

Complaints and Other Feedback Policy

Policy Statement

Coffs Harbour City Council is committed to providing an effective complaints handling system which will help respond to and resolve dissatisfaction about Council services in a fair, efficient and consistent manner.

The *Complaints and Other Feedback Policy Operational Guidelines* (as amended) provides information on the principles and implementation of this Policy. The Guidelines are aimed at increasing community confidence in Council's commitment to service delivery and effective complaint handling, as well as to improving the capacity of Council officials to manage and resolve internal and external complaints.

Council may review and amend this Policy and related operational Guidelines from time to time, and as statutorily required.

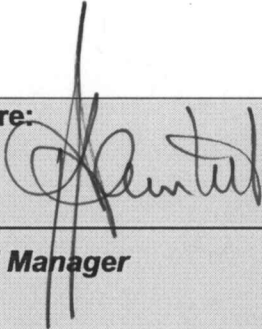
Related Legislation, Circulars or Guidelines (as amended, non-exhaustive)

- *Local Government Act* 1993 No. 30
- *Protected Disclosures Act* 1994 No 92
- *Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) Act* 1988 No 61
- *Model Code of Conduct for Local Councils in NSW*, Department of Local Government, 2008
- *Guidelines for the Model Code of Conduct for Local Councils in NSW*, Department of Local Government, 2008
- *Apologies: A Practical Guideline*, NSW Ombudsman, 2007
- *Unreasonable Complainant Conduct: Interim Practice Manual*, NSW Ombudsman, 2007
- *Complaint Handlers Toolkit*, NSW Ombudsman, 2004

Does this Document Replace an Existing Policy, Procedure or Plan?

Yes, this document replaces Council's —

- *Complaints Management Policy and Procedure* (15 December 2005)
- *Competitive Neutrality Complaints Management Policy* (15 October 1998 as amended 15 December 2005)

Related Council Policy or Procedure	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Coffs Harbour City Council <i>Code of Conduct</i> 2008 ▪ <i>Privacy Management Plan</i> 2003 (as amended 15 December 2005) 	
Application and Distribution	
It is mandatory for all Council officials to comply with this Policy. This Policy and Operational Guidelines will be available on Council's website, www.chcc.nsw.gov.au , under Council Policies.	
Approved by: Executive Team: Not Applicable [Meeting date] Council: 18 December 2008, Resolution No. 181 [Meeting date & Resolution No.]	Signature:  <hr/> General Manager
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Complaints and Other Feedback Policy – Version 1	

Key Responsibilities

Position	Directorate	Responsibility
Mayor	Council	To lead Councillors in their understanding of, and compliance with, this Policy and Operational Guidelines, and to manage Code of Conduct Complaints about the General Manager.
General Manager ("Principal Officer")	Executive	<p>To lead staff (either directly or through delegated authority) in their understanding of, and compliance with, this Policy and Operational Guidelines.</p> <p>To refer all pecuniary interest complaints to the Director General, Department of Local Government.</p>

Position	Directorate	Responsibility
		<p>To report all instances of suspected corruption to the ICAC (as required under section 11 of the <i>Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1988</i>).</p> <p>To manage Code of Conduct complaints about Councillors, staff and delegates of Council.</p> <p>To approve resources to develop, implement and review this Policy and Operational Guidelines.</p>
Public Officer		<p>To receive and manage all complaints, except complaints made pursuant to the Code of Conduct, Pecuniary Interest or under Protected Disclosure legislation (unless acting in the capacity of Protected Disclosures Officer).</p> <p>To refer complaints as necessary to the General Manager or appropriate external authority.</p>
Protected Disclosure Officers		<p>To receive and manage all complaints made under Protected Disclosure legislation.</p> <p>To provide information to staff on Protected Disclosures and processes for making complaints.</p>
Manager Legal & Governance	Executive	<p>To monitor and review implementation of the Policy and Operational Guidelines.</p> <p>To recommend changes or updates to the Policy and Operational Guidelines.</p> <p>To provide advice and interpretation of the Policy and Operational Guidelines.</p>
Directors	All Directorates	To communicate, implement and comply with the Policy and Operational Guidelines.
Director of Corporate Services	Corporate Business	<p>To ensure (directly or through delegation) the distribution and communication of the Policy and Operational Guidelines.</p> <p>To ensure (directly or through delegation) the approved Policy and Operational Guidelines are available in hard copy and electronically on Council's website.</p> <p>To ensure (directly or through delegation) the registration of complaints/other feedback and the meeting of timeframes for the referral of complaints to relevant Council officials.</p>
Executive Manager HR & Organisational Development	Corporate Business	Facilitate the provision of regular training to all Council officials on their role and responsibilities in relation to this Policy, Operational Guidelines and related procedures.

