

Customer Feedback

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Hawkesbury City Council (Council) provides a wide range of facilities and services to the community.

In providing these facilities and services, Council:

- Strives for excellence, continuous improvement and best practise in all interactions with customers and the community;
- Is committed to delivering a quality customer service experience that is consistent, accurate, efficient, effective, solutions-focused and responsive and delivered in ways that are professional, respectful, inclusive and uphold the rights of all customers; and
- Actively encourages feedback about our program delivery, services, processes, performance and conduct of Council staff from our customers. Council is committed to using this information to improve our services for the benefit of all customers, as well as adapt to the changing needs and expectations of our customers.

This Policy outlines how customers can provide feedback to Council, how we listen to customers, and the principles we use to work together towards an appropriate resolution. It is based on the Australian Standard ISO 10002-2018 Guidelines for complaints management in organisations and the NSW Ombudsman's Effective Complaint Handling Guidelines for public sector agencies. This Policy will assist Council to meet its statutory obligations as defined by legislation.

Nothing in this Policy overrides the General Manager's obligation to report under Section 11 of the *Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1988*.

1.2 Statement

Section 270 of the *Local Government Act 1993* requires Council to establish policies and procedures to respond to reasonable requests for the provision of a service by the Council or the improvement of a service provided by the Council and to deal with complaints about the actions of the Council, staff and/or other persons acting on behalf of the Council.

This Policy reflects legislative and regulatory guidelines, ensuring Council has an approach to investigate complaints.

We encourage feedback from customers about our program delivery, services, processes, performance and conduct of Council staff and Councillors, and we follow the NSW Ombudsman's principles of feedback management:

- Visibility
- Objectivity
- Customer-focused approach
- Accessibility
- Charges
- Accountability
- Responsiveness
- Confidentiality
- Continual improvement

Our customers will:

- Be treated with respect, integrity and honesty
- Have their feedback passed onto the responsible/nominated officer(s)
- Receive no charge for providing feedback
- Have their feedback handled in accordance with this Policy and our Customer Service Experience Policy and Charter
- Have their personal details kept secure and in accordance with our Privacy Management Plan
- Not be adversely affected because they have made a complaint.



1.3 Definitions

The definitions of certain terms are:

Complaint	An expression of dissatisfaction with our services, staff or procedures.
Compliments	An expression of when we have met or exceeded the needs or expectations of
	the customer.
Customer	An individual or business (internal or external) who accesses, receives, or
	benefits from facilities, goods and/or services and interacts with or within
	Council to request information, services or actions from officers.
Customer	A request for a service or action by a customer.
Request	
Customer Service	The task or query on behalf of a customer.
Customer	The perception or feeling a customer has during and after they access Council
Experience	services, interact with our staff, visit our facilities or use one of our systems.
Customer Service	The concept of looking at both the customer service and customer experience
Experience	as a whole responsibility in the way in which the Council communicates,
	interacts and connects with its customers. The fundamental principle being
	Council cannot be delivering to its community expectations if it isn't focused on
	delivering effective customer service and creating quality customer
	experiences; these go hand in hand.
General	A complimentary or constructive feedback about our program delivery,
Feedback	services, processes and performance.
Service	They set the expectations for the customer on the amount of time it is
Standards	reasonable to expect Council will take to respond, resolve an enquiry or
	deliver a service.

1.4 Scope

This Policy applies to all Councillors, Council staff and persons carrying out work on behalf of the Council, such as contractors, consultants, workplace students and volunteers.

Council staff are responsible for encouraging feedback, and assisting to lodge feedback, from our internal and external customers in line with this Policy, the Customer Service Experience Policy and Charter and in conjunction with any other related Policy or Council directive.

In addition, the Mayor and Councillors play a role in referring customer feedback to Council for appropriate action and identifying any policy or strategy changes.

1.5 Objectives

The overall aims of this Policy are to ensure:

- Our internal and external customers are provided with the opportunity to offer feedback to Council
- All feedback is handled consistently, fairly, efficiently and effectively and in line with best practise
- Council continuously listens to customer feedback (including suggestions, compliments and complaints) about our program delivery, services, processes, and performance
- Feedback is used to improve or enhance our responsiveness and overall approach to our service delivery in line with best practise.

