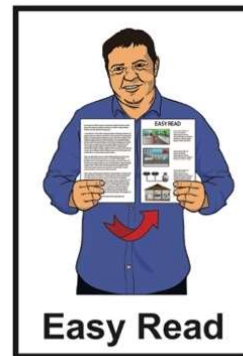


Ombudsman

Tuia kia ōrite · Fairness for all



Official information requests

Tono mō te pārongo ōkawa

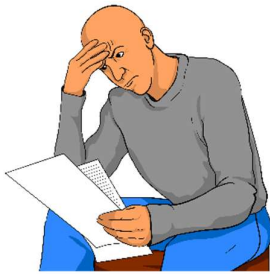


Published: April 2025

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.

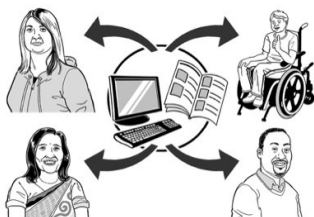


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About this document



This Easy Read document is from the Ombudsman.



The Ombudsman works for **fairness** for all New Zealanders.



Fairness means being treated:

- with respect
- the same way as everybody else.



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



The Ombudsman can look into complaints about government agencies.

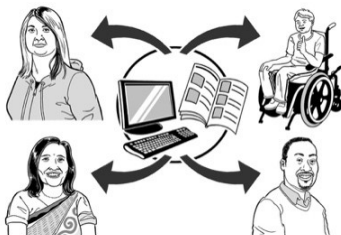


This includes complaints about **official information**.



This document tells you:

- what official information is
- how to ask for official information
- how to make a complaint to the Ombudsman about your request for official information.



Official information is information the Government has that is not about you.

Where it says **we / our** this means the Ombudsman.

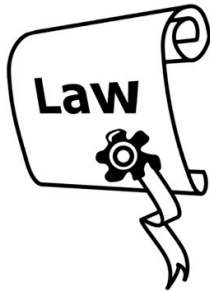
What is official information?



Anyone can ask for official information.

The **laws** about getting official information are the:

- Official Information Act 1982
- Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987.



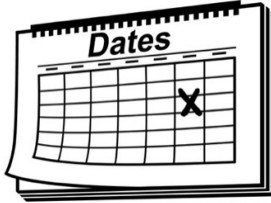
Laws:

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

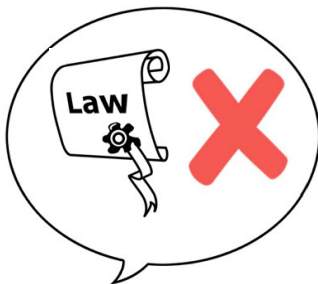


These laws about official information tell government agencies things like:

- what to do about requests for official information
- how long they have to get the information to you.



If you ask for official information it should be given to you.



It will not be given to you if one of the laws says there is a good reason not to.



You can ask for official information from:

- Ministers such as the Minister for Disability Issues
- government departments like the Department of Internal Affairs
- government ministries such as Ministry of Disabled People – Whaikaha
- organisations owned by the state like ACC
- education for adults like:
 - universities
 - wānanga
 - polytechnics
 - institutes of technology.



Te Kaporeihana Āwhina Hunga Whara





You can also ask for official information from:

- local councils
- school boards
- the Police.



You cannot ask a government agency for your **personal information**.



Personal information is information about you.



If you want to get personal information you need to ask the Privacy Commissioner.



Contact the Privacy Commissioner for more information:

Freephone: 0800 803 909



Freephone means it will not cost you any money.

How to get official information



You need to make an official information **request** to a government agency.



A **request** is when you ask for something.



Make sure:

- you are clear about the information you want
- you know which government agency has the information you want.





If you are not sure call the government agency to find out if they have the information you want.

You need to request the official information from:



- the government agency that has the information you want

and



- not from the Ombudsman



Government agencies have to:

- follow the laws about official information
- support you with your request where they can.





The best way is to write your complaint in:

- an email

or

- a letter

or

- a text message.



You can also request the information:

- by visiting the government agency

- calling the government agency.



The government agency may still ask you for the request in writing.



In your request it is good to name the laws that government agencies have to follow such as:

- Official Information Act
- Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act.



This can help to make sure the right rules are applied.



Keep a copy of all the information you have about your request.



