

# Privacy Policy

## About this policy

This is a policy about the handling of personal Information by the Ombudsman. It applies to both the Commonwealth and ACT Ombudsman. Its purpose is to give you a better understanding of our personal information handling practices and to enhance the transparency of Ombudsman operations. It gives effect to the Australian Privacy Principles contained in the [Privacy Act 1988](#).

## Outline of this policy

'Part A – Personal Information Management' provides background on the functions and activities of the Ombudsman and explains in general terms the kinds of personal information collected by us, and how this is collected and held. It also explains how you can ask to see your personal information that we hold and how you can ask to have details of your personal information corrected. This part also explains how you can complain if you believe that your personal information has been mishandled, or there has been a breach of your privacy by us.

'Part B – Records' lists specific kinds of Ombudsman records on which personal information is held. It explains in further detail the management of personal information by reference to specific Ombudsman functions and activities, such as complaint handling and investigations. You can find out here what sorts of records we keep, what kinds of personal information are typically collected on these records, and the purpose for which this information is collected, held, used and disclosed.

'Part C – Online' explains the Ombudsman's personal information handling practices when a person visits the Ombudsman website.

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# Privacy Policy

## Part A – Personal Information Management

### Our obligations under the Privacy Act

The Commonwealth Ombudsman must comply with the Australian Privacy Principles contained in the [Privacy Act 1988](#) which regulate how agencies may collect, hold, use or disclose personal information, and how individuals may access and correct personal information held about them. In this privacy policy *personal information* has the same meaning as defined by section 6 of the *Privacy Act 1988*:

*‘information or an opinion about an identified individual, or an individual who is reasonably identifiable:*

- (a) whether the information or opinion is true or not; and*
- (b) whether the information or opinion is recorded in a material form or not.’*

In this privacy policy *sensitive information* has the same meaning as defined by section 6 of the *Privacy Act 1988*:

- ‘(a) information or an opinion about an individual’s:*
  - (i) racial or ethnic origin; or*
  - (ii) political opinions; or*
  - (iii) membership of a political association; or*
  - (iv) religious beliefs or affiliations; or*
  - (v) philosophical beliefs; or*
  - (vi) membership of a professional or trade association; or*
  - (vii) membership of a trade union; or*
  - (viii) sexual preferences or practices; or*
  - (ix) criminal record;**that is also personal information; or*
- (b) health information about an individual; or*
- (c) genetic information about an individual that is not otherwise health information; or*
- (d) biometric information that is to be used for the purpose of automated biometric verification or biometric identification; or*
- (e) biometric templates.’*

### Background: functions and activities of the Ombudsman

Our strategic vision is for administrative action by Australian and ACT Government agencies and related service providers to be fair and accountable. Through investigation of their administration we influence agencies to treat people fairly. This includes encouraging agencies to have their own accessible, effective and targeted complaint handling services, and overseeing agency compliance in the use of selected intrusive and coercive powers.

The **Commonwealth Ombudsman** is a statutory office holder with a number of functions, including:

**Investigation** under the [Ombudsman Act 1976](#), of administrative actions of Australian Government departments and administrative agencies, either on receipt of a complaint or on the Ombudsman’s own motion,

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**Investigation** under the [Ombudsman Act 1976](#), of particular complaints made in relation to the Australian Defence Force (as the **Defence Force Ombudsman**), Private Postal Operators (as the **Postal Industry Ombudsman**) and private registered education providers to overseas students (as the **Overseas Students Ombudsman**),

**Investigation** of public interest disclosures made to the Ombudsman, and performance of other functions, under the [Public Interest Disclosure Act 2013](#).

**Inspection** of law enforcement agency records relating to telephone interception, electronic surveillance and the use of similar powers, to ensure compliance with relevant, federal statutory requirements, and monitoring the Australian Federal Police's management of professional standards issues under Part V of the [Australian Federal Police Act 1979](#).

**Reporting** on persons held in immigration detention for over 2 years under Part 8C of the [Migration Act 1958](#).

Depending on the function being performed by the Commonwealth Ombudsman he may be also be referred to as the **Immigration Ombudsman**, **Taxation Ombudsman** or **Law Enforcement Ombudsman**.

