

Have you been treated unfairly by:

- a government agency?
- a city, district or regional council?
- a district health board?
- a tertiary education institution?
- a school board of trustees?

The Ombudsman may be able to help you.

## Contacting the Ombudsman

Free phone: 0800 802 602  
[www.ombudsman.parliament.nz](http://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz)

Email:  
[info@ombudsman.parliament.nz](mailto:info@ombudsman.parliament.nz)



Post:  
PO Box 10152, Wellington 6143

Fax:  
(04) 471 2254

Office enquiries:  
8:30am to 5:00pm Monday to Friday

**Wellington**  
Level 7, 70 The Terrace, Wellington 6011

**Auckland**  
Level 10, 55-65 Shortland Street, Auckland 1010

**Christchurch**  
Level 2, 138 Victoria St, Christchurch 8013

### Other Ombudsman leaflets include:

Making or complaining about requests for official information, "Whistle-blowing": a guide to the Protected Disclosures Act, Making complaints about prisons and Community Corrections, Monitoring places of detention, Fair treatment for people with disabilities, and The Ombudsman: who we are.

**Ombudsman**

Fairness for all

## Making complaints about government agencies



Office of the Ombudsman  
Tari o te Kaitiaki Mana Tangata

# What can the Ombudsman do for you?

**The Ombudsman investigates complaints about the acts and decisions of central and local government agencies, with wide powers to call them to account for their actions.**

The Ombudsman is an independent investigator who'll give your complaint careful and fair consideration.

We consider whether the agency's acts or decisions were unreasonable, unfair or wrong. If we think they were, we'll say so, and may suggest a solution.

The Ombudsman can investigate complaints against:

- Government agencies, including those responsible for benefit payments, housing, health, immigration, passports, accident compensation, education, taxation and child support.
- Local government agencies, including those responsible for roads, drainage, nuisance and animal control, planning and the granting and enforcing of building or resource consents.

The Ombudsman can't investigate complaints about private individuals or companies, private training establishments, lawyers, MPs, decisions made by a full council or a court or tribunal.

We can't investigate complaints about the Police, or Government Ministers, unless it relates to a request for official information.

The Ombudsman usually can't investigate if you have a right to appeal a decision to a court or tribunal.

Nor can we provide legal advice, award compensation or act as your spokesperson or agent.

## The complaints process

### What should you do first?

Before coming to the Ombudsman it's always a good idea to try to resolve the issue with the government agency itself. Many of them have a complaints process. If they don't, write to the head of the agency.

The Ombudsman may decide not to investigate unless you've tried to do this first.

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### How to make your complaint

You can make a complaint to the Ombudsman by letter, fax, email or using the online form on our website. Contact details and links are overleaf. Phone our office if you need assistance.

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### Tips on making your complaint

Don't delay. It may be hard for us to investigate a complaint that happened more than 12 months ago.

Describe the decision or act that you want to complain about, and say why you think it was unfair.

Be clear and concise. Stick to the main facts that are at the heart of your complaint, without too much detail unless really necessary.

Provide letters and documents that show you've already tried to sort out the issue with the agency.

Tell us what outcome you want.

## What happens when you make your complaint?

**We'll let you know we've received it and we'll keep you informed during the complaint handling process.**

When we receive your complaint, the Ombudsman will first decide whether or not it can be investigated. If not, we'll say why and may direct you to other options or agencies.

By making informal enquiries with the agency, we can resolve many complaints. If we can proceed in this way, a formal investigation won't usually be conducted.

If your complaint is investigated, the Ombudsman will seek all relevant information needed to consider the matter.

When the investigation ends, the Ombudsman will form an opinion on whether the agency acted unreasonably or unfairly. You'll have an opportunity to comment if the Ombudsman doesn't think the agency acted unreasonably or unfairly.

Where appropriate, the Ombudsman may recommend a solution.