

Central Coast Council

Complaints and Feedback Management Policy



Date Adopted: 23/07/2024

Revision: 3

Policy No.: CCC012

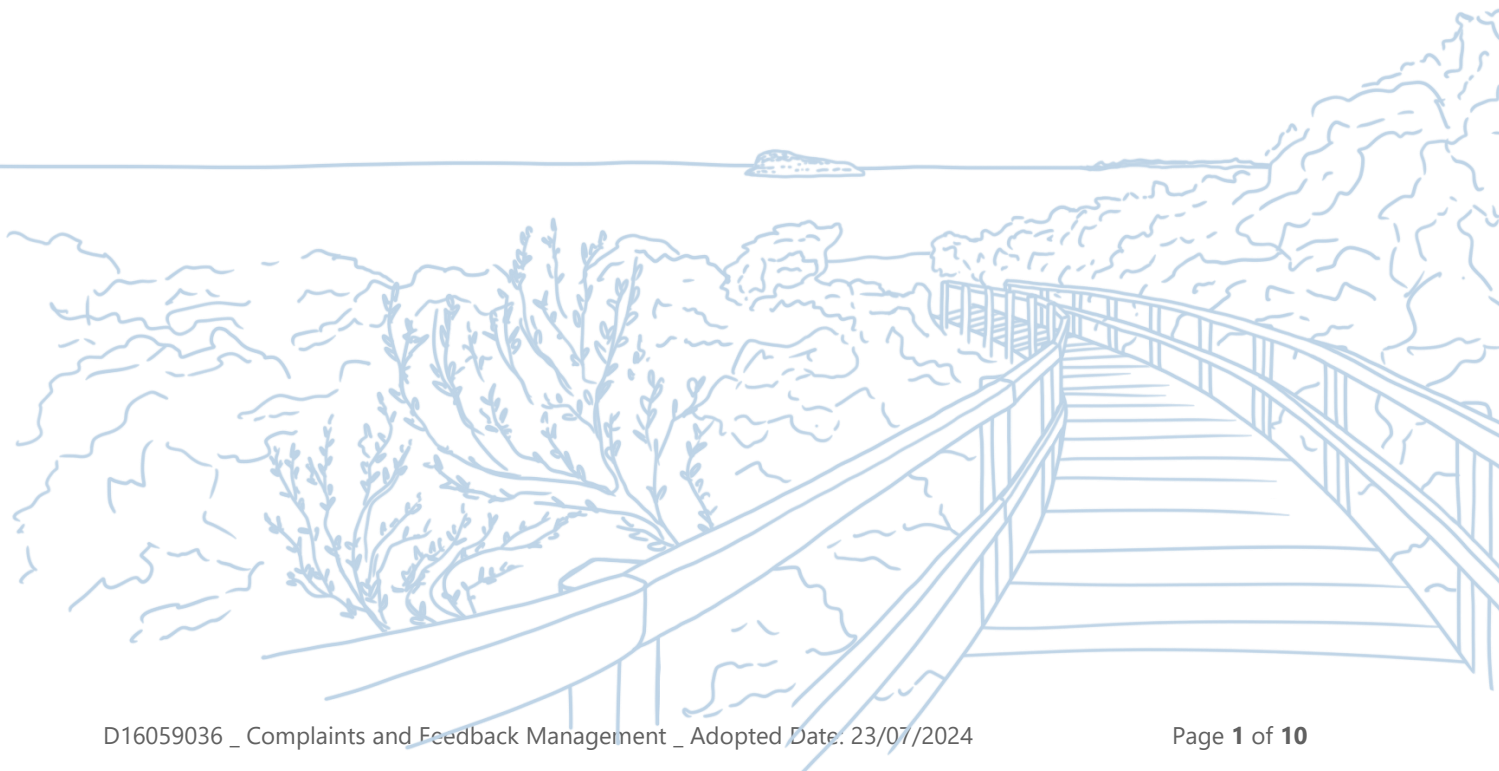


Table of Contents

1. Policy Objectives.....	3
2. Policy Scope	4
3. Policy Statement.....	4
4. General	5
5. Responsibilities.....	5
6. Policy Definitions	6
7. Policy Administration	8
8. Policy Authorisations	9
9. Policy History.....	9
10. Appendices.....	9
Appendix 1: Three Tiers of Response Model.....	10