The **ACT Ombudsman** is a statutory office with a number of functions, including:

**Investigation** under the [Ombudsman Act 1989](#), of administrative actions of ACT Government directorates and administrative agencies, including actions under the [Freedom of Information Act 1989](#), either on receipt of a complaint or on the Ombudsman's own motion,

**Inspection** of law enforcement agency records relating to controlled operations, surveillance devices and assumed identities to ensure compliance with relevant ACT statutory requirements,

**Monitoring** of records relating to the ACT child sex offenders register, and

**Performance of functions** in relation to the [Public Interest Disclosure Act 2012](#).

Currently the Commonwealth Ombudsman is also the ACT Ombudsman. It is the policy of the Ombudsman that in performing his functions as the ACT Ombudsman he will comply with the APPs contained in the Privacy Act 1988. Unless otherwise indicated, reference to the 'Ombudsman' in this policy generally means a reference to both the Commonwealth and ACT Ombudsman.

The Ombudsman investigates in private, and staff are obliged to keep confidential information obtained in connection with their work. However in certain circumstances the Ombudsman may publicise matters related to the work of the office. Most commonly this occurs where the Ombudsman considers that it is in the public interest to publish a report relating to the outcome of an investigation.

The Commonwealth Ombudsman is covered by the [Freedom of Information Act 1982](#), and the ACT Ombudsman is covered by the [Freedom of Information Act 1989](#).

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## How does the Ombudsman collect personal information

We collect personal information primarily from the individual to whom the information relates or their authorised representative.

However, in our investigation work we have a broad discretion as to how to investigate matters, including the information that we can ask other agencies, persons or private entities to give to us. For example to investigate a complaint it is usually necessary to collect personal information from the government agency about which the complaint has been made, either directly from officers of that agency or by remote access to the agency's databases. If you make a complaint to us and we decide to investigate the complaint then you should expect that your personal information will be collected in this way. As part of this process we may also collect information about a person associated with your complaint.

*Example:* As part of an investigation we may need to know information about current partners, dependent children, people who are being cared for by you, or people you have notified to an agency as having possibly breached a benefits or taxation law.

We may collect personal information from private entities which are private education providers when we are carrying out our Overseas Students Ombudsman functions, or private postal operators which are subject to our Postal Industry Ombudsman jurisdiction.

We also collect personal information from private entities where the Ombudsman has a commercial relationship with them, usually when they provide services to the Ombudsman.

We will only collect your personal information from someone other than you or your authorised representative if:

- you agree to it **or**
- it is authorised by law  
*Examples:* the *Ombudsman Act 1976* allows us to obtain personal information from another agency as part of an investigation (see above); the *Migration Act 1958* requires the Secretary of the Immigration department to give the Ombudsman a report relating to the circumstances of a person's detention for persons held in detention for more than 2 years **or**
- it is unreasonable or impractical to collect it from you.

Sometimes in the course of an investigation, or in other circumstances, we are given personal information about a person (which may be about someone other than the person who made the complaint), and we have not asked for this information. This is called 'unsolicited personal information' see [Privacy Act 1988](#), and it can be provided by the complainant, an agency or another person. In these circumstances we will assess whether we would be permitted under the APPs to collect this same information from the person whose personal information it is. If we could have collected it from that person because of our functions and activities, then we will retain it, otherwise we will destroy it. We will not use or disclose unsolicited personal information unless this is permitted by the APPs.

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We will endeavour to tell you if we collect solicited or unsolicited personal information about you from someone else, however in some circumstances this will not be reasonable

*Example:* Because of the confidential nature of Ombudsman investigations we cannot disclose that a person has made a complaint to the Ombudsman. Therefore it would be unreasonable to tell a payer in a child support matter that we had collected their personal information if this would disclose that the payee had made a complaint to the Ombudsman.

We collect personal information as a result of face to face meetings, telephone conversations, in writing by mail, fax or electronic communication, and through submissions of complaint forms through our website - see visiting our website [Part C](#)

We also collect personal information in records made during inspections and reviews, and in documents provided by agencies for the purposes of our inspections and reviews when carrying out our Inspection functions described under [Background](#).

The Ombudsman conducts a number of activities and that are incidental to, and necessary for carrying out his/her statutory functions described under [Background](#) above. These are best described as 'corporate' functions and include finance, accounting, procurement, reporting, employment and human resources activities. Therefore in connection with our corporate activities we collect personal information from a wide range of sources including from job applications of prospective staff, directly from staff, other government agencies and private entities.

