



KEMPSEY
Shire Council

GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT

8th May 2007

GM5	CORRESPONDENCE AND COMPLAINT HANDLING
FILE: 584 AVB	{ Folio No. * }

SUMMARY:

Reporting to Council on outstanding correspondence and complaints for the quarter ending 31st March 2007.

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DESCRIPTION:

Council's Service Standards require correspondence to be answered within 14 days and for complaints to be handled within 10 days.

Recommendation six of the Department of Local Government Report – Promoting Better Practice is, "Reports should be provided to Council on a regular basis on council's complaint handling activities so that Councillors receive information about Council's handling of complaints and correspondence".

The action plan forwarded to the Department of Local Government indicated that it is proposed to report to Council quarterly in August, November, February and May each year.

At the June meeting of Council it was resolved: -

- "2. That the information on Councillor requests received and dealt with be included in the quarterly report on the complaints and correspondence handling system.*
- 3. That a resource usage estimate be included in this report."*

CORRESPONDENCE

A report which summarises Council's correspondence handling performance is attached at [\(Appendix C – K62\)](#).

The report shows on the left-hand side the Workload indicators, ie. number of items of correspondence outstanding; new correspondence; and finalised correspondence. It should be noted that these figures refer to all items of correspondence, – not just those which were outstanding more than 14 days.

The right-hand side of the report indicates Council's performance as compared to the Service Standard period of 14 days, ie. of the 3,170

items of correspondence finalised within the March 2007 Quarter, 89.5% of these were dealt with in not more than 14 days.

Reasons for correspondence not being answered within 14 days include:-

General Managers Unit

290 items of correspondence finalised during the Quarter, of which 94.14% were completed within 14 days.

There were 22 items of correspondence on hand at the end of the Quarter.

Corporate and Community Services

1,034 items of correspondence finalised during the Quarter, of which 87.3% were completed within 14 days.

There were 92 items of correspondence on hand at the end of the Quarter, with 73 of these items being outstanding more than 14 days.

Sustainable Development Services -

Of the 1,158 responses sent in the period, 91.36% were completed within 14 days.

Of the 185 items outstanding at the end of the period:-

- 14 are objections to DAs that have not been determined
- 16 relate to an environmental study that has not been determined. It should be noted that a further 20 items relate to DAs that have been determined and it is intended to ensure that objectors were notified of the determination in accordance with Council's policy.
- 20 are matters that do not require a written response
- 23 are matters replied to by the determination of the application to which they relate or in the refund of fees

Shire Services -

510 items of correspondence were finalised during the Quarter of which 85.88% were completed within 14 days. This represents an increase of 8% from the previous quarter of the correspondence finalised within 14 days.

Of the 84 items remaining outstanding at the end of March, 37 of these were outstanding for less than the service standard period of 14 days, i.e. 47 were outstanding for more than 14 days.

- matters requiring referral to Council for a determination.
- annual returns/licences that were completed by their due date but not within 14 days of receipt.
- land acquisition and road opening/closing that required advice or approval from third parties e.g. solicitors or government departments.
- correspondence relating to lease agreements
- 21 expressions of interest received relating to the South West Rocks Water Recycling Plant.

- Staff vacancies in Engineering Strategy, Works and Macleay Water contributed significantly to the capacity to respond to correspondence within 14 days.

COMPLAINTS

A report which summarises Council's complaints handling performance is attached at [\(Appendix D – K64\)](#).

In summary the report indicates that during the Quarter 23 complaints were completed, with 65% of these being dealt with in not more than 10 days.

Reasons for complaints not being finalised within 10 days include:

Corporate and Community Services

1 complaint referred to Noxious Weeds Officer from Parks and Gardens staff.

- Noxious Weeds -- obtaining quotes.

Sustainable Development Services

- Of the 15 complaints completed in the period, 86.67% were responded to in 10 days
- 100% were responded in 28 days
- There were 14 new complaints for the period
- There were 3 complaints outstanding at the end of the period

As in the previous reporting periods, the majority relate to dogs and a perception that Council has not acted. In all cases Council responded, however, in some cases it has been necessary to reinspect complaints on several occasions to verify allegations concerning barking and straying animals.

Other complaints relate to non-urgent matters such as alleged unauthorised uses with complainants demanding immediate action which may not be justified.

Shire Services

During the quarter 7 complaints were finalised with a reduction in the number of complaints outstanding at the end of the quarter to 2.

- Matters that are the subject of a complaint often require an amount of investigation that may not be able to be completed within the specified 10 day period.
- Alterations are being made to the process to better identify complaints from work requests so that the appropriate priority can be given to complaints.

COUNCILLORS REQUESTS

A report on Councillors requests received and dealt with is attached at [\(Appendix E – F66\)](#).

The report shows as follows –

Outstanding Requests at 1 st January	-	11
New Requests during Quarter	-	45
Requests finalised during Quarter	-	41
Outstanding Requests at 31 st March	-	15

The cost of staff responding to these requests has been estimated at \$1,556.00 for the March 2007 Quarter.

REPORT IMPLICATIONS:

- *Environmental*

Nil

- *Social*

Nil

- *Economic (Financial)*

Nil

- *Policy or Statutory*

Nil

- *General Manager's Comments*

Nil

RECOMMENDATION:

That the information be noted.

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A V Burgess
GENERAL MANAGER