2. TYPES OF FEEDBACK

2.1 Compliments

Compliments are received when we have met or exceeded the needs or expectations of the customer. The receipt of compliments assists us in:



- Understanding what aspects of our service customers value
- Understanding how our service impacts on our customers
- The ability to share and reinforce examples of best practise
- Building morale and provide recognition to our staff.

2.2 General feedback

General feedback about our program delivery, services, processes and performance assists us in understanding:

- What services our customers require
- How our service impacts on our customers
- What information we could provide to the community.

2.3 General complaints

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with our services, staff or procedures. General complaints are managed in accordance with Council's three-tier Complaints Handling Model (explained in Section 3 of this Policy). Requests for service (unless they are complaints related to Council's response times to a request for service) and requests for information or explanation of Council policies or procedures are not classified as complaints. Similarly, comments of a harassing nature with no identifiable purpose are not classified as complaints and will not be investigated further.

A complaint is an expression of concern about:

- Delivery of a Council service
- Customer service experience
- Failure to provide information
- Competence or conduct of staff
- Errors of judgement or misinterpretation of information
- Decisions being unfair, unreasonable, inconsistent or lacking in merit
- Poor administrative processes.

A complaint is not:

- Feedback relating to a Council resolution
- Feedback relating to the determination outcome of a development application
- A matter that has already been reviewed by an external agency
- Feedback relating to a particular Councillor outside their role as a Councillor
- Any work-related grievance from a Council employee
- A request for services unless it is a second request where there has been no response to the first
- A request for information or an explanation of policies or procedures
- Making an expression of opinion where a response or resolution is not expected (for example, a submission or feedback on a service).

Types of complaints that will not be investigated

The General Manager and/or the Public Officer may determine that a complaint will not be investigated where that complaint:

- Is considered frivolous, vexatious or not made in good faith or concerns a trivial matter
- Involves a matter where an adequate remedy or right of appeal already exists, whether or not the complainant uses the remedy or right of appeal
- Relates to conduct before a court, coroner or tribunal
- Relates to matters under investigation by the Minister for Local Government, ICAC, the NSW Ombudsman's Office, a Minister of the Crown or government department or the NSW Police
- Relates to the appointment or dismissal of any employee or an industrial or disciplinary issue
- Relates to a decision, recommendation, act or omission which is more than one year old



- Relates to a matter the subject of a current report to Council that has not been considered and/or determined
- Relates to a resolution of Council or a decision dealing with a matter of policy or the adoption of a policy
- Relates to the actions or conduct of private individuals
- Relates to a matter where there is insufficient information available
- Involves a matter where the complainant declines or refuses to provide further information and/or there are threats made against Council, Councillors and/or Council staff.

Complaints relating to alleged breaches of Council's adopted Code of Conduct and procedures by a Councillor, Council staff or delegate of Council will be dealt with in accordance with the procedures prescribed under the Code rather than under Council's normal complaint handling procedures as outlined in Section 3.1.5 of this Policy.

2.4 Anonymous complaints

We accept anonymous complaints where there is enough information to be able to investigate the issues raised. We encourage complainants to provide their contact details, as we may not be able to investigate the matter thoroughly without obtaining additional information.

2.5 Sensitive complaints

Complaints received naming particular employees are distributed securely to the appropriate department manager for investigation to ensure, as far as practical, the privacy and confidentiality of all parties involved.

Under the principle of natural justice, named employees are entitled to be provided with details of any complaint against them which is investigated. Assistance and support will be provided to both the complainant and the employee (where required) during any investigation.

Complaints received naming Councillors, the Mayor or General Manager will be distributed securely to the Mayor or General Manager (as appropriate) for assessment, investigation and possible resolution.

Complaints relating to alleged breaches of Council's adopted Code of Conduct and procedures by a Councillor, Council staff or delegate of Council will be dealt with in accordance with the procedures prescribed under the Code rather than under Council's normal complaint handling procedures as outlined in Section 3.1.5 of this Policy.

2.6 Serious sensitive complaints

2.6.1 Pecuniary interest

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 the person or another with whom the person is associated.

