



Making complaints about prisons and Community Corrections

Easy Read



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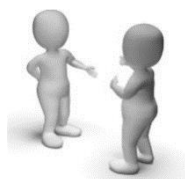
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Before you start



This is a long document.



While it is written in Easy Read it can be hard for some people to read a document this long.



Some things you can do to make it easier are:

- read it a few pages at a time
- have someone to assist you to understand it.

Prisons in New Zealand



Prisons are where people live when they have:

- done something wrong
- broken the law.



The **Department of Corrections** (**Corrections**) deals with prisons in New Zealand.



It is the job of Corrections to keep prisoners safe in prisons.



Corrections also works with prisoners so that when prisoners leave prison they can have a better life.



Prisoners work with **Community Corrections** when they leave prison.



Community Corrections works with people who have left prison to support them to have a good life.

How can the Ombudsman help you?



The Ombudsman may be able to help you if you think you have been treated badly by Corrections.



Corrections is a **government agency**.



A government agency reports to the Government.



The Ombudsman looks into complaints about things **government agencies** have done.



We can look at your complaint about Corrections if:



- you have made a complaint to Corrections using its complaints process and you are not happy with what it has said about your complaint



- you have asked for **official information** from Corrections and you are not happy with its reply

or



- you have not received a reply from Corrections after 20 **working days**.



Official information is information that a government agency has that is **not** about yourself.



You can ask government agencies to show you this information.



A **working day** is any day except:

- weekends
- statutory holidays like Waitangi Day and ANZAC Day
- the days between 25 December and 15 January.



You can complain to the Ombudsman if you are not happy with what Corrections:



- says about your complaint

or



- what it did when you asked for official information.



The Ombudsman is **independent** of the Government.



This means the Government does not tell us how to do our work.

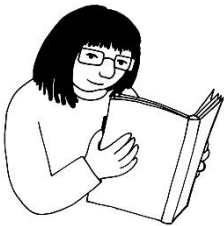
Before you talk to us about how Corrections handled your complaint



You need to try to sort out your problem with Corrections first before you make a complaint to the Ombudsman.



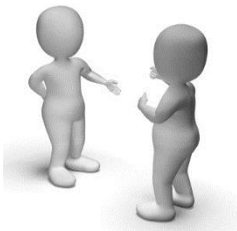
Corrections has a **complaints process**.



This process tells you the right way to make a complaint about Corrections or Community Corrections.



The thing you need to do first is to fill out a complaint form.



You can ask a Corrections Officer or Community Corrections office for the right form.



If you are unhappy with the reply you get you can call Corrections' **Complaints Response Desk** and ask them to look into your complaint.



Call: 0800 326 778



You can contact the **Corrections Inspectors** and ask them to look into your complaint if you are still unhappy after you have called the Complaints Response Desk.



Call: 0800 225 697



The Ombudsman may not look into your complaint if you do not try to sort out the problem first in these ways.

Before you talk to us about how Corrections handled your request for official information



You can complain to the Ombudsman if you are not happy with **how Corrections has handled your request for official information.**



A **request** means to ask for information that Corrections holds.

Send us:



- a copy of your request if you have a copy
- Corrections' reply to you.

How to make a complaint to the Ombudsman



You can complain to the Ombudsman if you **cannot** sort out your problem with Corrections.

You can do this by:



- calling our office to talk about your problem



- writing us a letter to tell us about your problem.



You can find out what to do and how to contact us on **page 28**.



You can tell the Ombudsman if you are worried about telling us about your complaint.



Tell us why you do not want to talk about your problem on the phone or write it down in a letter.



We can set up a meeting at the prison if we need you to tell us about the information you are worried about giving us.

Tips for making your complaint



You can complain to us if you have:

- made a complaint to Corrections and you are not happy with what it has said
- asked Corrections for official information and you are not happy with what it has said.



Make your complaint as soon as you can.



It makes it hard for us to look at your complaint if it is about something that happened more than 1 year ago.



Tell us:

- what happened to make you unhappy
- why you are unhappy about what happened.



Make sure the information about your complaint is easy for us to read.



We need you to give us the reply:

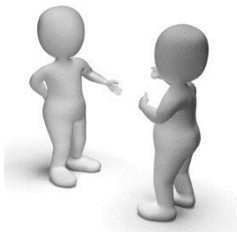


- you got from Corrections when you complained to it using the complaints process

or



- you got from Corrections when you asked for official information.



We need you to give us the information you have that you think will help us to look into your complaint.



Do not give us extra information that **is not about** your complaint.

What happens when you make your complaint to us?



The Ombudsman will decide if we **can**
or **cannot** look into your complaint.



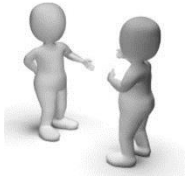
If we cannot look into your complaint we:



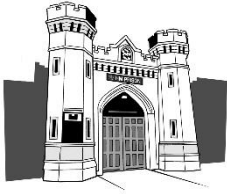
- will tell you why



- can tell you about other agencies that
might be able to help you.



We may contact:



- Corrections to see if we can sort out your problem



- you to talk about your problem.

What happens if we decide we can look at your complaint?



We will ask Corrections for information if we decide we **can** look into your complaint.



