

General Warning

The purpose of this fact sheet is to give general introductory information about the complaints process. It does not contain legal advice.

WARNING: Alternative legal action should be considered before making a complaint. What is included in a complaint may be relevant to any current or future legal proceedings. If you are involved in legal action you should immediately see a lawyer and not proceed with a complaint.

If you (or the complainant, if you are complaining on their behalf) want financial compensation, support or money you should see a lawyer before making a complaint.

General complaint information

Complaints are rarely about just one thing. When you have a problem, it may be that a number of things have gone wrong. Below are some of the common areas where issues may arise that could lead to a complaint.

Discrimination	Disability and NDIS services	Policing, Custody and Detention
Seniors and Aged Care supports and services	Consumer and Business disputes	Phone and Internet services
Banking, Insurance and Superannuation	Energy and Water services	Housing and Real Estate
Health Care services	Employment issues	Education and Training providers
Government Agencies and Departments	Child Safety and Protection	State Fines and Debts
Corruption	Privacy and Access to Information	Media and Publications

There are different complaint bodies to handle different types of complaints. You should consider the different pathways available to decide the most appropriate pathway for your circumstances. One event could lead to multiple complaints. That means you may need to lodge more than one complaint to have all of your concerns addressed.

The online triage tool on this website can help you to identify the different complaint bodies that may be able to assist you.

It is usually quickest and easiest to try to resolve a complaint directly with the person or body you are having a problem with. Many complaint handling bodies will not act on a complaint unless you have tried to resolve your complaint directly. If you do not feel it is safe or appropriate to complain directly, you should contact the relevant complaint body to discuss your situation.

Complaints involving discrimination

There are state and federal complaints bodies that handle complaints that about discrimination. If your situation involves discrimination, you should consider making a discrimination complaint in addition to any other complaints. Discrimination may occur when someone is treated less favourably on the basis of: race; sex; gender; disability; age; sexuality; relationship status; pregnancy; caring responsibilities; or having or being thought to have an infectious disease.

WARNING: The state and federal bodies that handle discrimination complaints have different rules, including time limits. You can make a complaint to both the state and federal complaint bodies, but they may decide not to address your concerns if you have already complained elsewhere. For example, if you have already lodged a discrimination complaint to anti-discrimination NSW, it is likely that Australian Human Rights Commission will decide not to act on your complaint. Please carefully review the discrimination factsheets for information about your options before making a discrimination complaint.

National Health Practitioner Ombudsman (NHPO)

In this fact sheet, we introduce the National Health Practitioner Ombudsman (**NHPO**) and outline how complaints can be made to the NHPO.

The NHPO handles complaints about how the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (**AHPRA**), National Boards and accreditation organisations for health practitioners have handled certain matters and aims to champion fairness by resolving complaints, identifying opportunities for systemic improvement, and engaging with the community to improve the regulation of Australia's registered health practitioners.

Legislation and Key Terms

Relevant Legislation:

The Health Practitioner Regulation National Law (the **National Law**) was enacted in each state and territory of Australia in 2009 and 2010 and aims to create a national registration and accreditation scheme for registered health practitioners. The National Law is not a Commonwealth law. Instead, it is enacted and implemented by each state and territory using an 'adoption of laws' model. Queensland is the lead jurisdiction for implementing the National Law. If amendments are made to the National Law after approval by the Ministerial Council, Queensland, then any changes are automatically applied in all other parliaments that are part of the National Scheme, except Western Australia and South Australia. The National Law framework is set out below:

- Queensland (lead State) – [*Health Practitioner Regulation National Law Act 2009 \(Qld\)*](#)
- ACT – [*Health Practitioner Regulation National Law \(ACT\) Act 2010*](#)
- Northern Territory – [*Health Practitioner Regulation \(National Uniform Legislation\) Act 2010 \(NT\)*](#)
- South Australia – [*Health Practitioner Regulation National Law \(South Australia\) Act 2010*](#)
- Tasmania – [*Health Practitioner Regulation National Law \(Tasmania\) Act 2010*](#)
- Victoria – [*Health Practitioner Regulation National Law \(Victoria\) Act 2009*](#)
- Western Australia – [*Health Practitioner Regulation National Law \(WA\) Act 2010*](#)

The National Law gives the Ombudsman and Privacy Commissioner powers that come from the:

- [Ombudsman Act 1976 \(Cth\)](#)
- [Privacy Act 1988 \(Cth\)](#)
- [Freedom of Information Act 1982 \(Cth\)](#)

These Commonwealth Acts are modified by the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law Regulation to make them suitable for the National Scheme in the [Health Practitioner Regulation National Law Regulation 2018](#).

