

Complaint Handling Policy

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Eastern Waste Management Authority herein referred to as East Waste, is committed to achieving customer service excellence by striving to deliver services in a professional, coordinated and timely manner.
- 1.2. East Waste recognises that feedback and complaints provide the organisation with an opportunity to improve services and resolve matters of concern.
- 1.3. East Waste is committed to making its feedback and complaints process transparent, accessible, inclusive and responsive.
- 1.4. This Policy sets out our approach to handling feedback and complaints from customers of East Waste (including Constituent Councils, their staff, residents, businesses, and members of the public). It provides a fair, consistent, and structured process for receiving, investigating, and resolving concerns.

2. Scope

- 2.1 This Policy applies to all:
 - all complaints about East Waste's services, decisions, or actions taken by East Waste (including by the East Waste Board, Board Committees, employees, contractors, or agents of East Waste). Feedback that is not a formal complaint (for example, general comments or suggestions) is also welcomed, as it helps continually improve our services.
 - forms of service feedback and complaints about East Waste operations, except where another legal or policy process applies.

3. Definitions

- 3.1. **Business Day** means a day when East Waste is normally open for business, i.e. Monday to Friday, excluding public holidays.
- 3.2. **Complaint** means an expression of dissatisfaction by a customer with a product, service or behaviour delivered by East Waste or its representatives where the customer requests for a formal complaint to be recorded and expects a response or remedy.
- 3.3. **Complaints Register** means East Waste's complaints management ticketing system software where complaints are recorded and managed.
- 3.4. **Complainant** means the person or organisation making the complaint.

- 3.5. **Customer** means a person who is utilising services or programmes provided by East Waste and includes external customers being any Constituent Council, their staff and/or residents, members of the public or organisations that interact with East Waste.
- 3.6. **Employee** means any person acting on behalf of East Waste (this includes employees, Board Directors and committee members, contractors, and consultants).
- 3.7. **Feedback** means any opinion, comment / suggestion, compliment or expression of interest/ concern made directly or indirectly by a customer where a response or resolution is not explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required.
- 3.8. **Major Complaint** means a complaint about a serious matter that, due to its nature, severity, or potential impact, raises issues that are complex, high-risk, systemic, or likely to attract significant public or regulatory attention that may adversely affect the organisation or its Constituent Councils, and requires notification to the East Waste Board.
- 3.9. **Request for Service** is an application to have East Waste take some form of action to provide a service or improve a service. East Waste receives complaints and feedback across all areas of its operations and makes the distinction between a request for service, feedback and a complaint for the purpose of this policy.
- 3.10. **Senior Officer** is an employee of East Waste within the Executive Leadership Team, being a Manager or the General Manager.
- 3.11. **Significant Complaint** means a complaint that cannot be resolved at the initial or lower level of staff responsibility and requires escalation to a Senior Officer. A complaint will also be considered significant where one or more of the following apply:
 - It involves actual or potential serious harm (e.g. safety, financial, legal, or reputational risk).
 - It affects, or has the potential to affect, multiple people or a broader group of stakeholders.
 - It involves, or has the potential to involve, a breach of legislation, regulatory requirements, or organisational policy.

4. Guiding Principles

East Waste will manage feedback and complaints in line with the following principles:

- 4.1. **People Focus:** East Waste is open to feedback and/or complaints from all customers. Complainants will be treated with respect and understanding, and East Waste welcomes input as an opportunity to improve our services.
- 4.2. **Service Levels:** East Waste will manage complaints in accordance with established Constituent Council Service Level Agreements and agreed Constituent Council guidance. Complaints will be appropriately prioritised and managed having regard to their nature, complexity and level of risk.
- 4.3. **Transparency:** East Waste will make it clear how and where complaints can be made (via email, phone or web form) and explain the process of complaint management in plain language. All methods of complaint lodging will be acknowledged equally. Information about

timelines and possible outcomes will be provided to complainants, subject to legislative requirements.

