Complaints about child protection and other child and family services

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

The Ombudsman can consider complaints about:

- The Department of Family and Community Services (FACS).
- Non-Government services for children and young people that are funded by FACS, including foster care, residential out-of-home care and some early intervention services.
- Specialist homelessness services funded by FACS, including youth and women’s refuges.
- Other community services funded by FACS such as family support services, domestic violence services and carer advocacy services.

Who can complain to the Ombudsman?

Any person with a genuine interest can contact the Ombudsman to make a complaint about a service provided or funded by Family and Community Services.

What can the Ombudsman do with my complaint?

Assess your complaint

We will assess the information you give us and decide what action we should take. In all cases, we tell you the reasons for our decisions, and even if we are not proposing to take formal action, we will help you find the right agency to complain to.

Help to resolve your complaint with the agency

If you have not yet done so, the investigation officer may work with you to assist you to raise your complaint directly with the service provider. 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 pursue your complaint with us.

Make inquiries

We may ask the agency or service provider to provide us with information about the issues you are raising or what they have done to resolve your complaint. We can make suggestions to the agency or service about what they could do to resolve the complaint.

Refer your complaint to the service provider for local resolution

In some cases, we ask the service provider to sort out the problem with you and to report back to us about the solution and the outcome. We will assess their response to determine if they have taken reasonable steps.

Chair a joint meeting to facilitate communication

In some cases, we help parties come to shared agreements through facilitated round table discussions. We also bring parties together in other ways to resolve complaints and focus on the future.

Investigate your complaint or refer it for investigation

Sometimes, when the problem is not resolved or we think the problem is very serious, we can formally investigate or refer the complaint to the agency for investigation. This can be a long process, and so we keep parties informed about the progress. Following the investigation which we conduct, we will make findings and recommendations to the service or agency. We will also monitor the agency’s implementation of the recommendations.
Who complains to us and why?

Any person with a genuine interest can contact the Ombudsman to make a complaint about a child or family service provided or funded by Family and Community Services.

Examples of who contacts us and the kinds of complaints they make

Young people

- I recently left care and I do not know what support I’m entitled to receive.
- I don’t feel safe in my placement and my caseworker is not listening to me.

Parents

- I don’t understand what I need to do to comply with FACS’ safety plan.
- FACS are not responding to my complaints about my caseworker.
- My children are in foster care and is not being supported to maintain contact with their family and culture.

Child protection reporters

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

Foster carers

- I’m not getting the support and training I need.

Clients of homelessness or refuge services

- I’m concerned about my safety and my concerns have been ignored
- I’ve been told to leave the service and I don’t know why.

Contact us for more information

Our business hours are: Monday to Friday, 9am–5pm (Inquiries section closes at 4pm)

If you wish to visit us, we prefer you make an appointment. Please call us first to ensure your complaint is within our jurisdiction and our staff are available to see you.

Level 24, 580 George Street
Sydney NSW 2000

Email nswombo@ombo.nsw.gov.au
Web www.ombo.nsw.gov.au

General inquiries 02 9286 1000
Toll free (outside Sydney metro) 1800 451 524
National Relay Service 133 677

Telephone Interpreter Service (TIS): 131 450
We can arrange an interpreter through TIS or you can contact TIS yourself before speaking to us.

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