<i>Position</i>	<i>Directorate</i>	<i>Responsibility</i>
Executive and Managers	All Directorates	To implement this Policy, Operational Guidelines and related procedures. To lead staff in their understanding of, and compliance with, the Policy and Operational Guidelines.
Information Technology Manager	Corporate Business	To assist with the development of systems to support public access to the Policy, Operational Guidelines and related information.
All Council officials	Council	To comply with this Policy, Operational Guidelines and related procedures.

COFFS HARBOUR CITY COUNCIL



Complaints and Other Feedback Policy

Operational Guidelines

December 2008

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Complaints and Other Feedback Policy

Operational Guidelines

1. Introduction

Coffs Harbour City Council is committed to delivering quality services that are responsive to the needs of our community. This includes building an organisational culture that recognises the benefits of effective complaint handling, as well as the importance of receiving customer feedback to improve the work we do.

Complaints are a valuable source of feedback and an important tool for business and staff development. These Guidelines aim to help Council appropriately respond to complaints and other feedback so that we can better identify the needs of our community and improve our overall performance.

The Operational Guidelines outline a set of basic procedures and principles in handling complaints and other feedback. While we value your feedback, it is considered that formal complaint processes should be a last resort, with issues and concerns being addressed directly with the appropriate Council official wherever possible.

2. Definitions

The meaning of some terms used in the Operational Guidelines —

Code of Conduct Complaint	A complaint about the conduct of a Council official that alleges a breach of Council's Code of Conduct or the Model Code of Conduct for Local Councils in NSW (DLG).
Competitive Neutrality Complaint	A complaint made in relation to the National Competition Policy and Principles.
Complainant	Person, group, organisation or other entity making a complaint or providing feedback.
Corrupt Conduct	Conduct as defined under section 440A of the <i>Local Government Act</i> 1993 and the provisions of the <i>Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) Act</i> 1988.
Council Official	Councillors, members of staff, Administrators (appointed under section 256 of the Act), members of Council committees, conduct reviewers and delegates of Council.
Criminal Conduct	Conduct that breaches the provisions of the <i>Crimes Act</i> 1900.

Natural Justice	Concerns the basic or fundamental judicial rights extended to a person with rights at issue.
Pecuniary Interest	Concerns an interest that a person has in a matter because of a reasonable likelihood or expectation of appreciable financial gain or loss to that person or another person with whom they are associated.
Procedural Fairness	Is concerned with the procedures used by a decision-maker, rather than the actual outcome reached. It requires a fair and proper procedure be used when making a decision.
Protected Disclosure	A disclosure or notification made under, and in accordance, with the provisions of the <i>Protected Disclosures Act 1994</i> .
Public Officer	The Council officer appointed by the General Manager under section 34 to the <i>Local Government Act 1993</i> .

3. Objectives

The objective of Council's *Complaints and Other Feedback Policy* and Operational Guidelines is to —

- Improve the capacity of Council to manage and resolve complaints and other feedback in a fair, efficient and consistent manner.
- Increase community confidence in Council's commitment to service delivery and effective complaint and other feedback handling.
- Identify opportunities to improve Council performance through complaint and feedback information, as well as through any issues identified in the response to or investigation of the complaint or feedback matter.