Key Terms: Below are key terms that appear throughout this factsheet and their meaning.

AHPRA means Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency.

Complaint means an expression of dissatisfaction where a response or resolution is wanted, expected or required.

Complainant means a person who has made a complaint.

FOI means freedom of information.

FOI Act means *Freedom of Information Act 1982*.

NHPO means the National Health Practitioner Ombudsman.

National Boards means each of the 15 national boards including 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

Step 1: What type of Complaints can be made to this body?

Complaints can be made about how the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) and the National Boards have handled matters and collected, used or disclosed personal information and how AHPRA handles FOI requests and NHPO can independently review FOI decisions made by AHPRA.

NHPO focuses on complaints about, but not limited to:

Sub-category	Example
Delays or Poor Communication After Making a Complaint (Notification)	<p>You should make a complaint if you raised a concern about a health practitioner with AHPRA, and they didn't respond in a timely or clear way. This includes long delays, poor communication, or confusing outcome letters.</p> <p><i>Example: Gertrude made a notification about a practitioner involved in her late family member's care. She felt the process took too long and the outcome letter was vague and hard to understand.</i></p>
Concerns from a practitioner about how a complaint about them was handled	<p>You should make a complaint if you're a registered health practitioner and believe AHPRA or a National Board didn't handle a complaint made about you fairly. This might include ignoring key documents, failing to assess whether the complaint was vexatious, or not properly handling your counter-complaint.</p> <p><i>Example: John felt the Board ignored relevant documents and didn't assess whether the notification against him was vexatious. He also believed his own complaint against the notifier was mishandled.</i></p>
Delays or errors in processing a registration or renewal application	<p>You should make a complaint if your application to register or renew your registration wasn't handled properly. This might involve administrative mistakes, poor communication, or being unfairly removed from the public register.</p> <p><i>Example: Stevie's registration was reinstated, but she wasn't told she had a short window to renew it. She missed the deadline and was removed from the register, despite following up several times.</i></p>
Concerns about the fairness of registration standards	<p>You should make a complaint if you believe a registration standard, such as the English language requirement, is unfair or has been applied unreasonably to your situation. This might include being told to sit a test even though your education was entirely in English.</p> <p><i>Example: Sadia believed it was unfair to be required to take an English language test after completing all her education in English.</i></p>
Issues with endorsement or area of practice applications	<p>You should make a complaint if you had problems with how your application for endorsement or specialisation was handled. This could include unclear requirements, poor communication, or not receiving timely or helpful responses.</p> <p><i>Example: Bill didn't receive answers from AHPRA while trying to meet requirements for endorsement. His application was later refused.</i></p>