- 4.4. **Responsiveness:** Complaints will be acknowledged promptly and addressed in a timely manner. The Complainant will be kept informed of progress and expected timeframes. East Waste is genuine in its communication and follows through on its promises. East Waste aims to resolve complaints at the first point of contact if possible; otherwise, complaints will be formally lodged and will be escalated appropriately (see Section 6).
- 4.5. **Fairness:** To ensure the complaint handling process is fair and reasonable, complaints are dealt with in an impartial, objective and unbiased manner. East Waste will consider all relevant information before making decisions. Complainants will have the opportunity to present their case and respond to findings. East Waste will ensure that making a complaint will not unfairly disadvantage the Complainant i.e. no “victimisation”.
- 4.6. **Support:** East Waste supports and assists customers who want help to provide feedback and/or make a complaint. There are opportunities for internal and external review and/or appeal about the organisation’s response to the complaint, and complainants are informed about these avenues when applicable.
- 4.7. **Confidentiality:** The Complainant’s personal information and details of the complaints will be kept confidential and only disclosed on a need-to-know basis. East Waste will seek permission from the Complainant should their details need to be disclosed. Complaints about employee conduct will be handled discreetly to protect the privacy of all involved.
- 4.8. **Accountability:** Clear roles and responsibilities for complaint handling are established. Staff who handle complaints are trained and have authority to investigate and respond. All complaints and outcomes will be recorded, monitored, and reported to management to ensure accountability. Performance against complaint-handling standards will be periodically reviewed by senior management.
- 4.9. **Continuous Improvement:** East Waste views complaints as valuable feedback. Complaint trends and outcomes will be analysed to identify underlying issues and to improve systems, procedures, and service delivery. Lessons learned from complaints will be communicated to relevant staff, and changes will be made where necessary to prevent recurrence.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

- 5.1 **Complainants** are responsible for providing accurate and complete information when submitting a complaint. They should include relevant details (who, what, where, when, why) and any supporting evidence. Complainants should cooperate with requests for further information.
- 5.2 **Frontline Staff** (Customer Service Officers, drivers, etc.) should attempt to resolve issues immediately at first contact. If the issue cannot be resolved at the first point of contact, it will be recorded as a complaint and escalated to the appropriate staff.
- 5.3 **Managers, Business Partners, Coordinators, Team Leaders and Leads** are responsible for handling complaints escalated to them. If a complaint cannot be resolved within two (2) business days and the customer requests to escalate the complaint, they should inform

customers about this Policy and direct them to the correct contact points. They should ensure investigations are thorough and fair. Managers must keep Complainants informed, seek resolution when possible, or escalate further if needed (for example to the General Manager). Managers will ensure all staff follow complaint procedures and that outcomes are implemented

- 5.4 **General Manager** is responsible for investigating Major Complaints and overseeing complaint management and ensuring compliance with this policy. The General Manager will receive written complaints that request escalation (Internal Review) and coordinate the review process. The General Manager will report complaint data and trends to the East Waste Board annually.
- 5.5 **East Waste Board** receives periodic reports on complaints and compliment data as part of governance oversight. The Board will be notified of any major complaints and any requests for Internal Review of an East Waste Decision (Section 7).

6. Making and Submitting a Complaint

6.1. How to Lodge a Complaint

To submit a complaint please contact East Waste via any of the below options:

- Email: east@eastwaste.com
- Phone: (08) 8347 5111
- Online form: www.eastwaste.com.au.
- In person: 1 Temple Court Ottoway.

6.2 No Discrimination of Method

The method of lodging a complaint does not affect our response. All complaints will be treated equally, whether received in writing, by phone, on our website, or in person. If a complaint is made anonymously or through social media, it will be treated as a request for information or service. In those instances, East Waste will provide a response clarifying the process to lodge a formal complaint, as well as provide a link to East Waste's Complaint Handling Policy.

6.3 Information Required

To assist East Waste in effectively managing a complaint the Complainant should provide sufficient information to assist East Waste in investigating the concerns including a summary of what the complaint is about and any relevant key information such as, but not limited to:

- The Complainant's name, contact details and preferred method of communication.
- A clear statement of the concern (what happened, where, and when).
- Any relevant details or documents (e.g. photographs, notes, invoices).
- Any identifying details of the East Waste staff involved, if known (e.g. name, description, or truck number)
- The outcome or remedy sought by the Complainant.
- When a complaint is raised verbally, East Waste staff will record the details or ask the Complainant to submit a written statement if needed (taking into account the Complainant's circumstances). Reasonable assistance will be offered to help Complainants articulate their concerns.

7. Complaint Handling Process

7.1 Acknowledgement

- 7.1.1 Upon receiving a complaint and where a response to the customer is requested and appropriate contact details have been provided, East Waste will contact the Complainant as soon as possible and within two (2) business days, either via phone or email. The acknowledgment will include:
- the name and contact details of the person handling the complaint.
 - The outcome or proposed resolution for the complaint.
 - if the complaint cannot be resolved within two (2) business days, an expected timeframe for a response.
 - For significant complaints, an outline of the process including a link to, or copy of, this policy.
- 7.1.2 If the complaint was made by phone or in person, the Complainant will be advised that their concerns have been recorded and will be actioned.

