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1. Statement

Ipswich City Council (**Council**) is committed to recognising the importance and value of listening and responding to complaints from its customers and staff and acknowledges that it should be open and accountable for the decisions it makes.

While Council endeavours to resolve issues before they become complaints, there are instances where this may not be possible. Council is committed to ensuring all complaints are dealt with in a confidential, efficient, effective, fair, transparent and economical manner.

Council staff managing complaints are expected to treat complainants with courtesy and respect.

Council will adhere to the local government principles contained in the *Local Government Act 2009*.

2. Purpose and Principles

Council has established a Complaints Management Framework, (**framework**), which is a complaints process in accordance with sections 306 of the *Local Government Regulation 2012*, 268 of the *Local Government Act 2009*. The framework and this policy also refer to 65 of the *Human Rights Act 2019*, 166 of the *Information Privacy Act 2009* and *Ministerial Guidelines* made under the *Right to Information Act 2009* from which this policy has been developed.

Further this policy forms a component of Council's Complaints Management Process that satisfies its obligations under the *Local Government Act 2009* and *Local Government Regulation 2012* for managing administrative action complaints.

Council acknowledges the right of its customers and staff to complain when dissatisfied with an act or decision made by Council, or how it has dealt with personal information or provided access to information in relation to Council's Publication Scheme.

Council seeks to be "complaints friendly" and encourages feedback to assist with improving its business and customer service processes. Therefore, complaints are to be managed in accordance with [Council's Complaints Management Procedure](#) (**procedure**) that covers each complaint type under this policy, and which sets out the processes for receiving, acknowledging, investigating and responding to those complaints.

All complaints are to be:

- Categorized according to specific identified criteria;

- Dealt with in a timely manner as stipulated in the procedure;
- Dealt with fairly, confidentially and objectively;
- Dealt with in accordance with human rights;
- Tracked and monitored;
- Reported upon from time to time;
- Where appropriate referred to external agencies and;
- Resolved by mediation, negotiation and informal resolution where possible and observing natural justice wherever practical.

Complainants will:

- Have their complaints acknowledged;
- Be advised of outcomes as soon as possible;
- Be given reasons for decisions; and
- Be advised of any available internal review options or external appeal options.

Council will utilise complaint information to:

- Provide a suitable remedy to a complainant;
- Develop and maintain good relations with its customers and staff;
- Evaluate and improve services, programs, policies and procedures;
- Inform decision making about future service and program delivery;
- Evaluate complaint data to improve the management of its employees and the programs, policies and procedures they work within.

3. Strategic Plan Links

This policy aligns with the following iFuture 2021-2026 Corporate Plan themes:

- Safe, Inclusive and Creative
- A Trusted and Leading Organisation

4. Regulatory Authority

- *Local Government Act 2009*
- *Local Government Regulation 2012*
- *Right to Information Act 2009*
- *Information Privacy Act 2009*
- *Human Rights Act 2019*
- Ministerial Guidelines made under the *Right to Information Act 2009*
- AS ISO 10002-2006

Related documents

- Ipswich City Council Complaints Management Framework
- Unreasonable Customer Conduct Policy
- Unreasonable Customer Conduct Procedure
- Human Rights Policy
- Human Rights Complaints Procedure
- Acts and Decisions – Human Rights Act 2019 Administrative Directive
- Right to Information Policy
- Right to Information Procedure
- Information Privacy Policy

- Information Privacy Procedure
- Employee Code of Conduct
- Councillor Code of Conduct
- Complaints Management Procedure

5. Human Rights Commitment

Ipswich City Council (Council) has considered the human rights protected under the *Human Rights Act 2019 (Qld)* (the Act) when adopting and/or amending this policy. When applying this policy, Council will act and make decisions in a way that is compatible with human rights and give proper consideration to a human right relevant to the decision in accordance with the Act.

6. Scope

This policy applies to all Council officers and relates to administrative action complaints, privacy complaints and, publication scheme complaints.

Those complaints are to be dealt with in accordance with this policy and supporting procedure, recorded appropriately in Council's records management system and resolved as per agreed service levels.

Human rights complaints, while managed by the Complaints Management Unit (CMU), are dealt with under the Human Rights Policy and supporting Human Rights Complaints Procedure.

Public interest disclosures under the *Public Interest Disclosures Act 2010 (PID Act)* are dealt with under the Public Interest Disclosure Policy and supporting Public Interest Disclosure Procedure.

Complaints not covered by this policy or the Council's Complaints Management Framework should not be escalated to the CMU or the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) unless determined by the relevant Department Head.

This policy does not provide for the following matters which should be referred to the CEO and managed under the relevant policies and procedures:

- Competitive neutrality complaints
- Liability claims against Council
- Official misconduct or criminal matters
- Complaints regarding the Mayor or councillors

Complaints regarding the CEO should be directed to the Mayor.

Issues regarding requests for services are to be dealt with under Council's normal business processes, recorded appropriately in Council's Customer Engagement System (CES) and resolved in accordance with agreed service levels. Such requests are not covered by this policy and should not be escalated to the CMU unless determined by the relevant Department Head.

7. Roles and Responsibilities

All relevant staff are to receive appropriate complaints management training and are to make use of the available Council resources to manage complaints.

Maintenance of this policy will be designated to the Governance Section, Legal and Governance Branch.

