

COUNCIL POLICY

POLICY NUMBER & TITLE:	GOV012	COMPLAINT MANAGEMENT POLICY
WORD DOCUMENT ID:	DOC/25/27048	
VERSION:	1.0	
ADOPTED MEETING DATE:	Click or tap to enter a date.	
REVIEW DUE:	Four yearly or following change of legislation or incident	
VERSION AMENDMENTS:	Nil	

RESPONSIBLE DEPARTMENT:	Corporate Services
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COMPLAINT MANAGEMENT POLICY

POLICY OBJECTIVE

Wentworth Shire Council (Council) is committed to delivering quality customer service and communicating effectively with the community. An effective complaints management system is an essential part of the provision of quality customer service and is also a key component of sound corporate governance ensuring that there is an appropriate level of accountability in the exercise of Council functions.

1. POLICY STATEMENT

The intent of this policy is to ensure that Council establishes a complaints management system that handles feedback and complaints effectively and provides an efficient, fair and accessible mechanism for resolving complaints. Wentworth Shire Council reserves the right to manage and investigate complaints in any way deemed appropriate dependent on the circumstances, however, in most cases, Council will follow the processes outlined in this policy and assess accordingly with this policy.

Complaints should not be trivial in nature and should contain enough information to ensure the complaint can be investigated in full and within acceptable timeframes. If a complaint is trivial in nature or insufficient information is provided, this may impact Council's ability to investigate and respond to the complaint. The complaint must relate to matters that Council has a jurisdiction to resolve.

A complaint management system is an organised way of responding to, recording and reporting complaints, as well as using complaints to improve service to Council's customers.

Council aims to:

- Recognise the customer's right to raise concerns about their dealings with Council;
- Provide clear definitions of what constitutes a complaint;
- Provide an efficient, fair and accessible mechanism for resolving complaints;
- Inform the community and customers about the process used to handle complaints; and
- Establish the remedies that are available to resolve complaints.

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Council regards all complaints with the utmost seriousness and will handle complaints in a professional, respectful and timely manner in order to resolve the issues raised by the complainant.

2. POLICY COVERAGE

This policy applies to all Council staff. It also applies to contractors and consultants carrying out services on behalf of Wentworth Shire Council.

It should be noted that particular categories of complaints are covered by specific policies or legislation and will be treated according to those specific requirements. Complaint types specific to these may relate to:

- Breaches of Council's Code of Conduct
- Reports of fraud or corruption
- Staff grievances
- Breaches of privacy legislation
- Complaints relating to non-disclosure of pecuniary interests by Councillors

3. STRATEGIC PLAN LINK

Strategy: 4. Wentworth Shire Council is supported by a strong and ethical civic leadership with all activities conducted in an open, transparent and inclusive manner

Objective: 4.3 Provide a governance framework that is transparent and builds trust in local leadership

4. DEFINITIONS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Term/Word	Definition
Complaint	an expression of dissatisfaction made to or about an organisation, related to its products, services, staff or the management of a complaint, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required
Complaint Management System	all policies, procedures, guidance documents and software used by Council for the management of complaints

5. POLICY CONTENT

This policy and complaint management framework documents are intended to ensure Council handles complaints fairly, efficiently and effectively.

Council's complaint management framework is underpinned by several principles, in particular:

- Transparent and effective processes, and decision-making in the public interest;
- Council treats all people with respect, including those making complaints
- All complaints will be acknowledged and responded to in a fair, timely and effective manner in accordance with our publicly available procedures

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- Council values complaint information and will use it to guide continuous improvement of our services, procedures and processes
- Good governance of, and by, local government; and
- Ethical and legal behaviour of Councillors and local government employees.

5.1 What is a complaint?

A complaint, as defined by Australian and New Zealand Standard Guidelines for complaint management in organisations - AS/NZS 10002:2022 (AS/NZS Complaint Management Standard) is:

‘an expression of dissatisfaction made to or about an organisation, related to its products, services, staff or the management of a complaint, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required’.

5.2 What is not a complaint?

Requests for service are not considered complaints for the purpose of this policy. Requests or actions that are **not** complaints may include:

- Requests for information
- Request for service, action or assistance
- Reporting of a hazard or risk (for example a fallen tree)
- Reports of faulty infrastructure
- Reports about neighbours, dogs or building work that falls into the compliance aspect of Council’s responsibility, such as requests for action for unauthorised building or other breaches or reports of noise.
- Comments or objections relating to a development

5.3 Complaint Handling

All Council staff are to accept, acknowledge, investigate and manage complaints in accordance with this policy, and the Complaint Management Framework.

Training is provided to support staff in the effective management of complaints to Council.

5.4 Complaint Records Management

All complaints must be recorded and managed in Council’s Complaints Management Register. The staff member who receives the complaint is responsible for registering it in Council’s electronic document management system (EDMS) and initial information on the Register, regardless of the method or location by which the complaint is received including verbally, by email, in person, or by post.