Incorrect use or disclosure of personal information	<p>You should make a complaint if you believe your personal details were shared inappropriately or stored or used in a way that breaches your privacy. This might include publication of sensitive health information or other personal data.</p> <p><i>Example: Anand found that a tribunal decision linked on the public register revealed private health-related conditions that should not have been made public.</i></p>
Poor handling of a Freedom of Information (FOI) request	<p>You should make a complaint if AHPRA didn't respond to your FOI request, refused it without a clear reason, or caused unreasonable delays. This might also include failing to help you revise your request so it could be accepted.</p> <p><i>Example: Darcy accepted AHPRA's suggestions for revising their FOI request but never received a response, despite multiple follow-ups.</i></p>
Problems with accreditation of education providers or programs	<p>You should make a complaint if you believe an accreditation authority didn't properly assess or approve a training program or education provider. This might include unreasonable delays, lack of transparency, or poor communication.</p> <p><i>Example: Bill was undertaking a training program for endorsement and contacted AHPRA for help but didn't receive timely responses.</i></p>
Unclear or inconsistent policies or procedures	<p>You should make a complaint if you believe a policy or rule was applied unfairly or without proper explanation. This includes confusing or inconsistent application of rules.</p> <p><i>Example: Sadia was told to do a language test even though others in her situation hadn't been required to do the same, and she wasn't given a clear reason why.</i></p>
Systemic or widespread issues	<p>You should make a complaint if you believe there's a wider or ongoing issue that is affecting more than one person. This might include policies that have unfair consequences, or poor communication practices affecting a whole profession.</p> <p><i>Example: Fatima noticed that overseas-trained nurses from non-English-speaking backgrounds were waiting much longer for registration decisions.</i></p>
Unfair assessment of overseas qualifications	<p>You should make a complaint if your overseas qualification was not assessed fairly by an accreditation authority or specialist college. This might include a lack of clear criteria, inconsistent decisions, or long delays in processing.</p> <p><i>Example: Ajay applied to have his overseas physiotherapy degree recognised. He received no updates for months and wasn't told why he was rejected.</i></p>
Exclusions	<p>NHPO cannot handle:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complaints about individual health practitioners or services: Go to your state health complaints body if your issue is with a doctor, nurse, clinic or hospital.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complaints about the outcome: The NHPO can't change decisions made by AHPRA, a National Board, or others — even if you think the decision was wrong. • Complaints you haven't raised with AHPRA first: You should try to sort it out with AHPRA or the relevant board before coming to the NHPO. • Complaints you can appeal elsewhere: If you can go to a tribunal or court, the NHPO will usually not investigate. • Complaints in NSW or Queensland: The NHPO doesn't handle complaints about health regulators in NSW or Queensland — they have their own systems.
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Step 2: What is the Jurisdiction of the complaints body?

Jurisdiction	Description
State	NHPO has powers to hear complaints under the law of the Commonwealth and each state and territory.
Geographical Scope	NHPO has the power to act on complaints about the conduct of AHPRA and the 15 National Boards.
Time limitations for review applications	<p>General complaints and privacy complaints</p> <p>Generally speaking, a general complaint and privacy complaint should be made within 12 months after the events that led to the concern.</p> <p>FOI request reviews</p> <p>There are separate specific time limits for requesting a review of a FOI decision:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For requests to give another individual or organisation access to a document, reviews must be lodged within 30 days from notification of the decision; and • For requests involving a refusal to give access to a document or to correct a document, reviews must be lodged within 60 days from notification of the decision.
Exclusions	<p>NHPO cannot consider complaints about whether AHPRA, a National Board, an accreditation authority or specialist medical college made the right or wrong decision about a regulatory matter.</p> <p>The NHPO's jurisdiction extends only to decisions regarding AHPRA, a National Board, an accreditation authority or specialist medical college. Generally, the NHPO will also not investigate where:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a person has not first complained to the agency or prescribed authority. This allows agencies to address complaints and is often the fastest way to receive a response.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a person can seek review of an agency or prescribed authority's action – either an internal review with the agency, or an external review at a Tribunal – like the Administrative Appeals Tribunal. <p>NHPO also cannot accept complaints about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the Health Care Complaints Commission or the Health Professionals Council Authority in New South Wales, or the Office of the Health Ombudsman in Queensland. individual health practitioners (such as doctors or pharmacists) or health services (such as hospitals or clinics). <p>NHPO may suggest alternative ways for complainants to raise their concerns about issues NHPO cannot consider.</p>
Exercise of discretion	<p>NHPO does not have to investigate every complaint it receives.</p> <p>When deciding whether to investigate, the NHPO can consider any matters it considers appropriate or relevant. Some of the factors that will commonly be considered include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the complaint response that had been provided to the complainant by the organisation in question was fair and reasonable. the regulatory matter is still active and involvement from NHPO was not appropriate. the complainant has the right to make a complaint about the action to another body and has not exercised that right. the complaint is frivolous, vexatious, misconceived, lacking in substance or not made in good faith. the complainant does not have a sufficient interest in the subject-matter of the complaint. NHPO did not receive the information they needed from the complainant to progress the complaint further. the complainant was anonymous and NHPO was not able to contact them for further information. the matter would more appropriately be dealt with by a court or tribunal. <p>If NHPO decides not to investigate your complaint, the NHPO will notify you in writing and provide reasons why it decided not to investigate the complaint</p>

Step 3: Who can you make a complaint against?

