

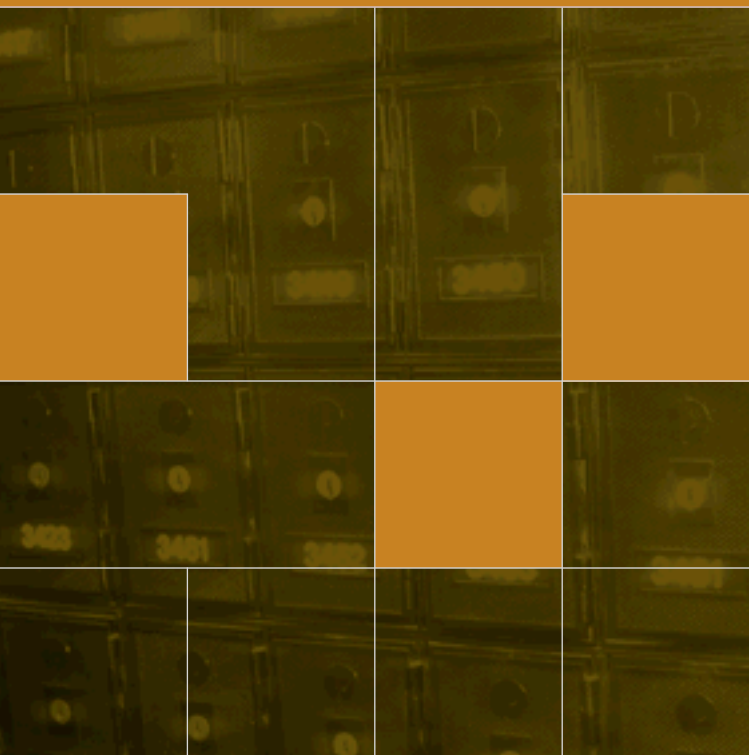
Postal Industry Ombudsman Information for postal operators

APRIL 2006



THE POSTAL INDUSTRY OMBUDSMAN (PIO) IS AN INDEPENDENT BODY ESTABLISHED BY THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT. THE PIO INVESTIGATES COMPLAINTS ABOUT POSTAL OR SIMILAR SERVICES PROVIDED BY AUSTRALIA POST AND OTHER POSTAL OPERATORS REGISTERED WITH THE SCHEME.

THE OFFICE OF THE PIO IS ONE OF THE FUNCTIONS OF THE COMMONWEALTH OMBUDSMAN



Who can join the PIO Scheme?

If your business provides a postal or similar service, you can join the scheme by registering with the PIO.

A postal or similar service is any service connected with the acceptance, security, allocation, transport or retention of mail. It includes mail that is delivered to an address or held for collection by a person, and packet and delivery services. It does not include unaddressed ('junk') mail.

Membership is voluntary. You can de-register at any time.

Why join the PIO scheme?

Membership benefits for a postal operator include:

- demonstrating to your customers a commitment to customer service
- access to an independent, external and fair complaints-handling scheme with experience in handling postal issues
- useful feedback from the PIO on any areas of your services and products that are causing customer dissatisfaction
- expert assistance from the PIO in establishing your own in-house complaints-handling procedures
- specialist resolution of more difficult or complex complaints.

What the PIO will investigate

The PIO is able to investigate:

- a registered postal operator's actions relating to the provision of a postal or similar service
- the actions of contractors and subcontractors engaged by a registered postal operator to provide that service.

The PIO is only able to investigate complaints about postal services—not about any other type of service your business may provide.

The PIO also has the power to initiate an investigation without a complaint, for example, service issues that may arise across the industry.



What the PIO will not investigate

The PIO will not investigate:

- a complaint from a postal operator against another postal operator (including Australia Post)
- a complaint made more than 12 months after the action that caused the complaint
- action relating to the employment of staff by a postal operator
- a matter being considered by a court or tribunal (unless there are special reasons)
- a complaint about action that happened before the postal operator registered with the PIO.

The PIO can choose not to investigate if it is considered that:

- the complaint is frivolous or vexatious or not made in good faith
- the complainant does not have sufficient interest in the matter
- further investigation would not be warranted in all the circumstances.

What the PIO can do

The PIO can provide a report and make recommendations to the postal operator where an action is considered contrary to law, unreasonable, unjust or improperly discriminatory, or otherwise wrong in all the circumstances. Where no action is taken on recommendations the PIO can provide a report to the Minister for tabling in Parliament.

During an investigation, the PIO may suggest that:

- an explanation be provided to the complainant
- corrective action be taken, such as an apology, or compensation
- the postal operator consider altering a policy, procedure, or the information it provides to customers.

What registered operators can expect

You can expect the PIO to:

- offer an independent, fair and robust complaint-handling process
- not advocate for consumer groups
- not criticise a postal operator without giving the operator an opportunity to explain
- explain the fees that may be imposed and give the operator an opportunity to resolve problems itself before increasing the fee
- encourage operators to develop their own internal complaint-handling processes.

The PIO will aim to settle disputes as quickly and informally as possible.

What the PIO expects

The PIO expects that postal operators who register with the scheme:

- will implement and maintain their own internal complaint-handling processes
- will be prepared to take primary responsibility to deal with complaints where they have an in-house complaints-handling procedure
- will take reasonable steps to ensure that customers are aware of the internal complaints and PIO schemes
- are honest and open in their dealings with the PIO
- are prepared to pay the PIO's investigation fees.

Fees

The PIO is entitled to charge a registered operator a fee to cover the cost of an investigation. The fee will depend on the level of complexity involved in resolving the matter. A member will not be charged for inquiries, or where the matter will not be investigated by the PIO.

If the complaint proceeds to investigation, the PIO will advise you of the fee to be charged. If a complaint is complex, the PIO will advise which higher fee will be charged. Details of the fee structure are on the PIO website at www.pio.gov.au.

Recovery of fees

The Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) collects fees on behalf of the PIO. Invoices will be sent to the postal operator by ACMA. Members will only be charged fees for completed investigations.

How to join the PIO Scheme

There is no joining fee.

You can register electronically by using the registration form provided on the website at www.pio.gov.au, by calling our toll free number and requesting a registration form be sent to you, or by visiting any of the Commonwealth Ombudsman's offices.

You can de-register at any time by advising the PIO in writing. If the PIO receives a complaint within 12 months about an action that took place while you were registered, the PIO is able to investigate that complaint.

The Ombudsman has taken reasonable action to ensure that the information contained in this publication is accurate and adequately comprehensive for the purpose for which it was created. The Ombudsman is not responsible for any damage or loss claimed to arise from any error or omission in this information.



Contact details

PHONE 1300 362 072

(local call charge)

Enquiries 9 am–5 pm Monday to Friday

Postal GPO Box 442, Canberra ACT 2601

Email pio@ombudsman.gov.au

Web www.pio.gov.au