From time to time the Ombudsman conducts surveys of people who have contacted the office. Your personal information will not be collected for this purpose unless you agree to it prior to your participation in any survey.

### How does the Ombudsman hold personal information

We hold personal information that we collect in both electronic and paper records. Apart from our databases used to manage human resources, payroll and banking information we maintain two operational databases. One is specifically designed to manage cases, 'the case management system', and the other to manage administrative documents. Both databases are controlled locally and securely. We take steps to ensure that personal information we hold is protected against unauthorised access, use, modification or disclosure, or other interferences. These steps include password protection for accessing our electronic system, securing paper files in locked cabinets, safes and secure areas, and physical access restrictions.

The case management system stores information in an interconnected fashion. This means that we can access personal information directly by searching for a person's name, or indirectly, by searching with reference to a specific case number or another search parameter. Many of these search parameters are set up to enable the Ombudsman to access material and statistics to comply with his reporting obligations.

Access to records containing personal information is permitted on a 'need-to-know', work-related basis, and subject to restrictions based on security clearance levels. In some cases access will be more tightly restricted.

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*Examples:* personnel records are restricted to staff in the relevant area; access to confidential legal advice records is restricted to members of the legal team.

Where appropriate, senior management may authorise the creation of virtual barriers that prevent staff from physically accessing information contained in electronic records.

When no longer required, personal information is destroyed in a secure manner, or deleted, in accordance with the [Archives Act 1983](#) and the Ombudsman's Records Authority, (for Commonwealth Ombudsman records); or the [Territory Records Act 2002](#) (ACT) and Territory Records (Records Disposal Schedule—Ombudsman Complaint Management Records) Approval 2011, (for ACT Ombudsman records).

### What kinds of personal information does the Ombudsman collect and hold

In accordance with the Australian Privacy Principles we collect personal information to enable us to carry out the Ombudsman's functions and activities see [Background](#). We collect and hold personal information relating to a wide range of people. These include complainants, persons held in immigration detention, prisoners held in the ACT, Ombudsman staff, Australian Government agency staff, ACT Government agency staff, staff of State or international ombudsmen offices and foreign government organisations, staff of private registered providers of education to overseas students, private postal operators, individuals who provide services to the Ombudsman as individuals or via organisations, and other people who contact or approach the Ombudsman.

In general the kind of personal information we collect about you may include your name, dates of birth, electronic (email), postal, street addresses, telephone number, occupation, and details of your complaint.

You may complain to us anonymously or by adopting a pseudonym. However, if you do so it may be difficult or impossible for us to investigate your complaint.

*Example:* if your complaint relates to an agency's actions in handling a claim you have made for a benefit, then we would not be able to investigate those particular actions without you giving us your name and any relevant reference number.

We will tell you if we cannot investigate your complaint because you have not supplied sufficient identifying information.

We will only collect your sensitive information if:

- you agree to us collecting it **and** it is reasonably necessary for, or directly related to one of our functions or activities (see [Background](#)) **or**
- it is required or authorised by law or an order of a court of tribunal  
*Examples:* the *Ombudsman Act 1976* allows us to obtain relevant personal information as part of an investigation; the *Migration Act 1958* requires the Secretary of the Immigration Department to give to us a report relating to the circumstances of a person's detention where a person has been in detention for more than 2 years **or**



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- a ‘permitted general situation’ as defined in the [Privacy Act 1988](#) exists  
*Examples:* it is necessary to lessen or prevent a serious threat to life, health or safety of a person or the public; we suspect that unlawful activity or serious misconduct relating to the Ombudsman’s functions or activities has happened or may happen and the information is needed to take appropriate action; we believe it is necessary to assist in locating a missing person; we believe it is necessary to defend court action brought against the Ombudsman

It is the policy of this office not to collect biometric information. In the unlikely circumstances that it is relevant to a complaint or other investigation then we will seek your agreement to the collection of any such information if it is about you.

In some circumstances we may collect and hold your health information. This is most likely to occur in circumstances where it is relevant to your complaint, or where the Ombudsman is performing his functions under the *Migration Act 1958* in relation to persons held in immigration detention for more than 2 years.