NHPO deals with complaints about how AHPRA and the National Boards have handled matters and how AHPRA handles FOI requests.

Respondent	Description
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AHPRA	NHPO accepts complaints about how the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) has handled certain matters, including in relation to its handling of personal information and FOI requests.
National Boards	NHPO also accepts complaints about the National Boards. The National Boards are responsible for setting the standards that all registered health practitioners in the 16 registered health professions must meet. There are 15 National Boards. More information is available here .
Accreditation authorities	NHPO also accept complaints to the Ombudsman about how accreditation authorities handle matters in areas such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the accreditation of an education provider or program of study the assessment of an overseas qualified practitioner.
Specialist medical colleges	NHPO can also assist with complaints about the delivery of a specialist medical college's training program or the assessment of a specialist international medical graduate.
Exclusions	NHPO cannot consider complaints about whether AHPRA, a National Board, an accreditation authority or specialist medical college made the right or wrong decision about a regulatory matter. For example, NHPO cannot assess whether a National Board's decision to take action against a health practitioner was correct. Instead, NHPO look at whether the way the matter was handled was fair and reasonable.
Additional information you need to know	If you are not sure if your complaint is within the jurisdiction of the NHPO you can discuss your situation with NHPO by calling 1300 795 265 between 9.00 am to 5.00 pm Melbourne time, Monday to Friday (excluding Victorian public holidays). A voicemail service is available outside these hours or if NHPO is unavailable to accept your call. More information about the types of complaints NHPO can and cannot handle can also be found on their website here .

Step 4: Are you eligible to make a complaint?

Eligibility	Description
Who can make a complaint?	<p>Anyone can make a complaint to NHPO.</p> <p>Complaints can be made on a confidential basis (i.e. NHPO will not share personal information provided to it during the complaint process). Complaints can also be made anonymously or by using a fake name (pseudonym). Ideally, anonymous or confidential complaints should be made by phone so NHPO can check its understanding of the complaint issues and also discuss the limitations NHPO may face in progressing the matter.</p>

Have you tried to resolve your complaint directly with the public authority or community service provider?	Before making a complaint to NHPO, it is useful to talk to the agency to which the complaint relates to first discuss the issue. Talking to the agency is often a quick and easy way of resolving issues or understanding why something has occurred. It allows you to communicate directly with the agency, so they understand your concerns and what you want. If the issue isn't resolved, you can then make a complaint to NHPO.
Is there a more appropriate organisation to resolve your complaint?	When the NHPO receives a complaint, it will first consider whether the NHPO can look into the issue being raised. If NHPO determines that your complaint does not relate to how AHPRA, a National Board, an accreditation authority or a specialist medical college have handled a matter, NHPO may suggest that your complaint could be better addressed by another organisation and provide you with the contact details of that organisation.
Can a complaint be made on behalf of someone?	<p>Someone else can help you make a complaint, such as a friend, advocate, or support worker, but you'll usually need to give permission for them to act on your behalf.</p> <p>If you don't want to share your name or details, you can also:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make a complaint anonymously (without giving your name) • Use a fake name (pseudonym) • Ask that your identity be kept confidential <p>Note: NHPO may not be able to progress your complaint unless they have enough information to look into it properly. The best way to make an anonymous or confidential complaint is to call NHPO by phone, so they can explain what's possible.</p>
Exclusions	<p>General complaints and privacy complaints</p> <p>NHPO's power to act on complaints is strictly limited to those about the conduct of AHPRA and the 15 National Boards.</p> <p>Generally speaking, a general complaint and privacy complaint should be made within 12 months after the events that led to the concern.</p> <p>FOI request reviews</p> <p>NHPO's ability to review FOI requests only relates to decisions made by AHPRA about requests for access to documents under FOI legislation.</p> <p>Generally speaking, you can lodge a complaint with NHPO at any time within 60 days of receiving the decision regarding your FOI request. However, certain exceptions apply to this time limit. If, however, you are applying for a review of a decision to grant another person access to documents that concern you, this application must be made within 30 days.</p>
Additional information you need to know	<p>Free complaints process</p> <p>NHPO's services are free. You do not need a lawyer for the complaint process, but you can seek legal advice at any time.</p> <p>Limitations of anonymous and confidential complaints</p>

NHPO will aim to assist people who wish to make a complaint. However, it may be difficult (and sometimes impossible) for NHPO to progress a complaint without certain information such as the name of the relevant health practitioner or notifier. NHPO requests that complainants contact NHPO by phone to make an anonymous or confidential complaint so NHPO can talk in detail about any limitations NHPO may face in progressing the matter. To contact NHPO by phone, please call 1300 795 265. More information about anonymous and confidential complaints is available [here](#).

