



KEMPSEY
Shire Council

GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT

13th November 2007

GM6 CORRESPONDENCE AND COMPLAINT HANDLING FILE: 584 AVB (NRN) {Folio No. *}

SUMMARY:

Reporting to Council on outstanding correspondence and complaints for the quarter ending 30th September 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 2006 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 [\(Appendix D - Page K80\)](#).

The report shows on the left-hand side the Workload indicators, i.e. 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, i.e. of the 1,128 items of correspondence finalised within the September 2007 Quarter, 78.99% of these were dealt with in not more than 14 days.

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

General Managers Unit

73 items of correspondence finalised during the Quarter, of which 82.19% were completed within 14 days.

Corporate and Community Services

347 items of correspondence finalised during the Quarter, of which 78.39% were completed within 14 days.

- Administration – Four (4) letters involved legal matters requiring investigations prior to response to council solicitor; Two (2) letters were Freedom of Information applications requiring detailed assessment and discussions with applicant before formal letter of determination. FOI Act allows 21 days for processing applications; Seven (7) letters related to insurance claims where detailed reports are required from other Council departments. Correspondents receive a letter of acknowledgement before a determination of claim letter is sent.
- Business Services – EOI process awaiting assessment; backlog of correspondence following annual leave.
- Financial Services - Of the 21 items shown as outstanding as at 30/6/2007, 5 were answered prior to the 30 September with 14 replies issued in October. Of the 15 items identified as being outstanding for more than 15 days, two were replied to within 15 days and two were responded to in accordance with timelines set by external parties whilst work loads within the section have contributed to delays in meeting performance goals.
- Community & Customer Services – New position – carry over from SDS; awaiting information from Wutuma Project Officer; Determining if Council will host a “Women’s Day”; Parklands Cottage – report to November Council meeting.
- IT & Communications – Request from Kempsey Golf Club for superseded computer equipment. Acknowledged and referred to Council for consideration with Donations Policy.

Sustainable Development Services

Of the 426 responses sent in the period, 79.34% were completed within 14 days.

Of the 294 items outstanding at the end of the period, 131 letters were allocated to the Planning Services that was without a manager since August 2007 and two Area Planners for the entire period.

Of the 299 items outstanding at the end of the period –

- 21 are objections to DAs that have not been determined
- 5 relate to environmental studies / draft LEPs that have not been determined
- 19 refer to matters that do not require a response
- 23 relate to matters replied to by the determination of a the application to which they refer
- 14 were replied to but not marked off

Shire Services

264 items of correspondence were finalised during the Quarter of which 79.17% were completed within 14 days.

There are 95 items remaining outstanding at the end of period.

The reasons for correspondence not being answered within 14 days include:

- 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.
- 14 relate to quotes and tenders that required detailed assessment.
- Staff vacancies contributed to the capacity to respond to correspondence within 14 days.

COMPLAINTS

A report which summarises Council's complaints handling performance is attached at [\(Appendix E - Page K82\)](#).

In summary the report indicates that during the Quarter 12 complaints were completed, with 75% of these being dealt with in not more than 10 days.

Reasons for complaints not being finalised within 10 days include:

Sustainable Development Services

- Of the 7 complaints completed in the period, 100% were completed within 10 days
- There were 8 new complaints for the period
- There were 3 complaints outstanding at the end of the period

Shire Services

During the quarter 4 complaints were finalised with 2 being completed within the 10 days period. There are no complaints outstanding at the end of the quarter.

COUNCILLORS REQUESTS

A report on Councillors requests received and dealt with is attached at [\(Appendix F - Page K84\)](#).

The report shows as follows –

Outstanding Requests at 1 st July	-	10
New Requests during Quarter	-	32
Requests finalised during Quarter	-	31
Outstanding Requests at 30 th September	-	11

The cost of staff responding to these requests has been estimated at \$718.80 for the July to September Quarter.

REPORT IMPLICATIONS:

- *Environmental*

Nil

- *Social*

Nil

- *Economic (Financial)*

Nil

- *Policy or Statutory*

Nil

- *General Manager Comments*

Nil

RECOMMENDATION:

That the information be noted.

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A V Burgess
GENERAL MANAGER