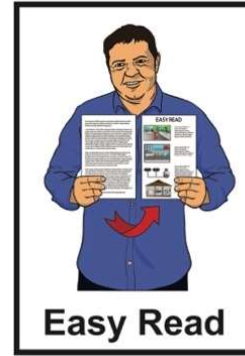


# Ombudsman

Tuia kia ōrite • Fairness for all



## Reporting serious wrongdoing at work (whistleblowing)

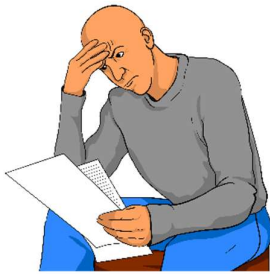


**Published: April 2025**

# Before you start



This is a long document.



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
- set aside some quiet time to look at it
- have someone read it with you to support you to understand it.



# What is in here

**Page number:**

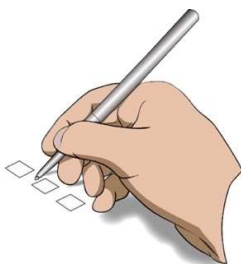


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# About this document



This Easy Read document is from the Ombudsman.



The Ombudsman works to make sure all New Zealanders are treated fairly by the Government.



Being treated **fairly** means being treated:

- with respect
- the same way as everybody else.

This includes **whistleblowers**.

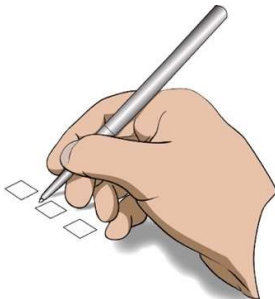


**Whistleblowers** are people:

- who see something very bad happen at work
- and
- tell somebody about it so that it will stop happening.

This document tells you:

- about the **law** that protects whistleblowers
- what to do if you want to report something bad that has happened at your work.





This document also tells you:

- places you can go to report something bad that has happened at work
- how the Ombudsman can help you.



### Laws:

- are rules made by the Government
- and**
- have to be followed by everyone.



The Ombudsman may be able to help you if you decide to be a whistleblower.

# What is serious wrongdoing?



Serious wrongdoing is when something very bad happens at work.

Serious wrongdoing can be things like:



- somebody breaking the law:
  - like hurting somebody
  - stealing something



- putting a person / people in danger
- putting the environment in danger
- putting the people of New Zealand in danger.





Serious wrongdoing can also be things like:

- using public money or things for the wrong reason
- very bad behaviour by a **public official** such as **discrimination**.



A **public official** is somebody who works for a government agency.



**Discrimination** is when people are treated unfairly because of things like being:

- Māori
- a man / woman / someone of another gender
- disabled.





Whistleblowers report serious wrongdoing.

This means whistleblowers:



- tell somebody about what has happened
- and**
- are protected for speaking up.

# What is a whistleblower?



Whistleblowers report serious wrongdoing at their work.

Reporting serious wrongdoing is called making a **protected disclosure**.



A **protected disclosure** is when you: do not get in trouble or lose your job for telling someone about something very bad that has happened at work.



There is a law that says how to keep whistleblowers safe.



This law is called the **Protected Disclosures Act 2022**.



## This **Protected Disclosures Act 2022**:

- became a law on 1 July 2022
- supports whistleblowers to report serious wrongdoing at work
- keeps whistleblowers safe
- supports organisations to look into reports about whistleblowing.



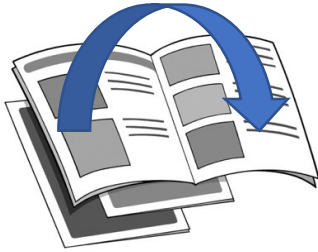
## This law:

- tells whistleblowers the right **authority** to report serious wrongdoing to
- allows whistleblowers to report to the right authority at anytime rather than having to go to their employer first.





Here **authority** means the places you can go to make a protected disclosure.



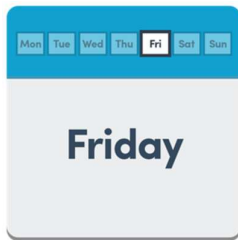
Go to **page 27** to find out a list of some of these authorities.