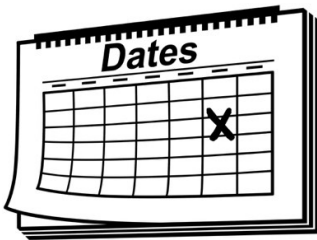
This means you have a **record** of your complaint.

Here a **record** means you have the information to show someone that you have made a complaint.

What happens when you make your request?



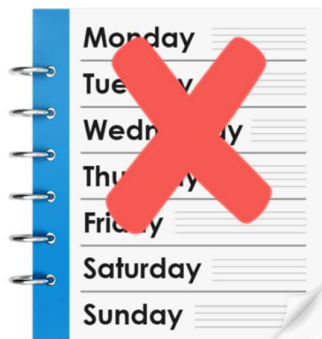
The government agency will tell you that it has received your request.



It has 20 working days to get back to you.

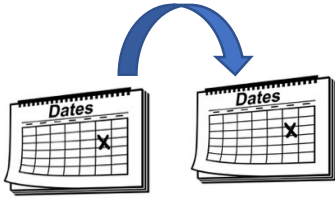


A working day includes days Monday to Friday.

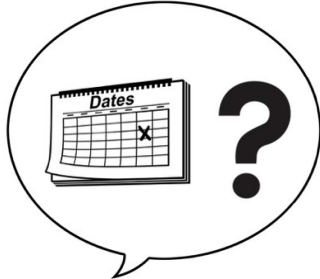


A working day does not include:

- Saturday
- Sunday
- public holidays.



Sometimes the government agency will take longer than 20 days to get the information you need.



They must tell you:

- if it will take longer than 20 days
- why it is taking longer.



If you are unhappy with this you can contact the Ombudsman.



If you need your information very fast you:

- need to let the agency know

and

- tell them why you need the information quickly.





Sometimes you may have to pay some money to get official information.

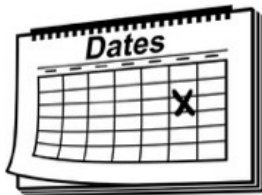


This is because it may take a long time to find all the information you have asked for.



The government agency will tell you if it is going to cost money.

The amount it costs must be fair.



You can use the online calculator to find out the latest date for a response to your request at:

www.ombudsman.parliament.nz



The government agency will give you:

- **all** of the information you asked for

or



- **some** of the information you

or



- **none** of the information you asked for.



The government agency has to tell why it did / did not give you the information you asked for.

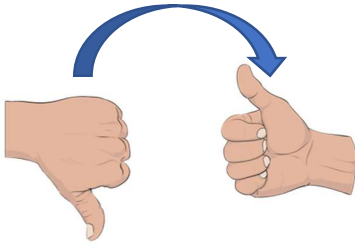


You can complain to the Ombudsman if you are not happy with what the government agency has done about your request.

How the Ombudsman can help you



The Ombudsman can help to **resolve** complaints.

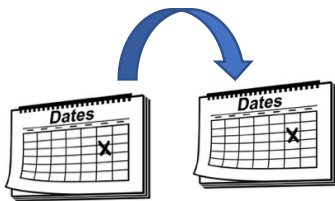


Resolve means to sort out a problem.

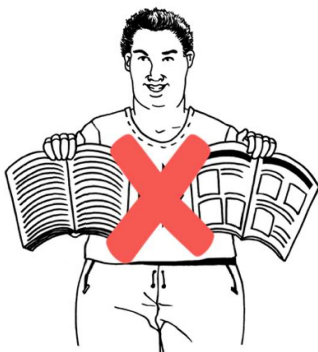


These complaints may be about:

- not getting the official information you have asked for



- waiting more than 20 days to get the official information you have asked for.



- not being given the information in a way that you can:
 - read
 - understand.



These complaints may also be about:

- the government agency is charging too much money to give you the official information
- the government agency telling you how you should use the official information.



The Ombudsman may ask the government agency to **release** all or some of the information to you as a result of your complaint.



Here **release** means to give you the official information you have asked for.



In most cases the agency must release the information when asked to by the Ombudsman.

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 services are:

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



How to make a complaint to the Ombudsman



Get all the information you have about your complaint including:



- a copy of the written information in your request including things like:



- emails

- letters



- text messages

- details of the information you gave in your spoken complaint

- tell us why you are unhappy.



