

# What to expect if you make a complaint to us

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## Assessing your complaint

After receiving your complaint, the first thing we do when we receive a complaint is assess it to see if it can be investigated. We consider:

- Can we legally investigate your issue? Under the [Ombudsman Act 2001](#), we can investigate complaints about the actions and decisions of Queensland state government departments and agencies (including state schools and TAFE), local councils and public universities. Learn more about things [we can and cannot investigate](#).
- Is your complaint more than 12 months old? If so, we are unable to investigate, unless there are special circumstances.
- Have you made a complaint to the organisation involved before contacting us? We generally ask that you give the organisation a chance to fix the issue first by using its complaint handling process.
- Do you have other appeal rights? We will consider if your matter can be taken to other agencies, such as the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal or Magistrates Court, or managed by [another complaint handling organisation](#).
- Have you given us enough information about your complaint? We may

need to ask for further information from you or the organisation involved.

- Tell us about anything that makes it harder for you to go through the complaint process. We acknowledge barriers may be faced by people who:
  - identify as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander
  - are under 18 years old
  - have an intellectual impairment
  - need help with reading or writing
  - are experiencing domestic violence
  - are an asylum seeker or refugee.

Our assessment will take about 10 days to complete and we will let you know the outcome.

## **Investigating your complaint**

If we decide that your complaint should be investigated, it will be given to one of our investigators.

The investigator may need to request information from the organisation involved. They will then look at all the information provided by you and the organisation and assess:

- the impact of the organisation's decision or action
- whether the organisation's decision was lawful, fair and reasonable
- the outcome you want
- whether an investigation is likely to lead to a positive outcome for you and/or lead to an improvement in the organisation's procedures.

This takes around one month to complete. During this stage of the investigation, the investigator will contact you to discuss your complaint.

At this point the investigator may:

- determine that your complaint does not need to be investigated further;  
or
- continue their investigation.

More information from you and/or the organisation may be required. We may also undertake site visits or conduct interviews with you and/or the organisation's staff.

The time needed to complete an investigation depends on the complexity of the complaint and the amount of information we need to collect. Most investigations are completed within three months and straightforward matters are finalised much quicker than that. If an investigation is going to take longer we will let you know.

The investigator will keep you informed about the progress of the investigation and update you at least once a month. However, please [contact us](#) if you have questions at any stage.

If our investigation finds the organisation's decision was unlawful, unfair or unreasonable, we may make recommendations to fix your complaint. This may involve working informally with you and the organisation to reach an outcome. We may also recommend changes to the organisation's policies or procedures so the issue does not happen again. We cannot force an organisation to follow our recommendations but most are accepted.

To support the assessment and investigation process, the Office has a [policy and procedure \(PDF 207.2KB\)](#), and associated [guidelines \(PDF 262.4KB\)](#) for deciding complaints under the Ombudsman Act 2001.

## Our service to you

We aim to provide a high level of [customer service](#). Your personal information, including name and contact details, is handled in accordance with the [Information Privacy Act 2009](#). Learn more about how we ensure your [privacy](#).

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