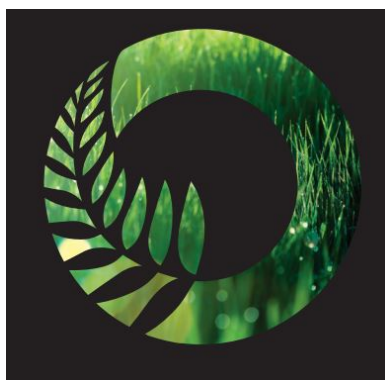


Ombudsman

Fairness for all



Making complaints about government agencies

Easy Read



What is in this book?



Before you start

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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.

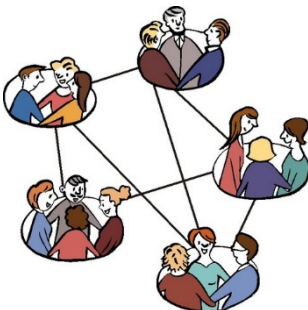
Have you been treated badly by a government agency?



The Ombudsman deals with people who think they have been treated badly by a **government agency**.



A **government agency** is an organisation that reports to the Government.



Government agencies and **local government agencies** are government agencies.

Government agencies deal with:



- benefit payments



- housing



- health



- immigration

- passports



- ACC



- education

- tax



- child support.

Local government agencies look after:



- roads



- animal control



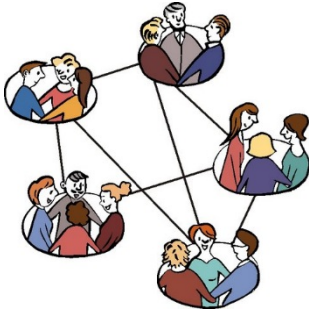
- planning how communities are built and what is needed in communities



- building or resource consents



Building or resource consents are documents that will say if things like houses can be built or changed.



There are over 4 thousand **government agencies** in New Zealand.

Here are some examples of government agencies:

- State Services – ministries and government departments

The Department of Corrections is an example of a state service.

- Local government – places like your council and regional council.

Auckland Council is an example of a council.



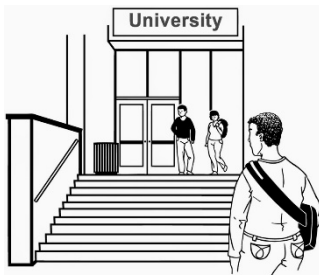


- District Health Boards (DHB)
like the Auckland DHB



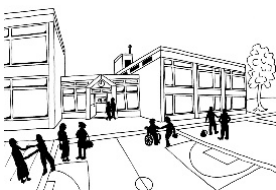
- State-owned enterprises

Businesses owned by the Government, like ACC are called **State-owned enterprises.**



- Places of study for adults, like:

- universities
- wānanga
- polytechnics
- institutes of technology



- Boards of Trustees for schools

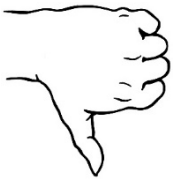


- Crown entities

The Human Rights Commission is an example of a **Crown entity**.

The Ombudsman:

- looks into complaints about government agencies
- deals with problems fairly.



If you think you have been treated badly by a government agency we might be able to help you.

What we can do for you



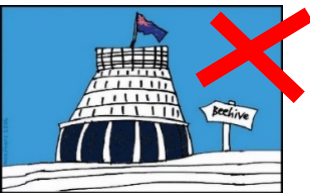
The Ombudsman looks into complaints about government agencies.



Talk to us if you want to make a complaint about a government agency.



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



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



The Ombudsman will have a look at your complaint and think about what to do about it.



If we think the government agency might have done something wrong we can look into your complaint.



We can ask the agency:

- what happened?
- why did it happen?
- what can they do to make it right?



If we think the government agency has done something wrong we will tell them.



If they have not done something wrong we will tell you.



Sometimes the Ombudsman can give information to the organisation to help fix the problem.



Sometimes we **can** look into complaints about the **Police** or **Government Ministers**.



We can only do this when the complaint is about an **official information request**



An official information request is when you ask for information from a government agency.



You **can** complain to the Ombudsman if the agency:



- takes too long to give you the information you want.



- does not give you the information you have asked for.



- does not tell you why it will not give you the information.



