



OPCAT

FAQs

Preventing torture and ill-treatment in places of detention in the ACT

What is OPCAT?

The *Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture* (OPCAT) is an international human rights treaty that Australia has agreed to implement. It aims to prevent torture and ill-treatment in places of detention, through regular visits by independent organisations.

In the ACT, the Office of the Inspector of Correctional Services (OICS), the ACT Human Rights Commission and the ACT Ombudsman are responsible for doing OPCAT visits. Places of detention include prisons like AMC, police cells, mental health facilities like Dhulwa, and youth detention facilities like Bimberi.

Can you take my complaint or advocate for me?

No.

We visit places of detention to understand how people who are detained at that place are being treated. We do this by speaking to detained people and to staff, and by looking at records, CCTV and other types of information.

Once we understand what the main issues are, we make recommendations to the government on how to strengthen protections against torture and ill-treatment, and improve conditions in detention.



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Will the government listen to you?

Not necessarily. We make recommendations to government, but the government does not have to accept them, or make changes to conditions in detention. However, the government has agreed that our role is an important one and has agreed to take our recommendations seriously.

We can also publish reports about what we find out and our recommendations. These reports are then available to media and other organisations. We will also advocate for our recommendations to be accepted and implemented, to improve conditions and treatment in places of detention.

Will the information I share with you be kept confidential?

Yes, we will only share information with other people or organisations with your permission or as required by law. We will only publish information with your permission.

We can also use information you share with us without including your name, and making sure we protect your identity, if you prefer.



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Can I get into trouble if I speak to you?

Staff and management are not allowed to get you into trouble if you speak with us or share any information with us. We will be speaking with management at the place of detention and to government to make that clear. The human rights treaty makes it clear that people are allowed to speak to us, as the independent visitors.

If anyone punishes you for speaking with us, or because they think you have spoken with us, please let us know immediately. We will follow up. It may be a criminal offence for a person to punish you for talking to us.

Punishment includes not only formal punishment or discipline. It can also be intimidating or harassing you, or taking away your rights or privileges - like phone calls, employment or moving you to a different location.

When will your next visit be?

We will not always announce our visits to staff and detained people, because unannounced visits help us to understand what is happening in detention. So, unfortunately, we cannot provide that information to you.

However, you can contact us at the details provided on the next page at any time.



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Contact



ICS
ACT Inspector
of Correctional
Services

Website ics.act.gov.au/
Email ics@act.gov.au
Phone 1800 932 010



**ACT HUMAN RIGHTS
COMMISSION**
Australian Capital Territory

Website hrc.act.gov.au/
Email human.rights@act.gov.au
Phone (02) 6205 2222



Website www.ombudsman.act.gov.au
Email actombo@ombudsman.gov.au
Phone (02) 5117 3650

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the ACT, the Ngunnawal people. We acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of this city and this region.