Step 5: What remedies are available at this body?

Power	Description
Assessment and preliminary inquiries	<p>General complaints and privacy complaints</p> <p>Once NHPO has accepted a complaint, it carefully considers the most appropriate way to address the concerns raised, which may include making preliminary inquiries, starting an investigation, transferring the complaint directly to AHPRA for a response, seeking conciliation (in relation to privacy complaints made to the Commissioner) or deciding not to take any further action.</p> <p>If NHPO decides to investigate a complaint, an investigator will be assigned to the complaint and will write to AHPRA, the accreditation authority or the specialist medical college and to the complainant to advise them of the issues that have been identified for investigation. AHPRA, the accreditation authority or the specialist medical college will also be asked to provide NHPO with information about the complaint, including any relevant documents it holds about the matter.</p> <p>At the conclusion of the investigation, the investigator will discuss their proposed findings with the complainant. This is an opportunity for any final comments before the investigator makes a final decision.</p> <p>NHPO aims to finalise basic complaints within six months and more complex complaints within twelve months. NHPO will provide complainants with a progress update every six weeks unless this is not practical or appropriate.</p> <p>FOI request review</p> <p>If NHPO have accepted your review, NHPO will make preliminary enquiries with AHPRA and you by email but can send information to applicants by post if they prefer. Where possible, NHPO try to resolve your review informally. NHPO may recommend that a court or tribunal hears the matter. NHPO may also decide not to review the decision for other reasons and where this is the case, NHPO provide a thorough explanation of this outcome.</p> <p>NHPO will ask AHPRA for any information and documents NHPO need. This might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the FOI request and, if applicable, the internal review request;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • copies of relevant correspondence between the applicant and AHPRA, such as letters, emails or file notes of telephone conversations • copies of all documents contained in the schedule of documents to AHPRA's FOI decision. For documents that were partly or fully exempt, NHPO request the documents in both redacted and unredacted form. <p>NHPO also ask AHPRA to provide a submission to explain why it made its decision. NHPO will also provide you with an opportunity to provide written submissions or information that supports your view that AHPRA's decision is incorrect.</p>
Formal resolutions	<p>For complaints made to the Ombudsman, the investigator will provide the complainant with a detailed explanation of the decision about the complaint. Formal resolutions may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NHPO providing (or suggest that AHPRA, a National Board, an accreditation authority or specialist medical college provides) a better explanation of the decision or action being complained about • NHPO speeding up the processing of a delayed matter • NHPO suggesting that an apology be offered, a process or policy be reviewed or changed or a decision be reconsidered • NHPO deciding that the handling of the matter was reasonable and take no further action. <p>The NHPO does not have the power to force AHPRA, a National Board, an accreditation authority or a specialist medical college to change a decision they have made. However, when appropriate, the NHPO can make formal comments or suggestions for improvement.</p> <p>For complaints made to the Commissioner, the investigator will provide the complainant with a detailed explanation of the final decision.</p>
Privacy - conciliation	<p>In relation to privacy complaints, and NHPO determines that conciliation is reasonably possible, an NHPO conciliator will conduct conciliation directly or indirectly. This will involve you and the organisation negotiating with one another about how the complaint may be resolved.</p>
Formal FOI review decision	<p>If NHPO can't resolve your review informally, NHPO will make a formal review decision. The review decision might vary the decision and direct AHPRA to disclose more information to you or be the same decision as AHPRA's decision, which means you won't receive any more information.</p> <p>NHPO will give the review decision to you and to AHPRA. The decision explains NHPO's reasons for making it.</p> <p>If you or AHPRA are not happy with NHPO's review decision, an appeal can be made to the relevant state or territory tribunal. An appeal must be made within 28 days of receiving notice of the Commissioner's decision.</p>

Additional information you need to know

More information about NHPO's review processes can be found [here](#).

