

LOCKHART RIVER ABORIGINAL SHIRE COUNCIL

COMPLAINTS MANAGEMENT POLICY



ADOPTION SCHEDULE: July 2026

NEXT REVIEW: July 2027

DIVISION: Corporate

RESPONSIBLE OFFICER: Chief Executive Officer P – Primary Author
Director Corporate Services S – Secondary Author

1. Authority

- Local Government Act 2009
- Local Government Regulation 2012
- Council's Code of Conduct
- Information Privacy Act 2009
- Human Rights Act 2019

2. Objective

This policy has been established to provide a clear process for the handling and resolving of Administrative Action Complaints and Privacy Complaints made against the Council.

3. Scope

This policy applies to all Council and Aerodrome Company employees and councillors.

This policy applies specifically to administrative action complaints, as defined below, however Council's Complaints Management Process may be used for all types of complaints. This policy provides guidance for submitting, receiving, handling, investigating, resolving and recording complaints. It covers internal and external complaints against staff and elected members about minor breaches of the Council's Code of Conduct and failure to provide satisfactory services to clients of community programs.

4. Exemptions

The complaints Management Policy does not cover:

- Requests for service and maintenance;
- Any work related to grievance of another officer or employee;
- Trivial, frivolous or vexatious complaints
- Complaints to which a statutory review process exists; and/or,
- Official misconduct which should be directed to the CCC (Crime and Corruption Commission Queensland)

5. Definition

Term	Definition
<i>Complaint</i>	Complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction by a person regarding: - a decision or other action of the Council; or, - an alleged minor breach

A complaint is not the same as a request for service, a request for information or inquiry seeking clarification of an issue.

<i>The Council</i>	refers to Lockhart River Aboriginal Shire Council
<i>Frivolous matter</i>	is a matter which is viewed as trivial, lacking in substance, annoying or designed to cause embarrassment to the subject of the complaint, which is unworthy of commencing an investigation.
<i>Vexatious complaint</i>	is a complaint intended to, or perceived to intend to cause distress, embarrassment, or to harass the subject of the complaint.
<i>Minor breach</i>	is a minor breach by a Councillor's Code of Conduct for Councillors.
<i>Complaint form</i>	a template provided to the public by Council upon which a complaint may be documented.

6. Policy Statement

Complaints received by Lockhart River Aboriginal Shire Council will be dealt with fairly and promptly and the lessons learnt used constructively to continuously improve the quality of services provided by the organisation to the people of the Shire.

When addressing complaints, the Council is committed to the following principles:-

6.1 Compliance

The handling of complaints must comply with all the relevant legislation (including but not limited to the Local Government Act, Public Interest Disclosure Act 2010, the Council's Code of Conduct and policies.

6.2 Impartiality

Complaints will be dealt with fairly and impartially.

6.3 Accountability

The actions taken to investigate and resolve formal complaints must be recorded and available for scrutiny.

6.4 Transparency

A summary of complaints by type, number and outcome will be published in the Annual Report.

6.5 Responsiveness

Complaints will be dealt with at the lowest level in the organisation compatible with a satisfactory outcome. Complaints will be dealt with and in adherence to the stated timeframes for complaints management.

6.6 Confidentiality

The Council will aim for a level of confidentiality consistent with maintaining the privacy and dignity of both complainant and the person complained against, whilst still allowing any necessary investigations to take place.

6.7 Natural Justice

The complaints management process complies with the principles of natural justice so that all parties directly affected by the complaint have an opportunity to present their views and the process is conducted without bias.

7. Responsibility

This policy applies to all Council and Aerodrome Company employees and all Councillors of the Council.

People can make a complaint:

- by telephone or in person
- by email or online, via council's website
- in writing, addressed to the CEO
- anonymously

By lodging the complaint in writing, this will assist the Council in understanding the nature of the complaint and any outcome sought by the complainant.

A complaint lodged on behalf of a person by a professional advisor; e.g. solicitor or accountant, will be responded to that advisor.