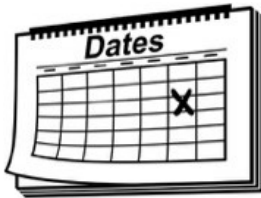


You should also include information about what the government agency said about your request if you have it.



If you have not got a reply to your request tell us:

- where you made the request
- and
- when you made the request.





Here are the ways you can make a complaint to us:

- fill out the form on our website:

www.ombudsman.parliament.nz/get-help-public

- call us to make a complaint.
- email your complaint to us
- write a letter to us.

Go to **page 32** to find the contact information for the Ombudsman.

You can contact the Ombudsman if you have any questions before you make your complaint.

What happens when the Ombudsman gets your complaint?



We will tell you when we get your complaint.



The Ombudsman will look at your complaint to decide if we:



- can **investigate** your complaint.
- cannot investigate your complaint.



Investigate means looking into something like a complaint to find out what has happened.



A complaint about official information does not always have to be investigated.



Sometimes the Ombudsman can sort out your complaint by talking:

- to you

and

- the government agency.



If we cannot investigate your complaint we will tell you why we cannot investigate it



If the Ombudsman decides to investigate your complaint we will talk to:

- you

and

- the government agency you have made your official information complaint about



The Ombudsman will look at any information the agency does not want to give you.



The Ombudsman will ask you for more information if we need it.



We will tell you what is happening about your complaint.

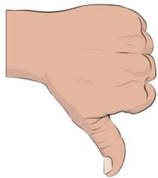


At the end of the investigation the Ombudsman can decide if the agency:



- acted in a reasonable way / the right way

or



- acted in an unreasonable way / the wrong way.



If the Ombudsman thinks the agency did the right thing we will:

- tell you.
- give you a chance to respond

If the Ombudsman thinks the agency did the wrong thing we can suggest they give you:



- **all** of the information you have requested
- **some** of the information you have requested.



Sometimes a complaint is about a problem a lot of people may have with a government agency.



If we think it will be useful for other people to know about your complaint we may publish information about it.



We will tell you first.



The Ombudsman will protect your privacy.

This means we will not give your personal information to somebody else.

Contact the Ombudsman



You can contact the Ombudsman by:



Free phone on:

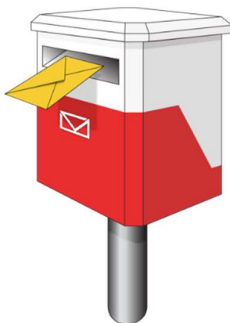
0800 802 602



Email at:

info@ombudsman.parliament.nz

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



Office of the Ombudsman

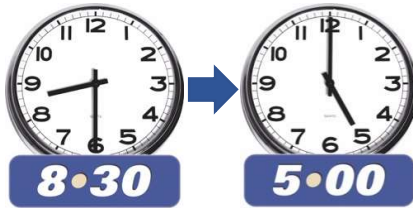
PO Box 10152

Wellington 6143

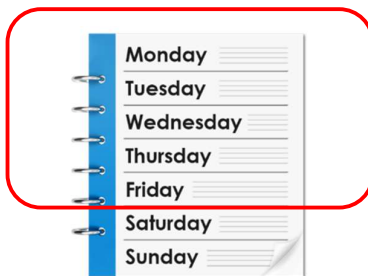


You can also **visit** our office.

Our offices are open:



- 8:30 am to 5 pm



- Monday to Friday.

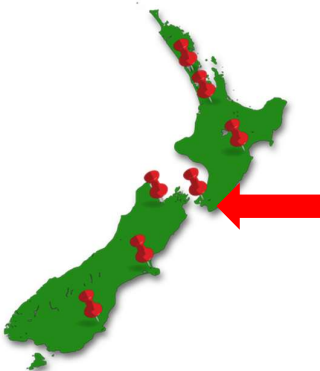
There is an office in **Auckland**:



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



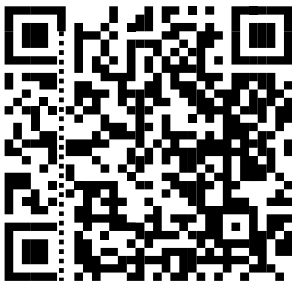
Facebook

@ombudsmannz



X

@Ombudsman_NZ



Scan this QR code to link you to:

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



How to use QR codes



Published: August 2024

You can read how to use a QR code here:

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

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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