Where a matter involving a pecuniary interest is or is likely to constitute corrupt conduct, members of the community may choose to report it to Council by way of a complaint.

Alternatively, complaints relating to pecuniary interests may be made in writing to the Office of Local Government, identifying the complainant and the person against who the complaint is made, giving particulars of the complaint, and be verified by statutory declaration.

Council staff and Council officials will use the reporting mechanisms outlined in Council's Fraud and Corruption Prevention Policy and may be dealt with under level's of Code of Conduct.

2.6.2 Corruption, maladministration, serious and substantial wastage

Council is committed to maintaining high ethical standards. It is everyone's responsibility to not only act honestly but to report any instances of possible corruption, maladministration, or serious substantial wastage.



Such reports can be reported in accordance with the procedures outlined in this policy and will be forwarded to the General Manager. You can also report suspected instances to the Independent Commission against Corruption (ICAC) on 1800 463 909, suspected maladministration to the NSW Ombudsman on 1800 451 524 or to the Office of Local Government on 02 4428 4100.

2.6.3 Criminal activity

Complainants claiming or suspecting criminal activity (including suspected fraud or corruption) by a Council employee or relating to Council owned property will be directed to the Public Officer for assessment, investigation and reporting to the Police where necessary.

3. POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

3.1 How we handle your feedback

3.1.1 For Compliments, we will:

- Record the details of your compliment in Council systems
- Acknowledge your compliment within ten (10) business days
- Distribute compliment as part of our rewards and recognition program.

3.1.2 For General Feedback, we will:

- Process consultation, public exhibition and survey feedback as part of the project in line with Council's Community Engagement Policy
- In the case of all other general feedback, record the details of your general feedback in Council systems and distribute them to the relevant Service Coordinator
- Ensure that simple feedback requests or queries are closed within four (4) business days. For complex or longer-term feedback requests, it will take time to investigate and get the right response to you. In these cases, we will acknowledge your correspondence within ten (10) business days and keep you informed with progress updates every 30 business days.

3.1.3 For General Complaints, we will:

- Record the details of your complaint in Council systems
- Use a three-tier complaint-handling model as outlined below to distribute general complaint
- Regularly monitor the feedback we receive and use this information to improve our program delivery, services, processes, performance and conduct of Council staff and Councillors.

Tier 1 - Frontline Complaint Handling

- Where a written complaint is received, acknowledge receipt within five (5) business days
- Where a simple or non-contentious complaint is received, staff will attempt to resolve complaint at
 first point of contact or refer the complaint to a staff member who may be able to resolve the
 complaint 'on the spot'
- Where a complaint is unable to be resolved 'on the spot', the staff member will escalate to the appropriate Service Coordinator, who will nominate an investigating officer
- The investigating officer will investigate and will attempt resolution within five (5) business days. For complex complaints, it will take time to investigate and get the right response to you. In these cases, we will let you know we need more time to investigate and keep you informed with progress updates every 30 business days.

Tier 2- Internal Review

The purpose of an internal review is not to determine a different response, but to check that all involved in determining the original decision have taken all the required steps in the procedure.

A request for internal review must be in writing and lodged by email, letter or in person.



- Record the details of the request in Council systems and acknowledge receipt within five (5) business days
- The Public Officer will nominate a Senior Officer. Where possible, staff involved in the original request will not be involved in the internal review. The Public Officer will advise the complainant that the matter has been referred for internal review within ten (10) business days
- The Senior Officer will complete the internal review and document recommendations to maintain, amend or rescind the previous decision and propose additional corrective actions or remedies as considered necessary to Public Officer within 15 business days
- The Public Officer will refer the information to the Director/General Manager to authorise the proposed response together with any additional actions or remedies to be implemented within ten (10) business days. If we require more time to investigate, we will let you know.

Tier 3 - External Review

Where a complaint continues to remain unresolved, the complaint will be referred to the General Manager who may refer the unresolved complaint for external review or, alternately, advise the complainant of the avenues available to them should they wish to pursue the matter further. The General Manager will provide such advice to the complaint in writing. Complaints, dependent on their nature, can be referred to the following external agencies for external review: NSW Ombudsman, Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC), <a href="the the the the the theorem and the t

3.1.4 For Sensitive Complaints naming a Council staff member, we will:

A sensitive complaint naming Council staff must be in writing and lodged by email, letter or in person.