More detailed information about the kind of personal information that is collected by us can be found in [Part B](#)

### **For what purposes does the Ombudsman collect, hold, use and disclose personal information**

In accordance with the Australian Privacy Principles we collect, hold, use and disclose personal information to enable the Ombudsman to carry out his functions and activities see [Background](#). These functions and activities intersect with the activities of most Commonwealth and ACT government bodies and include international activities with Ombudsman bodies in other countries see [International program records in Part B](#). Therefore the best way for this policy to describe the purpose for which we collect, hold, use and disclose personal information is by reference specific kinds of records held by us in relation to specific Ombudsman’s functions and activities in [Part B](#)

In addition, in order to maintain the integrity of, and administer and develop, internal information technology systems, we use records contained in our databases which may contain personal information for systems development and testing.

### **How can I access or correct my personal information held by the Ombudsman?**

You can ask to see your personal information held by us, and you can ask that it be corrected if you think that it is wrong or not up to date. If you are speaking to an investigation officer or a member of the public contact team you can ask them about this and they will be able to immediately update information such as your address or contact details if these have changed. More formal or extensive requests should be addressed to the ‘Privacy Contact Officer’ and sent by

- over land mail to GPO Box 442, Canberra ACT 2601, or



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- email to [privacy@ombudsman.gov.au](mailto:privacy@ombudsman.gov.au).

You can also call 1300 363 072 and ask to speak with a Privacy Contact Officer.

Generally your request will be considered by us with reference to the framework of the [Freedom of Information Act 1982](#) (for Commonwealth Ombudsman matters), and the [Freedom of Information Act 1989](#) (for ACT Ombudsman matters).

If, in considering your request, we believe that a document containing your personal information should be withheld from you because an exemption under the FOI Act would apply then we may withhold that document (or parts of it), and will explain the reason to you in writing. Requests for access will be answered within 30 days of the date on which the request is made.

Ombudsman staff should refer to internal Ombudsman policies and guidelines in relation to access to their personal information.

You may also seek access to, or request amendment or annotation of, your personal information by submitting a request under relevant Commonwealth or ACT Freedom of Information Acts. Information on how to make a request under the FOI Act may be found at [www.ombudsman.gov.au/pages/contact-us/seeking-information/](http://www.ombudsman.gov.au/pages/contact-us/seeking-information/). More general information on FOI and Privacy may be found on the Australian Information Commissioner's website <http://www.oaic.gov.au/freedom-of-information/freedom-of-information>

### **How do I complain about the handling of my personal information by the Ombudsman?**

Complaints about privacy breaches by the Ombudsman must be made in writing. You can address a complaint to the 'Privacy Contact Officer' and send by

- over land mail to GPO Box 442, Canberra ACT 2601, or
- email to [privacy@ombudsman.gov.au](mailto:privacy@ombudsman.gov.au).

You can also call 1300 363 072 and ask to speak with a Privacy Contact Officer.

You should set out how you say we have not handled your personal information in accordance with the Australian Privacy Principles.

We will acknowledge your complaint within 7 days and investigate and resolve all complaints as soon as possible. Your complaint will be referred to a Privacy Contact Officer, usually a member of the Ombudsman legal team. Your complaint will be investigated and you will be advised of the outcome of the investigation. Our decision will be explained with reference to the relevant APPs. The time this will take will depend on the nature of your complaint and how complicated it is.

If you are unhappy with our response or the way we have handled your complaint, you may complain to the Australian Information Commissioner. Details on how to make a complaint to the Information Commissioner can be found at [www.oaic.gov.au/privacy/privacy-complaints](http://www.oaic.gov.au/privacy/privacy-complaints).

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Ombudsman staff should refer to internal Ombudsman policies and guidelines in relation to complaints about interference with their privacy.

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## **Part B – Records: specific kinds of Ombudsman records that hold Personal Information**

### **Complaint handling and investigation records**

These records contain details of complaints made to us in relation to the Ombudsman's functions under the [Ombudsman Act 1976](#), the [Public Interest Disclosure Act 2013](#), the [Ombudsman Act 1989](#) (ACT) and the [Public Interest Disclosure Act 2012](#) (ACT) see [Part A Background](#). These include complaints made to the Commonwealth Ombudsman in his capacity as the Immigration Ombudsman, Taxation Ombudsman, Law Enforcement Ombudsman, Defence Force Ombudsman, Postal Industry Ombudsman and Overseas Students Ombudsman.