1. Policy Objectives

1.1 This Policy has been developed to provide clear direction for Central Coast Council (**Council**) staff to respond effectively and independently to individual cases of dissatisfaction and aims to:

- 1.1.1. increase customer satisfaction, strengthen customer input into our services, acknowledge areas of excellence and identify service improvements;
- 1.1.2. ensure that complaints and feedback received are managed in a timely and equitable manner and recognise the needs and expectations of the complainant; and
- 1.1.3. guide the standard of behaviour for Council staff who are managing complaints.

1.2 The Policy further aims to establish standardised and uniform principles and objectives to complaints and feedback handling across Council in order to:

- 1.1.4. manage complaints in a fair and just manner;
- 1.1.5. support the seven principles of effective complaint management (accessibility, accountability, continuous improvement, commitment, confidentiality, objective and fairness and transparency);
- 1.1.6. enable staff to feel confident and supported in responding to community feedback and complaints and understand their roles and responsibilities in managing feedback, compliments and complaints about Council services;
- 1.1.7. support staff to identify and act fairly, consistently, honestly and appropriately when responding to feedback; compliments and complaints, including where assistance may be needed to submit feedback, compliments or complaints;
- 1.1.8. ensure Council complies with all relevant complaint handling legislative and administrative requirements;
- 1.1.9. provide a mechanism for reviewing the effectiveness and efficiency of Council's feedback and complaint management practices to analyse, evaluate and audit complaints and their outcomes to deliver improvements; and.
- 1.1.10. increase public confidence in Council by creating an environment that encourages feedback and complaints, including making available to the community a selection of convenient feedback channels.

2. Policy Scope

- 2.1. 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 Council.
- 2.2. This Policy does not confer any delegated authority upon any person. All delegations to staff are issued by the Chief Executive Officer.
- 2.3. For the purposes of this Policy, the following are not considered 'complaints' and are subject to other requirements, obligations and processes:
 - 2.3.1. Requests for Council services;
 - 2.3.2. Staff grievances;
 - 2.3.3. Public interest disclosures;
 - 2.3.4. Privacy complaints;
 - 2.3.5. Appeals about a decision about eligibility to receive services;
 - 2.3.6. Feedback and/or criticism for which a response is not expected; and
 - 2.3.7. Access to government information.

3. Policy Statement

- 3.1. Council is committed to providing services of the highest quality. Key to meeting this commitment is welcoming feedback from those who use Council services as opportunities for continuous improvement of the services provided. This feedback can be provided in the form of a complaint.
- 3.2. A complaint is defined as an expression of dissatisfaction about Council, related to its products, services, staff or the handling of a complaint, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required.
- 3.3. Council will aim to resolve all complaints at the first point of contact; however, depending on the nature of the complaint, it may require escalation through one of three tiers of response (**Appendix 1**).
- 3.4. Council will ensure appropriate resources and training are available to Council Officers to enable them to respond to feedback and complaints in a fair, courteous and effective manner, whilst respecting the privacy of the complainant in accordance with Council's Privacy Management Plan Policy.
- 3.5. This Policy should be read in conjunction with Council's Code of Conduct and Procedures for Administration for the Code of Conduct.

- 3.6. This Policy incorporates the principles of the Australian / New Zealand standard: Guidelines for Complaint Management in Organisations (AS 10002:2022) and the NSW Ombudsman’s Complaint Management Framework (2015).
-

4. General

- 4.1. 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.
- 4.2. 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.
- 4.3. Analysis of feedback received will assist in identifying recurring and/or systemic issues to guide business improvements while compliments will allow us to celebrate and acknowledge best practice. Unreasonable complainants will be managed in accordance with Council’s *Unreasonable Complainants Policy* and the NSW Ombudsman’s Complaint Management Framework.
-

5. Responsibilities

Compliance, monitoring and review

- 5.1. The following staff have identified roles under this Policy:

Customer Feedback and Improvement Officer

- 5.1.1. The Customer Feedback and Improvement Officer is responsible for implementing and monitoring this Policy using the Complaints and Feedback Management procedure.

