Act.

Making requests for

Official Information

OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMEN

Nga Kaitiaki Mana Tangata

Are you trying to get information from:

- ▶ a Minister of the Crown?
- ▶ a government department or organisation?
- ▶ a city, district or regional council?
- ▶ a health board, school or tertiary institution?

Contact the Ombudsmen who may be able to assist you.

FREE

IMPARTIAL

INDEPENDENT

Requesting Official Information

Under the Official Information Act or the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act, you can request official information.

What is 'official information'?

Official information means any information held by:

- ▶ Ministers of the Crown
- ▶ central government departments and organisations and state-owned enterprises
- ▶ the Police
- ▶ city, district or regional councils
- ▶ school boards of trustees, universities or polytechnics
- ▶ public health authorities, such as district health boards
- ▶ any other agency subject to the Official Information Act or the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act.

If you request personal information about yourself, this is covered by the Privacy Act. Enquiries about such requests should be made to the Privacy Commissioner.

How do you make a request for official information?

Put your request to the agency which you think holds the information that you want. It is best to do this in writing.

Be clear about the information that you want.

If you are unsure whether an agency holds the information, you can telephone the agency to check. Agencies are required to give you reasonable help in making your request. It is best to keep a copy of your request or a note of the date when you made it.

How long will it take?

The agency must reply to your request promptly, within a maximum of 20 working days.

This time limit can be extended, but the agency must tell you why.

You can ask for your request to be treated as urgent, but you must give reasons.

Can I be asked to pay for information?

In many instances, information can be supplied without charge. Where there is charge, it is required to be reasonable.

Can information be withheld?

Yes, there are a number of grounds for withholding information. If an agency decides to withhold any official information that you have requested, the agency must give you reasons.

How can an Ombudsman help?

If you are unhappy with the response to your request or you have not received a response, you can complain to an Ombudsman. An Ombudsman can investigate:

- ▶ the withholding of information
- ▶ delays or extensions to the time limits for responding to requests
- ▶ charges for supplying information.

Ombudsmen are independent and will deal with your complaint in an impartial manner. Ombudsmen do not act as your agent or adviser in obtaining information.

Telephone Assistance

You may wish to discuss your complaint with one of our staff first (see the contact details on the back of this pamphlet).

An Ombudsman's investigation is free and is conducted in private.