- Record the details of request in Council systems and acknowledge receipt within five (5) business days
- The General Manager will determine what action is to be taken and will refer the complaint to the relevant Director for investigation. The complaint may be investigated by the General Manager if considered appropriate in the circumstances.
- The Director will advise the complainant when a response from Council is expected within ten (10) business days.
- The Director will be responsible for coordinating the investigation of the complaint. The Director may delegate the investigation of the complaint, or parts of the complaint, to a Manager.
- In investigating a complaint, the designated investigation officer will follow the rules of procedural fairness. The designated investigation officer must:
 - inform the staff member(s) of the content of any allegations or adverse comments made against them
 - ensure that any enquiries made under this part which might give rise to disciplinary action is done so in accordance with the relevant local government awards. This may involve consultation with Council's People and Development Manager during the process
 - ensure that the person/s who is/are the subject of the complaint is/are aware of their right to request the presence of a union representative and/or the involvement at any stage
 - provide the staff member(s) with a reasonable opportunity to put their case forward
 - review relevant documents and consider submissions
 - make reasonable enquiries before making a recommendation
 - ensure that no person is involved in enquiries in which they have a direct interest
 - act fairly and without bias
 - conduct the enquiries without undue delay.
- The designated investigation officer will complete the investigation and document recommendations.
 The designated investigation officer will refer their recommendations to the relevant Director and
 General Manager. The General Manager will then determine what action is to be taken and will
 report their findings, and the reasons for these findings, in writing to the complainant and the person
 subject of the complaint
- Where a complaint has been investigated by the General Manager, they will decide whether the
 complaint discloses inappropriate action and determine what action is to be taken. The General
 Manager will report their findings, and the reasons for these findings, in writing to the complainant
 and the person subject of the complaint



• In the case of a complaint alleging corrupt conduct in the terms of the *Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1988* the provisions of this policy do not override the requirements of Section 11 of that Act for such matters to be reported to the Commission. In the case of complaints reported to the ICAC, the General Manager may decide not to investigate such complaints until such time as the ICAC advises of its proposed actions or requests the Council to commence investigations into the matter and these investigations may be undertaken as appropriate in the circumstances and may not be subject to the provisions of this policy.

3.1.5 For Code of Conduct Complaints, we will:

- Adopt a Code of Conduct that incorporates the provisions of The Model Code of Conduct for Local Councils in NSW pursuant to section 440 of the Local Government Act 1993
- Council has adopted a Code of Conduct and procedures applicable to Councillors, staff and
 delegates of Council, which is consistent with the Model Code of Conduct. Members of the public as
 well as other Councillors, staff or delegates of Council may make complaints under the Code of
 Conduct. The Code of Conduct prescribes procedures for dealing with such complaints
- Complaints alleging breaches of the Code of Conduct should be reported in writing to the General Manager, or Mayor in the case of a complaint against the General Manager.
- Complaints relating to alleged breaches of Council's adopted Code of Conduct and procedures by a
 Councillor, Council staff or delegate of Council will be dealt with in accordance with the procedures
 prescribed under the Code rather than under Council's normal complaint handling procedures as
 outlined in Section 3.3 of this Policy.

3.2 Limitations on service or communication

We encourage customers to lodge complaints in an appropriate manner. Council expects that the behaviour of customers and the community will stay within reasonable limits. If behaviour strays beyond these limits, Council is entitled to place and enforce limits on contact between Council and the person displaying inappropriate behaviour.

We will only apply this part of the Policy in exceptional cases where it is necessary to ensure the health, safety and well-being of Council staff or equity in the use of Council resources. These limits can apply to an individual customer or a group. This Policy does not limit legislative access and service rights.

The General Manager may limit service or communication with a customer if there is evidence that they are an unreasonable complainant. The General Manager will first consider whether:

- The complaints procedure has been implemented correctly so far as practical to this point and no material element of the complaint has been overlooked or inadequately addressed
- The behaviour of the complainant has become intimidating, threatening, offensive or so habitual or obsessive that it constitutes an unreasonable demand on Council's resources.

