

You can request official information from:

- a Minister of the Crown
- a government agency
- a state-owned enterprise
- a crown entity
- a city, district or regional council
- a district health board
- a tertiary education institution
- a school board of trustees

If you're unhappy with the response to your request you can make a complaint to the Ombudsman.

## 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 complaints about government agencies, "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 or complaining about requests for official information



Office of the Ombudsman  
Tari o te Kaitiaki Mana Tangata

# 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 agencies and state-owned enterprises
- the Police
- city, district or regional councils
- school boards of trustees and tertiary education institutions
- public health authorities, such as district health boards
- any other state sector 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 the Privacy Act should be made to the Privacy Commissioner on 0800 803 909.

## How do you make a request for official information?

Put your request to the agency which you think holds the information you want. Be clear about the information you want.

If you're not sure whether an agency holds the information, it's best to call them. They're required to give you reasonable help in making your request. It helps to keep copies of your request or notes of the date when you made it.

## How long will it take?

The agency must reply to your request within a maximum of 20 working days. This time limit may 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.

Use our online calculator to find out when a response to your request should be sent.

## Can you be asked to pay for information?

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

## Can information be withheld?

There are a number of reasons why information can be withheld. If an agency decides to withhold any official information you've requested, they must tell you the reasons.

## How can the Ombudsman help?

If you're unhappy with the response to your request, or if you haven't received one, you can make a complaint to the Ombudsman. We can investigate the withholding of information, delays or extensions to time limits for answering requests, and charges for supplying information.

The Ombudsman is independent and impartial when dealing with your complaint.

If you've got any questions phone our office on 0800 802 602.

# How to make your complaint

**You can make your complaint by letter, fax, email, or via the online complaint form on our website.**

Please provide a copy of your letter of request, or details of your spoken request, as well as a copy of the agency's reply to that request if you have it.

If you haven't received a reply to your request, give details of where and when you made it. If you need help, call us on 0800 802 602.

## 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.

Informal enquiries may be made to deal with your complaint as quickly as possible. We may be able to resolve your complaint without an investigation.

If your complaint is investigated the Ombudsman will seek an explanation from the agency. If any information has been withheld, the Ombudsman will view it.

The Ombudsman will form an opinion on whether your request has been handled correctly. If the opinion is that the request has been handled correctly, you'll have an opportunity to answer that before any final decision is made. Where appropriate, the Ombudsman may make a recommendation to the agency.