

# What happens when you make your complaint?

It will be acknowledged promptly.

An Ombudsman will decide whether or not it can be investigated. If your complaint cannot be investigated, we will tell you why and may direct you to other options or agencies.

If your complaint can be investigated, an Ombudsman will seek information from the agency concerned about the subject matter of your complaint.

We will keep you informed throughout the investigation.

At the end of the investigation, an Ombudsman will reach a view on whether the agency has acted unreasonably or unfairly. If it is considered that your complaint cannot be upheld, you will have an opportunity to respond to that view before a final decision is made. Where appropriate, an Ombudsman may recommend a remedy.

Making telephone enquiries with an agency can often satisfactorily resolve complaints. A formal investigation will not usually be conducted if it appears that we can deal with your complaint in this way.

# Contacting the Ombudsmen

**Complaints free phone:** 0800 802 602

**Email:** [complaint@ombudsmen.govt.nz](mailto:complaint@ombudsmen.govt.nz)

**Website:** [www.ombudsmen.govt.nz](http://www.ombudsmen.govt.nz)

**Office enquiries:** 8.30am to 5.00 pm Monday to Friday

## AUCKLAND

Level 10, 55-65 Shortland Street

PO Box 1960

AUCKLAND

Phone: (09) 379 6102

Fax: (09) 377 6537

## WELLINGTON

Level 14, 70 The Terrace

PO Box 10152

WELLINGTON

Phone: (04) 473 9533

Fax: (04) 471 2254

## CHRISTCHURCH

Level 6, 764 Colombo Street

PO Box 13482

CHRISTCHURCH

Phone: (03) 366 8556

Fax: (03) 365 7935

This pamphlet is available in Maori, Samoan and Mandarin Chinese.

Other Ombudsmen pamphlets cover making complaints about tertiary education institutions, prisons, requests for official information and the Protected Disclosures Act.

# Making complaints about Government Agencies

**OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMEN**

*Nga Kaitiaki Mana Tangata*

## Have you been treated unfairly by:

- ▶ a government department or organisation?
- ▶ a city, district or regional council?
- ▶ a local organisation or health board?
- ▶ a school Board of Trustees?

**Contact the Ombudsmen who investigate complaints about government agencies.**

**FREE  
IMPARTIAL  
INDEPENDENT**

# What can an Ombudsman do for you?

An Ombudsman investigates complaints about administrative acts and decisions of central and local government agencies.

An Ombudsman:

- ▶ is an independent investigator
- ▶ has wide powers to investigate government agencies and to call them to account for their actions
- ▶ will give your complaint careful and just consideration
- ▶ will decide whether the agency's acts or decisions were unreasonable, unfair or wrong
- ▶ may recommend a remedy where a complaint is found to be justified.

Ombudsmen **can** investigate complaints against:

- ▶ government agencies, including those responsible for benefit payments, housing, health, immigration, passports, accident compensation, education, taxation and child support
- ▶ local government agencies, including those responsible for roads, drainage, nuisance and animal control, planning and the granting and enforcing of building or resource consents.

Ombudsmen **cannot** investigate complaints about private individuals, companies, lawyers, Members of Parliament, decisions made by a full council or a Court or Tribunal.

Ombudsmen **do not** investigate complaints against the Police or Government Ministers (unless your complaint relates to a request for official information).

Ombudsmen **do not** provide legal advice, award compensation or act as your advocate or agent.

*An Ombudsman's investigation is free and is conducted in private.*

## The complaints process

### What should you do first?

**Before** you make a complaint to an Ombudsman, try to resolve it with the government agency concerned. Many agencies have a complaints process. If this is not the case, write to the head of the agency.

**An Ombudsman may decide not to investigate unless you have attempted to do this.**

### How to make a complaint

You can make your complaint by:

- ▶ letter, fax or email
- ▶ using an online complaint form available on our website
- ▶ phoning our Office for assistance from staff.

See the contact details on the back of this pamphlet.

### Tips on making your complaint

- ▶ Do not delay in putting your complaint to an Ombudsman as it may be difficult to investigate a matter which occurred more than 12 months ago.
- ▶ Provide as much relevant information as possible, including letters and documents that show you have already attempted to resolve your complaint with the agency.
- ▶ Point clearly to the decision or act which lies at the heart of your complaint.
- ▶ Say what outcome you are wanting.

