

Places of Police detention

Police detention facilities, such as cells or vehicles, must be safe and humane and meet international standards.

The Authority can inspect facilities, view records, interview prisoners, and make recommendations. The inspections are important for two reasons: they help to protect the human rights of detainees; and they ensure that Police who work in these facilities know what conditions need to be observed.

Detainees should in the first instance raise concerns with the Police officers on duty. Police can also raise concerns, either with a senior officer or a staff representative. Alternatively, concerns can be raised directly with the Authority by Police or detainees.

Who are we?

The Independent Police Conduct Authority has been established by Parliament to keep watch over the Police. The Authority is governed by a Board which is appointed by the Governor General. It is chaired by a High Court Judge.

The Authority is made up of:

- an Investigations team. The investigators have worked in a range of law enforcement roles in New Zealand and other Commonwealth countries, and have been selected for their experience, ability and integrity. They deal with the most serious incidents; and
- a Complaints Management team. This is the first point of contact for enquiries to the Authority. The Complaints Assessors and Reviewers maintain oversight of complaints and keep in contact with the complainant until the matter is resolved.

Complaints about Police

Independence
trustworthiness
accountability

vigilance
integrity

What does 'independence' mean?

Being 'independent' means we make findings based on our own judgment of the facts and the law.

In this way, our independence is similar to the independence of a Court.

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IPCA

Independent Police Conduct Authority
Whāia te pono, kia puawai ko te tika

The Independent Police Conduct Authority is an independent body that keeps watch over the Police.

We are not part of the Police – the law requires us to be independent. We have our own investigators, and we are headed by a High Court Judge.

If you have a complaint about the Police, you can come to us.

What can you complain about?

We investigate complaints about:

- Police misconduct
- Police neglect of duty
- Police practices, policies and procedures.

We also investigate incidents of death and serious injury involving Police. The Police are required by law to notify us about these incidents and we consider them even if we don't receive a complaint from the public.

What are 'misconduct' and 'neglect of duty'?

'Misconduct' and 'neglect of duty' can include a wide range of incidents. Examples of 'misconduct' may include excessive or unreasonable use of force, dishonesty, threats or harassment, unlawful arrest, or a range of other actions.

Neglect of duty includes failure to investigate, prosecute, notify or respond to a crime.

When should you complain?

Many complaints can be resolved quickly and effectively by going directly to the Police. You may therefore wish to complain directly to the Police in the first instance. Police are required to inform the Authority about all complaints made to them, and how those complaints have been dealt with.

If you complain directly to the Police and are not satisfied that the complaint has been properly resolved, you are entitled to make a complaint to the Authority.

How can you complain?

You can make complaints to the Authority online at www.ipca.govt.nz. You can download a complaints form from the website.

Other ways to make complaints to the Authority include:

- phoning 0800 503 728 or emailing enquiries@ipca.govt.nz
- writing a letter to the Independent Police Conduct Authority, PO Box 5025, Wellington 6145
- visiting a Police station or a district court and asking to make a complaint to the Authority
- making a complaint to an Ombudsman
- the Authority can provide an interpreter on the phone for people who wish to use a language other than English. Phone us and ask for Language Line, which is a free service available during office hours.

You can also ask for help from a lawyer or another advisor such as the Citizens Advice Bureau.

What happens to your complaint?

When the Authority receives a complaint, it may carry out its own investigation, or ask the Police to investigate under the Authority's oversight.

The approach will depend on how serious the complaint is or how it can best be resolved. The Authority independently investigates the most serious matters, such as those involving death or allegations of serious misconduct.

If a complaint is referred to the Police for investigation, the Authority will take steps to ensure it is properly resolved. This may include directing or actively overseeing the Police investigation, or reviewing or auditing the Police investigation once it is completed.

The Authority may also decline to take action on a complaint – for example, if the complaint is minor or outside our jurisdiction.

The Authority receives around 2,000 complaints a year. The majority are resolved by way of correspondence between the Authority, the Police, and the person complaining, without the need for a formal investigation by the Authority.

How long does it take?

Some complaints are resolved within days or weeks; others that are serious and require investigation can take many months, or longer. The time taken can depend on matters outside our control.

We'll stay in touch

If you make a complaint, we'll get in touch to confirm we've received it.

We may seek further details, and we will also seek further information from the Police.

Once we've made a decision about how we are going to proceed, we'll explain what we're doing and why. Then, as long as we are dealing with the complaint, we will make sure you are kept informed.

If you have made a complaint and want information about progress, you can contact us by phoning 0800 503 728 or emailing enquiries@ipca.govt.nz