These files also record the actions taken by us in relation to those complaints, including investigation and internal reviews of decisions made about those complaints. Because the Ombudsman can investigate complaints about most Commonwealth and ACT government agencies, as well as some private contractors to the Commonwealth, the kind of personal information that is collected and held on these files can vary greatly and will depend on the nature of the complaint.

*Example:* if you complain about an agency's decision about government benefits the personal information might include your pension status, use of appeal or review mechanisms, complaint and/or customer reference numbers with the other agency, how the action complained about has affected you, and any outcome you would like to obtain.

These files may also contain sensitive information.

*Examples:* A complaint about how you have been treated while held in immigration detention, or a decision about a visa application, might include details of your physical or mental health, disabilities, sexual orientation, racial or ethnic origin, criminal convictions, religious beliefs, community and/or political affiliations, financial circumstances, or personal relationships; an overseas student complaint or external appeal about a private registered education provider, might include details of your visa status, your country of citizenship, your enrolment details, your academic results, medical certificates or other health records provided in relation to your attendance, or other personal details about compassionate and compelling circumstances that may have affected your studies in Australia; a complaint from a prisoner held in the ACT may include medical information, details of legal representatives, social workers, other prisoners and associates, and video footage of prison incidents.

Personal information of the kinds described above may also be held in relation to someone other than the person who has made the complaint. Other people whose personal information may be held on these files include relatives or friends of the complainant, staff of other government agencies or staff of government service providers.

Personal information described above is collected to enable us to decide whether your complaint is within the Ombudsman's jurisdiction, whether there is a reason not to investigate the complaint, the agency about which the complaint is made, and how best to investigate the complaint. It also helps us decide if another body or person could assist you

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better in resolving your complaint. In some circumstances the [Ombudsman Act 1976](#) allows us to transfer your complaint, including your personal information, to another agency or body. If we investigate your complaint we will contact the agency about which you have complained, and sometimes other people or organisations if we consider they have information relevant to the investigation. It will normally be necessary for us to disclose some of your personal information when we do this.

If you have contacted the Ombudsman to make a complaint and you are also a person in relation to whom we have an obligation to report to the Minister under the *Migration Act 1958*, then we may use the details of your complaint to help us in our report to the Minister – see [Immigration detention reporting records](#) below. We will only use sensitive information from your complaint file if it is directly relevant to the matters in our report to the Minister.

Information contained on complaint files also assists the Ombudsman in discharging his wider functions by giving him a context in which to target inquiries, request relevant information and make suitably informed reports on actions taken by government.

*Example:* Your complaint about the way an agency has handled your pension or government benefit may be the same as a large number of other complaints, highlighting that this is an issue of interest about which the Ombudsman may wish to conduct an ‘own motion’ investigation about – see [Own motion investigation records](#).

In some circumstances an investigation of a complaint will result in the Ombudsman making a report under Division 2 of the [Ombudsman Act 1976](#), or Division 2.3 of the [Ombudsman Act 1989](#). The information collection on the file will be used for the purposes of the report. The Ombudsman may make all or part of the final report public, and as far as possible will remove individual names from, and abridge such reports, in order to limit the disclosure of personal information.

### **Public interest disclosure records - agencies’ reporting requirements**

The Ombudsman maintains records relating to particular functions he has under the [Public Interest Disclosure Act 2013](#). These records include data collected from agencies in relation to allocation and investigation decisions under that Act. The Ombudsman also maintains records of requests made by agencies seeking an extension of time in relation to the handling of a disclosure. The data collected for these purposes may contain personal information including the name and contact details of the discloser and the nature of the disclosure. In addition agencies are required to provide further information to the Ombudsman for Annual Reporting purposes, such information would be de-identified and unlikely to contain personal information.

### **Own motion investigation records**

The Ombudsman may commence an investigation on his or her own motion. This means that the Ombudsman may investigate an issue of interest that relates to public administration without a specific complaint, or in relation to a group of similar complaints. We maintain separate files in relation to these investigations, managed both electronically and in paper formats.

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The kinds of personal information contained on these files may include that described under [Complaint handling and investigation records](#). The Ombudsman has broad powers to conduct own motion investigations in a manner he/she determines to be most appropriate, and by obtaining information from a wide range of sources, including individual complaint and investigation records.

