

Sometimes formal complaints are necessary

Despite your best efforts, concerns raised will sometimes remain unresolved. Or infrequently a serious event that warrants stronger action may occur. This is where a formal complaint may be necessary.

There are two ways to make a formal complaint:

- ▣ Internal complaints systems.
- ▣ External complaints systems.

How to use internal complaints systems

Every facility is required to have a process in place for handling complaints - this is known as an internal complaints system. Residents, carers and relatives must be made aware of this process and be given information on how to use it if necessary.

If you are not familiar with the complaints process in your family member's facility, you could do one of the following:

- ▣ Ask for a copy of this.
- ▣ Read the Resident Agreement where it is likely to be explained.
- ▣ Check the noticeboard or display board for information.
- ▣ Ask at your residents' and relatives' group.

Facilities are required to assist you in making your complaint. They are expected to guide you through the process and make it easier for you. While most facilities welcome complaints as a way to improve their service, it can still be a little daunting for carers.

How and when to use external complaints systems

In situations where internal complaints systems have not been effective or the issue is so great that it needs to be considered by an authority, external complaints systems are necessary.

*"Talking through my concern helped me clarify things.
I was then able to take the steps I need to."*

To discuss an external complaint you could contact:

- ▣ [Aged Care Complaints Resolution Scheme](#) - ph: 1800 550 552.
A Commonwealth service which helps to resolve complaints about residential care facilities.
- ▣ [Darwin Community Legal Services](#) - ph: 1800 700 600.
- ▣ [The Northern Territory Ombudsman](#) - ph: 1800 806 380
- ▣ The [Commonwealth Ombudsman](#) - ph: 1300 362 072.
An independent service that will investigate complaints about aged care facilities. They will refer you to the Commonwealth Ombudsman if the need arises.

Each of these agencies will discuss your complaint with you, provide information that you may need, advise you on your options and then support you to lodge your complaint if you choose to do so.



Making a formal complaint, particularly through an external complaints system, can be time consuming and stressful. A word of advice from carers is to seek support in this perhaps through Residential Care Rights, family and friends, other carers, or the residents' and relatives' group at your family member's facility. Don't go through this alone, if you don't need to.

Further information:

- ▣ [Charter of Residents' Rights](#).
- ▣ [It's Your Right: Living in an Aged Care Facility](#) - order this booklet.
- ▣ [Compliments, criticisms and dealing with conflict - information sheet](#). Helpful tips on dealing with complaints less formally.

Contact the [Commonwealth Carer Resource Centre](#) on 1800 242 636* to request the above information sheet be sent to you - or to find out about other information sheets in this series.

*Free call except from mobile phones. Mobile calls at mobile rates.

We do our best to keep these links up to date, but the internet changes all the time. If you can no longer access any of the above resources, please go to our [Internet Troubleshooting Guide](#), or email us at website@carersvic.org.au