

The Office of The Ombudsman, Hong Kong, China (formerly known as The Office of The Commissioner for Administrative Complaints) was established in 1989. The Office was formally delinked from the Government after The Ombudsman (Amendment) Ordinance came into operation on December 19, 2001. The Ombudsman is appointed by the Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government. He serves as the community's watchdog to ensure that Hong Kong is served by a fair and efficient public administration which is committed to accountability, openness and quality of service. Through independent, objective and impartial investigation, the Office's mission is to redress grievances and address issues arising from maladministration in government departments and public organisations and bring about improvement in the quality and standard of and promote fairness in public administration.

The Office upholds the following values, which include:

- Maintaining impartiality and objectivity in all investigations
- Making itself accessible and accountable to the public, government departments and public organisations
- Interacting with the public, government departments and public organisations with courtesy, respect and trust
- Upholding integrity and professionalism in the performance of its functions

**Powers and Jurisdictions:** The powers and jurisdictions of The Ombudsman include investigation of complaints of maladministration against all government departments (except the Hong Kong Auxiliary Police Force, the Hong Kong Police Force, the Independent Commission Against Corruption and the Secretariat of the Public Service Commission) and 27 major public organisations – the Accounting and Financial Reporting Council, Airport Authority, Auxiliary Medical Service, Civil Aid Service, Competition Commission, Consumer Council, Employees Retraining Board, Equal Opportunities Commission, Estate Agents Authority, Hong Kong Arts Development Council, Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority, Hong Kong Housing Authority, Hong Kong Housing Society, Hong Kong Monetary Authority, Hong Kong Sports Institute Limited, Hospital Authority, Insurance Authority, Kowloon-Canton Railway Corporation, Legislative Council Secretariat, Mandatory Provident Fund Schemes Authority, Privacy Commissioner for Personal Data, Property Management Services Authority, Securities and Futures Commission, Travel Industry Authority, Urban Renewal Authority, Vocational Training Council and West Kowloon Cultural District Authority.

The Ombudsman is empowered to initiate, of his own volition, direct investigation operations where injustice may have been caused by maladministration. Direct investigation operations are mainly prompted by issues of significant public interest indicative of suspected systemic problems which need to be rectified.

The Ombudsman also has the power to investigate complaints of non-compliance with the Code on Access to Information by government departments or public organisations.

However, there are some restrictions to The Ombudsman's powers under The Ombudsman Ordinance ("the Ordinance"). For instance, he will not normally investigate complaints which have a right of appeal or remedy by way of legal proceedings, or where a similar complaint has been investigated and no maladministration has been found, or complaints which are trivial, frivolous, vexatious or made in bad faith.

**Mode of Lodging Complaints:** Complaints can be lodged in

writing, by post, fax or email, or by online complaint form. Postage-free complaint forms are obtainable at the Office of The Ombudsman and District Offices of the Home Affairs Department. In addition, complainants can visit the Office of The Ombudsman in person to seek assistance. All complaints lodged with the Office are treated in the strictest confidence.

**Handling of Complaints:** The Office of The Ombudsman adopts the following methods to deal with complaints received:

- a. Inquiry – The Ordinance provides that for the purposes of determining whether to undertake a full investigation, the Ombudsman may conduct such "preliminary inquiries" as he considers appropriate. In the interest of complainants, this procedure is often used to resolve complaint cases of a general nature more quickly. The organisation under complaint will be asked to provide information, and the Office will collect other evidence and present the findings to the complainant in conclusion.
- b. Mediation – A powerful and effective tool for bringing complainants and departments and organisations hand-in-hand in the pursuit of mutually satisfactory solutions. Through the facilitation of the Office's authorised mediation staff who are acting impartially, complaints involving no or only minor maladministration can be resolved in a speedy and amicable manner.
- c. Full Investigation – For complex cases which appear to involve issues of principle, serious maladministration, gross injustice, systemic flaws or procedural deficiencies, or simply require deeper and fuller probing, the Office will conduct full investigation. Upon completion of a full investigation, the Office will make recommendations to the departments or organisations concerned for improvement, where warranted, based on its findings.

**Performance Results:** During the reporting year of 2024/25, the Office of The Ombudsman received 4,402 cases of complaints and completed processing 4,664 cases. Among the complaints processed, 1,655 were pursued and concluded by inquiry (1,060), mediation (555) or full investigation (40); while 3,009 were closed after assessment. The Office also completed eight direct investigation operations. A total of 254 recommendations were made upon completion of the full investigations and direct investigation operations. All recommendations were fully accepted by the government departments and public organisations for implementation.

**Education and Publicity:** The Office advocates a positive complaint culture through different channels and a wide variety of initiatives. Not only are the public encouraged to participate in social issues and voice their opinions in a constructive manner, but departments and organisations are also urged to serve the public with open-mindedness. These initiatives include:

- issuing press releases and holding press conferences to elaborate on the Office's latest developments and investigation findings;
- announcing news and updates about the Office through the website and social media;
- broadcasting publicity messages on television, radio and social media;
- organising sharing sessions and seminars for government departments, relevant organisations, universities, schools, etc.;
- presenting The Ombudsman's Awards annually to recognise professionalism in serving the public, and to foster and promote a positive culture in the public sector; and

- implementing a dual-track commendation scheme to recognise government departments, public organisations and members of the public for contributing to the improvement of public administration.

**Liaison with Other Ombudsman Institutions:** The Ombudsman of Hong Kong, China maintains close contact with ombudsman institutions worldwide, namely the International Ombudsman Institute (“IOI”) and the Asian Ombudsman Association (“AOA”).