

## Complaint Handling Policy

<b>Policy Owner: Executive Manager/Public Officer</b>	
<b>Date Last Adopted/Amended: 31 May 2016</b>	<b>Review Date: 17 November 2023</b>

### 1. Policy Statement/Objective(s)

Shellharbour City Council is committed to ensuring that we handle complaints fairly, efficiently and effectively.

Our complaint management system is intended to:

- enable us to respond to issues raised by people making complaints in a timely and cost-effective way
- boost public confidence in our administrative process, and
- provide information that can be used by us to deliver quality improvements in our services, practices, procedures, products, systems and complaint handling.

This policy provides guidance to Council staff and people who wish to make a complaint on Council's services, systems, products and staff.

### 2. Scope

This policy applies to all Council officials receiving or managing complaints from the public made to or about us, regarding our services, practices, procedures, products, systems and complaint handling.

Staff grievances, code of conduct complaints and public interest disclosures are dealt with through separate mechanisms.

### 3. References

- Australian and New Zealand Standard *Guidelines for complaint handling in organisations* AS/NZS 10002:2014
- Council 's *Code of Conduct* and associated Procedures
- Council's *Privacy Management Plan*
- *NSW Local Government Act 1993*
- *NSW Protected Disclosures Act 1994*
- *NSW Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998*
- *NSW Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009*
- *NSW Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1998*
- Office of Local Government *Practice Note No 9 – Complaints Management In Councils*

- NSW Ombudsman *Effective Complaint Handling Guidelines, 2nd Edition, December 2010*
- NSW Ombudsman *Complaint Management Framework, June 2015*
- Council's Customer Service Charter

#### 4. External/Internal Consultations

Nil

#### 5. Definitions

<b>Complaint</b>	<p>Expression of dissatisfaction made to or about us, our products, services, staff or the handling of a complaint where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required.</p> <p>A complaint covered by this Policy can be distinguished from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• staff grievances (see our internal complaints policy)</li> <li>• public interest disclosures made by our staff (see our internal reporting - public interest disclosures policy)</li> <li>• code of conduct complaints (see our code of conduct)</li> <li>• responses to requests for feedback about the standard of our service provision (see the definition of 'feedback' below)</li> <li>• reports of problems or wrongdoing merely intended to bring a problem to our notice with no expectation of a response (see definition of 'feedback')</li> <li>• service requests (see definition of 'service request' below), and</li> <li>• requests for information (see our access to information policy).</li> </ul>
<b>Complaint management system</b>	All policies, procedures, practices, staff, hardware and software used by Council in the management of complaints.
<b>Dispute</b>	An unresolved complaint escalated either within or outside of Council.
<b>Feedback</b>	Opinions, comments and expressions of interest or concern, made directly or indirectly, explicitly or implicitly, to or about us, about our products, services or complaint handling where a response is not explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required.
<b>Service request</b>	<p>The definition of a service request is likely to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• requests for approval</li> <li>• requests for action</li> <li>• routine inquiries about Council's business</li> <li>• requests for the provision of services and assistance</li> </ul>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>reports of failure to comply with laws regulated by Council</li> <li>requests for explanation of policies, procedures and decisions.</li> </ul>
<b>Grievance</b>	A clear, formal written statement by an individual staff member about another staff member or a work related problem.
<b>Policy</b>	A statement of instruction that sets out how we should fulfil our vision, mission and goals.
<b>Procedure</b>	A statement or instruction that sets out how our policies will be implemented and by whom.
<b>Public interest disclosure</b>	A report about wrong doing made by a public official in NSW that meets the requirements of the Public Interest Disclosures Act 1994.

## 6. Variation and Review

Council reserves the right to review, vary or revoke this policy.

### Review History

Date Policy first adopted – Version 1	18/8/2004
Date amendment adopted – Version 2	28/2/2007
Date amendment adopted – Version 3	17/4/2007
Date amendment adopted – Version 4	27/10/2010
Date amendment adopted – Version 5 Based on the Ombudsman's model and includes change of name	31/05/2016
Date policy reviewed	17/11/2020

## 7. Policy

Council commitment

Council expects staff at all levels to work in accordance with Council's Core Values and Behaviours and be committed to fair, effective and efficient complaint handling. When dealing with complaints, staff must adhere to the Complaint Handling Guidelines.

### ACCOUNTABILITY AND LEARNING

#### Analysis and evaluation of complaints

We will ensure that complaints are recorded in a systematic way so that information can be easily retrieved for reporting and analysis.

Regular reports will be run on:

- the number of complaints received
- the outcome of complaints, including matters resolved at the frontline

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- issues arising from complaints
- systemic issues identified, and
- the number of requests we receive for internal and/or external review of our complaint handling.

Regular analysis of these reports will be undertaken to monitor trends, measure the quality of our customer service and make improvements.

Both reports and their analysis will be provided to Council's General Manager and senior management for review.

### **Monitoring of the complaint management system**

We will continually monitor our complaint management system to:

- ensure effectiveness in responding to and resolving complaints, and
- identify and correct deficiencies in the operation of the system.

Monitoring may include the use of audits, complaint satisfaction surveys and online listening tools and alerts.

### **Continuous improvement**

We are committed to improving the effectiveness and efficiency of our complaint management system. To this end, we will:

- support the making and appropriate resolution of complaints
- implement best practices in complaint handling
- recognise and reward exemplary complaint handling by staff
- regularly review the complaints management system and complaints data, and
- implement appropriate system changes arising out of our analysis of complaints data and continual monitoring of the system.

## **8. Related Forms**

Complaint/Feedback Form

**Note: Related forms can be located Online under “Forms and Applications”**

## **9. Attachments:**

Attachment 1: Complaint/Feedback Form  
Attachment 2: Complaint Handling Procedure  
Attachment 3: Complaint Handling Guideline

### **Policy Authorised by:**

Name: Council Resolution Number - 130

Date: 130

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