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## Complaints about health services

The Office of the Health Services Commissioner (OHSC) was established by the *Health Services (Conciliation and Review) Act 1987*. The Health Services Commissioner is an independent health ombudsman who also has responsibility for the administration of the *Health Records Act 2001* which covers health privacy. The role of the office is to assist health service users to resolve complaints about health service providers and improve the quality of healthcare.

### You can complain about anyone who provides a health service

The Health Services Commissioner can accept complaints about anyone who claims to provide a health service or anyone who holds health information. This includes:

- General medical practitioners
- Dentists
- Private and public hospitals
- Specialists
- Physiotherapists
- Nurses
- Ambulances
- Alternative therapists
- Social workers in a health setting
- Anyone else who provides a health service.

### What constitutes a complaint?

A complaint can be made about a health services provider who has:

- Failed to provide considerate, quality healthcare
- Denied you respect, dignity or privacy
- Failed to provide adequate information on services provided or treatments available
- Failed to allow you to make an informed choice about treatment
- Denied you access to information about your health care.

### Who can complain?

Complaints can be lodged by health service users (patients). If the user of the health service is unable to complain, the Commissioner can accept complaints from relatives, friends or guardians, a health service provider or anyone with sufficient interest if the user gives consent or is unable to make a complaint themselves.

### How to complain

Before lodging a complaint, your first step should be to try and resolve the complaint directly with the health service provider. The Health Services Commissioner is not an advocacy service, but assists in mediating or conciliating complaints. If you have trouble resolving your complaint directly with the provider, they can assist you.

Complaints can be made to the Health Services Commissioner in writing or by telephone with one of our assessment officers.

### Information in other languages

The OHSC has produced a brochure about its services titled '*Problem with a health service or concerns about translating and interpreting services? We can help.*'

This brochure is available in English and 24 other languages, which can be downloaded from the OHSC website. Brochures are also available through healthcare centres, hospitals and migrant resource centres.

## Where to get help

- Office of the Health Services Commissioner – Tel. (03) 8601 5200 or 1800 136 066

## Things to remember

- The role of the Health Services Commissioner's office is to help you resolve complaints about health service providers.
- You can complain about anyone who claims to provide a health service.

### **This page has been produced in consultation with, and approved by:**

Department of Health - Office of the Health Services Commissioner

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