4. Principles

Council's *Complaints and Other Feedback Policy* is underpinned by the following principles —

4.1 Access

- Public access to information about making a complaint or providing other feedback will be through Council's website, www.chcc.nsw.gov.au. Hard copy information will also be available from Council's libraries.
- Reasonable assistance will be available to complainants with special needs, including complainants who are unable to lodge a complaint in writing.

4.2 Responsiveness and Accountability

- All complaints and other feedback will be registered and recorded in Council's electronic data system, and distributed to relevant officers in Council.
- Complaints will be resolved in a timely manner, in the context of Council's resource constraints.
- Relevant parties to a complaint will receive information that explains how and why a decision was made. Information may include —
 - the results of any investigation
 - any action already taken by Council
 - any action scheduled to be taken by Council
 - reasons for no action
 - any further options available to the complainant if they are dissatisfied with the outcome
- Where complaints do not progress to formal investigation, complainants will be provided with reasons in writing.
- Where complaints progress to formal investigation and are complex or lengthy, relevant parties will receive regular progress reports wherever practicable or reasonable.
- Where process or performance improvements are identified in the course of investigating or responding to a complaint, such feedback and recommendations will be provided to the General Manager and/or Director of the relevant Council Department, as appropriate.
- Information on the complaint — including the date of the complaint, any action taken, the status, outcome and advice/information provided to the complainant — will be recorded by the relevant Council officer in Council's electronic record keeping system.
- All relevant documentation submitted as evidence in support of a complaint must also be registered by the relevant Council officer in Council's electronic record keeping system.

4.3 Privacy and Confidentiality

- The privacy of the complainant and any Council official named in a complaint will be maintained wherever possible, subject to any legal or legislative requirements, or overriding principles of natural justice and procedural fairness.
- The principles of Council's Privacy Management Plan will be applied to the handling of all complaints and other feedback.
- Any personal information you supply will only be used by Council to investigate your complaint and to allow Council to respond to you.
- Your personal information will only be disclosed to those areas within Council that may have information relevant to your complaint so that it can be managed fairly.
- None of the information you provide to Council will be disclosed outside of Council without your permission, unless we are required by law to do so.
- Wherever possible, and subject to any legal or legislative requirements, Council will maintain confidentiality in complaint handling processes.
- Council asks complainants to maintain confidentiality in complaint processes.

4.4 Natural Justice and Procedural Fairness

- The principles of natural justice and procedural fairness will be applied to the handling of all complaints and investigations.
- The rules of natural justice and procedural fairness relate to the procedure adopted by a decision maker to enable a fair decision to be made. This includes the principle that a person against whom allegations are made should have —
 - advance notice of the allegations and evidence
 - the opportunity to challenge allegations and evidence before decisions are reached
 - the right of appeal against any decision taken
- Details of complaints or other feedback will be communicated promptly to the Council official concerned, except in circumstances where confidentiality is required to protect the integrity of an internal or external investigation.