As with complaint files, information contained on own motion investigation files may be disclosed to the agency or agencies in relation to which the investigation is being conducted.

An own motion investigation will usually result in the Ombudsman making a report under Division 2 of the [Ombudsman Act 1976](#), or Division 2.3 of the [Ombudsman Act 1989](#). The information collection on the file will be used for the purposes of the report. The Ombudsman may make all or part of the final report public, and as far as possible will remove individual names from, and abridge such reports in order to limit the disclosure of personal information.

### **Inspection and law enforcement records**

The Ombudsman keeps records relating to the performance of statutory inspections and review roles. These roles involve assessing the compliance of certain federal, state and territory law enforcement agencies with legislation that deals with, amongst other things, telecommunications interception and access to stored communications, surveillance device use and the conduct of controlled operations. As the ACT Ombudsman the Ombudsman also has an inspection role in relation to the use of assumed identities, and has a particular role to play in monitoring records relating to the ACT child sex offenders register. The Commonwealth Ombudsman also undertakes inspections under the [Australian Federal Police Act 1979](#) and review activities under the [Fair Work \(Building Industry\) Act 2012](#).

Records of the Ombudsman's inspection and review activities may include personal information of the following kinds:

- the names of judicial and agency officers who issued, or are authorised to issue warrants, notices and authorisations;
- the names of Ombudsman staff and staff of other agencies; and
- the names and contact details of people who have made, or are the subject of, complaints to the AFP;
- criminal histories, records of police interviews, CCTV footage and police incident reports;
- the names, addresses, employment details, video footage, and transcripts of examinations kept as part of the Ombudsman's functions under the [Fair Work \(Building Industry\) Act 2012](#).

We maintain separate files in relation to inspections activities, which are managed in paper and electronic formats, with access restricted to the Ombudsman's inspections and law enforcement team.

### **Immigration detention statutory reporting records**

The Ombudsman keeps records relating to the performance of his immigration detention reporting function under Part 8 of the [Migration Act 1958](#). This requires the Ombudsman to report to the Minister for Immigration on persons held in immigration detention for more than two years, and every six months thereafter while the person remains in immigration

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detention. We maintain separate files in relation to this role, managed both electronically and in paper formats.

These records contain personal information relating to immigration detainees and may also contain personal information about employees of the Department of Immigration and Border Protection or service providers contracted to that department. These records could include personal information about immigration status, criminal charges and convictions, tribunal decision records, court records, detention incidents, health and welfare summary reports, full mental and physical health records, details of prescribed medication, racial or ethnic origins, political affiliations, details about refugee claims, personal relationships and the financial status of persons held in detention. Records may also include information provided by other agencies (such as the Australian Federal Police and other government agencies), with their permission, or obtained using the Ombudsman's formal powers.

Personal information (including sensitive personal information) is obtained from the Secretary of the Department of Immigration and Border Protection as part of his/her obligation under section 480N of the [Migration Act 1958](#), and from individual complaint records. In addition we may obtain personal information from legal representatives and advocates for detainees, and from detainees directly, through interview and/or documents.. Sensitive personal information is only used if directly relevant to the Ombudsman's reporting functions.

In accordance with Part 8 of the [Migration Act 1958](#) when the Ombudsman makes a report to the Minister it will contain personal information about the person held in detention including the name of that person. The version of the report that is provided for tabling in Parliament will not, as far as possible, contain personal information that can identify the person held in detention and does not include the person's name. Other de-identified information includes date of birth, place of birth, nationality, citizenship, ethnicity, other people's names (including medical professionals, advocates, lawyers and migration agents), hospitals, and the Department of Immigration and Border Protection's unique person identifier. In some cases, information about a person's current detention placement may be de-identified. In other cases, information is not only de-identified but redacted, for example, where the report includes personal medical detail or sensitive information about minors.

Procedures relating to handling these files are regularly reviewed and access to these records is only permitted to members of the relevant team responsible for this function.

### **Miscellaneous contact records**

The purpose of these records is to record details of approaches made to the Ombudsman that do not constitute complaints for the purposes of either the Commonwealth or ACT Ombudsman Act. Such approaches may be from members of the public, officers of other agencies, the media and researchers. The records may also contain complaints about us and how we may have handled your complaint or relate to alleged breaches of the Ombudsman's service charter or other matters. The kinds of personal information stored on these records may reflect any of the kinds described above.