Step 6: Preparing your complaint. What should your complaint look like? What should it include?

Requirement	Description
Format	<p>General and privacy complaints</p> <p>Complaints can be lodged:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By phone: 1300 795 265 • Online, using the online complaint form available here; • By email: complaints@nhpo.gov.au • By post: National Health Practitioner Ombudsman, GPO Box 2630, Melbourne VIC 3001 <p>Complex or less urgent complaints are usually better submitted in online, by email or by post so you can provide supporting documentation. Confidential or anonymous complaints are best submitted by phone.</p> <p>If you would like the assistance of an interpreter or translator this can be arranged by the NHPO free of charge.</p> <p>FOI request reviews</p> <p>All FOI request reviews must be submitted in writing and must include your contact details for how information can be sent you (this is usually an email address or mailing address) and a copy of AHPRA's FOI decision you would like to be reviewed.</p> <p>Complaints can be lodged:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online, using the online complaint form available here • By post: National Health Practitioner Ombudsman, GPO Box 2630, Melbourne VIC 3001 • By email: foi@nhpo.gov.au
Personal Details	<p>General and privacy complaints</p> <p>NHPO accepts complaints from people who do not want to share some of their personal information (such as their name) with NHPO, or with other relevant organisations (such as AHPRA, a National Board, an accreditation authority or a specialist medical college).</p> <p>When deciding whether to lodge a confidential or anonymous complaint, it is important to know that it can be difficult (and sometimes impossible) for NHPO to deal with or investigate complaints that are anonymous or confidential. This is because</p>

	<p>NHPO may not be able to gather relevant information about the specific concerns.</p> <p>FOI request review</p> <p>To apply for a FOI request review, you should include your:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First and last name • Contact number • Email and postal address <p>NHPO's online FOI review complaint form will not progress unless you complete the above person details fields.</p>
Respondent's Details	<p>You should provide the name of AHPRA, the National Board, the accreditation authority or the specialist medical college you are complaining about.</p>
Relevant Facts	<p>You should provide details of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the name of the respondent (i.e., AHPRA, the National Board, the accreditation authority or the specialist medical college). • when the conduct you are complaining about occurred, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ for general and privacy complaints, if the conduct occurred in the last 12 months; ○ for FOI decision reviews, if the decision was made in the last 60 days (or for document requests, the last 30 days). • for FOI decision reviews: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ the reference number for the FOI request; ○ the type of decision you want NHPO to review. • any communications there has been between you and the respondent organisation. • details of what happened after you complained to the respondent about the problem. • What do you want to happen for your complaint to be resolved? <p>You should provide as much detail as possible to help NHPO understand your complaint.</p> <p>If you have any documents to support your complaint they should be provided, including any correspondence you had with AHPRA, the National Board, the accreditation authority or the specialist medical college about your complaint.</p> <p>If you lodge your complaint through NHPO's online complaint form you can attach supporting documents with Individual document sizes not exceeding 3MB, and the combined size of all documents attached to not exceeding 10MB.</p>

What NOT to include	You will be required to make a declaration that the information you have provided is true and correct. Do not make false or misleading statements. This may be an offence.
Additional information you need to know	The complaint form will require you to authorise the NHPO to share personal information contained in this form, such as relevant correspondence, with the organisation it relates to. The NHPO will also collect, use, store and disclose personal and health information in accordance with their privacy policy.

Step 7: Lodging your complaint and next steps.

