The Ombudsman’s role in community services

The Ombudsman is the independent and impartial watchdog for community services in NSW.

We promote and protect the rights and best interests of people using community services in NSW by handling and resolving complaints about these services, and by monitoring and reviewing how these services are delivered.

We carry out our role under the Community Services (Complaints, Reviews & Monitoring) Act 1993 and the Ombudsman Act 1974.

What community and disability services do we cover?

Any services provided by:
- Family and Community Services (FACS)
- organisations that are funded, licensed or authorised by the Minister for Family and Community Services, the Minister for Ageing, or the Minister for Disability Services, including:
  - FACS operated disability accommodation
  - assisted boarding houses
  - child protection and out of home care services, including foster care
  - early intervention services
  - refuges for young people, women, families and men, and
  - neighbourhood and family support services.

What can we do?

- **Deal with complaints** about any problem with a support or service you receive. It’s best if complaints are resolved quickly and directly between you and the service provider, and we can help you to complain to the service. We can also work with you and the service to try to resolve the matter.

- **Review complaint handling systems** of community services and make recommendations for improvements.

- **Inquire into major issues** affecting people receiving or eligible to receive, community services.

- **Review the situation of people in care**. We can review the circumstances of an individual child or person in care, or a group of children or other persons 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 the person or group of people.

- **Review the deaths of certain children and people with disability in care** (including residents of assisted boarding houses). We look at the causes and patterns of death and recommend ways to improve services to reduce early or preventable deaths.

- **Coordinate Official Community Visitors** in their visits to assisted boarding houses, residential services for children and young people, and accommodation services for people with disability in full-time care. Visitors look at what is happening in those services, talk with residents and staff, and raise matters affecting residents for resolution.

- **Monitor, review and set standards** for the delivery of community services.
• **Educate and inform** service providers, service receivers, carers and the community about making, handling and resolving complaints and about standards for the delivery of community services.

• **Promote access to advocacy support** to enable you to participate in decisions that affect you.

### How do we assess standards of services and conduct?

We look at whether:

• services are acting in your best interests, and
• services are complying with relevant legislation and standards.

We are not advocates, but we promote your rights and best interests and improvements in the delivery of community services.

### How do I get in touch with the NSW Ombudsman?

You can contact us by phone, email, in person, or through our website. Our contact information is below.

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**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  
**Facsimile** 02 9283 2911  
**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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