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## **Freedom of Information (FOI) records**

The purpose of these records is to record all requests for information made to the Commonwealth Ombudsman under the [Freedom of Information Act 1982](#) and, to the ACT Ombudsman, under the [Freedom of Information Act 1989](#). These files also record requests for internal review of Ombudsman FOI decisions, as well as requests for annotation and/or amendment of records. We also record our interactions with the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner in respect of FOI complaints and Information Commissioner reviews.

Personal information on these records may relate to the person who has made the FOI request, complainants to the Ombudsman (whether or not they are also the FOI applicant), Ombudsman staff, staff of other agencies, and any other person whose personal information is contained in the record to which FOI access has been sought.

Most requests that we receive under Freedom of Information law relate to complaint investigation files, therefore usually the personal information will consist largely of the kinds mentioned above under 'Complaint handling and investigation'.

## **Voicemail records**

Telephone calls to our 1300 362 072 number may be recorded. You will be advised if your call will be recorded. These records registered on our phone system may relate to a range of matters, including complaints, general enquiries, media enquiries, and contact by other agencies. The personal information contained in them may include a caller's name, address and telephone number. Depending on the subject matter of a recording the information contained in it will be placed onto other records either as an audio record or reduced to a written form (not necessarily an exact transcription), and be handled accordingly. Once placed with the relevant record the recording is destroyed.

These records may also be used for training and quality assurance purposes.

## **International program records**

The purpose of these records is to capture our work in improving the quality and performance of ombudsman offices in countries within the Asia-Pacific region. Files typically contain details about the development and delivery of relevant programs and projects, including details of overseas visits and liaison activities with other ombudsmen.

Personal information contained on these files is generally limited to that of Ombudsman staff, staff of other State or international ombudsmen offices, and staff of other Australian or international government organisations. It may include names, business and personal address details, CVs and information relating to expressions of interest for employment, information about next of kin and emergency contacts, birth and gender details, medical information and passport details.

Passport pages and the personal information contained in them are used for arranging travel and accommodation as well as enabling our counterpart organisations to send accurate



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letters of invitation for the purposes of arranging visas. Consequently this information may be sent to diplomatic missions of countries in the Asia Pacific region.

Next of kin and medical information may be revealed to overseas countries in the case of an emergency. We also hold such information in relation to staff of overseas counterpart organisations who visit our office.

CVs and expression of interest documents containing personal information of Ombudsman staff are sent to our counterpart organisations overseas as a way of introducing placement officers. Likewise we receive and hold this information in respect of staff of our overseas counterpart organisations which visit or work in our office.

The countries to which we send (usually through their diplomatic missions within Australia), personal information described above include the Republic of Indonesia, Solomon Islands, Samoa, the Independent State of Papua New Guinea, Republic of Kiribati, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, New Zealand, Republic of Peru, Cook Islands, Niue, the Kingdom of Tonga, the Republic of Nauru, and the Republic of Vanuatu.

### **Personnel records**

The Ombudsman has duties and powers as an agency head under the *Public Service Act 1999* and has other associated obligations including those arising under the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*, the *Sex Discrimination Act 1984*, the *Fair Work Act 2009*, the *Safety Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988*, the *Superannuation Act 2005*, the *Long Service Leave (Commonwealth Employees) Act 1976*, the *Maternity Leave (Commonwealth Employees) Act 1976* and the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011*. Records are kept by us to enable the Ombudsman to discharge his functions in relation to these obligations and related responsibilities in respect of staff, employees and contractors.

Personnel files are kept to maintain records about all aspects of employment including recruitment, employment history, payroll, leave, equal employment opportunity data, workplace relations, security clearances, performance, workplace health and safety, rehabilitation and compensation. These records are kept in relation to all permanent, contracted and temporary staff members/employees of the Ombudsman.

Access to personnel files is controlled on a 'need to know' basis. Not all members of the Human Resources team have access to all personnel files. Spreadsheets used to capture personal information are password protected.

