

MAKING AN ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SERVICE COMPLAINT

Council seeks to work with its customers within the environmental health regulatory framework when providing the services related to registration and verifying food premises. However sometimes issues with our customers arise.

POLICY STATEMENT

This Council is registered and accredited to carry out work as a recognised agency under the Food Act 2014 and as such they are required to have a Complaints Policy.

The Environmental Health Team is committed to the delivery of quality services to meet the needs of its customers in line with its responsibilities as a recognised agency and Council's making it easier to do business strategy.

The Environmental Health Team welcomes feedback from customers as this provides opportunities for learning and improving services. We want to hear from you if you feel dissatisfied with any part of our service related to registering and verifying food premises.

Learning from our mistakes is an important part of our continuous improvement. The Environmental Health Team will always try to resolve complaints in a fair, timely, and confidential manner, in order to achieve positive outcomes for customers and staff.

Complaints that fall outside the scope of the responsibilities of a recognised agency under the Food Act 2014 will be passed to Council as a territorial authority for investigation and action.

DEFINITION OF A COMPLAINT

For the purposes of this process, a complaint is defined as a customer informing the Environmental Health Team either verbally or in writing that:

- they are dissatisfied with the standard of service they have received; and/or

- the Environmental Health Team have failed to do something required by statute or that it had agreed to do (eg, exceeding statutory timeframes for registering food premises or not meeting published service levels); and or
- they are dissatisfied with the way they have been treated.

Some situations will not be considered under this process, for example complaints that constitute a disagreement with, or refusal to accept matters that the Environmental Health Team is obliged or required by statute to apply; and a complaint where another formal process has commenced.

If your issue is regarding a process or technical decision made by us as a recognised agency, please refer the matter to Ministry for Primary Industries.

Note: If a concern is verbal and is resolved at the first point of contact then this is not regarded as a 'complaint' but as a business as usual enquiry or discussion, and does not need to be recorded (except where the customer requests a complaint be recorded).

Every effort will be made to resolve an issue as quickly as possible at the first point of contact. If the issue cannot be resolved at the first point of contact then it will be managed in accordance with this policy.

MONITORING

All complaints will be investigated and dealt with in confidence, consistent with the needs of the investigation. To enable the Environmental Health Team's policy and procedures to be adequately reviewed and revised, monitoring of compliance will be undertaken.

The information will be used to monitor the Environmental Health Team performance, highlight areas of failure and feed into the continuous improvement process.

RESPONSIBILITY AND REVIEW

The Environmental Health Team's Complaints Process is the responsibility of the Team Leader Environmental Health and will be subject to regular review.

SERVICE STANDARDS

The Environmental Health Team will ensure that:

- Investigations will be undertaken in a way that ensures objectivity and fairness to all parties.
- Complaints will be prioritised according to risk and urgency.
- Complaints will be responded to as quickly as possible by the most appropriate method.
- A full response will be made within two working days, or an acknowledgement will be sent. If the issue needs more time we will let you know and keep you updated.
- Remedies will be proportionate to the issues raised.
- Complaint records will be kept and will cover:
 - details of the investigation;
 - the outcome (eg, whether the complaint is upheld, action taken, apology, or reason why Council is unable to assist); and
 - information on the right of further redress and escalation if the customer remains dissatisfied.

PROCESS AND ESCALATION

Complaints should be directed in the first instance to the Team Leader Environmental Health.

Once received complaints are assigned to a senior member of the Environmental Health Team for investigation.

The senior member of the Environmental Health Team investigates the complaint and reports the result of the investigation back to the complainant.

If necessary, the complaint is escalated to the Team Leader Environmental Health for investigation and resolution.

Where the complaint relates to the actions of a senior member of the Environmental Health Team, it is investigated by the Team Leader Environmental Health.

If necessary, the Team Leader Environmental Health escalates the complaint to the Divisional Manager, Environmental Consents.