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# Complaints and Feedback Management **Policy**

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Policy owner:	Communications, Marketing & Customer Engagement
Approved by:	Chief Executive Officer
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## Purpose

This policy aims to provide clear direction for Central Coast Council (CCC) staff to respond effectively and independently to individual cases of dissatisfaction. Additionally, it aims to increase customer satisfaction, strengthen customer input into our services, acknowledge areas of excellence and identify service improvements.

1. The policy will provide guidance to staff when managing complaints and feedback received from customers.
2. Enhance public confidence in the Council by creating an environment that encourages feedback and complaints.
3. Ensure complaints are managed in a timely and equitable manner and recognise the needs and expectations of the complainant.
4. Provide a transparent, accessible and effective complaints process that is supported by a system to analyse, evaluate and audit complaints and their outcomes in order to deliver quality improvements.
5. Supply a mechanism for reviewing the effectiveness and efficiency of Council's feedback and complaint management practices and outcomes.

## Policy summary

The policy aims to address seven principles of effective complaint management.

1. Accessibility
2. Accountability
3. Continuous Improvement
4. Commitment
5. Confidentiality
6. Objectivity and Fairness
7. Transparency

The policy aims to assist Community members to:

1. be aware of the process of providing feedback, compliments and complaints to the Central Coast Council as well as the process for response and investigation; and
2. be confident in our commitment to continuous improvement and responsiveness when issues do arise.

The policy aims to assist all staff:

1. to feel confident and supported in responding to community feedback and complaints;
2. to act fairly, consistently, honestly and appropriately when responding to feedback; compliments and complaints; and
3. to be aware of their roles and responsibilities in relation to the management of feedback, compliments, and complaints.

## Scope

1. This Policy covers all personnel employed by Council including volunteers, any person or organisation contracted to or acting on behalf of Council, any person or organisation employed to work on Council premises or facilities and all activities of the Council.
2. This policy does not confer any delegated authority upon any person. All delegations to staff are issued by the Chief Executive Officer.

## Background

Council delivers a diverse range of services to the community. These services are offered to our residents, community partners, visitors, government agencies and businesses.

1. Council welcomes and actively encourages all feedback from the community and are committed to managing feedback and complaints in a timely, respectful and appropriate manner, ensuring value is gained from the process.
2. Feedback from our community provides Council with valuable insights into areas where service standards are meeting customer's expectations or where service standards have not been met and improvements need to be made.
3. Effective management of our community's feedback contributes to our commitment to continuous improvement. Additionally, it is significant to the reputation and performance of the Central Coast Council aiding in building strong connections within our community.
4. This policy incorporates the principles of the Australian / New Zealand standard: Guidelines for Complaint Management in Organisations (AS/NZS 10002:2014) and the NSW Ombudsman's Complaint Management Framework (2015).

## General

1. Council understands the importance of receiving community feedback and outline our commitments within the Customer Experience Strategy.
2. Feedback such as a suggestion or compliment may be acknowledged, however further investigation and response will be limited. The information is to be used to consider future improvements or to celebrate and acknowledge best practice.
3. Council encourages the community to provide feedback and offers various ways for our Community's convenience. It is recommended that only one method is utilised to avoid duplication and maximise effectiveness of Council time and resources.
4. Complaints will be dealt with courteously, fairly and in a timely manner.
5. Council will endeavour to review anonymous complaints, however without the ability to thoroughly investigate, gather evidence and obtain witness information, action and/or resolution may be difficult and limited.
6. Data from feedback and complaints will be analysed to identify recurring and/or systemic issues in order to guide business improvements.
7. Unreasonable complainants will be managed in accordance with Council's Unreasonable Complainants Policy and the NSW Ombudsman's Complaint Management Framework.
8. Council will aim to resolve all complaints at the first point of contact, however depending on the nature of the complaint, may require escalation through one of three tiers of response (see *Procedures*).
9. Council will ensure appropriate resources and training are available to respond to feedback and complaints. Council officers are trained to efficiently and effectively handle feedback and complaints.
10. It is the personal responsibility of all Council employees, volunteers, contractors and agents to have knowledge of, and to ensure compliance with, this policy.
11. This policy should be read in conjunction with Council's Code of Conduct and Procedures for Administration for the Code of Conduct.
12. Council will protect the identity of people making complaints where this is practical and appropriate. Personal information that identifies individuals will only be used by CCC as permitted under the relevant privacy laws.
13. Members of the public have the right to access certain information held by Council as identified in the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009.