Personal information is disclosed on a 'need to know' basis to the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet for the purposes of administering our payroll, and to travel providers under the 'whole of government' travel arrangements. In addition we are required to give personal information to various bodies including the Australian Public Service Employment Database, the Australian Government Security Vetting Agency, the Australian Taxation Office and Comcare

Staff should refer to internal guidelines for more detail in relation to these records.

# Privacy Policy

## **Corporate administrative records including policy records**

The purpose of administrative records is to hold information relating to corporate functions, including office governance, financial management, procurement, legal services, privacy, information, communications and technology, public affairs and both physical and information security.

Such files may contain a range of personal information relating to complainants, contracted service providers, Ombudsman staff (and staff of other agencies) as well as members of the wider community. Such information is likely to mirror the kinds described above in relation to complaint investigations.

## **Strategic/agency liaison records**

The purpose of these files is to record information and activities relating to policy aspects of the Ombudsman's work, for example the development of directions, aids or systems to support our decision-making and the performance of statutory functions. Information on these records may also help us make contributions to policy debates across government.

Some of these files may include material relevant to closed or ongoing investigations (where it is related to, or may inform consideration of, a broader policy issue), and include personal information about complainants or agency staff.

These files may also contain interagency protocols or memoranda of understanding and details of interagency meetings including the names of attendees and their positions within agencies.

# Privacy Policy

## Part C - Online

### Scope

This privacy statement applies to your interactions with Commonwealth Ombudsman and ACT Ombudsman websites (<http://ombudsman.gov.au>; <http://ombudsman.act.gov.au>/, <http://www.pio.gov.au/>, <http://www.oso.gov.au/>). This statement discloses our information gathering and dissemination practices that are set out in accordance with the [Privacy Act 1988](#).

### Privacy statement

We are committed to the protection of your privacy in accordance with the [Australian Information Commissioner's Guidelines for Federal and ACT Government World Wide Websites](#). These guidelines outline the requirements for transparent collection, appropriate and ethical use and secure storage of personal information. Our aim is to provide an online environment which will ensure the information you provide to us is handled in a secure, efficient and confidential manner.

### Information collected

When visiting our sites, a record of your visit is logged. This 'clickstream data' is recorded for statistical purposes only and is used to help improve the website. The following information is supplied by your browser (e.g: Internet Explorer):

- the user's server address
- the user's operating system (for example Windows, Mac etc)
- the user's top level domain name (for example .com, .edu, .gov, .au, .uk etc)
- the date and time of the visit to the site
- the pages accessed and the documents downloaded
- the previous site visited,
- the type of browser used.

This information is used for statistical purposes only. No attempt will be made to identify users or their browsing activities except in the unlikely event of an investigation, where a law enforcement agency (or other government agency) exercises a legal authority to inspect Internet Service Provider (ISP) logs (eg. by warrant, subpoena or notice to produce).

### Cookies

Cookies are small text files that a website can transfer to your computer when you access information on that website. Cookies can make websites easier to use by storing information about your preferences on a particular website. Some cookies may remain stored on your computer for a predetermined amount of time unless you specifically clear them. This site may use cookies.

# Privacy Policy

## Collection of personal information

When you e-mail us:

- we will record your e-mail address
- we will only use your e-mail address for the purpose for which you provided it
- it will not be added to a mailing list, unless provided by you specifically for that purpose
- we will not use your e-mail address for any other purpose
- we will not disclose it without your consent or otherwise in accordance with the APPs.

## Security

Our sites do not generally provide facilities for the secure transmission of information across the Internet. The only exception to this is that users can submit complaints using our [online complaint form](#) which uses an encrypted connection, provided by the SSL/TLS protocol. Nonetheless, users should be aware that there are inherent risks in transmitting information across the Internet. As an alternative, users are able to write to:

Commonwealth Ombudsman  
GPO Box 442, Canberra ACT 2601

Phone: 1300 362 072  
Fax: 02 6276 0123

Email: [privacy@ombudsman.gov.au](mailto:privacy@ombudsman.gov.au)

## Links to other sites

Our sites contain links to other sites. We are not responsible for the content or the privacy practices of other web sites and we encourage you to examine each website's privacy policy.

## Feedback

If you have any questions about this privacy statement, your dealings with the Commonwealth Ombudsman, or this website, please contact us at [privacy@ombudsman.gov.au](mailto:privacy@ombudsman.gov.au)