4.5 Trivial, Frivolous, Unreasonable, Baseless, Constant and/or Vexatious Complaints

- Council asks complainants to provide all relevant information to the complaint, and to be reasonable in their expectations.
- Council may refuse to investigate a complaint if it is considered to be trivial, frivolous, baseless, unreasonable or vexatious. This decision is at the discretion of the relevant Council official but should be based on reasonable and supportable grounds.
- Complaints or complainants may be determined to be unreasonable, and dealt with in accordance with the *Unreasonable Complainant Conduct: Interim Practice Manual – NSW Ombudsman 2007*.
- Where Council receives excessive correspondence from a complainant, Council may request that the complaint be limited and refocused by the complainant.
- Where correspondence or complaint is excessive, Council will only address significant and serious issues, and may limit the number of issues that will be addressed in any given period from a complainant.
- Where a person is making constant complaints to Council, Council may limit the times and days on which contact will be accepted from that complainant, or may require that contact only be in writing.
- Where a person is raising the same issues with different Council officers, Council is entitled to nominate a particular Council officer to deal with that complainant and will notify the complainant that no other Council officer will respond to their complaints.
- A complaint may be considered vexatious when its purpose is to harass, annoy, delay or cause detriment. A complaint can also be considered vexatious where the complainant lacks reasonable grounds for lodging the complaint, or possesses insufficient direct interest in the issue complained about.
- If a complaint is considered vexatious, Council may choose to limit or cease correspondence with the complainant. Once this decision is made it will be communicated to the complainant in writing, but after initial advice to this effect, no further correspondence will be entered into on the matter by Council.
- Where it is clear that a complainant will not accept Council's decision on a matter, and that complainant continues to contact Council, Council may notify the complainant that no further complaints will be accepted or interviews granted concerning the matter, and that correspondence will be registered but not acknowledged or responded to unless the complainant provides significant new information relating to the complaint or raises new issues of complaint which, in Council's opinion, warrant fresh action.

4.6 Anonymous Complaints

- While Council will maintain confidentiality in complaint processes, it will not investigate anonymous complaints.
- Anonymous complaints can still be made to appropriate external agencies, such as the NSW Department of Local Government (DLG) or the NSW Ombudsman (see Part 15), or to Council's Protected Disclosure officers under Protected Disclosure provisions.

4.7 Integrity, Dignity and Respect

- Council takes complaints seriously and will deal with them in a positive, expedient and confidential manner.
- Council officials will demonstrate fair and consistent decision-making, and complaints will be investigated without prejudice.
- Council treats complainants with courtesy and respect, and asks that complainants treat Council officials with courtesy and respect.
- Council will not tolerate rude or aggressive behaviour towards Council officials in complaint handling or other processes. In such circumstances, Council officials are entitled to terminate phone calls or meetings as appropriate.
- Wherever possible, Council officials will provide the complainant with initial warning that their conduct is inappropriate and that the meeting or conversation will be terminated.

5. What is a Complaint?

For the purpose of this Policy, a complaint is identified as an expression of dissatisfaction about —

- a service, procedure, practice or Council policy
- the conduct, lack of conduct, decision or omission of a Council official that is not resolved at the point of service

Common categories of complaint include —

- service delivery
- administrative decisions

- staff conduct
- policy and procedure
- privacy

Complaints must be about previously made decisions or actions of Council or its officials, and you must indicate how this has adversely affected you.

6. Competitive Neutrality

6.1 About Competitive Neutrality

The National Competition Policy is aimed at increasing consumer and business choice by ensuring competitiveness in goods and services. The Competition Principles Agreement, formed under the National Competition Policy, encourages efficient service provision by requiring government business functions to be open to competition, where appropriate.

Under the Competition Policy, non-regulatory service functions should operate under similar competitive pressures to those experienced in the private sector. This helps ensure that Council services remain relevant, cost-effective and operationally efficient.

Further information on competitive neutrality is available from the National Competition Council website at <http://www.ncc.gov.au/>. You can also access the National Competition Policy and the Competition Principles Agreement on this website.

6.2 Council Businesses Subject to Competitive Neutrality

The following Council owned and operated activities have been categorised as Category 1 Businesses, and are subject to competitive neutrality principles —

- Coffs Harbour City Council Water Supply
- Coffs Harbour City Council Sewerage
- Coffs Harbour City Council Airport

Each business activity has an annual gross operating income over \$2 million per year.

6.3 What Isn't a Competitive Neutrality Complaint?

Competitive neutrality complaints do not include complaints about —

- Levels of service (e.g. inadequate water quality, garbage bin collection, condition of roads or footpaths etc)
- Cost of Council services (unless Council has not costed the service to take competitive neutrality into account)
- Trade practices laws and their application to Council's businesses or services

6.4 Making a Competitive Neutrality Complaint

The Competition Principles Agreement requires Council to deal with complaints concerning Council business activities that are not competing in the market (against private business) on a level playing field.

