

Frequently asked questions

Who can make a complaint?

A child who is (or was) a vulnerable child or an adult acting on behalf of a vulnerable child.

What are the grounds for a valid complaint?

- The service provider failed to provide services that were 'reasonably expected' and
- The service provided failed to meet the standard that was reasonably expected.

The Commissioner does not have the power to deal with complaints against service providers that do not relate directly to the wellbeing of the vulnerable child. Complaints must refer to the services that are, or should have been provided.

What services and service providers can be the subject of complaints?

Services for a vulnerable child provided by an NT public authority or those provided by a non-government organisation acting in an arrangement with a public authority.

What discretion does the Commissioner have in dealing with a complaint?

Apart from investigating a complaint, the Commissioner is able to refer a complaint to another appropriate person or agency for investigation, resolve the complaint directly with the service provider, or to decline to deal with the complaint on a number of grounds specified in the legislation.

Frequently asked questions (continued)

What happens when a complaint is found to be substantiated?

The Commissioner will seek to resolve the matter with the service provider. This may take the form of recommendations designed to initiate or to improve service provision and/or to ensure a satisfactory level of service into the future. The Commissioner is required to monitor the responses of service providers to any recommendations that have been made.

If you would like to make a complaint or obtain further information about the complaint management process, please contact us.

Phone: **1800 259 256 or
(08) 8999 6076**

Email: childrenscommissioner@nt.gov.au

Web: www.childrenscommissioner.nt.gov.au

Twitter: @NTChildCommish

Postal address:
Office of the Children's Commissioner
PO Box 40598, Casuarina NT 0811

Location:
Level 5, NT House,
22 Mitchell Street, Darwin NT



Complaints about services provided to vulnerable children in the Northern Territory.



About the Children's Commissioner

The functions of the Children's Commissioner and the complaint management provisions can be found in the Northern Territory's *Children's Commissioner Act 2013* (the Act). One of the core objectives of the Commissioner is to ensure the wellbeing of vulnerable children in the Northern Territory.

The Children's Commissioner is responsible for ensuring the wellbeing of vulnerable children.

One way this is achieved is by dealing with complaints by or on behalf of vulnerable children, or someone who has previously been a vulnerable child.

Grounds for a complaint:

1. The services provided were not an appropriate standard.
2. A service provider failed to provide services that could reasonably be expected.

A 'service provider' can be a government or non-government organisation providing services under the Act. 'Services' include any activities relating to the care or wellbeing of the child.

As a general rule, complaints should be made within one year of the matter in question arising.

What is the definition of a vulnerable child?

A vulnerable child is one who:

- Has been notified to or is otherwise involved with child protection or out-of-home care services provided by the Department of Children and Families (DCF).
- Is under arrest, on bail, or has an order under the Youth Justice Act.
- Is on an order made under the Volatile Substance Abuse Prevention Act.
- Has a mental illness or has a disability.
- Has sought (or for whom a family member or a designated professional has sought) child-related services for the prevention of harm, exploitation, protection, care or support of the child.
- The Act also specifies that the complaint provisions apply to a young person (aged 15 – 25 years) who has previously been in the care of DCF.

Making a complaint

There are three ways you can lodge a complaint:

1. Call the Office of the Children's Commissioner by telephone to discuss the matter and processes involved. If we are out of the office, we will call you back as soon as possible. Please remember to leave a contact number.
2. Visit the Office of the Children's Commissioner to discuss your complaint with us in person. It is recommended that you make an appointment to ensure that a member of our team is available to meet with you.
3. Send a written complaint by fax, email, or through our website. For written complaints, please provide a brief outline of the matter and your contact details.

Before we formally deal with a complaint we recommend that steps be taken to resolve the matter directly with the service provider involved by utilising existing complaint mechanisms.

If you are unsure of whether you wish to make a formal complaint, we would be happy to discuss options with you. Further details of the complaint management processes can be found on our website www.childrenscommissioner.nt.gov.au

