

Complaint Management Procedure

Purpose

This procedure outlines the process for complaint management at the City of Sydney (the City) in accordance with the City’s Complaint Management Policy.

This procedure is intended to:

- provide guidance to a person wanting to make a complaint to the City
- inform City staff of their obligations to communicate, investigate and record complaints

Scope

This procedure applies to the following:

- People wanting to make a complaint to the City in accordance with the City’s Complaint Management Policy
- City employees responsible for recording, investigating and actioning complaints

Definitions

Term	Meaning
Complaint	Expression of dissatisfaction made to or about us, our services, staff or the handling of a complaint where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required. Examples of a complaint are <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • failure to achieve specified standards of service • delay in responding • Behaviour or attitude of employees • a Council decision or policy and/ or • withdrawal or reduction of service • content on our online channels (including third party comments) that is defamatory
Complaint Management System	All policies, procedures, practices, staff, hardware and software used in the management of complaints.
Dispute	An unresolved complaint escalated either within or outside of our organisation.
Employees	All City of Sydney employees including permanent (whether full-time or part-time), temporary, casual employees and apprentices.

Term	Meaning
Feedback	Opinions, comments and expressions of interest or concern, made directly or indirectly, explicitly or implicitly, to or about us, services or complaint handling where a response is not explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required.
Service request	The definition of a service request includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • requests for the provision of works or services • routine inquiries about the organisation’s business • requests for the provision of services and assistance • reports of failure to comply with laws regulated by the organisation • requests for information or explanation of policies, procedures and decisions
Grievance	A clear, formal written statement by an individual staff member about another staff member or a work-related problem.
Policy	A statement of instruction that sets out how we should fulfill our vision, mission and goals.
Procedure	A statement or instruction that sets out how our policies will be implemented and by whom.
Public interest disclosure	A report about wrongdoing made by a public official in New South Wales that meets the requirements of the Public Interest Disclosures Act 1994

How to make a complaint

Complaints can be made:

On-line

Complaints can be made using our on-line enquiry and feedback form [Make a general enquiry or provide feedback - City of Sydney](#)

Email

council@cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au

By telephone

Customer Service (02) 9265 9333

In person

At any of Council’s Offices during normal business hours.

By mail

City of Sydney
GPO Box 1591
SYDNEY NSW 2001

People who have a hearing or speech impairment

The City of Sydney welcomes calls made through the National Relay Service (NRS).

The NRS is a government sponsored initiative that allows people who are deaf or have a hearing or speech impairment to make phone calls in the same way as anyone else. This service is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

National Relay Service (NRS)

Tel: 1800 555 677

Web: www.relayservice.gov.au

- **Voice/Text phone users**
To make a call dial: 133 677 (24 hours 7 days per week).
- **People who have speech/communication impairment only (do not have a hearing impairment)**
Speak and Listen Service (SSR) on 1300 555 727

Translating and Interpreting Services (TIS National)

The City offers a Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) and can be accessed by calling 13 14 50 (24 hours 7 days per week).

Process for when a complaint is received**Acknowledgment and time to resolve**

For complaints received in writing, email and on-line, the responding city employee will send an acknowledgement to the person making the complaint within 2 working days.

Where a complaint cannot be resolved within 10 business days, it is the responsibility of the responding City employee to let the person making the complaint know and keep them informed of progress.

Where a complaint alleges content on the City's website or a City social media channel is defamatory, the responding City employee must take action within 7 days of the complaint being made (e.g. by removing the material) to meet legislative obligations. The person making the complaint should be advised of the removal of the content as soon as possible.

Recording of Complaints

The responding City employee is responsible for recording the complaint, investigation, outcome and response in the relevant City system.

Investigating and responding to complaints

Level 1 Complaints – Resolution at first contact

City employees and workers are to make every effort to resolve the complaint at the first point of contact.

Where a complaint is resolved at first point of contact, the actioning City employee will record in the relevant City system:

- details of the person making the complaint
- the reason for complaint
- reference number
- outcome

If it is not possible to resolve the complaint at the first point of contact, due to the complexity, the need for investigation or breach of legislation, the responding City employee will inform the complainant of the following:

- the complaint is being escalated
- the reason for escalation
- the staff member or team who the complaint is being referred to
- a reference number for the escalation

Level Two Complaints – Internal review or investigation

A complaint that requires internal review or investigation is classified as a Level Two complaint.

If the review or investigation is going to be longer than 10 working days, the responding City employee must inform the person making the complaint of the new timeline and keep them updated on the progress.

The responding City employee must advise the person who made the complaint of the outcome in writing (email or letter) and will include:

- the outcome of the complaint and any action taken
- the reason/s for the decision
- the remedy or resolution proposed or put in place, and
- any options for review that may be available to the complainant, such as an external review or appeal

The responding City staff member is responsible for recording the complaint, investigation, outcome and response in the relevant City system.

Level 3 Complaints – External review

People who are dissatisfied with the response to their complaint can refer their complaint for review to the following third parties.

NSW Ombudsman

Level 24,580 George Street, SYDNEY NSW 2000

Phone: 02 9286 1000 or 1800 451 524

Email: nswombo@ombo.nsw.gov.au

NSW Department of Local Government

Locked Bag 3015, NOWRA NSW 2541

Phone: 02 4428 4100

Email: dlg@dlg.nsw.gov.au

The Independent Commission Against Corruption

GPO Box 500, SYDNEY NSW 2001

Phone: 02 8281 5999 or 1800 463 909

Email: icac@icac.nsw.gov.au

The Information and Privacy Commission NSW

GPO Box 7011, Sydney NSW 2001

Phone: 1800 472 679

Email: ipcinfo@ipc.nsw.gov.au

The Office of the Small Business Commissioner NSW

GPO Box W275, Parramatta NSW 2150

Phone: 1300 795 534

E-mail: we.assist@smallbusiness.nsw.gov.au

Unreasonable Conduct Towards the City and its Employees

In cases where the complaint is unable to be resolved to the satisfaction of the person making the complaint (after all the relevant processes have been followed) the City may, in accordance with the Unreasonable Conduct Towards the City and its Employees Policy, impose a limit on communication with the complainant if the same issue continues to be raised.

Responsibilities

City employees are responsible for applying this procedure.

Business Unit Managers are responsible for ensuring that this procedure is followed.

Consultation

This procedure is based on the NSW Ombudsman Complaint Handling Model Policy and Framework (2015).

The review of this procedure has been carried out in consultation with Legal, Governance, Workforce Services, Rates, Health & Building, Waste & Cleansing, City Rangers, Data & Information Management Services, Social Programs & Services and Office of the CEO.

References

Laws and Standards
• NSW Ombudsman Complaint management framework and model policy 2015
• NSW Ombudsman Effective Complaint Handling Guideline 2017
• Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act (1998)
Policies and Procedures
• Managing Unreasonable Conduct Towards the City and its Employees Policy
• Code of Conduct
• Access to Information Policy
• Public Interest Disclosure Policy

Review period

This procedure will be reviewed every 3 years.

Approval

The Chief Executive Officer approved this procedure on 23/12/24.



Monica Barone PSM, Chief Executive Officer

Approval History

Stage	Date	Comment	TRIM
Original Procedure	18 November 2021	Approved by the CEO.	2021/431742
Reviewed	23 December 2024	Added complaints alleging defamation. Substituted references to 'workers' with 'employees'	2024/739480
Commence Review Date	23 March 2027		
Approval Due Date	23 December 2027		

Ownership and approval

Responsibility	Role
Author	Manager Customer Service
Owner	Manager Customer Service
Endorser	City of Sydney Executive
Approver	Chief Executive Officer