Complaints concerning competitive neutrality should be addressed in writing to the Public Officer, Coffs Harbour City Council. Please see Part 13 of the Operational Guidelines for information on what to include in your complaint.

For further information on framing a competitive neutrality complaint, please see the National Competition Council website at www.ncc.gov.au.

7. Complaints About Pecuniary Interests

A 'pecuniary interest' is an interest that a person has in a matter because of a reasonable likelihood or expectation of appreciable financial gain or loss to that person or another person with whom they are associated.

The *Local Government Act* 1993 requires that "*pecuniary interests of councillors, Council delegates and other persons involved in making decisions or giving advice in Council matters be publicly recorded and requires councillors and staff to refrain from taking part in decisions on Council matters in which they has a pecuniary interest*"(ss.441 – 459).

Special provisions have been made under the Act to investigate and resolve complaints concerning pecuniary interests (ss.460 – 490).

The Director-General of the Department of Local Government is responsible for assessing and investigating pecuniary interest complaints. If you have a complaint regarding an alleged breach of the pecuniary interest provisions, please contact the Department of Local Government via www.dlg.nsw.gov.au.

8. Protected Disclosures

It is important for public officials to report any wrongdoing in the public sector. However, many people fear that they may suffer in their workplace as a result of such reports. To encourage

the reporting of misconduct and to protect public officials from reprisals, in 1994 the NSW Government introduced the *Protected Disclosure Act*.

Under the *Protected Disclosures Act*, it is an offence to take detrimental action against a person who makes a protected disclosure. Protected disclosure can be made about —

- Corrupt conduct
- Maladministration [this involves serious misconduct that is contrary to law, unreasonable, unjust, oppressive, discriminatory or based on improper motives]
- Substantial and serious waste of public money [this includes uneconomical, inefficient or ineffective use of resources which results in a significant loss or waste of public funds or resources]

A protected disclosure must show, or tend to show, one of these activities.

Protected disclosures about corrupt conduct can be made directly to the ICAC. Matters concerning maladministration or substantial and serious waste of public money should go to the NSW Ombudsman and Auditor-General, respectively.

Within Council there are also Protected Disclosure Officers who can help you decide whether a matter falls within the protected disclosure provisions, and to assist you in making a notification. Current information on Council's Protected Disclosure Officers is available from Council's intranet website.

For more information about protected disclosures, see www.icac.nsw.gov.au. Information can also be obtained by Council officials from Council's Governance and Legal Services Division.

9. Complaints About Corrupt and/or Criminal Conduct

Council is committed to maintaining high ethical standards. It is everyone's responsibility to act honestly and to report any instances of possible criminal conduct, (serious) corruption, maladministration or serious and substantial wastage.

If you are concerned that the conduct of Council or a Council official is criminal, please contact your Local Area Command of the NSW Police.

If you are concerned that the conduct of Council or a Council official is corrupt, please contact the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC), or write to the General Manager or Public Officer of Council.

The General Manager of Council is a Principal Officer under the *Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) Act 1988*, and has a positive obligation to report to the Commission any suspected incidences of corruption in Council or concerning Council officials (s.11).

Corrupt conduct is defined under section 440A of the *Local Government Act 1993* as —

"serious corrupt conduct" means corrupt conduct (within the meaning of the *Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1988*) that may constitute a serious indictable offence, being:

(a) in the case of conduct of the holder of a civic office—conduct in connection with the exercise or purported exercise of the functions of the civic office, or

(b) in the case of conduct of a member of staff of a council—conduct in connection with exercise or purported exercise of the duties of the member of staff.