The Ombudsman will decide if Corrections has done things in the right way or not when we have looked into your complaint or request.



If the Ombudsman decides Corrections has not done things in the right way we can sometimes tell them about ways to fix the problem.

Complaints the Ombudsman cannot look into



There are some complaints that the Ombudsman **cannot** look into.

We **cannot** look into complaints about:



1. Decisions made by the Courts.

2. Decisions made by the **Parole Board**.



Parole is when a prisoner can leave prison early because of good behaviour.

The Parole Board is a group of people who can decide if a prisoner can have parole.

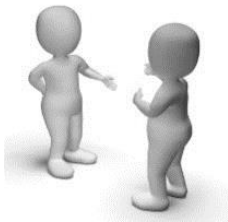
3. Decisions made by **Hearing Adjudicators**.



A Hearing Adjudicator is a Corrections' staff member who deals with **misconduct** charges.

Misconduct means very bad behaviour.

You can ask to see a Visiting Justice if you are not happy with what they say.

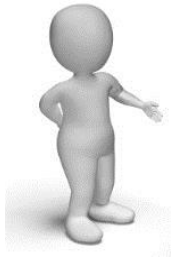


4. Decisions made by **Visiting Justices**.



A Justice is another name for a judge.

A Visiting Justice is a Judge who is working at a court they do not normally work at.

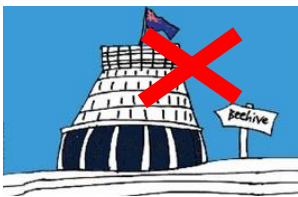


5. People who are not Corrections staff.



Sometimes we can look into complaints about staff of other government agencies that you may be dealing with.

For example – agencies like the Ministry of Social Development or the Ministry of Justice.



6. Companies and businesses that do not report to the Government.



7. Lawyers in private practice.



8. The Police.

You can usually only complain to the Ombudsman about the Police if you have asked for official information and:

- they have said no

or

- they don't reply within 20 working days.

Contact the **Independent Police Conduct Authority (IPCA)** if you want to complain about how the Police have behaved.

Call: 0800 503 728



The Ombudsman also **cannot** give you any information that the prison has about you.



You can ask Corrections for information about yourself.



This is called **personal information**.

Personal information is information that an agency has that is about you.

You can ask agencies to show you this information.



You can complain to the **Privacy Commissioner** if Corrections does not give you the personal information you have asked for.



The Privacy Commissioner looks into complaints when they are about an agency saying **no** to giving out personal information.



You can **call** the Privacy Commissioner on: 0800 803 909.

Other things the Ombudsman cannot do



The Ombudsman **cannot**:



- give you legal advice



- give you money to make up for something bad that has happened



Sometimes an agency might pay you some money to make up for something bad that has happened.

This is called an **ex gratia** payment.



- act as your spokesperson

This means we **cannot** speak for you.

Contact us



You can contact us in the following ways:

Free Phone:



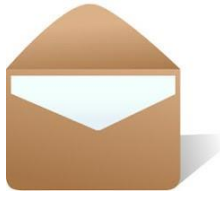
Call from **outside** the prison:
0800 662 837

or

0800 802 602



Call from **inside** the prison:
0800 662 837



Write a letter and post it to:

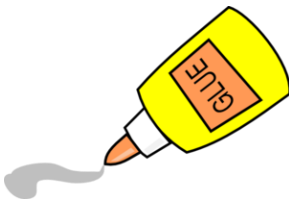
Office of the Ombudsman

P.O. Box 10152

Wellington 6143



When you send your letter make sure that the envelope is **sealed**.



This means that the envelope is closed shut with tape or glue.



Letters to the Ombudsman sent from prison **are not** opened by prison staff.



Send an email:

info@ombudsman.parliament.nz



Website:

www.ombudsman.parliament.nz



Fax:

04 471 22 54



Our offices are open:

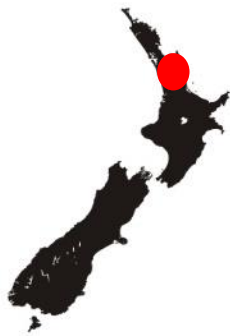
8:30am to 5pm Monday to Friday.



Call to make a time if you need to come and see us.



We have offices in Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch:



Auckland

Level 10, 55–65 Shortland Street,
Auckland 1010



Wellington

Level 7, 70 The Terrace,
Wellington 6011



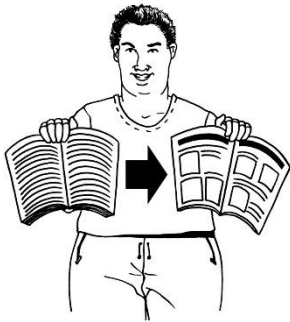
Christchurch

Level 2, 138 Victoria Street,
Christchurch 8013

More information about the Ombudsman



We have made other booklets that tell you about our work.



They are all in Easy Read.

The other booklets we have are about:



The Ombudsman: who we are

Making complaints about government agencies

Making or complaining about requests for official information



‘Whistle-blowing’: a guide to the Protected Disclosures Act



Monitoring places of detention



Fair treatment for people with disabilities.



This information has been translated into Easy Read by
People First New Zealand Inc.– Ngā Tāngata Tuatahi

