



Community Services Complaints

What is this fact sheet about?

This fact sheet sets out the types of community service complaints that the NSW Ombudsman can help with. It explains who can complain to us and gives examples of those who complain to us and the types of complaints they have. The fact sheet tells you what the Ombudsman can do with your complaint and how we can help you.

What types of Community Service complaints can the Ombudsman help with?

The Ombudsman can consider complaints about:

- the Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ)

- non-government services for children and young people that are funded by DCJ, including foster care, Intensive Therapeutic Care (ITC) and some early intervention services
- specialist homelessness services funded by DCJ, such as family support services, domestic violence services and refuges.

Who can complain to the Ombudsman?

Any person can contact the Ombudsman to make a complaint about a service provided or funded by DCJ.

Before making a complaint to the Ombudsman, it is best to talk directly to the service provider to try to resolve your concerns.

What kinds of community service complaints does the Ombudsman receive?

Some examples of who complains to us and the kinds of complaints we receive include:

✓ Young people

- I recently left care and I do not know what support I am entitled to receive.
- I don't feel safe in my placement and my caseworker is not listening to me.
- My case plan does not reflect what I want, and I am not getting the supports I need.

✓ Clients of homelessness or refuge services

- I try to access services, but I keep getting turned away.
- I am concerned about my safety and my concerns have been ignored.
- I have been told to leave the service and I do not know why.

✓ Child protection reporters

- I made Helpline reports but they are not being assessed or acted on.

✓ Parents

- I do not understand what I need to do to comply with DCJ's safety plan.
- DCJ are not responding to my complaints about my caseworker.
- My child is in foster care and is not being supported to maintain contact with their family and culture.

✓ Foster carers

- I am not getting the support and training I need.
- I have submitted reimbursement requests or for costs to be covered that are being disputed or not acted on.

What can the Ombudsman do with my complaint?



Help you complain to the agency

If you have not yet done so, our staff may encourage you to talk directly to the service provider about your complaint.

We can advise you about how to do this and what to say.

The service provider will often work with you to solve the problem without you having to lodge a complaint with us.



Assess your complaint

We will assess the information you give us and decide what action, if any, we will take. If we decide not to act on your complaint, we will tell you why we made that decision and help you find the right agency to complain to.



Make inquiries

We may ask the agency or service provider to provide us with information about what has happened and what they have done to resolve the complaint. We can make suggestions to the agency or service about ways to help resolve the problem and to improve how services are delivered.



Review the situation of children and young people in care

In certain cases, we may decide to look further into the problem by conducting a review. We can review the circumstances of an individual child in care, or a group of children in care. We report to the relevant Minister, service provider and any other appropriate people on the results of the review, and we can make recommendations to improve the circumstances of a child or group of children.



Refer your complaint to the service provider for local resolution or investigation

We can ask the service provider to sort out the problem with you and to report back to us about the solution and outcome.

You can contact us again if you are not satisfied with what the service provider does because of your complaint.



Conciliate your complaint

Sometimes it can be difficult to meet with a service provider to sort out your concerns. We can help you to meet with the service provider, help you to raise your concerns and help you to make an agreement with the service provider that works for you.



Investigate your complaint

Sometimes, when the problem is not resolved or we think the problem is very serious, we can start a formal investigation. This can be a long process, and we would keep you informed about progress. From our investigation we can make findings and recommendations to the service or agency.



Scan the QR code to find out more on our website.

Contact us

✉ info@ombo.nsw.gov.au

☎ 1800 451 524

🌐 www.ombo.nsw.gov.au