

Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman

Service Charter

This charter tells you the nature and level of the services you can expect from the Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman (the Office). It also explains what to do if you are unhappy with the service you receive.

Our commitment to you

We are committed to providing you with a service that is respectful, courteous, fair and independent. You can expect us to be helpful, professional and sensitive to your needs. You can expect that we will communicate with you, explaining what we can and can't do, telling you about next steps and keeping you informed of progress on your complaint.

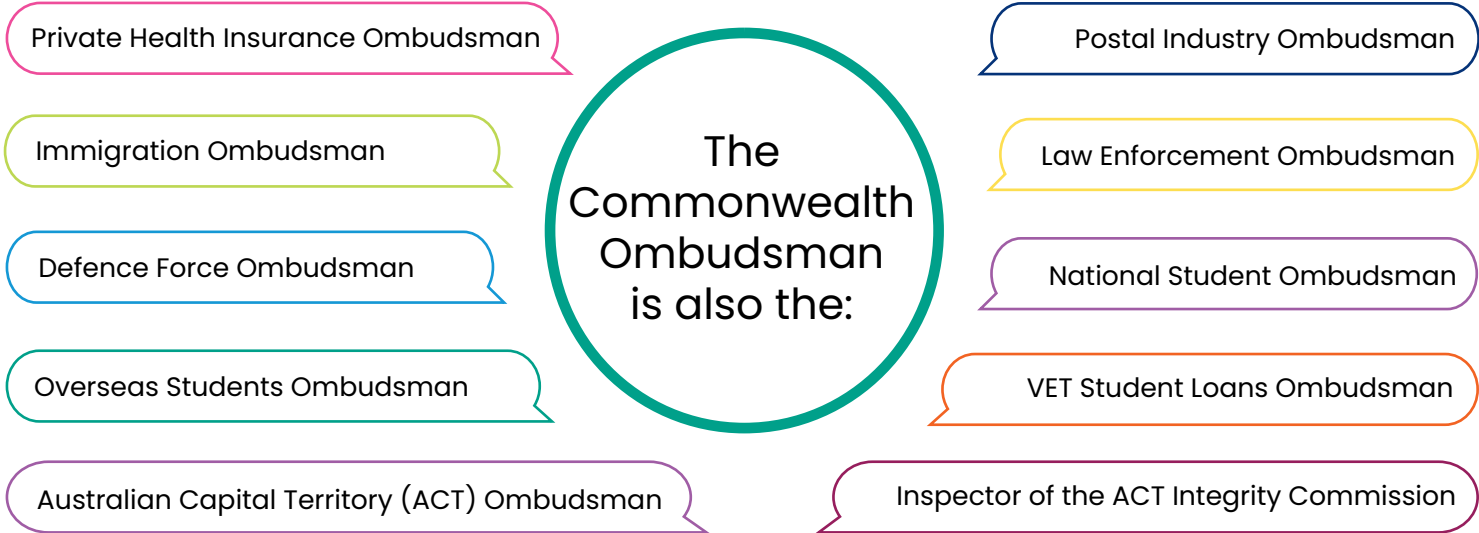
Your contact to our Office will be taken seriously. We will listen to what you tell us and consider it carefully. We may ask you to provide information in writing, give us more detail or make an appointment to meet with us.

We will do our best to resolve your complaint in a timely way. Some complaints can be resolved almost immediately, while some complaints can take several months or longer. We prioritise complaints based on urgency, vulnerability and risk. Prioritisation can impact the timeframes in which we resolve your complaint.

We will make decisions fairly and independently and explain the actions we took in response to your contact. We will tell you when your complaint is closed. If you are unhappy with a decision we make, you can ask us to review it.

Who we are

The Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman is established under the *Ombudsman Act 1976* (the Ombudsman Act). We exist to ensure fair and accountable administrative action by Australian Government agencies and private sector organisations we oversee. We achieve our purpose through complaint handling, conducting investigations, conducting visits and inspections, encouraging good public administration practices, and administering a specialist redress scheme.





Our services and role

Our services are free, independent and accessible to everyone.

We assess complaints about actions and decisions of Australian Government agencies and the private sector organisations we oversee to see if actions they have taken are wrong, unjust, unlawful, discriminatory or unfair. The Ombudsman also seeks remedies for people affected by problems with public administration and makes recommendations for improvement.

Due to the high volume of complaints we receive each year, we use our discretion and judgement to decide the best way forward to resolve your complaint. While all complaints are assessed and responded to, not all complaints are individually investigated.

Our service standards

We aim to provide timely, efficient and effective services within the following timeframes:

- Enquiries – 95% resolved within 10 working days
- Complaints:
 - 50% resolved within 30 working days
 - 75% resolved within 90 working days
 - 85% resolved within 6 months
 - 99% resolved within 12 months
- Telephone service: Average speed of answer is < or = to 10 minutes

What we expect from you

We know that when you come to us to make an enquiry or complaint, you may be in difficult circumstances, experiencing distress or in need of urgent assistance. We will do our best to help but will not tolerate abusive behaviour towards our staff. We will warn you if your behaviour is becoming unreasonable. If you do not respond to our warnings, we may stop the communication with you.

To provide you with the best service we can, we ask that you:

- Be polite, respectful, courteous and willing to listen
- Inform us about any particular needs you may have
- Give us a clear idea of your concerns and the outcome you are seeking
- Provide accurate and complete information
- Respond promptly to any requests for further information

Before contacting us, we ask you to contact the complaints area of the agency or organisation you are complaining about. This gives the agency an opportunity to resolve your complaint first and can often provide you with an outcome more quickly than we can. It's unlikely we will be able to assist you until you have taken this step.

Accessibility

You can access information in the way you choose – through our website at ombudsman.gov.au, by telephone on 1300 362 072, or in person at one of our office locations.

If you need an interpreter or assistance owing to disability or impairment, let us know and we will arrange support.

If English is not your first language and you need help to communicate with us, you can use the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National) on 131 450.



What we can't help with

Most complaints about the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) and the Tax Practitioners Board (TPB) should be directed to the Inspector-General of Taxation (IGT).

Unfortunately, we cannot help resolve your complaint if it is outside of our role. For example, we cannot help if your complaint is about your bank, phone provider, life insurance policy, employment, or a State Government agency.

Requesting a review of our decision

If you disagree with our final decision, you can ask us to review it. Undertaking a review is at our discretion. A request for a review should be made in writing within 3 months of being told of the decision.

The review will be conducted by a senior officer who was not involved in the original investigation of your complaint. The review officer may:

- Uphold the decision of the original officer
- Change the decision of the original officer
- Send the matter back to the original officer or another officer for further investigation

We endeavour to complete reviews within 60 days. The review officer will send you a letter advising you of the outcome of the review. We will generally only review a matter once.

Tell us what you think

We value your feedback, including complaints, because it allows us to understand your experience and helps us to improve our service.

Feedback can be provided by phoning us on 1300 362 072 or using our [online form](#).

In addition to listening to your feedback, we also undertake a regular customer satisfaction survey to help us identify how to improve our services.

This survey is conducted by a third-party provider and your personal information, including contact details, demographic statistics and basic complaint information such as when you came to us, how you lodged the complaint, the agency you are complaining about, how long it took us to resolve your complaint, and how we resolved your complaint, may be provided to that external company.

You can opt out of participating in our survey when you call us, or when you email us by following the steps provided when you lodge an online complaint.

Our Privacy Policy is available on our website at [ombudsman.gov.au](#).

For more information visit our website at [ombudsman.gov.au](#)