The definition of corruption under the *Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) Act 1988* is broad. Examples of corrupt conduct include —

- Bribery, blackmail, fraud, theft, embezzlement or forgery
- Official misconduct (including breach of trust, fraud in office, nonfeasance, misfeasance, malfeasance, oppression, extortion or imposition)
- Perverting the course of justice
- Election bribery, funding offences or fraud
- Tax and revenue evasion
- Illegal drug dealings or gambling
- Misuse of public resources for personal benefit
- Carrying out of public duties dishonestly or unfairly
- Misuse of information or material by a public official, obtained during the course of their duties
- Any conspiracy or attempt in relation to any of the above

Corrupt conduct is also the conduct of any person (whether or not a public official) that adversely affects, or could adversely affect, either directly or indirectly, the exercise of official functions by any public official, any group or body of public officials or any public authority.

Complaints concerning suspected instances of corruption, maladministration or serious and substantial wastage can also be directed to the NSW Ombudsman and/or the Department of Local Government.

10. Code of Conduct Complaints

Codes of Conduct provide important information to assist Council officials to act honestly, ethnically, responsibly and with accountability in their public functions.

Council's Code of Conduct identifies the standards of behaviour expected from all Council officials, and outlines the mechanisms for reporting breaches and handling, reviewing and resolving Code of Conduct complaints. It is based closely on the Department of Local Government's *Model Code of Conduct for Local Councils in New South Wales*.

Topics included in Council's Code of Conduct are conflicts of interest, pecuniary interests, access to information and resources, relationships between Council officials, personal benefit and general conduct obligations.¹

All Council officials must comply with the provisions of the Code of Conduct. If you believe there has been a breach of the Code of Conduct, you can make a complaint in writing to Council.

If the complaint concerns the conduct of councillors, members of Council staff, committees or Council delegates, it should be addressed in writing to the General Manager.

If your complaint concerns the conduct of the General Manager, then it should be addressed in writing to the Mayor.

The process for handling Code of Conduct complaints is clearly outlined in Council's Code of Conduct and the Model Code. There are a range of options available in reviewing a Code of Conduct complaint, including —

- determining not to enquire into a matter
- enquiring into a matter
- investigating a matter
- referring a matter to a Code of Conduct Committee to review or investigate

For more information on complaint handling processes, please refer to Council's Code of Conduct available from www.chcc.nsw.gov.au.

You can also obtain a copy of the *Model Code of Conduct to Local Councils in New South Wales* and related Guidelines from www.dlg.nsw.gov.au.

¹ The *Local Government Act 1993* (s.440) requires councils to adopt the provisions of the Department of Local Government's *Model Code of Conduct for Local Councils in New South Wales*. Councils may include additional provisions in their own Codes of Conduct that supplement the Model Code, but the Model Code will always prevail to the extent of any inconsistency.

11. Complaints Excluded Under this Policy

While complaints are a valuable organisational tool for Council to improve service delivery, it is recognised that Council has limited resources to pursue complaints over which it has no jurisdiction, or which have otherwise been adequately addressed. Therefore, certain types of complaints have been excluded from this Policy. These include complaints concerning —

- Denied FOI (Freedom of information) or other statutory governed access to information applications. [Note that Freedom of Information processes have an internal review and external appeal mechanism].
- Dissatisfaction with matters before, or the decision of, a Court or Tribunal in relation to Council officials, business, services or facilities.
- Dissatisfaction with the decision of a Code of Conduct Committee or of Council (responding to a Code of Conduct Committee investigation or recommendation).
- A Council resolution.
- Approval or refusal of a development application.
- The conduct of a councillor outside of their role as a Council official.

It is also recognised that some complainants may not be satisfied with the outcome of complaint handling and investigation by Council, despite the fairness and objectivity of the process. Therefore, Council may refuse to deal with complaints that relate to a pre-existing issue that has already been reviewed, resolved or decided upon by Council, its representatives or an external agency — the outcome of which has been communicated to the complainant.

Finally, Council may exercise its prerogative not to deal with complaints that are trivial, vexatious, baseless, unreasonable, frivolous or constant. However, you are entitled to pursue such complaints with an appropriate external agency or authority, as identified in Part 15 below.