For more information about complaints to do with getting official information read our booklet called: **Making or complaining about requests for Official Information.**

What we cannot do

The Ombudsman cannot look into complaints about:



- people who do not work in the government



- training places that are not owned by the Government



- lawyers



- Members of Parliament (MPs)



- decisions made by a full council



- decisions made by a court



- decisions made by a **tribunal**.

A tribunal is like a court.

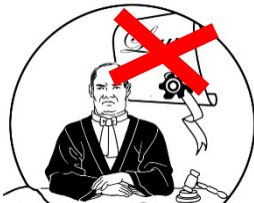


- Police – when it is not about an Official Information Act request



- Government Ministers – when it is not about an Official Information Act request.

The Ombudsman also **cannot**:



- give you legal advice.



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



- act as your spokesperson –
this means we **cannot** talk for you.

Before you talk to us



Try to sort out your problem with the agency you are having a problem with.



They should have a **complaints process**.



A complaints process tells you the right way to make a complaint with that agency.



Find out what the complaints process is for the organisation you want to complain about.



Follow the steps in the complaints process to try to sort out your complaint with the government agency.



What do you do if the organisation does not have a complaints process?



Write a letter or email to the head of the organisation.



Tell them why you are unhappy.



Come and talk to the Office of the Ombudsman if you have tried to sort out the problem with the agency and are still unhappy.



If you have not tried to sort out your problem with the government agency first we may say go back to the agency and try to sort out your problem.

How to make a complaint to the Ombudsman



If you **cannot** sort out your problem with the agency you are having a problem with you can make a complaint to the Ombudsman.

You can do this by:



- writing a letter to us



- sending us an email



- sending us a fax



- filling out the form on our website



- calling us.

Our contact details are on **page 28**.



Tips for making your complaint

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 think it is unfair.



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



Only give us information **about** your complaint.

Show us:



- documents about your complaint



- letters about your complaint



- anything else you think we need to see about your complaint.



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



Tell us what you would like to happen to fix your complaint.

What happens when you make a complaint?



1. The Ombudsman will tell you when we get your complaint.



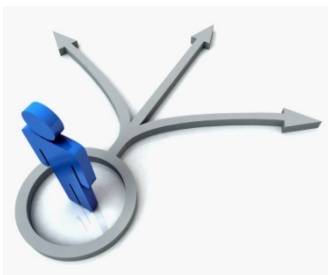
2. We will look at your complaint and decide if we **can** look into it.



3. We will tell you what is happening as we deal with it.

4. If we **cannot** look into your complaint we will tell you:

- why we cannot look into it
- if there is somebody else that may be able to help you.





5. If we say **yes** we will deal with your complaint.

This might mean we will talk to the agency your complaint is about.



The Ombudsman sorts out many complaints by talking to agencies.



6. If your complaint **cannot** be sorted out this way we will look into it.



This means we will get all the information we need.



The Ombudsman will try to find out what happened.



If something went wrong we will see if the agency can fix it.

7. The Ombudsman will decide if the organisation did something wrong.



9. We will tell you what we decide.

If we think the organisation **did** do something wrong we will tell you.

If we think the organisation **did not** do something wrong we will tell you.



You can tell us what you think before we make a final decision.



10. We will tell the government agency if it needs to fix the problem.



Sometimes we can also tell the organisation ways they can fix the problem.

Contact us



Contact the Office of the Ombudsman to find out about what we do and if we can help you.



Free Phone: 0800 802 602



Fax: 04 471 22 54



Website:

www.ombudsman.parliament.nz



Send an email:

info@ombudsman.parliament.nz



Write a letter and post it to:

The Office of the Ombudsman

P.O. Box 10152

Wellington 6143



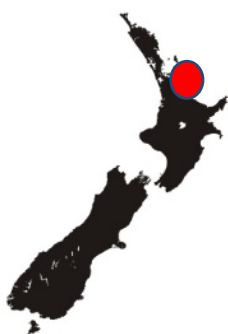
Our offices are open:

8:30am to 5pm Monday to Friday.



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

There is an Ombudsman office in Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch:



Auckland

Level 10, 55–65 Shortland Street,
Auckland 1010



Wellington

Level 7, 70 The Terrace,
Wellington 6011



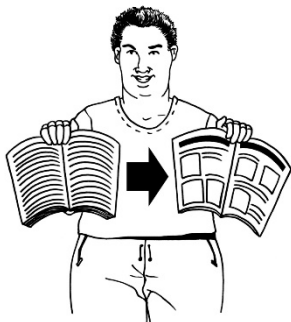
Christchurch

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 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.



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