7.2 Initial Assessment

- 7.2.1 Employees will be trained to manage complaints efficiently and effectively and provided with a level of delegated authority appropriate for the nature of complaints they are expected to resolve.
- 7.2.2 The employee will attempt to resolve or de-escalate the matter at first contact where appropriate (for example, by providing a simple explanation or making a minor correction). If the matter is resolved, the employee will confirm whether the customer still wishes to have a formal complaint recorded. If a complaint is to be recorded, it will be entered into East Waste's complaint register and assigned to the appropriate staff to investigate.
- 7.2.3 Where a complaint relates to the delivery of a service governed by an applicable service level agreement, the complaint will be assessed and managed having regard to the relevant service standards and timeframes.
- 7.2.4 Significant Complaints will be assigned to a Senior Officer to be formally investigated.
- 7.2.5 Major Complaints will be assigned to the General Manager to be formally investigated. The General Manager will inform the East Waste Board of Major Complaints as soon as practicable.

7.3 Investigation

- 7.3.1 The investigating officer will gather relevant information. This may include:
- interviewing staff or witnesses involved.
 - reviewing records (work orders, vehicle footage, logs, emails, policies).

- written statements from the Complainant.
- investigations will be conducted objectively and confidentially.

7.3.2 In instances where a complaint cannot be resolved within two (2) business days from the receipt of the complaint then the Complainant will be provided with regular updates, no later than every 10 business days, about the progress of the complaint.

7.4 Resolution

7.4.1 Upon concluding the investigation, East Waste will aim to resolve the complaint by:

- Correcting errors (e.g. re-performing a missed service, waiving incorrect charges).
- Explaining decisions or clarifying misunderstandings where services were delivered in accordance with applicable service standards and established Service Level Agreements or specific Constituent Council guidance.
- Offering other remedies consistent with policy (for example, service credits or re-scheduling of collection).

7.4.2 East Waste will, where practicable, remedy the situation in a manner which is consistent and fair for both East Waste and the customer(s). The solution chosen will be proportionate and appropriate to the circumstances. Sometimes it may only be possible to offer an apology.

7.5 Completion and Follow-Up

7.5.1 After resolution, the outcome of the complaint is to be recorded in East Waste's Complaints Register.

7.5.2 East Waste will inform the Complainant that the complaint has been resolved (e.g. to confirm a service has been corrected) if requested by the Complainant.

7.5.3 The resolution to Significant Complaints and Major Complaints will be communicated to the Complainant in writing (email or letter) whenever possible. Where a verbal explanation suffices, East Waste will document the outcome for internal record keeping.

7.5.4 Customer satisfaction with the complaint process may be surveyed occasionally for continuous improvement.

8. Escalation and Review

8.1. Escalation to Senior Staff

8.1.1. Where it is not possible to resolve a matter at the initial point of contact and the matter is a complaint, East Waste will escalate the complaint to the appropriate staff member or department. This will occur, for example, when the frontline staff member has been involved in the matter that is the subject of the complaint, or when the complaint is about an issue that requires a decision to be made at an alternate department level, or by a more senior staff member. A senior staff member includes Managers, Business Partners, Coordinators, Team Leaders, Leads and/or Supervisors. Where the complaint is deemed to be Significant or Major, it is escalated to the relevant Senior Officer to investigate.

- 8.1.2. The Complainant should be informed about this escalation and contact details should be provided.

8.2. Internal Review of an East Waste Decision

- 8.2.1 Where a complaint is significant and and/or has been escalated to a Senior Officer and the customer is dissatisfied with the outcome, the customer may wish to request an Internal Review of the decision.
- 8.2.2 An Internal Review of an East Waste decision is available under section 270 of the *Local Government Act 1999*. This is a process established by legislation that enables a council or subsidiary to reconsider all the evidence relied upon to make a decision, including new evidence if relevant.
- 8.2.3 Requests for an Internal Review should include full details on the decision that the complainant is wanting to be reviewed, the date of the decision, the reason for seeking the decision and the details of the person that made the decision. Request for an Internal Review can be made in writing to the East Waste General Manager at: east@eastwaste.com.
- 8.2.4 Due to the limited administrative resources at East Waste, requests for internal review may be assigned to an East Waste Constituent Council, or an external body which ensures an additional level of independence and transparency.
- 8.2.5 The East Waste Board will be notified of any requests for Internal Review. The nature of the Internal Review will be reported in East Waste's Annual Report.