The Complaints Management Register must be kept current and updated in real time to accurately reflect all related conversations, investigations, actions, and resolutions.

5.5 Confidentiality

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Council will manage complaints in a sensitive manner, and protect the confidentiality of parties to the complaint whenever possible.

Instances where it may not be possible for Council to maintain confidentiality of the complaint due to legal requirements include:

- Successful applications to access records under *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009* (NSW) (GIPA),
- Successful applications for disclosure of information under the *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998* (NSW) (PPIPA),
- Court order or subpoena
- Council is required by law to report certain information under legislation, for example: *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998* (NSW), or *Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1998* (NSW).

5.6 Unreasonable complaints

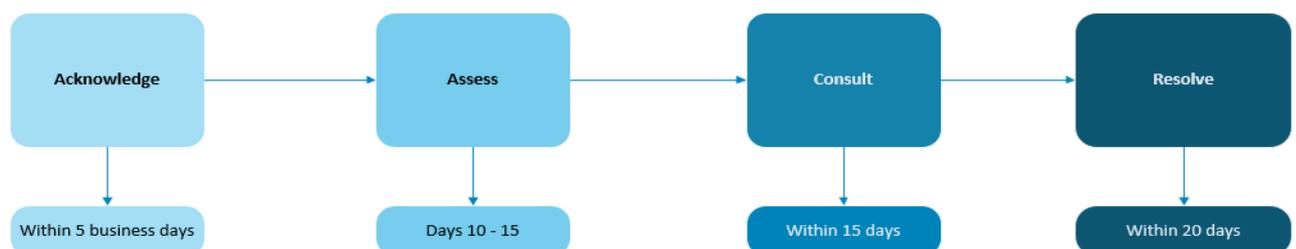
Council will support staff managing any unreasonable conduct of people making complaints that impact on staff health, security and wellbeing or unreasonably or disproportionately diverts Council resources, in accordance with the Complaint Management Framework.

5.7 Council's Complaint Management Process

Council's complaint management process provides at least three levels of review. Where possible, complaints will be resolved at first contact with Council. The levels are:

1. Standard Complaints (Frontline) – resolved at first contact by frontline or first point of contact staff
2. Complex Complaints (Investigation) – undertaken by a senior officer if the complainant is dissatisfied with the level one response
3. Unresolved Complaints (External Review) – complaints that cannot be resolved after the first two levels may be referred to an external agency such as the NSW Ombudsman or Office of Local Government.

Council aims to resolve complaints in accordance with the NSW Ombudsman guidelines of within 20 working days, as shown below:



Where a complaint is addressed to a Councillor from a customer, the information will be forwarded to the General Manager's Office to ensure the complaint is officially recorded. The details of the

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complaint will be provided to an appropriate officer for investigation and management under this policy. Councillors are not responsible for the investigation of, or response to any operational complaint.

5.8 Complaint Outcomes

Council welcomes feedback on complaint outcomes, positive and negative. A person making a complaint is entitled to ask for an internal review of the complaint, if they are dissatisfied with the outcome. An internal review is the second level of complaint management with a review being undertaken by a more senior officer of Council. The General Manager may be informed of a complaint depending on its nature.

The person making the complaint is able to seek an external independent review if they are unsatisfied with the internal review outcome. Council will provide advice on how to approach the organisations that can perform the external review, to the complainant.

5.9 How to make a complaint

Council provides a number of avenues for people to make a complaint:

Email: council@wentworth.nsw.gov.au

Online: www.wentworth.nsw.gov.au

Mail: Wentworth Shire Council, PO Box 81, Wentworth NSW 2648

In person: 61 Darling Street, Wentworth NSW 2648

Midway Service Centre, 3 Midway Drive, Buronga NSW 2739

Phone: 03 5027 5027

Due to the complexity of some matters, Council may request complaints submitted over the phone, be lodged in writing.

Council's Compliments and Complaints website page provides additional information: [Compliments and Complaints](#)

6. RELATED DOCUMENTS AND LEGISLATION

Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 (NSW) (GIPA)

Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 (NSW) (PPIPA)

Children's Guardian Act 2019 (NSW)

Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1998 (NSW)

Australian and New Zealand Standard Guidelines for complaint management in organisations - AS/NZS 10002:2022 (AS/NZS Complaint Management Standard)

NSW Ombudsman – Effective Complaint Management Guidelines 2025

Wentworth Shire Council Complaint Management Framework August 2025

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7. ATTACHMENTS

Nil.

8. DOCUMENT APPROVAL

This Council Policy is the latest version of the official policy of the Wentworth Shire Council, as adopted by Council on [Click or tap to enter a date..](#) All previous versions of this policy are null and void. This policy may be amended or revoked by Council at any time.

Signed:

General Manager Wentworth Shire Council

[Click or tap to enter a date.](#)

Date

DRAFT