

# Making a Complaint



Making a complaint can feel risky, especially when DCJ holds power over decisions about your child. This guide is about **helping you complain safely, strategically, and with support.**

You have the right to raise concerns. You also have the right to protect yourself while doing so.

## 1. First, you're allowed to complain

Parents often worry that complaining will make things worse. That fear is real and understandable. But:

- You have the right to raise concerns about decisions, conduct, communication, or delays
- You do **not** have to accept poor treatment to prove cooperation
- A complaint is not the same as refusing to work with DCJ

Complaining is a way to advocate for your children.

## 2. Be clear about *what* you are complaining about

Before you complain, try to name the issue as clearly as possible. This helps protect you and keeps the complaint

focused.

Common reasons parents complain include:

- Being spoken to disrespectfully or dismissed
- Decisions made without explanation
- Family time being reduced or cancelled without reason
- Reports that feel inaccurate or don't reflect what's happening
- Not being included in plans or meetings
- Delays that are harming the chance of restoration

You don't need legal language. Plain words are okay.

### **3. Keep it factual, not emotional (even though it is emotional)**

Your feelings matter but complaints are taken more seriously when they focus on **what happened, when, and what impact it had.**

Try this structure:

- What happened
- When it happened
- Who was involved
- Why it concerns you
- What you are asking for

You can say how it affected you and your child – without attacking anyone.

## 4. Write it down (even if you speak first)

If you raise concerns verbally:

- Ask for a follow-up email confirming what was discussed
- Keep copies of all emails, letters, and notes

If possible, submit complaints **in writing**. Written records protect you.

## 5. Ask for support, don't do this alone

You are allowed to:

- Have a support person help you write or submit a complaint
- Take an advocate or peer worker with you to meetings
- Ask for time to think before responding

Many parents say complaints feel safer when someone walks beside them.

## 6. Know where complaints can go

Complaints can be raised:

- With your caseworker or their manager
- Through DCJ's formal complaints process
- With external bodies (for serious or unresolved concerns)

You don't have to escalate immediately. You can start small and build if needed.

## **7. Protect your working relationship**

You can complain **and** still work toward restoration.

Helpful phrases parents use:

- "I want to keep working together, but I need this addressed."
- "This isn't about blame – it's about clarity and fairness."
- "I'm raising this because it affects my child."

This shows cooperation *without silence*.

## **8. If you feel unsafe complaining**

Trust that feeling.

Some parents choose to:

- Delay a complaint until they have support
- Keep detailed records until a safer time
- Seek advice before submitting anything

**"I was terrified to complain because I thought they'd say I wasn't cooperating. What helped was having someone sit with me and remind me that speaking up didn't make me a bad parent – it made me an informed one. This was about making sure my children were treated fairly, they don't have a voice in this, I can still**

**help keep them safe while they are in OOHC,  
complaining helped me do this."**

## **Remember**

You are not asking for special treatment. You are asking for **fairness, transparency, and respect.**

You deserve to understand decisions being made about your child.

And you deserve support while navigating this system.

## **How to complain**

To complain to the [NSW Department of Communities and Justice](#)(DCJ), contact their Enquiry, Feedback and Complaints Unit by calling **1800 000 164**, emailing **complaints@dcj.nsw.gov.au**, or writing to Locked Bag 4028, Ashfield NSW 2131; you can also make an anonymous complaint.

## **General Complaints & Feedback**

- **Phone:** 1800 000 164 (9 am – 4:30 pm, Mon–Fri).
- **Email:** complaints@dcj.nsw.gov.au.

## **Escalation Options**

- **NSW Ombudsman:** For serious issues or to escalate, contact the NSW Ombudsman (ombo.nsw.gov.au) or

call 02 9286 1000.

- **OCG** – Office of Children's Guardian

<https://ocg.nsw.gov.au/organisations/reportable-conduct-scheme/making-complaint>

To make a ministerial complaint about NSW Child Protection,

Escalate directly to the Minister for Families and Communities if needed.

**Contact the Minister's Office:** For broader issues or if you're unsatisfied with DCJ, you can contact the Minister for Families and Communities (currently [Minister's Name]), though they can't intervene in court matters.

**Timelines:** Expect an acknowledgement within 3 business days and a response within 21 business days, though complex cases may take longer.

**“Every cancelled family time took something from my child. I stayed quiet at first because I was scared, but silence didn't protect us, it just let the harm continue. My caseworker kept making excuses that DCJ had no family time workers, it**

**was painful for my child and me. I got support and had recorded everything and when I finally got the courage to complain I had all the evidence I needed. With the evidence my complaint got handled quickly and my child got their family time back. Support and evidence are Important."**

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