Depending on the circumstances, the limitations could include one or more of the following:

- Whom a customer may contact within Council
- The number of opportunities we will give to a customer to address the same or similar issues
- The number of issues we will address in any given period
- The types of issues we will address (e.g. we will only address significant and serious issues)
- The times and days telephone calls will be accepted by Council
- The termination of phone calls or meetings when appropriate, e.g. we may terminate phone calls or
 meetings if the customer is abusive or threatening or has been instructed to correspond only with a
 specific staff member who is not available at that time. Staff members may terminate calls or
 meetings after an initial warning to any customer who is abusive or threatening
- The requirement that the customer must only communicate with Council in writing
- The number of responses to complaints, correspondence, or enquiries on the same or similar issues where they do not provide new information
- Correspondence will be received, read, and recorded but only acknowledged or otherwise responded to if they provide new information.



Limitations on the provision of information will not occur if we are under a statutory responsibility to provide the information.

The General Manager will document the limits on service or communication and inform the customer of the reasons for taking such steps.

3.3 Review or appeal of limits on service or communication

Requests to remove a limitation of service or communication must be made in writing to the General Manager by the person to whom the limits apply. The General Manager will only consider one written request per year. On completion of the review, the General Manager will advise the person of any subsequent review dates. If the customer is dissatisfied with the review, they may contact the NSW Ombudsman's Office, depending on the circumstances, or the Office of Local Government.

3.4 How to provide feedback

- Sensitive complaints naming Council's staff or Code of Conduct must be in writing and lodged by email, letter or in person.
- A request for Tier 2 internal review must be in writing and lodged by email, letter or in person.
- All other feedback can be submitted in the following ways:

Visit us in person:	Council's Customer Service Centre: Our address is 366 George St, Windsor Hours: Monday to Friday, 9am to 4pm excluding public holidays
Call Centre:	Phone: 02 4560 4444 Hours: Monday to Friday 8:30am – 5pm excluding public holidays
Write to us:	Use the online contact form council@hawkesbury.nsw.gov.au Hawkesbury City Council, PO Box 146, Windsor NSW 2756

3.5 What we need to know and expect from customers

It is important to record information about your feedback. To help us understand your feedback, Council asks that our customers::

- Treat staff with respect
- Work with Council to solve problems and reach a resolution
- Provide information that is timely, accurate and complete
- Provide a description of the issue or situation, including any dates, times and locations of incidents and if appropriate, supply supporting documents, photos or videos
- Quote reference numbers when contacting us about an existing matter
- Include their contact details, including name, address, phone number and email address.

Council has a zero-tolerance approach towards violent and abusive service interactions. Anyone found to be violent or abusive may be refused service, asked to leave any of our offices, buildings or sites or call terminated after an initial warning.



