

Service charter

October 2021

This document sets out the standards of service you can expect when engaging with the office of the National Health Practitioner Ombudsman (NHPO).

Our office investigates complaints, facilitates resolutions and makes recommendations to improve the regulation of Australia's registered health practitioners. We provide oversight of bodies in the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (the National Scheme), including the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (Ahpra) and the 15 National Boards.

Please contact us by phone, email or post, or [visit our website](http://www.nhpo.gov.au) to find out more about our complaint handling and Freedom of Information (FOI) review processes.

Telephone: 1300 795 265 (interpreter services: 131 450)

Email: <complaints@nhpo.gov.au>

Mail: GPO Box 2630, Melbourne, VIC 3001

Website: <www.nhpo.gov.au>.

Who can access our services

Our free and independent services are available to all, including the public and health practitioners.

We accept confidential and anonymous complaints. These complaints can be more challenging for us to progress, so we request you call us first to discuss how we handle personal information.

What to expect from us

We are guided by and committed to our values. Our values shape how we interact with you and how we expect you to engage with us.



What we will do	What we will not do
We are independent	
<p>Anyone can contact us and our services are free.</p> <p>We will thoroughly consider all the information provided to us without taking sides.</p> <p>We will record and analyse information gathered through our services to achieve our purpose.</p> <p>We will publicly share information about our work and be accountable for our performance.</p>	<p>We cannot provide legal advice or act as an advocate.</p> <p>When we receive a complaint to the Ombudsman, we cannot:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • force Ahpra or a National Board to change its decision • order that compensation be paid.
We are courageous	
<p>We will use our investigative powers and take appropriate action when necessary.</p> <p>We will make suggestions or recommendations for improvement to address identified systemic issues.</p> <p>We will conduct own motion investigations to identify areas for improvement in the National Scheme.</p>	<p>We will not compromise our independence or impartiality.</p> <p>We will not let challenging subject matter prevent us from listening to and considering all perspectives.</p>
We are collaborative	
<p>We will clearly communicate how we can assist and what the next steps for each matter are.</p> <p>We will share the contact details of the staff member who will provide regular updates about a complaint or application.</p> <p>We will answer questions and queries to the best of our abilities.</p> <p>We will make referrals wherever possible to the most appropriate body to ensure each person's matter is suitably addressed.</p>	<p>We will not restrict access to our services in response to unreasonable complainant conduct more than is necessary to effectively manage risks and the equitable use of resources.</p> <p>We will not consider matters outside our jurisdiction. 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.</p>
We are respectful	
<p>We will treat everyone with courtesy and respect.</p> <p>We will carefully consider concerns and clarify whether we have understood the issues raised.</p> <p>We will use our training to provide professional, empathetic customer service and respond to unreasonable complainant conduct reasonably and proportionately.</p>	<p>We will not tolerate any harm, abuse or threats directed towards our staff.</p> <p>We will not leave complainants without any means of contacting us unless there is a very significant risk posed to the health or safety of a staff member or another individual.</p> <p>We will not share confidential or personal information for a reason other than the purpose it was collected for, or unless consent is given.</p>

We are fair	
<p>We will make it easy to access our services and to understand our processes.</p> <p>We will explain which issues raised with us will be investigated or reviewed and which issues are out of scope.</p> <p>We will provide clear reasons for our decisions at every stage of the complaint or FOI review process.</p>	<p>We will not make an unfavourable comment or decision without first informing those involved in the matter and providing them with an opportunity to respond.</p>

When you'll hear from us

We aim to address your matter as quickly as possible while ensuring it is comprehensively considered. We will keep you informed of your matter's progress based on the following timeliness targets. Find out more about [what to expect](http://www.nhpo.gov.au/what-to-expect) on our website: <www.nhpo.gov.au/what-to-expect>

Type of contact	Timeframe
Acknowledge receipt of your matter	3 working days
Connect you with your case officer	10 working days
Finalise your complaint or application	Approximately 3 to 6 months
Finalise more complex complaints or applications	Approximately 9 to 12 months
For ongoing complaints and applications	We will contact you
Provide progress updates	Every 6 weeks
Return phone calls	3 working days
Respond to written communication	10 working days

What we expect from complainants and applicants

- Be polite and treat our staff with courtesy and respect.
- Clearly identify what issues you would like addressed and the outcome you are seeking.
- Respond to requests for information in a timely way.
- Provide honest and accurate information.
- Inform the staff member handling your matter if you need to correct or update any information provided (including contact information) or 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.

If these expectations are not met, we may consider placing limitations or conditions on your ability to communicate with staff or access certain services.

We have a zero-tolerance policy in relation to any harm, abuse or threats directed towards our staff. Any conduct of this kind may result in us deciding to stop engaging with you. If the conduct is of a criminal nature, it will be reported to police and in certain cases legal action may also be considered.

Feedback and review of our decisions

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

We request you first contact the staff member who managed your matter to discuss any concerns. If this does not resolve the matter, you can contact us to provide formal feedback or [apply for a review](https://www.nhpo.gov.au/review-of-our-decisions).
<www.nhpo.gov.au/review-of-our-decisions>.

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

Authorised and published by the National Health Practitioner Ombudsman, 50 Lonsdale St, Melbourne.

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