8.3 External Review

- 8.3.1 If the complainant remains dissatisfied after an Internal Review (or if one is not appropriate), they may be directed to their local council or external bodies (such as the Ombudsman SA) for further review, depending on the nature of the complaint.
- 8.3.2 Information regarding lodging a Complaint with the Ombudsman is available online at www.ombudsman.sa.gov.au or by calling (08) 8226 86 99 or 1800 182 150 (outside metro SA only).

Note: Generally, the Ombudsman prefers a complaint to be addressed by East Waste in the first instance, unless this is not appropriate in the circumstances.

9. Unreasonable Conduct by Complainants

- 9.1 East Waste is committed to providing fair and respectful complaint handling. However, staff are entitled to a safe working environment. Therefore, East Waste may apply measures to manage unreasonable conduct by Complainants. Unreasonable conduct is persistent or abusive behaviour that hinders proper complaint resolution and places unreasonable demands on resources. Examples include:
 - **Unreasonable persistence:** Repeated complaints about the same issue after all remedies have been offered or avenues of review exhausted.
 - **Unreasonable demands:** Demands for outcomes beyond East Waste's powers or resources (e.g. demanding the impossible or changing demands frequently).

- **Unreasonable lack of cooperation:** Refusal to provide necessary information, or to engage constructively (e.g. lying, threatening staff, or ignoring procedures).
- **Unreasonable arguments:** Making baseless, irrelevant, or irrational arguments that obstruct resolution.

9.2 When dealing with an unreasonable complainant, East Waste will:

- Warn the Complainant, if possible, about the behaviour and its impact on the process.
- Limit contact to essential communication (for example, no email or phone calls beyond the investigation process).
- If necessary, designate a single point of contact to manage the complaint.
- Ensure all communication remains professional and factual.

9.3 Where a Complainant's behaviour is deemed unreasonable and/or consumes an unwarranted amount of East Waste's resources or impedes the investigation of their complaint, a decision may be made to apply restrictions on contact with the person. Before making any decision to restrict contact, the complainant will be warned that, if the specified behaviour(s) or actions continue, restrictions may be applied. Any action due to unreasonable conduct will be documented.

9.4 Except in extreme cases, East Waste will continue to process the complaint on its merits (focusing on facts rather than the complainant's behaviour) while safeguarding staff and resources.

9.5 Any decision to suspend action on a complaint will be made by the General Manager and communicated in writing (where possible) to the Complainant in addition to advising the East Waste Chair and the Chief Executive Officer of the applicable Constituent Council, if relevant.

10. Alternate Remedies

10.1 If the complaint would be more appropriately dealt with by another process this will be explained to the Complainant at the outset for example:

- Allegations of misconduct, fraud or corruption in public administration.
- Freedom of Information applications.
- Claims for financial compensation e.g. insurance claims.

11. Record Keeping and Reporting

11.1 All complaints, and their outcomes will be recorded in East Waste's Complaints Register. This includes the nature of the complaint, key dates, investigation summary, and resolution. These records are kept confidentially according to the *State Records Act 1997*.

11.2 Annual reports will be prepared for management and the East Waste Board, summarising complaint numbers, types, turnaround times, and any identified service improvements.

12. Legislation

East Waste Charter

Local Government Act 1999

Freedom of Information Act 1991

Public Interest Disclosure Act 2018

Ombudsman Act 1972

State Records Act 1997.

13. Related Documents

Internal Review of Decision Procedure

Public Interest Disclosure Procedure

Service Level Agreements with East Waste Constituent Councils (2026)

AS/NZS 10002:2014 "Guidelines for Complaint Management in Organisations"

SA Ombudsman's Complaint Management Framework (2016).

14. Review

This Feedback and Complaints Policy shall be reviewed within four (4) years of issued date or more frequently if legislation or organisational requirements change.



Signed
General Manager



Signed
Chair of East Waste Board

Date: 26 September 2026

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15. Document History

Version No:	Issue Date:	Description of Change:
1.0	June 2023	New Document
2.0	August 2026	Policy aligned to standard practice at East Waste and the recommendations specified in the <i>SA Ombudsman's Complaint Management Framework (2016)</i> including a defined process for dealing with unreasonable Complainants.