## Review

### Compliance, monitoring and review

1. The policy is based on the Three Tier Complaint model set out by the NSW Ombudsman and is reviewed and evaluated annually by the Unit Manager, Communications, Marketing & Customer Engagement to confirm it still complies with all relevant legislation, government policy and Central Coast Council policies.
2. The policy is implemented and monitored by the Customer Feedback and Improvement Officer with oversight from the Internal Ombudsman using the Complaints and Feedback Management Procedure.
3. Suspected breaches or misuse of this policy are to be reported to the Chief Executive Officer. Alleged breaches of this policy shall be dealt with by the processes outlined for breaches of the Code of Conduct, as detailed in the Code of Conduct and in the Procedures for the Administration of the Code of Conduct.

### Records management

1. Customer feedback (compliments, complaints, general feedback as defined below) regardless of the channel in which it is received are to be registered in Council's corporate CX system. Where required it will be cross referenced to the Content Management system as outlined in the Procedures.
2. On advice of the Internal Ombudsman, Customer Feedback and Improvement Officer will ensure all documentation related to unreasonable complainant conduct will be stored in the electronic document management system Content Manager (CM).

## Definitions

Terms not defined in this document may be in a Council glossary or else state the terms and definitions as below.

**CX** is the Customer Relationship Management System used to track, action and communicate regarding customer requests.

**CM** is the Electronic Document Management System used to store customer complaint information regarding unreasonable complainant conduct and Internal Ombudsman investigations for sensitive complaints.

**Council** means Central Coast Council of NSW (CCC), being the organisation responsible for the administration of Council affairs and operations and the implementation of Council policy and strategies.

**Competitive Neutrality** is the principle that Council business should not operate with any unfair competitive advantage.

**Complainant** is the term used to describe a member of the community, staff or organisation who has lodged a complaint with Central Coast Council.

**Complaint** means any expression of dissatisfaction made to CCC regarding a Council service, Council official, Administrator or Councillor-where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected. A comment is not a complaint.

**Compliment** means any expression of satisfaction or gratitude made to Council regarding a Council service, Council official, Administrator or Councillor.

**Feedback** means any expression of satisfaction, dissatisfaction or suggestion made to CCC for the purpose of improvement

**Public Interest Disclosure** is a report, made by Council officers and Councillors about corrupt conduct, maladministration, serious and substantial waste of public money, government information contravention or local government pecuniary interest contravention by Council officials.

**Sensitive Complaint** means a complaint about a member of CCC staff's conduct. This may be reporting on a breach of the Code of Conduct, maladministration, reportable allegations, public interest disclosures, harassment, etc. Sensitive Complaints do not include complaints about Council processes or decisions in which a staff member is identified.

**Service Request** means any report or request for service which is provided ordinarily by CCC as part of Council's service offering. Examples of a service request would include a request for a road to be repaired (pothole) or a request for rangers to attend a noisy or dangerous animal.

**Unreasonable Complainants** are individuals or groups who behave in ways that are inappropriate and unacceptable, despite Council's best efforts to assist them. Unreasonable Complainant Conduct ('UCC') is any behaviour by a current or former complainant which, because of its nature or frequency raises substantial health, safety, resource or equity issues for our organisation, our staff, other service users and complainants or the complainant himself/herself.

## Related resources

Legislation:

- a. [Government Information \(Public Access\) Act 2009 \(NSW\)](#)

- b. Health Records Information Privacy Act 2002 (NSW)
- c. Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1988 (NSW)
- d. Local Government Act 1993 (NSW)
- e. Ombudsman Act 1974 (NSW)
- f. Public Interest Disclosures Act 1994 (NSW)
- g. Privacy and Personal Information Act (NSW)
- h. State Records Act 1998 (NSW)

Associated/Internal documents:

- i. Code of Conduct (found on the CCC website and intranet)
- j. Delegations of Authority Policy (found on the CCC website and intranet)
- k. Unreasonable Complainant Conduct Policy (found on the CCC website and intranet)
- l. Unreasonable Complainant Conduct Procedure (found on the CCC intranet)
- m. Complaints and Feedback Management Procedure (found on the CCC intranet)
- n. NSW Ombudsman's Complaint Management Framework (2015)

## History of revisions

Amendment history	Details
<p><b>Original approval authority details</b></p>	<p>Chief Executive Officer</p> <hr/> <p>March 2017 D12818841</p> <hr/> <p>Creation of Policy</p>
<p><b>Version # 2</b></p>	<p>July 2019</p> <hr/> <p>CM document number D13678163</p> <hr/> <p>Review of the policy to update new template, Code of Conduct Policy date change and update naming conventions of responsible authority. Procedure removed from Policy and separated into new document.</p>
<p><b>Version # 3</b></p>	<p>28/09/2021</p> <hr/> <p>CM document number D14869002</p> <hr/> <p>Revision of definitions of feedback, compliment, complaint to improve lodgement of customer requests.</p>