8. Key Stakeholders

The following will be consulted during the policy review process:

- Executive Leadership Team (ELT)
- Corporate Services
 - Complaints Management Unit
 - People and Culture
 - Legal and Governance

9. Monitoring and Evaluation

The successful implementation and effectiveness of this policy will be monitored through the following measures:

- Council staff training and induction processes that build understanding and adoption of this policy;
- Staff refer complaint matters appropriately to the Complaints Management Unit;
- Human rights are appropriately considered when making decisions under this policy and acts and decisions are compatible with human rights;
- All complaints are appropriately recorded in the applicable records management system;
- The Integrity and Complaints Manager to monitor and report on captured complaints data.

9. Definitions

Term	Meaning
Administrative Action Complaint	<p>Section 268 of the <i>Local Government Act 2009</i> states an Administrative Action Complaint is a complaint that – is about an administrative action of a local government, including the following, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a decision, or a failure to make a decision, including a failure to provide a written statement of reasons for a decision; • an act, or a failure to do an act; • the formulation of a proposal or intention; • the making of a recommendation; and • is made by an affected person.
Complainant	<p>An individual or group that makes a complaint about perceived failings or issues that affect them.</p> <p>For a human rights complaint, means the individual who is the subject of the complaint.¹</p>

¹ Schedule 1 (Dictionary) HRA.

Term	Meaning
Complaint	A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction orally or in writing, by an individual or group who is directly affected by an act or decision of Council or its staff, including a failure to take action.
Complaints management framework	The document that sets out the overarching framework of how council manages and responds to complaints.
Complaints management process	The <i>Local Government Act 2009 (LGA)</i> requires councils to adopt a process for resolving administrative action complaints from their receipt to resolution. That process includes policies, procedures and other directives that allow for a compliant, transparent and equitable approach to complaint management.
Council	Means Ipswich City Council.
Council staff	Anyone employed by or engaged by Council to undertake work on behalf of council. This includes councillors, permanent employees, contractors, labour hire, temporary staff and volunteers.
Customer	Anyone who enters council premises and is served by or engages with council staff, or who contacts Council staff by telephone, letter or electronic communication.
Customer engagement system - CES	Means the electronic document management system that Council uses to store and manage its records – requests for service in this instance.
Human rights	<p>Has the meaning given in part 2, divisions 2 and 3 of the <i>Human Rights Act 2019</i> and include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • recognition and equality before the law • right to life • protection from torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment • freedom from forced work • freedom of movement • freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief • freedom of expression • peaceful assembly and freedom of association • taking part in public life • property rights • privacy and reputation • protection of families and children • cultural rights – generally (enjoyment of culture, religion and language) • cultural rights – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples • right to liberty and security of person

Term	Meaning
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • humane treatment when deprived of liberty • fair hearing • rights in criminal proceedings • children in the criminal process • right not to be tried or punished more than once • right not to be subject to retrospective criminal laws • right to education • right to health services
<p>Human rights complaint</p>	<p>A human rights complaint is a complaint about an alleged contravention of section 58(1) by a public entity in relation to an act or decision of a public entity.²</p> <p><i>Note: Section 58(1) requires council to:</i></p> <p>(a) <i>act and make decisions in a way that is compatible with human rights; or</i></p> <p>(b) <i>when making a decision, Council must give consideration to a human right relevant to the decision.</i></p> <p><i>An act or decision will be compatible with human rights if the act or decision:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>does not limit a human right; or limits a human right only to the extent that is reasonable and demonstrably justifiable in a free and democratic society based on human dignity, equality and freedom.</i>³
<p>Local government principles</p>	<p>The local government principles are—</p> <p>(a) transparent and effective processes, and decision-making in the public interest; and</p> <p>(b) sustainable development and management of assets and infrastructure, and delivery of effective services; and</p> <p>(c) democratic representation, social inclusion and meaningful community engagement; and</p> <p>(d) good governance of, and by, local government; and</p> <p>(e) ethical and legal behaviour of councillors and local government employees⁴</p>
<p>Privacy complaint</p>	<p>Section 164 of the <i>Information Privacy Act 2009</i> states a Privacy Complaint is a complaint by an individual about an act or practice of a relevant entity in relation to the individual’s personal information that is a breach of the relevant entity’s obligation to comply with –</p> <p>(f) the privacy principles; or</p>

² Section 63 HRA.

³ Section 8.

⁴ Section 4(2) of the *Local Government Act 2009*.

Term	Meaning
	(g) an approval under section 157.
Public entity	Includes a local government, a councillor of a local government or a local government employee.
Public interest disclosure	<p>Under the PID Act, any person can make a disclosure about a:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • substantial and specific danger to the health or safety of a person with a disability; • commission of an offence or contravention of a condition imposed under a provision of legislation mentioned in Schedule 2 of the PID Act, if the offence or contravention would be a substantial and specific danger to the environment; • reprisal because of a belief that a person has made or intends to make a disclosure. <p>In addition, public sector officers can make a disclosure about the following public interest matters:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • corrupt conduct; • maladministration that adversely affects a person’s interests in a substantial and specific way; • a substantial misuse of public resources; • a substantial and specific danger to public health or safety; • substantial and specific danger to the environment; • A discloser can have either a ‘reasonable belief’ that wrongdoing has occurred or provide evidence which tends to show the wrongdoing has occurred.
Publication scheme complaint	Ministerial Guidelines made under the <i>Right to Information Act 2009</i> also allow for Publication Scheme Complaints to be made when information included in a Publication Scheme is not available or able to be accessed when it should be published according to legislation.
Records Management System	Means the Objective ECM (Enterprise Content Management) electronic document management system that Council uses to store and manage its records.

10. Policy Owner

The Corporate Governance Manager (Corporate Services) is the policy owner and the Integrity and Complaints Manager is responsible for authoring and reviewing this policy.