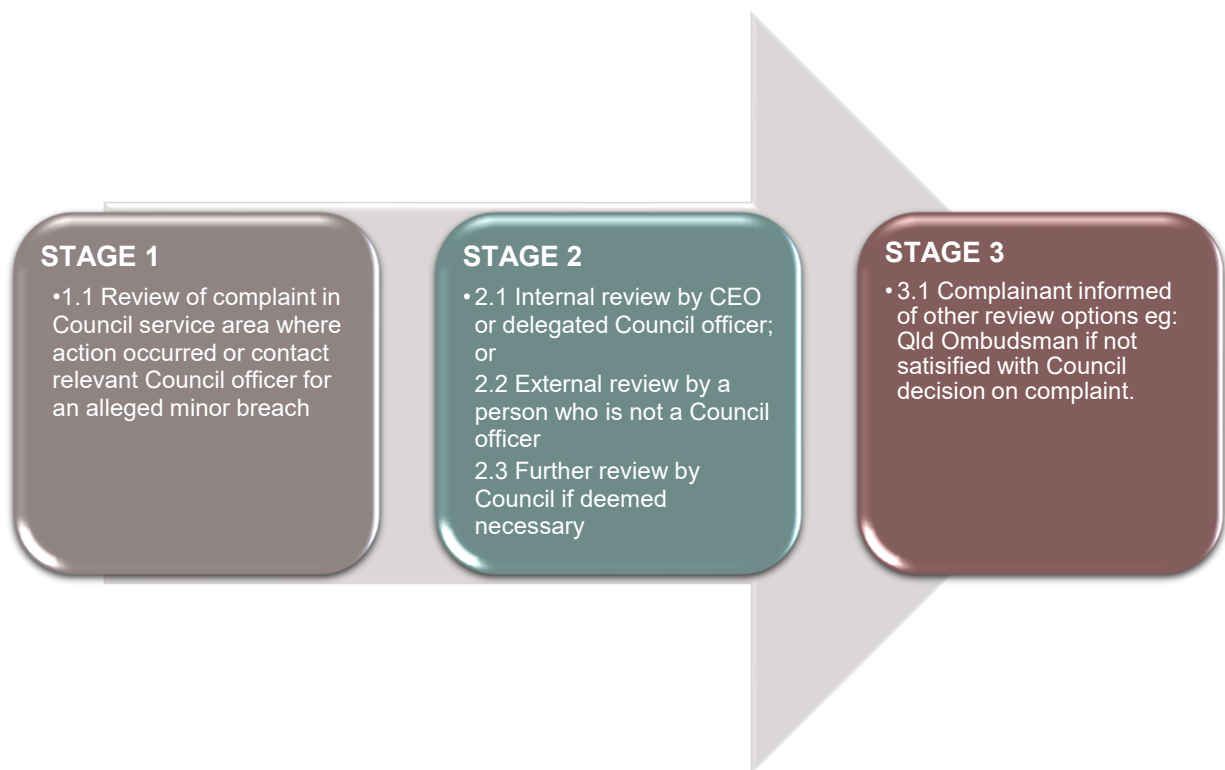
A complaint lodged by a person as an agent for an affected person, will be responded to directly to the affected person and not to the agent unless a letter of authority instructs otherwise.

Where complaints relate to individual officers or Councillors, regard will be given to the Employees Code of Conduct or Councillors Code of Conduct.

If the complaint contains allegations of criminal, corrupt or serious improper conduct, it will be referred to the CEO for consideration, including whether it should be referred to the relevant authority.

Human rights complaint has to be made to the Commissioner as per the requirements of section 65 of Human Rights Act 2019 if the complainant has not received any response or received inadequate response from Council within 45 days.

7.1 Complaint handling framework



8. Internal and External Review

An investigation may be taken either by way of internal review or external review.

- 8.1 Internal Review** an Internal Review can be an initial complaint investigation and also include a review of the initial decision by council if a complainant is not happy with the first decision.
- 8.2 External Review** an external review is when council has provided a review decision and the complainant remains dissatisfied. The complainant can then bring their matter to the Qld Ombudsman for consideration.

9. Recording a Complaint

All complaints will be recorded in a Register of Complaints maintained by the CEO. A summary of complaints by type, number and outcomes will be published in the Council Annual Report.

Complaints made by clients from Community Services department programs will be recorded in a register kept by the Director Community Services.

10. Types of Complaints

Complaints are categorised into:-

- Administrative Action complaints
- Conduct complaints
- Human rights complaints where the Council acts or make decisions not compatible with human rights or failure to give proper consideration to a human right relevant to the decision.
- Clients complaints for services provided through Women Shelter, HACC, Outside School Care Hours, Youth and Men Services community programs

A complaint should not be confused with a “request for service”

11. Processing of Complaints

Upon receipt of the complaint, an acknowledgement letter will be sent to the complainant within 3 – 5 working days

CEO may decide another officer may handle the complaint.

A timeframe for dealing with a complaint will depend on assessment of the following factors by the CEO.

- Urgency of the situation in terms of loss or damage likely to be suffered if the complaint is not quickly resolved.
- The likelihood that the complaint can be quickly resolved.
- The complexity of the complaint issue(s)
- Domestic and family violence clients complaints will be given priority and acted upon within the shortest time (hours or day) to ensure safety of the victims