You can make a protected disclosure if you:

- are working at a place
- used to work at a place
- are doing some work for a place as a **contractor**
- do **volunteer** work at the place
- are a **board member**.





A **contractor** is someone who works for a place for a set or short time.

The organisation / company pays a contractor:

- by the hour
- or
- for each day
- or
- when the work is finished.



Here **volunteer** means you:

- say yes to doing some work at a place
- and
- do not get money for the work you do.



**Board member** means somebody is a member of a board of directors.

It is called a **board** for short.

A **board** is a group of people at an organisation who:

- know a lot about the organisation / company
- make decisions for the organisation / company.





Protected disclosures can be made about a:

- public organisation like a government agency
- **private organisation.**



A **private organisation** is a business that is not run by the Government.



The Ombudsman can help whistleblowers to make a protected disclosure.

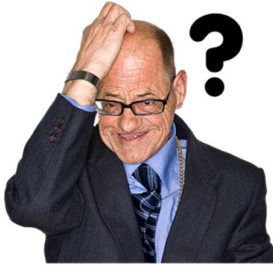


The Ombudsman can also tell organisations the best way to deal with protected disclosures.



You can talk to us if you want to find out more information about:

- what it means to be a whistleblower
- if you are worried about making a protected disclosure.

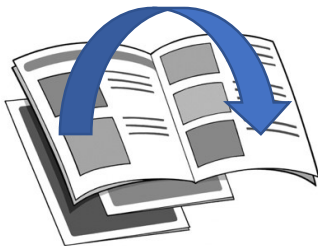


The Ombudsman will tell you:

- what you need to think about
- how to speak up
- which authority to speak to.



Go to **page 29** to find out all the ways you can contact the Ombudsman.



# How are whistleblowers protected?



The Protected Disclosures Act protects whistleblowers.

When you make a protected disclosure:

- the organisation you work for cannot **punish** you
- you will not be punished for speaking up
- you are protected by the Human Rights Act law.





Here **punish** means whistleblowers **can not:**

- get into trouble at work
- lose their job
- go to jail.



You are protected if your protected disclosure:

- is about serious wrongdoing at an organisation
- is about serious wrongdoing by an organisation
- you believe what you are reporting is very likely to be true
- you are very worried about what is happening.





## Keeping your information private

Most of the time if you make a  
protected disclosure your:

- name will be kept secret
- information will be kept secret.



You can say yes to your information  
being shared with someone else.



Sometimes your name will have to be shared.



This will happen if it:

- is needed for an **investigation** to find out more about what has happened
- stops something bad happening to somebody
- stops something bad happening to the environment
- is needed for an investigation to take place by an agency that protects the law like:



- Health and Disability Commissioner



- Privacy Commissioner



- NZ Police.



An **investigation** means looking into something like a complaint to find out what has happened.



You will be told if your information has to be shared.

## How to make a protected disclosure



There are different ways you can make a protected disclosure or report serious wrongdoing.



You can report it to the person in charge of your organisation.

You do not have to report it to the person in charge of your organisation if you do not want to.



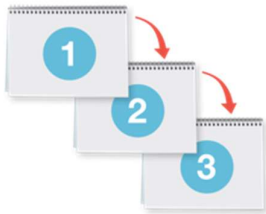
All government agencies must have a process for dealing with serious wrongdoing.



You can also report it to an authority that handles protected disclosures like the Ombudsman.



The Ombudsman can help you to find the right place.



You will need to follow the right **process** for reporting serious wrongdoing at your work.



Here a **process** means the right way to make a protected disclosure at your work.



Go to **page 27** to find out the places you can make protected disclosures to.

## How the Ombudsman can help whistleblowers



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



**Independent of the Government** means:

- we do our own work
- the Government does not tell us how to do our work.

The Ombudsman can do things to help whistleblowers like tell you:



- what protected disclosures are
- how to make a protected disclosure



- who you can make protected disclosures to about serious wrongdoing



- what each authority does
- how you can be kept safe if the place you work at tries to punish you for being a whistleblower.



You can contact the Ombudsman if you:

- think serious wrongdoing has happened at your work
- want to find out more information about whistleblowing
- want to find out the right authority to make a protected disclosure to.