Step	Description
Where to lodge your complaint	<p>General and privacy complaints</p> <p>Complaints can be lodged:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By phone: 1300 795 265 • Online, using the online complaint form available here; • By email: complaints@nhpo.gov.au • By post: National Health Practitioner Ombudsman, GPO Box 2630, Melbourne VIC 3001 <p>Complex or less urgent complaints are usually better submitted in online, by email or by post so you can provide supporting documentation. Confidential or anonymous complaints are best submitted by phone.</p> <p>If you would like the assistance of an interpreter or translator this can be arranged by the NHPO free of charge.</p> <p>FOI request reviews</p> <p>All FOI request reviews must be submitted in writing and must include your contact details for how information can be sent you (this is usually an email address or mailing address) and a copy of AHPRA's FOI decision you would like to be reviewed.</p> <p>Complaints can be lodged:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online, using the online complaint form available here • By post: National Health Practitioner Ombudsman, GPO Box 2630, Melbourne VIC 3001 • By email: foi@nhpo.gov.au
Receipt	<p>NHPO aims to acknowledge receipt of a complaint within three working days.</p> <p>For FOI request reviews, the assigned staff member will introduce themselves to the applicant within two weeks of receiving the application and will be the main contact person for the applicant throughout the FOI review process.</p>

Initial assessment	Your complaint will first be reviewed to determine if it is within the jurisdiction of NHPO. NHPO will consult with the parties to the review to determine the material facts and issues in relation to the review and whether the matter can be resolved informally.
Non-acceptance, withdrawal and declining to review	<p>If NHPO does not accept your complaint, NHPO will explain why it can't accept your review.</p> <p>Sometimes NHPO can quickly resolve a review at this early stage by talking to you and relevant respondent (ie AHPRA, a National Board, an accreditation authority or a specialist medical college). If NHPO can resolve your review before investigating it, NHPO may transfer it directly to AHPRA for a response. If NHPO believe the applicant's concerns could be better addressed in another way, NHPO will discuss this with the applicant. NHPO may recommend that a court or tribunal hears the matter. NHPO may also decide not to review the decision for other reasons and where this is the case, NHPO provide a thorough explanation of this outcome.</p>
Commencing the investigation / FOI review	<p>General and privacy complaints:</p> <p>If NHPO decides to investigate a complaint, an investigator will be assigned to the complaint.</p> <p>FOI request reviews:</p> <p>If NHPO accepts your review application, NHPO must tell AHPRA that NHPO has accepted it. This process may take some time depending on the number of documents involved in the review and the complexity of the issues raised.</p>
Preliminary inquiries	<p>General and privacy complaints:</p> <p>The investigator will write to AHPRA, the accreditation authority or the specialist medical college and to the complainant to advise them of the issues that have been identified for investigation. AHPRA, the accreditation authority or the specialist medical college will also be asked to provide NHPO with information about the complaint, including any relevant documents it holds about the matter.</p> <p>FOI request reviews:</p> <p>Once NHPO has accepted your review, it will make preliminary inquiries with AHPRA. Where possible, NHPO will try to resolve your review informally. NHPO will also ask AHPRA to provide a submission to explain why it made its decision.</p>
Informal resolution / preliminary review	<p>General and privacy complaints:</p> <p>At the conclusion of the investigation, the investigator will discuss their proposed findings with the complainant. This is an opportunity for any final comments before the investigator makes a final decision.</p>

	<p>FOI request reviews:</p> <p>NHPO aim to resolve reviews with as little formality and technicality as possible. NHPO will work with you and AHPRA to try to resolve the review in the most efficient and practical way. As part of this process, the applicant or AHPRA may be provided with a preliminary view to help get a quicker resolution of the matter as informally as possible.</p> <p>The applicant or AHPRA will also be provided with the opportunity to respond to the preliminary view and explain why they disagree with it, or to identify potential errors. The preliminary view is generally a good indication of the final outcome of an FOI review application.</p>
Formal review decision	<p>General and privacy complaints</p> <p>For complaints made to the NHPO, the investigator will provide the complainant with a detailed explanation of the decision about the complaint.</p> <p>The Ombudsman does not have the power to force AHPRA, a National Board, an accreditation authority or a specialist medical college to change a decision they have made. However, when appropriate, the Ombudsman can make formal comments or suggestions for improvement.</p> <p>FOI request reviews</p> <p>If NHPO can't resolve your review by agreement, NHPO will make a formal review decision. The review decision might vary the decision and direct AHPRA to disclose more information to you or be the same decision as AHPRA's decision, which means you won't receive any more information.</p> <p>NHPO will give the review decision to you and AHPRA. The decision explains NHPO's reasons for making it.</p> <p>If you or AHPRA are not happy with NHPO's review decision, an appeal can be made to the relevant state or territory tribunal. An appeal must be made within 28 days of receiving notice of the Commissioner's decision.</p>
Additional information you need to know	<p>Withdrawing a complaint</p> <p>Complaints can be withdrawn at any stage. NHPO will take no further action in relation to withdrawn complaints except to advise AHPRA, the accreditation authority or the specialist medical college it has been withdrawn or, in exceptional circumstances, to take action to prevent a serious risk of harm.</p>

Step 8: Post-complaint – what if you are not happy with the outcome of your complaint?