12. Who Do I Make My Complaint to?

Wherever possible complaints to Council should be resolved directly with the Council official involved. This can be done verbally or in writing. The officer involved will attempt to resolve your complaint without referring it to another party. However they may record the details of your complaint or feedback for Council records.

If you wish to progress the matter further, a complaint should be made to the relevant Council official identified below —

- Complaints concerning the conduct of Council staff, representatives or councillors should be made in writing to the General Manager.

- Complaints concerning the conduct of the General Manager should be made in writing to the Mayor.
- Complaints concerning any general Council matters should be made in writing to the Public Officer.
- Complaints concerning corrupt conduct can be made in writing to the General Manager, Public Officer or directly to the ICAC.
- Protected Disclosures should be made to the ICAC, Ombudsman, Auditor-General or Council's Protected Disclosure Officers.
- Complaints concerning Competitive Neutrality should be made in writing to the Public Officer.
- Complaints concerning criminal activity should be directed to your Local Area Command of the NSW Police and made in writing to the General Manager.

Reasonable assistance will be available to complainants with special needs, including complainants who are unable to lodge a complaint in writing.

Remember that complaints can also be made to other agencies, see Part 15 below.

13. What Do I Include in the Complaint?

Formal complaints must —

- be in writing
- be about a specific issue to do with the decision or action of Council or its officials
- outline how that decision or action has adversely affected you
- include your contact details so that we can provide a response or seek further information.

You can help us resolve your complaint more quickly by —

- treating our staff with courtesy and respect
- supplying as much relevant information as possible, as quickly as possible
- supplying the necessary details as accurately as possible
- including details of any letters that you have sent or received from Council, and the details of any phone calls or other discussions you have had with Council officials about the issue
- tell us what you would like us to do to fix the problem

- keep a copy of any letter, e-mail or fax you send
- do not make baseless, trivial or vexatious complaints

14. Timeframes for Complaint Handling

14.1 Serious, Complex or Urgent Matters

- Serious, complex or urgent matters may require detailed or lengthy investigation. Complex complaints may involve multiple issues, parties or business units. In some instances, a formal investigation may be necessary.
- Serious and urgent matters should be internally referred to the appropriate Council official as soon as practicable but not more than three (3) working days after Council's receipt of the written complaint.
- Written response to or acknowledgement of the complaint to the complainant should occur no later than ten (10) working days after Council's receipt of the written complaint.
- Complaints should to be responded to and resolved as efficiently and cost effectively as possible.

14.2 Routine or Standard Matters

- Routine or standard matters are complaints that usually involve a single issue or concern. Standard complaints do not require the level of detailed investigation as in other complaints, and can often be resolved by reviewing an action or activity.
- Routine matters should be internally referred to the appropriate Council official as soon as practicable but not more than five (5) working days after Council's receipt of the written complaint.
- Written response to or acknowledgement of the complaint to the complainant should occur no later than twelve (12) working days after Council's receipt of the written complaint.
- Complaints are to be responded to and resolved as efficiently and cost effectively as possible.

15. Complaints to Other Agencies

If you think your complaint has not been handled well by Council, you may refer your complaint to the NSW Department of Local Government (DLG) and/or the NSW Ombudsman for further review.

Amongst other functions, the DLG and Ombudsman's role is to investigate and review actions taken by local government. Contact details and information on progressing your complaint through the DLG and the Ombudsman is available from www.dlg.nsw.gov.au and www.ombudsman.nsw.gov.au, respectively.

Where you believe that corruption or serious maladministration has affected Council's handling of your complaint, or these form the subject of your complaint, you may also contact the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC), who may investigate the matter or Council's conduct. The ICAC can be contacted via www.icac.nsw.gov.au.

Where your complaint concerns competitive neutrality, in addition to the above agencies, you may also contact the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC), on www.accc.gov.au.

If criminal conduct is involved, you are encouraged to contact your Local Area Command of the NSW Police.