



# Knowing your rights & speaking your mind.

(Don't be shame, be game!)

If you're unhappy about the service that you or the person you care for is receiving, you have a right to complain. There are different services that have people there who can help you. There is a law that protects you if you want to complain. The service cannot hold it against you.

All services have a Complaints Procedure or way of responding to complaints. It is a way of making sure that you are listened to. There are a few simple steps that you should take in order to help you to be heard.

## The 4 Steps.

1. Try to sort the problem out with the worker or organisation first. It is a good idea to get support from someone who knows the system and can help you.
2. If you feel you're not getting any response, find out who you should complain to. Then write a letter about your concern and make sure it is dated. (If you need help, ask someone to help word the letter).  
Keep a copy of the letter and a record of when you sent it or delivered it.  
Keep a record of anyone you speak to, the date you spoke to them and what they said to you.

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3. If you failed with your first complaint or feel that you're not being listened to, then you can contact a special Complaints Unit or Organisation that has the power to look into the complaint for you.
4. After you have tried to work out the problem with the service, if you still don't feel you are getting anywhere, you can contact one of the following services to get some help or information.

## **I have a problem with Centrelink. What should I do?**

Contact your Local Centrelink office and ask for your problem to be looked at by the Authorised Review Officer (ARO).

1. The Authorised Review Officer (ARO) will then look at your case and make a decision.
2. If you're unhappy with this decision you can take the next step and contact the Social Security Appeals Tribunal (SSAT). This Tribunal is not part of Centrelink and it is quite relaxed. Not like a court. You can contact the SSAT on free call **1800 011 140** or **02 9202 3400**.
3. If all else fails, you can contact the Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT) on **1300 366 700** or **02 9391 2400**. You must do this in writing within 28 days of receiving the SSAT's decision. Let them know you are not happy with the SSAT's decision and list your reasons.
4. If you are not happy with the final Centrelink Decision, then you can contact the **Welfare Rights' Centre**. This is a free Legal Service that just deals with Social Security Law and problems people are having with Centrelink. The **Welfare Rights' Centre** can be contacted on free call **1800 226 028** or **02 9211 5300**.

## **If you have a complaint about a health care worker**

that you or the person you care for uses, for example: doctors, dentists, nurses, a community health centre, a hospital or health clinic, you may contact the **Health Care Complaints Commission** on free call **1800 043 159** or **02 9219 7444** for advice. All complaints to the Commission are to be forwarded to them in writing.

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However, if you are unhappy about the service or care that is being provided in a hospital, have a yarn with the Aboriginal Liaison Officer (ALO) first to try and work things out.

## **If you have any problems with Home Care**

you can ring the **Home Care Services of NSW Customer Relations Unit** free call **1800 044 043** or **02 9689 2666**.

## **NSW Ombudsman**

The NSW Ombudsman can look into complaints about:

The Home Care Service of NSW, The Department of Community Services as well as Child Protection

All non-government services funded by NSW Community Services and those funded by the Department of Ageing Disability and Home and Community Care.

You can ask to speak to an Aboriginal worker at the Ombudsman's office.

**Ombudsman's Office** free call **1800 451 524** or **02 9286 1000**

*\*1800 242 636 Free call except from mobile phones. Mobile calls at mobile rates.*