

## Policy

# Compliments and Complaints Handling

Version 1.4

Adopted by Council at its meeting on 14 February 2013

Minute No: 103

Division: Technology and Corporate Services  
Section: Corporate Governance  
File Reference: Council Policies/Protocols/Procedures  
Historical Reference: 1.3 Adopted by Council 21 July 2009  
Minute No 153

THIS PAGE IS BLANK

# Compliments and Complaints Handling

## Policy Objective

This policy provides a framework for effectively managing customer compliments, complaints and anonymous requests.

## Definitions

Not applicable

## Policy Background

The policy is designed to:

- Ensure complaints are received, appropriately recorded and resolved in a timely manner
- Deal with complaints in a fair and equitable manner
- Increase the level of customer satisfaction with the way feedback is handled, and in the delivery of services and systems.
- Recognise and acknowledge compliments Council receives.

## Policy

### Compliments

There are many instances where Council is complimented on the broad range of services it provides to the community, often in the form of a follow up phone call, written thank you or certificate of appreciation. These occasions highlight when Council has met or exceeded citizen expectations. Information about compliments Council receives often goes unrecognised because, unlike complaints, they require little action. However Council values its staff and compliments are an important feedback mechanism to organisational performance as well as a good sign of an engaged and active community.

Compliments are welcomed because they:

- Indicate which Council services and programs that citizens value.
- Assist in recognising staff whom provide exceptional customer service in their daily duties and ultimately recognise staff who demonstrate Council's values.
- Provides Council and Councillors the chance to share and reinforce examples of best practice in serving the community.
- Builds morale and recognises a job well done across a diverse workforce.

Anonymous compliments will be forwarded to Council's Public Officer, however, identified compliments will be dealt with in the following manner.

Council will ensure any compliment received is:

- Registered in the Records Management System.

- Letters/emails mentioning a specific staff member or team will be forwarded to that team, recognised appropriately and also copied to Human Resources for personnel file.
- Certificates of Appreciation from organisations are displayed in a central folder in the public area Murwillumbah.

Compliments can be sent to:

- The General Manager, Tweed Shire Council PO Box 816 Murwillumbah NSW 2484
- Emailed to [tsc@tweed.nsw.gov.au](mailto:tsc@tweed.nsw.gov.au)
- Sent through an online feedback form at [www.tweed.nsw.gov.au](http://www.tweed.nsw.gov.au)
- Made in person at Council offices or over the phone on (02) 6670 2400 or 1300 292 872

## **Complaint Definition**

### What is a Complaint?

- A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, made in respect to:
- A Council Officer's role in the provision of service delivery or lack of service delivery that has allegedly affected an individual, group or body of stakeholders whether justified nor not.
- The quality of service provided by council.
- Council failing to act upon a request from the public,
- The policies adopted by council.
- Dissatisfaction with Council's action following the lodgment of a request for service (management through Council's customer request management system) or a request for information (managed through Government Information Public Access Act).

### **Dealing with anonymous complaints**

Details of anonymous complaints should be recorded on a file note and referred to the Public Officer and under normal circumstances will not be pursued unless it is determined that further investigation is warranted based on the merit, seriousness and nature of the complaint and the information provided.

Due to anonymity, Council will be unable to provide any decision of any actions that may be taken.

### What is not a Complaint?

- A request for service is covered by the customer request management (CRM) process. Examples are; reporting of road potholes, water leaks, dust and noise, overgrown allotments and dog issues.
- A request for information or an explanation of a policy or procedure.
- Objections to a development application before Council determination or appeals in relation to the determination by council.
- Concerns raised regarding decisions of the elected council.

## **Anonymous Customer Requests**

Anonymous Customer Requests are recorded within councils Customer Request Management (CRM) system. The anonymous request will be entered and recorded; no further action will be undertaken unless it is identified that the issue may affect public safety or council infrastructure safety.

Anonymous Customer Requests have the propensity to redirect council resources from the conduct and provision of other vital services.

### Complaints dealt with outside of this Policy

- Complaints made under the Code of Conduct or allegations of corrupt conduct, maladministration or criminal activity are administered through the application of the Code of Conduct, Protected Disclosures as well as by agencies external to council.

## **Disclosure of personal information**

Sensitive personal information disclosed by a complainant in a complaint will not be released by Council to another party unless consent from the complainant is given. Sensitive personal information may include your name, contact and other personal details. Council is obliged to disclose sensitive information without your consent in very limited situations where there is a serious and immediate threat to a persons' health or safety.

## **How to Lodge a Complaint**

### Council's Preferred Action

- In writing to  
The General Manager  
Tweed Shire Council  
P.O. Box 816  
Murwillumbah NSW 2484
- By email to  
[tsc@tweed.nsw.gov.au](mailto:tsc@tweed.nsw.gov.au)

### Other Forms of Lodgement

- Telephone Council on (02) 6670 2400 or 1300 292 872 to a Council Officer
- In person at either of Council's offices located at Murwillumbah or Tweed Heads.

## **Recording of Complaints**

Council will record all complaints received (other than anonymous complaints) in the Electronic Content Management System. The principal benefit for recording complaints is that it provides a valuable tool for identifying trends and organisational weaknesses. Further, the information will be utilised as part of a program of continuous improvement.

## **How Complaints are reviewed**

Complaints will be reviewed in accordance with Council's Compliments and Complaints Handling Procedure, which provides an efficient, fair and accessible mechanism for resolving complaints. It recognises, promotes and protects the rights of individuals or organisations to comment and lodge complaints.

## **Dealing with difficult complainants**

Council recognises and accepts members of the public will sometimes display frustration or other behaviour. Council staff are to ensure difficult complainants are not unreasonably denied rights.

## **Protecting Complainants**

Council acknowledges the rights of members of the public to make a complaint. Council will ensure that people who complain are not subjected to victimisation, harassment, discriminated against or prejudged.

Disciplinary action will be taken against any member of staff who breaches this policy.

## **Complaints Handling Officer**

Council's Corporate Compliance Officer is responsible for ensuring that Council's management of complaints is carried out in accordance with the Compliments and Complaints Handling Policy and Procedures.

The Corporate Compliance Officer will monitor policy and procedure compliance and undertake independent investigations of complaints when requested.

## **Reporting**

Council's Corporate Compliance Officer will analyse and report to Council on compliments and complaints received by type and outcomes/actions on a quarterly basis.

## **Sourcing of the Policy**

The policy is available:

- On the Council's Internet [www.tweed.nsw.gov.au](http://www.tweed.nsw.gov.au),
- At Council's offices located at Murwillumbah and Tweed Heads.

A Compliments and Complaints Handling Procedure for reference by staff is located on Council's web site and outlines the actions which Council Officers will implement when receiving either a compliment or complaint and at each of the three levels of complaint review handling.

## **Related Legislation**

Not applicable

## **Compliance**

Not applicable

## **Forms**

Not applicable

## **Review Period**

This policy will be reviewed within 12 months of the election of each new Council or more frequently in the event of any legislative changes or change in circumstances.

## **Useful Links**

[Tweed Shire Council website](#)

## Version Control:

<b>Version History</b>		
<b>Version #</b>	<b>Summary of changes made</b>	<b>Date changes made</b>
1.4	Incorporated into new policy template	20/06/2013