

# Service Charter

MAY 2010





# Foreword

The Service Charter for my office sets out the standards of service you can expect from us, explains how you can assist us to help you and provides an opportunity for you to comment on our performance.

We are committed to providing the best service possible. Your feedback enables us to improve our service and to see ourselves from your perspective.

We regularly monitor our performance against the Charter standards, and assess ways to promote further improvement.

**Commonwealth Ombudsman**

May 2010



## Our role

The Commonwealth Ombudsman's services are available to anyone who has a complaint about any Australian Government department or agency that they have been unable to resolve.

The Commonwealth Ombudsman is also the Defence Force Ombudsman, Immigration Ombudsman, Law Enforcement Ombudsman, Postal Industry Ombudsman and Taxation Ombudsman.

Our role is to:

- investigate complaints
- deal with complaints in an impartial and effective way and achieve fair outcomes
- seek appropriate remedies
- promote improved administration by Australian Government agencies.

Our services are free.

## Our values

We strive to maintain the highest standards when delivering our services. In particular we are committed to the Australian Public Service Values and Code of Conduct, and to the specific values of our office:

- independence
- impartiality
- integrity
- accessibility
- professionalism
- team work.

# The service you can expect from us

We will give careful attention to your complaint.

## **In all cases we will:**

- Acknowledge written complaints within seven working days, and resolve all complaints as soon as possible. The time taken to resolve complaints varies because of their complexity and other factors.
- Provide you with the name of a contact person in our office, and keep you informed of the status of your complaint at regular intervals. You may contact us to check on the progress of your complaint at any time.
- Respond to telephone messages within 24 hours, except over weekends and public holidays.
- Communicate with you clearly and courteously.
- Treat information with privacy and respect, and collect, store, use and disclose your personal information only in accordance with Australian law.
- Tell you the reasons for any decisions we make.

## **If we decide to investigate your complaint, we will:**

- Investigate as quickly as possible, acting fairly, independently and objectively.
- Recommend changes to fix any problems where appropriate.

## **If we decide not to investigate your complaint, we will:**

- Provide you with reasons to explain why we cannot or believe we should not investigate your complaint. Where appropriate, we will advise you of any other avenues for you to pursue your complaint.

We welcome your feedback on our service delivery. Please see the compliments and complaints section.

## Services available to help you to make a complaint

- **Translating and Interpreter Service (TIS):** if you need help to communicate with us, you can contact us through TIS on 131 450.
- **National Relay Service (NRS):** if you are deaf, or have a hearing, sight or speech impairment, you can phone 133 677 then ask for 1300 362 072; **Speak and Listen** users phone 1300 555 727 then ask for 1300 362 072; **Internet Relay** users connect to NRS ([www.iprelay.com.au](http://www.iprelay.com.au)) then ask for 1300 362 072.
- **Community languages:** we have information about the Ombudsman in many community languages on our website.

## How you can help us to help you

We are committed to offering you an impartial and professional service. To help us achieve this goal we ask you to:

- inform us of any special needs you may have
- tell us if you need an interpreter
- respond to our requests for information in a timely manner and as accurately as you can
- treat our staff with courtesy and respect.

## Your rights

When you make a complaint to the Ombudsman you have the following rights.

- You can make the complaint in the way most convenient to you, for example, in person, by letter, fax, email, by telephone, SMS or via the online complaint form on our website ([www.ombudsman.gov.au](http://www.ombudsman.gov.au)). At times it may be necessary to ask you to set out your complaint or provide information in writing.

- Someone else can make a complaint on your behalf.
- You can make an anonymous complaint (although our ability to investigate may be limited).

If you disagree with a decision we have made about your complaint, you should discuss the matter with the person who made the decision. If you remain dissatisfied, you can ask for the decision to be reviewed. A 'request for review' form is available on our website, or you can call us and ask for a form to be posted to you. You should request a review within three months of being told of our decision.

A review is conducted by a senior officer who was not involved in your complaint. The review officer will contact you to discuss your complaint and will endeavour to complete the review within thirty days. The review officer will send you a letter advising of the outcome of the review.

We will only review a matter once.

## External review

If you disagree with our decisions, you have the following external review rights:

- Under the *Administrative Decisions (Judicial Review) Act 1977* you can ask us for a statement of reasons for a decision we have made about your complaint.
- You can apply to the Federal Court for a review of certain aspects of a decision we have made about your complaint.
- You can ask the Administrative Appeals Tribunal to review a decision by our office about your Freedom of Information request for documents in our possession.

# Compliments and complaints about our services

We want to improve our services, so your compliments, complaints and suggestions are important to us.

We seek feedback in a number of ways, including through direct feedback and client satisfaction surveys. We monitor our performance against our service standards. We report this in our annual report.

To tell us what you think about our service, you can visit, telephone, fax, email or write to us.

If you are not satisfied with the service you have received or feel you have not been treated fairly and reasonably by us, it would be helpful if you first raise the matter with the staff member who has been dealing with you. If you are not satisfied, you can raise the matter with a more senior officer by calling us and asking to speak to the person's supervisor or manager.





# Contact us

<b>Enquiries</b>	<b>9 am to 5 pm Monday to Friday</b> (except public holidays)
<b>Phone</b>	<b>1300 362 072</b> (Local call fee only. Calls from mobile phones will be charged at mobile phone rates.)
<b>Postal</b>	<b>GPO Box 442, Canberra ACT 2601</b>
<b>Fax</b>	<b>02 6276 0123</b>
<b>SMS</b>	<b>0413 COM OMB (0413 266 662)</b>
<b>Email</b>	<b><a href="mailto:ombudsman@ombudsman.gov.au">ombudsman@ombudsman.gov.au</a></b>
<b>Web</b>	<b><a href="http://www.ombudsman.gov.au">www.ombudsman.gov.au</a></b>

## Commonwealth Ombudsman offices:

### **Adelaide**

Level 5, 50 Grenfell Street, Adelaide SA 5000

### **Brisbane**

Level 17, 53 Albert Street, Brisbane QLD 4000

### **Canberra and National Office**

Level 5, Childers Square, 14 Childers Street,  
Canberra City ACT 2601

### **Darwin**

Level 12, NT House, Cnr Bennett and Mitchell Streets,  
Darwin NT 0801

### **Hobart**

Ground Floor, 99 Bathurst Street, Hobart TAS 7000

### **Melbourne**

Level 1, 441 St Kilda Road, Melbourne VIC 3004

### **Perth**

Level 12, St Martin's Tower, 44 St Georges Terrace,  
Perth WA 6000

### **Sydney**

Level 7, North Wing, Sydney Central, 477 Pitt Street,  
Sydney NSW 2000