

# Service charter

October 2020

## Our service charter

Our service charter sets out the standards of service you can expect when engaging with us.

### Our vision

We strive for fair and positive change in the regulation of registered health practitioners for the Australian community.

### Our purpose

We champion fairness through investigating complaints, facilitating resolutions and making recommendations to improve the regulation of Australia's registered health practitioners.

### Our values

#### We are independent

We make decisions and recommendations based on evidence and without taking sides.

#### We are fair

We are open and follow impartial processes to make sure everyone is treated equally.

#### We are courageous

We do what is in the public interest even if it is challenging.

#### We are respectful

We listen to and seek to understand the unique perspectives of everyone we engage with.

#### We are collaborative

We work with others to resolve issues and identify opportunities to improve.

## What we do

Our primary role is to provide oversight of bodies in the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (National Scheme) including the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (Ahpra) and the 15 National Boards.<sup>1</sup>

We provide a free, impartial and independent complaint handling service for the public and health practitioners. We accept:

- complaints to the National Health Practitioner Ombudsman
- complaints to the National Health Practitioner Privacy Commissioner
- applications to review freedom of information (FOI) decisions.

## Complaints to the Ombudsman

In general, the Ombudsman accepts and (where appropriate) investigates complaints about how Ahpra and the National Boards handled:

- a notification
- a registration matter
- personal information
- an FOI request.

Complainants commonly raise concerns about communication, delays and what information was considered by a National Board when it made a decision.

The Ombudsman can consider complaints that relate to how a matter was handled, not whether Ahpra's or a National Board's decision about a matter was right or wrong.

## Complaints to the Commissioner

The Commissioner accepts and (where appropriate) investigates complaints about how Ahpra or a National Board has used personal information, including alleged breaches of privacy.

The Commissioner can decide what should be done, and if compensation should be awarded, if a breach of privacy by Ahpra or a National Board is found to have occurred.

## FOI review services

The Commissioner also receives applications for a review of a decision made by Ahpra under federal FOI legislation.

The Commissioner can decide whether an FOI decision should be affirmed, varied, or set aside and a fresh decision made.

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<sup>1</sup>The National Boards currently include the: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practice Board of Australia, Chinese Medicine Board of Australia, Chiropractic Board of Australia, Dental Board of Australia, Medical Board of Australia, Medical Radiation Practice Board of Australia, Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia, Occupational Therapy Board of Australia, Optometry Board of Australia, Osteopathy Board of Australia, Paramedicine Board of Australia, Pharmacy Board of Australia, Physiotherapy Board of Australia, Podiatry Board of Australia and Psychology Board of Australia.

## What you can expect from us

### If you contact our office, you can expect we will:

- carefully consider your concerns and clarify whether we have understood the issues you raise
- clearly communicate how we can assist you and what the next steps for your matter are
- refer you to the most appropriate body to hear your concerns if we cannot assist you.

### If you make a complaint or apply for review of an FOI decision, you can expect we will:

- share the contact details of the staff member who will provide regular updates to you about your complaint or application
- provide clear reasons for our decisions at every stage of the complaint or FOI review process
- explain which issues you raised will be investigated or reviewed and which issues are out of scope
- promptly assess all the information you and any other relevant entities provide to us in a fair and impartial way
- answer questions and queries to the best of their abilities.

Find out more about how we handle complaints and the FOI review process: [www.nhpo.gov.au](http://www.nhpo.gov.au).

### In general, we cannot:

- force Ahpra or a National Board to review or change a decision it has made about a health practitioner's registration or a notification matter (although we can recommend that the decision be reconsidered or that another course of action be taken)
- provide legal advice or act as an advocate for you
- recommend or order that compensation be paid to you (except in relation to certain privacy complaints to the Commissioner).

We cannot accept complaints about the Health Care Complaints Commissioner or the Health Professionals Council Authority in New South Wales, or the Office of the Health Ombudsman in Queensland. We suggest approaching these organisations directly to discuss ways to make a complaint.

## When you'll hear from us

Type of contact	Timeframe
Acknowledge receipt of your matter	3 working days
Assess your matter and let you know if we can assist	10 working days
Finalise your complaint or application	Approximately 3 months
Finalise more complex complaints or applications	Approximately 9 months
<b>For ongoing complaints and applications</b>	<b>We will contact you</b>
Provide progress updates	Every 6 weeks
Return phone calls	3 working days
Respond to written communication	10 working days

## What we expect from you

We expect you to treat our staff with courtesy and respect. Our ability to provide you with a high level of service depends on mutual respect. We request that to the best of your ability you:

- respond to requests for information in a timely way
- provide accurate information about your complaint or application
- clearly identify what issues you would like addressed
- inform the staff member handling your matter as soon as possible if you need to correct or update any information provided, including if you wish to withdraw your complaint or application
- let the staff member handling your matter know if you have any special requirements, such as requiring assistance from an interpreter
- be polite – persistent personal attacks and aggressive or offensive language will not be tolerated.

Our staff's safety and wellbeing are very important to us. Ongoing unreasonable behaviour could mean that we cannot provide further assistance to you.

## Feedback and review of our decisions

We welcome feedback and applications for a review of a decision. We see this as an opportunity to address concerns, provide a better explanation of a decision or action and improve the service for others.

We request that you first contact the staff member who managed your matter to discuss any concerns. If this does not resolve the matter, you are welcome to contact us to provide formal feedback or apply for a review.

We accept feedback and applications for a review of decision via phone, email or post. Applications for a review can be downloaded from our website: [www.nhpo.gov.au](http://www.nhpo.gov.au).

## Contact us

Post	National Health Practitioner Ombudsman (NHPO) GPO Box 2630 Melbourne VIC 3001
Phone	1300 795 265
Email	<a href="mailto:complaints@nhpo.gov.au">complaints@nhpo.gov.au</a>
Website	<a href="https://nhpo.gov.au">https://nhpo.gov.au</a>

To receive this document in another format phone 1300 795 265, using the National Relay Service 13 36 77 if required, or email <[complaints@nhpo.gov.au](mailto:complaints@nhpo.gov.au)>.

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