



FACT Sheet

What does the Internal Ombudsman Shared Service do?

The Internal Ombudsman Shared Service provides residents, community members, ratepayers, local businesses, staff, Councillors and other Council Stakeholders with an “independent ear” regarding complaints about:

- administrative conduct
- unethical behaviour by Council
- corrupt conduct
- misconduct
- or maladministration

The service also assists the Councils with policy development and review and training in relation to good governance and administrative conduct.

All operations are underpinned by principles of procedural fairness, accountability and transparency.

The service is shared by City of Parramatta, Cumberland and Inner West Councils and operates under the Internal Ombudsman Shared Service Governance Charter.

How do I make a complaint to the Internal Ombudsman Shared Service?

Before making a complaint you should take **all reasonable steps** to try and resolve the matter with your local Council through the Council’s complaint handling policy. If the matter is about an administrative issue, you should request the Council review its processes before contacting the Internal Ombudsman.

Allow up to six weeks for a response from Council in regards to your concern/complaint. If after this period the matter has not been reasonably, or justly resolved by Council, then you may forward your complaint in writing to the Internal Ombudsman.

Your complaint to the Internal Ombudsman Shared Service

must include full details of the matter/issue and any relevant documents.

Complaints may be sent **via email** to the relevant Council email address as detailed below:

internalombudsman@cityofparramatta.nsw.gov.au

internalombudsman@cumberland.nsw.gov.au

internalombudsman@innerwest.nsw.gov.au

Internal Ombudsman staff can also be contacted **via phone**:

(02) 8757 9044.

Or Post:

**The Internal Ombudsman Shared Service
11 Northumberland Road
Auburn NSW 2144**

Internal Ombudsman staff are available in person or by telephone to assist with this process or to refer a matter appropriately.

What can the Internal Ombudsman investigate?

The Internal Ombudsman can investigate or refer for investigation matters including:

- all Council administrative processes
- any failure to comply with Council’s Code of Conduct, policies or procedures
- Council’s lack of attention to matters, or review of Council’s complaint handling procedures
- allegations of poor administration, maladministration, corruption, or other alleged improper conduct by Council or Council Officials
- anonymous complaints if sufficient details are provided
- matters referred by the Internal Ombudsman Shared Service Management Committee

What can’t the Internal Ombudsman Shared Service investigate?

The Internal Ombudsman is **unable** to investigate matters:

- that have not firstly been reviewed or investigated in accordance with the member Council's relevant complaints handling policy
- that are not part of Council's functions or businesses
- that require initial referral to external agencies including but not limited to: the NSW Independent Commission Against Corruption (the ICAC), the NSW Office of Local Government, the NSW Ombudsman, or the NSW Police
- where adequate details of the complaint are not available to allow proper investigation
- that are frivolous, vexatious or not made in good faith or are trivial in nature

What does an investigation involve?

1. Each case will be reviewed on its merit, seriousness and priority.
2. An acknowledgement letter will be sent to the complainant within three business days.
3. Records or information provided in relation to the issues raised will be reviewed.
4. Interviews with the relevant person(s) will be conducted.
5. A confidential report to the relevant General Manager or Chief Executive Officer will be prepared. This will include a review of the evidence available to the investigation, determinations on the complaint and any appropriate recommendations on the matters investigated.
6. A letter will be sent to the complainant detailing the results of the investigation, and any actions, if appropriate, giving consideration to relevant privacy legislative requirements.
7. Each investigation will be carried out in a timely manner.

The Internal Ombudsman may refer matters to other bodies, internal or external to Council for investigation, due to the nature, or urgency of the matter.

The timeframe for the investigation will be determined by the allocation, the priority of the matter, and other work constraints of the Internal Ombudsman Shared Service. All matters will be dealt with in a timely manner.

What outcomes can I expect from an investigation?

If a report from the Internal Ombudsman Shared Service finds that there has been an act or omission by a Council Official contrary to a policy or procedure and/or good administrative

conduct, the Internal Ombudsman can recommend that specific appropriate action be taken.

It is the General Manager or Chief Executive Officer's responsibility to address recommendations made by the Internal Ombudsman and ensure their implementation within the Council.

Each member Council is required to record each recommendation made by the Internal Ombudsman, take appropriate action, and record what action has been taken by Council. The Internal Ombudsman has the right to request at any time information regarding Council's action on previous report recommendations.

What about my privacy?

All parties to a matter investigated by the Internal Ombudsman are required to maintain confidentiality.

Internal Ombudsman Shared Service enquiries are undertaken in private and in a secure location.

Personal and private information are managed in accordance with the relevant member Council's Code of Conduct and the *NSW Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998*.

The Internal Ombudsman Shared Service manages and maintains strict separation and confidentiality of each individual member Council's records.

Council staff and Councillors are also bound by the confidentiality and privacy provisions of Council's Code of Conduct. A complainant's details will not be disclosed unless written consent from the complainant has been provided.

Where can I get more information?

View the **Internal Ombudsman Shared Service Governance Charter**. The document outlines in greater detail the scope of the Internal Ombudsman service, including who can make complaints, what types of complaints will be investigated and how these will be resolved.

To view, go to the relevant Council website as detailed below:

www.cityofparramatta.nsw.gov.au

www.cumberland.nsw.gov.au

www.innerwest.nsw.gov.au