Disclosures and Investigations Coordinator

- 5.1.2. The Disclosure and Investigations Coordinator is responsible for overseeing the implementation and monitoring of the Policy using the Complaints and Feedback Management procedure.

Unit Manager Communications, Marketing and Customer Engagement

- 5.1.3. The Unit Manager, Communications, Marketing and Customer Engagement is responsible for reviewing and evaluating this Policy to confirm it still complies with all relevant legislation, government Policy and Council policies.

Section Manager Customer Experience

- 5.1.4. The Section Manager is responsible for reporting quarterly to Council’s Executive Leadership Team (**ELT**) regarding complaints and feedback management to check for trends and manage changes as required.

All Council Employees

5.1.5. All Council employees, volunteers, contractors and agents are responsible for having the knowledge of, and to ensure compliance with, this Policy.

- 5.2. 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.

Reporting

- 5.3. Quarterly reporting to ELT regarding Complaints and Feedback Management to check for trends and manage changes as required.

Records management

- 5.4. Staff must maintain all records relevant to administering this protocol in accordance with Council's [Information and Records Management Policy](#).
- 5.5. 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.
- 5.6. The 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**).

6. Policy Definitions

Act	means the <i>Local Government Act 1993</i> (NSW)
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 Disclosures and Investigations Coordinator investigations for sensitive complaints.
Council	means Central Coast Council, 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.
Complaints	as defined in the Australian Standard Guidelines for complaint management in organizations (AS 10002:2022), are 'expressions of dissatisfaction made to or about an organisation related to its products, services, staff or the handling of a complaint, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required.'
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 Council for the purpose of improvement
Request for Council Service	is not considered a complaint.
Sensitive Complaint	means a complaint about a member of Council staff's conduct. This may be reporting on a breach of the Code of Conduct, maladministration, reportable allegations, , 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 Council 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 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.

7. Policy Administration

Business Group	Community and Recreation Services
Responsible Officer	Director Community and Recreation Services
Associated Procedure (if any, reference document(s) number(s))	Complaints and Feedback Management Procedure (under review)
Policy Review Date	Four years from date of adoption unless legislated otherwise.
File Number / Document Number	D16059036
Relevant Legislation (reference specific sections)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 ▪ Health Records and Information Privacy Act 2002 ▪ Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1988 ▪ Local Government Act 1993 ▪ Ombudsman Act 1974 ▪ Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 ▪ Public Interest Disclosures Act 2022 ▪ State Records Act 1998
Link to Community Strategic Plan	<p>Theme 4: Responsible</p> <p>Goal G: Good governance and great partnerships</p> <p>R-G2: Engage and communicate openly and honestly with the community to build a relationship based on trust, transparency, respect and use community participation and feedback to inform decision making.</p>
Related Policies / Protocols / Procedures / Documents (reference document numbers)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Code of Conduct ▪ Complaints and Feedback Management Procedure ▪ Delegations Register ▪ Information and Records Management Policy ▪ NSW Ombudsman's Complaint Management Framework (2015) ▪ Unreasonable Complainant Conduct Policy ▪ Unreasonable Complainant Conduct Procedure

8. Policy Authorisations

No.	Authorised Function	Authorised Business Unit / Role(s)
N/A	N/A	N/A

9. Policy History

Revision	Date Approved / Authority	Description Of Changes
1	March 2017	Creation of Policy
2	July 2019	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.
3	12 November 2021 Minute No. 285/21	Revision of definitions of feedback, compliment, complaint to improve lodgement of customer requests.
4	23 July 2024 Minute No. 275/24	Revised and transferred into new template

10. Appendices

1. Three Tiers of Response Model

Appendix 1: Three Tiers of Response Model