12. Investigation and resolution process

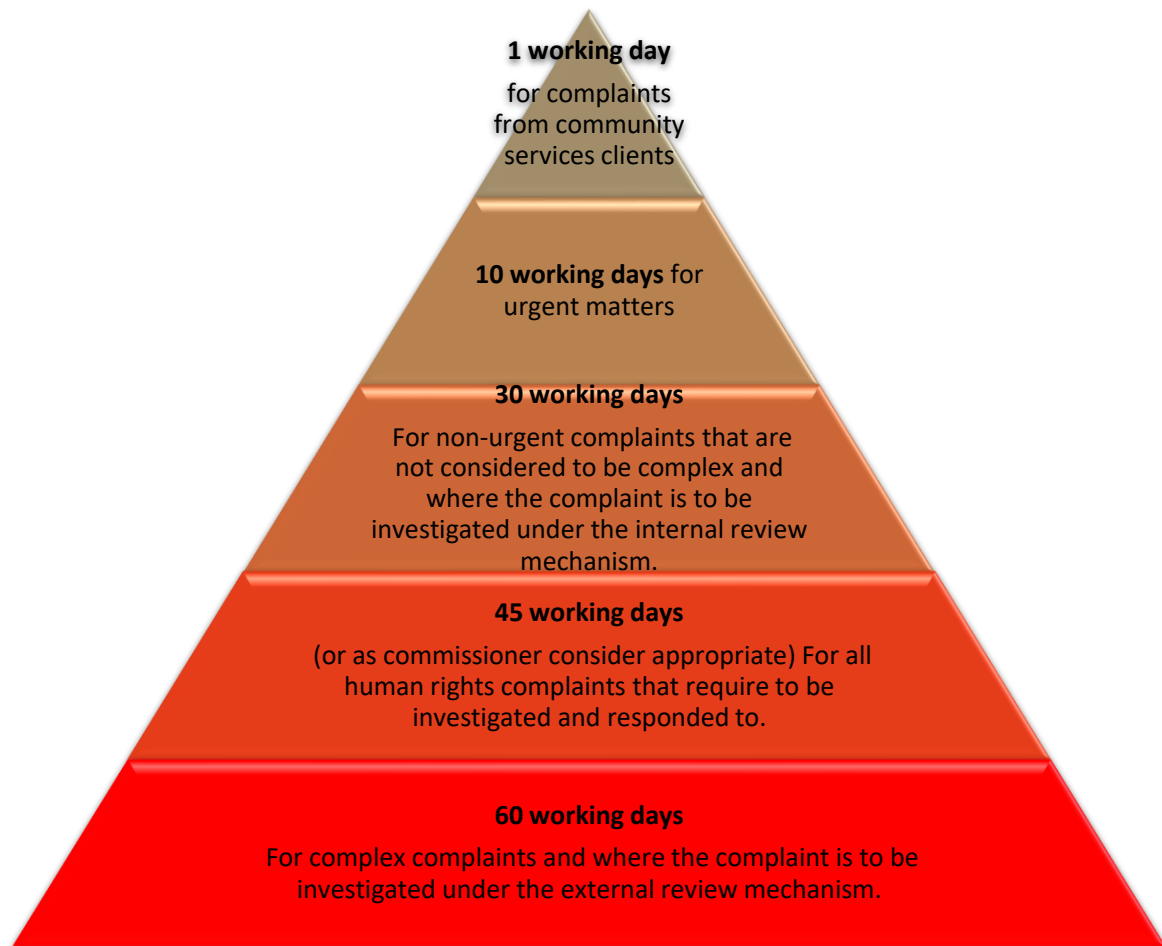
Discussion or mediation on any complaint can be taken with a view to resolution. Any outcome reached should be recorded on file at the time it is agreed with the complainant.

If because of the seriousness of the issue or the impact of the complaint means an extensive examination of the complaint is appropriate, the following aspects should be covered as necessary.

- Identifying the nature of the complaint and issue, for investigation by clarifying with the complainant.
- Understanding relevant legislation and policy.

13. Timeframes

In general terms, the Council will endeavour to meet the following timeframe for dealing with a complaint. However, clients complaints from Women Shelter, HACC, Outside School Care Hours, Men Services and Youth Services programs will be attended to within the day of reporting unless not practicable.



14. Remedies

The types of remedies that are appropriate to consider on the original complaint, or on an internal review request are:

- Admission of fault
- Explanation
- Apology
- Change of decision
- Repair / rework / replacement
- Technical assistance or
- Waiver of debt.
- Rectify the client's services issue.
- Offer alternative support services by different Council staff.

15. Recording and tracking of complaints

Every three months, commencing from the effective date of the policy and procedures, the CEO and the Council Complaints Officer will complete a report on all complaints received and handled.

Each report will set out the number of complaints received, a brief description of the outcome and details of any service delivery or business improvements effectively flowing from consideration of the complaints.

The CEO will assess the report to see if any systemic problem has been identified or there is any trend to the complaints received and will consider if any further action should be taken to change service delivery or improve business activities, services, systems and staff skills.

The CEO will discuss the report with the Council together with any comments relevant to the reports received.

16. Complaints from community services particularly applicable for clients who receive support services through Women Shelter, HACC, Outside School Care Hours, Men services and Youth Services Programs

- All clients from community services programs have the right to make complaint to the relevant funding body or appropriate external complaints agency for any unsatisfactory provision of services or behaviour by Council staff
- Council cannot take action to discontinue or reduce services, or any recriminatory action against clients or persons who have made such complaints.
- Council's policy is to foster transparency and accountability when providing services to those vulnerable clients in a safe and respectful environment.

These types of complaints should be done using the following forms:

- Form 1- Complaint form for Youth Services
- Form 2 - Complaint form for Women's Shelter
- Form 3 - Complaint form for Men's Services
- Form 4 - Complaint form for HACC / QCSS

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