The Ombudsman services are:

- free to all New Zealanders
- available to all New Zealanders.



# Places you can make a protected disclosure to



Here are some of the places a whistleblower can make a protected disclosure to:



- Ombudsman



- Health and Disability Commissioner



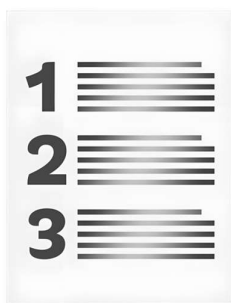
- Human Rights Commissioner



- NZ Police Commissioner



- Privacy Commissioner.



The Protected Disclosures Act includes a list of examples of which authority to go to for different types of wrongdoing.



Contact the Ombudsman:

- to find out the right place you can make a protected disclosure to
- for more information about being a whistleblower.



Go to **page 29** to find out all the ways you can contact the Ombudsman.

# Contact the Ombudsman



You can contact the Ombudsman by:



**Free phone on:**

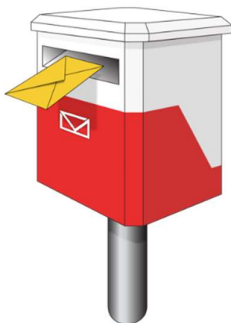
**0800 802 602**



**Email at:**

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

You can also send a **letter** to:



**Office of the Ombudsman**

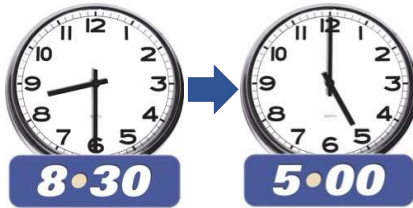
**PO Box 10152**

**Wellington 6143**

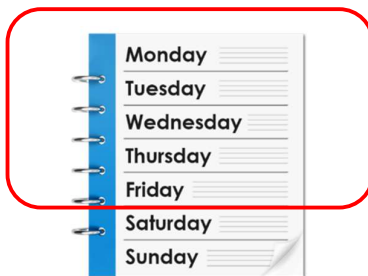


You can also **visit** our office.

Our offices are open:



- 8:30 am to 5 pm



- Monday to Friday.

There is an office in **Auckland**:

Level 6

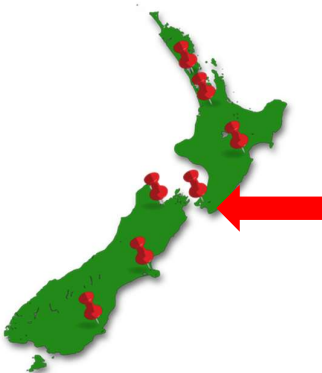
55 – 65 Shortland Street.



There is also an office in **Wellington**:

Level 7

70 The Terrace.





You can find more information about the Office of the Ombudsman on their **website** at:

**[www.ombudsman.parliament.nz](http://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz)**



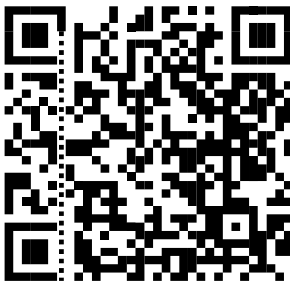
**Facebook**

**@ombudsmannz**



**X**

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Scan this QR code to link you to:

- more information about the Ombudsman
- information in accessible formats
- information in other languages.



You can read how to use a QR code here:

[www.peoplesfirst.org.nz/easy-read-library/resource/how-to-use-qr-codes](http://www.peoplesfirst.org.nz/easy-read-library/resource/how-to-use-qr-codes)



If you find it hard to use the phone the **New Zealand Relay** service is for people who are:

- Deaf / hard of hearing
- deafblind
- speech impaired / find it hard to talk.



You can find out more about the New Zealand Relay service on their **website** at:

[www.nzrelay.co.nz](http://www.nzrelay.co.nz)

**Ombudsman**

Tuia kia ōrite • Fairness for all

This information has been written by the Office of the Ombudsman.

**Make it Easy**  
Kia Māmā Mai



It has been translated into Easy Read by the Make it Easy Kia Māmā Mai service of People First New Zealand Ngā Tāngata Tuatahi.

**People First NZ**  
Ngā Tāngata Tuatahi



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