Avenue	Description
Internal review by NHPO	Applications for an internal review need to explain why the complainant is dissatisfied with the decision made about their

	<p>complaint. If an internal review application is successful, an internal review will be completed by a staff member who has not previously made a decision regarding the complaint. This review will consider whether:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the complaint was handled fairly all the issues raised in the complaint were appropriately addressed the decision reached was reasonable based on the available information the decision reached was adequately explained. <p>The potential outcomes of an internal review include the original decision being upheld, changed or referred to the staff member who originally had responsibility for the complaint to make further inquiries.</p>
Appealing an FOI request review	<p>If the applicant or AHPRA disagrees with the Commissioner's decision, an appeal can be made to the relevant state or territory tribunal. An appeal must be made within 28 days of receiving notice of the Commissioner's decision.</p> <p>The tribunal will reconsider AHPRA's original decision and has the power to make a new decision.</p> <p>NHPO are not involved in any subsequent tribunal proceedings.</p>
Additional information you need to know	<p>More information regarding the review process is available here.</p>

Step 9: Overlapping or Related Jurisdiction to the complaints body?

Jurisdiction	Description
Office of the Australian Information Commissioner	<p>The Office of the Australian Information Commissioner (OAIC) can handle complaints about the way personal information has been handled by Australian Government agencies and some private organisations. The OAIC can also review freedom of information decisions that are made by Australian Government agencies and ministers.</p> <p>There are also State Government privacy and information complaint bodies who may also be able to assist.</p>
National - Aged care	<p>All complaints or concerns about aged care services can also be directed to the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission.</p>
State and territory equivalents	<p>Each state and territory in Australia has an equivalent to the NHPO:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Victoria - Victorian Health Complaints Commissioner (HCC) New South Wales – Health Care Complaints Commission (HCCC)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Queensland – Office of the Health Ombudsman (OHO) • Northern Territory – Health And Community Services Complaints Commission (HCSCC) • Western Australia – Health and Disability Services Complaints Office (HaDSCO) • South Australia – Health And Community Services Complaints Commissioner (HCSCC) • Tasmania – Health Complaints Commissioner • Australian Capital Territory – Health Services Commissioner
Courts and Tribunals	<p>Unlike the NHPO, courts and tribunals can make binding and enforceable determinations. You may want to seek legal advice about the option of pursuing your complaint at court if it relates to: compensation (including workers compensation claims), development application decisions, orders made by local councils, decisions, fines and orders of regulators and licensing authorities and disputes over expert assessments.</p>

Need help?

Organisations that can help you make your complaint, provide support or advocacy or give you more information

Organisation	Contact Details	How they can help
NHPO	Website: https://nhpo.gov.au/ Email: General complaints: complaints@nhpo.gov.au FOI complaints: foi@nhpo.gov.au Telephone: 1300 795 265, 9.00 am to 5.00 pm Melbourne time, Monday to Friday (excluding Victorian public holidays).	You can contact NHPO directly if you have any further questions or need assistance with your complaint.
Translating and Interpreter Service	Website: www.tisnational.gov.au Telephone: 131 450	Provides interpreting and translation services for people if English is not their first language.
National Relay Service	Website: www.accesshub.gov.au	Provides a range of services to support people who are deaf or have a hearing or speech impairment to communicate.

Self-help tools and additional resources

Resource	How this helps
Where to make a FOI complaint	Guidance from NHPO on how to make a complaint regarding a FOI request.
How to make a general and complaint	Guidance from NHPO on how to make a general and privacy complaint
Law Society: Know Your Rights	Guidance for individuals who are uncertain about where to start when seeking legal advice.
Call It Out	Online register for racism/discrimination experienced or witnessed towards First Nations Australians. Not an official complaints body.