3.6 Policy Responsibilities

Role	Key Responsibilities
	Responsible for adhering to this Policy
Massa and Cassa sillara	Refer customer feedback to Council for appropriate action
Mayor and Councillors	Input into the proposed strategies and policies in relation to
	feedback.
	Responsible for adhering to this Policy
	Ensure staff awareness and compliance with the Policy
	Responsible for the final approval of this Policy
	Investigate sensitive and serious complaints or nominate an Investigating Officer
	Ensure integrity of the investigation
Canaral Managar	Regularly review reports on general feedback, complaints,
General Manager	compliments and suggestions on arising trends, issues and support
	recommendations for improvement
	Ensure integrity of reports
	Develop a culture of customer focus and continuous improvement by
	taking on customer feedback and integrating it into Operational Plan
	actions to be undertaken within divisions or departments
	Encourage staff to make recommendations for improvements.
	Responsible for adhering to this Policy
	Ensure staff awareness and compliance with the Policy
	Ensure employees receive training on this Policy
	Investigate complaints or nominate an Investigating Officer
	Ensure integrity of the investigation
	Regularly review reports on general feedback, complaints,
	compliments and suggestions on arising trends, issues and support
	recommendations for improvement
	Ensure integrity of reports
Senior Leadership Team	 Assist and support staff to lodge customer feedback requests and attempt to resolve at first contact
Corner Educations Feature	Develop a culture of customer focus and continuous improvement by
	taking on customer feedback and integrating it into Operational Plan actions to be undertaken within their department
	Recognise staff who deliver exceptional customer service experience
	and who have received compliments for service
	Lead, monitor and mentor staff to resolve requests within Corporate
	Channel and Service Standards
	Ensure team related processes, guidelines and directives are given in line with this policy. Customer Service Experience Policy and
	in line with this policy, Customer Service Experience Policy and Charter, Council Values and Code of Conduct.
	 Encourage staff to make recommendations for improvements.
	Responsible for adhering to this Policy
	Deliver a quality customer service experience in line with this policy,
	Customer Service Experience Policy and Charter, Council Values
	and Code of Code.
	Lodge requests, notes on interactions and all associated
Staff	communication documents in our corporate systems. If its existing,
	look up the original request and add interaction notes
	Attempt to resolve issues or concerns before they escalate to a formal complaint in line with this Policy
	Escalate any concerns or issues in meeting established Standards
	within this policy with your direct supervisor.



Role	Key Responsibilities	
Business Transformation and Customer Experience Manager	 Participate in the review of this Policy in line with Council Values, Code of Conduct and Customer Service Experience Policy and Charter. Embed a customer first culture throughout the organisation by providing staff with support and the tools they need to deliver a quality customer service including training, education and access to appropriate systems, processes, technologies and strategies. 	
Frontline Staff	 Assist customers to lodge feedback and advise them of the process Manage the coordination of customer feedback in line with Council's Feedback Policy. 	
Record Staff	 Manage the coordination of customer feedback in line with Council's Feedback Policy Administering the sensitive complaint process by creating a record for appropriate manager with the relevant classifications. 	
Records Coordinator	 Administering the sensitive complaint process by providing monthly reports on sensitive and serious sensitive complaints for the General Manager. 	
Governance Manager	 Responsible for the review of this Policy in line with Council Values, Code of Conduct and Customer Service Experience Policy and Charter Facilitate Council's feedback management Provide regular reports to Senior Leadership and Executive Leadership teams and ensure integrity of reports Assist and support Council employees in relation to administering the Policy. 	
Public Officer	 Manage and allocate Tier 2 Internal Review complaints Manage, assess and investigate serious sensitive complaints. Investigate non-compliance in-line with this Policy, Customer Service Experience Policy and Charter, Council Values and Code of Conduct. 	
Investigating Officer	Investigate the complaint in line with this Policy.	

4. DOCUMENT CONTROL

4.1 Review

This policy is reviewed at least every four (4) years or when relevant legislation changes.

4.2 Related Documents

- Hawkesbury City Council Code of Conduct
- Hawkesbury City Council Procedures for the Administration of the Code of Conduct
- Hawkesbury City Council Statement of Business Ethics
- Hawkesbury City Council Customer Service Experience Policy
- Hawkesbury City Council Customer Service Experience Charter
- Hawkesbury City Council Community Engagement Policy
- Hawkesbury City Council Workplace Surveillance Corporate Policy
- Hawkesbury City Council Performance Counselling (Disciplinary) Corporate Policy
- Hawkesbury City Council Privacy Management Plan
- Hawkesbury City Council Fraud and Corruption Prevention Policy.

4.3 Relevant Legislation, Regulations and Guidelines:

- NSW Local Government Act
- NSW State Records Act
- NSW Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act
- NSW Government Information (Public Access) Act





- Australian Standard ISO 10002-2018 Guidelines for complaints management in organisations
- NSW Ombudsman Good Conduct and Administrative Practice Guidelines for state and local Guidelines
- NSW Ombudsman Enforcement Guidelines for Councils
- NSW Ombudsman Unreasonable conduct by Complainant Model policy
- NSW Ombudsman Unreasonable conduct by a Complainant
- NSW Ombudsman Effective complaint handling guidelines
- NSW Ombudsman Complaint management framework and model policy
- NSW Ombudsman Apologies A practical guide