



QUEENSLAND  
ombudsman



# → Information

## Dealing with your complaint about a council

### → What happens to my complaint?

Your complaint is assessed to ensure it is within our jurisdiction and we have the legal power to deal with it.

We try to assess all complaints within seven days of receipt.

Usually, the Ombudsman will only consider your complaint if you have already tried to resolve it directly with the council concerned.

You can do this by contacting the council in writing and outlining the specific details of your complaint. We will tell you whom to contact in the council.

If you are still not happy with the outcome, or you do not receive a response from the council within a reasonable time, we will re-assess your complaint.

Your complaint will be registered and allocated a case number. It is important that you quote your case number when contacting our Office.

Nine out of ten complaints are assessed and/or settled within 60 days.

It may take longer if we need further information from you to clarify your complaint, or if we need information or documents from the council concerned.

If we cannot deal with your complaint for any reason, we will tell you why.

### → What can I do to help?

- Provide us with relevant information to help us understand your complaint.
- Organise your material in a logical and concise way.
- Send us copies of all correspondence and other documents, such as details of telephone discussions with council officers.

- Tell us what you want (e.g. an apology, a different decision, or a change to the way the council does things).
- Keep us updated on any new developments on your complaint (e.g. letters sent to you by the council) as this will assist us to assess and investigate your complaint.
- Be courteous in your dealings with us.

### → What happens if my complaint is to be investigated?

You will be notified of the issues that the investigative team intends to take up with the council. Our investigator will inform you of any correspondence or information you should provide.

The investigation may involve file inspections, telephone inquiries, interviews and discussions involving you, council officers or other people.

Sometimes, our investigation may take longer than expected if we need to get more detailed information from you or the council concerned to resolve the complaint.

### → How often will I be contacted?

We take your complaint seriously and will contact you regularly or whenever important matters arise to ensure you are kept up-to-date on progress and developments.

Contact our Office and speak to the investigator if you are able to give us further information regarding your complaint.

If you do not know who the investigator is, quote your case number (shown on the acknowledgement letter) and you will be directed to the appropriate officer.

## → What will the Ombudsman do to resolve my complaint?

We will usually try to informally resolve your complaint with the council concerned. Where possible, we will try to negotiate a mutually satisfactory outcome.

If we seek a response from the council about the issues you have raised, we will tell you about the response and our views.

If our investigation establishes maladministration (that is, we consider that a council has acted unlawfully, unfairly or unreasonably in making a decision, or has simply made the wrong decision), we may make recommendations to that council to rectify the maladministration.

Sometimes we also make recommendations aimed at improving the council's policies and practices to help the council avoid making similar poor decisions in the future.

It is important to understand that while we can make recommendations, we cannot force the council to implement them. However, recommendations made by the Ombudsman are nearly always accepted by the council involved.

## → Your feedback improves our service

We value your feedback. From time to time, we conduct surveys of people who have made a complaint to our Office.

These surveys are conducted by a research agency to ensure your anonymity is maintained at all times

If you do not wish to be surveyed, please email or write to us using the below contact details and address to the Communication and Research Unit.

## → Who is the Queensland Ombudsman?

The Ombudsman is an independent officer of the Queensland Parliament and cannot be directed by the Government or any person or entity about how to investigate your complaint.

The Ombudsman's role is to impartially investigate complaints made about the decisions of the State's public agencies to ensure those decisions are lawful, fair, reasonable, and correct.

The Ombudsman makes recommendations to public sector agencies to rectify the effects of wrong decisions and to help improve their policies and practices.

## → Which complaints can't be dealt with by the Ombudsman?

We do not have the power under our legislation to deal with complaints involving:

- Ministers and Cabinet, courts and judges, legal advisers to the Government or the Auditor-General
- Police in operational circumstances
- Private individuals and businesses such as insurance or telephone companies
- Commonwealth or interstate government departments.

Except in special circumstances, we do not deal with a complaint if you have known about the matter being complained about for more than 12 months before contacting us.

## → Can the Ombudsman give me legal advice?

No. While many of our investigative staff are lawyers, we cannot offer you legal advice or act on your behalf.

## Contact us

**Write to us:** Queensland Ombudsman GPO Box 3314,  
Brisbane, Queensland 4001

**Telephone:** (07) 3005 7000 or 1800 068 908 (outside Brisbane)

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

**Website:** [www.ombudsman.qld.gov.au](http://www.ombudsman.qld.gov.au)