

Organisational Guideline PUBLIC INTEREST DISCLOSURE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM 2021


Corporate Plan Reference:	<i>Excellence as a Council</i>	
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Program Owner and Department:	Governance Advisor, Executive Services	

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INTRODUCTION

Noosa Shire Council's Public Interest Disclosure (PID) Management Program (Program) has been prepared to comply with section 28 of the *Public Interest Disclosure Act 2010* ("the PID Act") and Public Interest Disclosure Standard No.1/2019 ("the Standard").

The purpose of this Program is for the management of PIDs made under the PID Act.

Furthermore, Noosa Council's PID Policy and Procedures incorporates elements of this Program and have been implemented to demonstrate Noosa Council's commitment to fostering an ethical, transparent culture and the encouragement of reporting suspected wrongdoing.

In summary, Noosa Council's PID Management Program encompasses the following:

- Our organisational commitment
- Appointment of a PID Coordinator
- Delegation of PID responsibilities
- Implementation of a communication strategy
- Implementation of a training strategy
- Analysis of PIDs

1 ORGANISATIONAL PROGRAM

1.1 Organisational Commitment

Noosa Shire Council (Council) is committed to ethical practices across all levels of operation and compliance with this PID Management Program. As such, Council is committed to the disclosure of information about suspected wrongdoing so that it can be properly evaluated, investigated and dealt with.

Within this context, Council's commitment to the management of PIDs shall be met by:

1. Council and senior management's support and encouragement with regard to the internal and external reporting of suspected wrongdoing.
2. Strong messaging on the high value and importance which Council and senior management place on PIDs. This includes recognising the important role disclosers play in identifying wrongdoing and thus improving the integrity and performance of Council.
3. The proper management of PIDs, including the protection of disclosers.
4. Providing a consistent and professional response to any PIDs received by Council in line with the PID Management Program, standards prescribed by the Queensland Ombudsman and in the PID Act.
5. Developing and implementing a training program to ensure that:
 - a. All Council officers are aware of their responsibilities with regard to making a PID;
 - b. All Council officers are aware of their responsibilities with regard to reporting corrupt conduct and other important matters adversely affecting the public interest;
 - c. All Council officers are aware of, and have access to, the support structures Council has in place for those who are affected by a PID; and,
 - d. All Council officers are aware of their responsibilities with regard to reprisals and confidentiality.
6. Encouraging all Council officers to be accountable for their actions and maintain the highest standards of professional conduct and ethical service.
7. Commitment to ensuring that sufficient resources are allocated to managing Council's PID Management Program.
8. Implementing improved procedures and processes following analysis of PIDs.

Furthermore, Council's Program has been prepared to respect and align with Council's commitment to a strong ethical culture and practices as outlined in Council's Code of Conduct. In particular, the Code of Conduct states that Council Officers must act ethically and maintain a high standard of integrity, accountability and transparency. This is reinforced by a legislative framework whereby the *Public Sector Ethics Act 1994* (QLD) outlines four ethical principles that guide Council and its officers' behaviours, namely one of which is integrity and impartiality.

1.2 Appointment of a PID Coordinator

Council has nominated the Governance Advisor as the PID Coordinator who is responsible for the management of issues related to PIDs. The Governance Advisor has:

- Direct access to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) in relation to PID matters;
- Delegated authority to appropriately manage PIDs; and,
- Access to resources to allow for the proper management of PIDs.

Furthermore, Council's Director of Executive Services, Governance Advisor and CEO all have authority via Council delegation with respect to a number of powers under the PID Act.

1.3 Delegation of PID responsibilities

The PID Coordinator is responsible for:

- Applying consistent and appropriate assessment procedures to determine which complaints meet the requirements of the PID Act for treatment as a PID;
- Monitoring the investigation and resolution of PIDs;
- Managing and coordinating the support and protection offered to disclosers;
- Collecting, reporting and reviewing data about PIDs received;
- Providing clear guidance to staff about how to make a PID;
- Reporting PID information to the Queensland Ombudsman, as required;
- Coordinating or providing staff training regarding PID reporting and PID management;
- Ensuring that Council's PID Policy and PID Procedures are regularly reviewed in accordance with the recommendations provided by the Queensland Ombudsman; and,
- Reporting of PIDs to Council's Audit and Risk Committee annually on:
 - Issues arising from PIDs received during the period; and,
 - Effectiveness of Council's PID Policy and Procedures.

Note: Any identified issues arising from identification, evaluation and monitoring of a PID are referred and considered as part of Council's audit program.

1.4 Implementation of a communication strategy

Council recognises that the success of its Program is highly dependent on employee awareness of this program and Council's PID Policy and Procedures.

As such, Council's communication strategy involves the following:

- Promotion of Council's PID Policy and Procedures via Council's website, Council's Intranet, Factsheets, flowcharts, communication and various Leadership and Management meetings;
- Introducing the PID Policy and PID Procedures to new employees as part of Council's Induction Program and within the Employee Code of Conduct;
- Ensuring that Council's PID Policy and Procedures are incorporated into Council's PID Training Strategy;
- Reports and messaging to Council's Executive and leadership teams, and other relevant officers;
- Key messages from the Ombudsman circulated to staff as part of information awareness;

1.5 Implementation of a training strategy

Council recognises the importance of developing and providing training to staff on PID issues and ensuring that regular training opportunities are provided.

As part of our regular training in ethical behaviour, employees will be educated on the elements of the PID act, in particular:

- How to identify wrongdoing;
- How to make a PID;
- The support and protection afforded to the discloser; and,
- How PIDs are managed by Council.

Council's training strategy involves the following:

- All new employees are introduced to PID awareness as part of Council's induction program and within the Employee Code of Conduct;
- Staff are scheduled to attend PID training sessions – internal and/or external via webinar or face-to-face, if permitting. A record of attendance is maintained by the Governance team.
- Staff members of the Governance team and managers are provided the opportunity to attend comprehensive PID training presented by the QLD Ombudsman's Office, including:
 - Module 1: Assessment and Management
 - Module 2: Risk Assessment and Protection
 - Module 3: Support
- Officers that are called upon to act as Support officers are also provided the opportunity to participate in PID training, especially for Module 3: Support.

1.6 Analysis of PIDs to inform improvements

Council acknowledges the value of information obtained from PIDs in identifying systemic issues, trends and informing administrative improvements.

Following the finalisation of a PID, the PID Coordinator will assess and report to the Chief Executive Officer regarding any recommendations for change as a result of that assessment e.g. service delivery, personnel management, business processes or internal controls. Similarly, the PID coordinator also provides an annual report to Council's Audit and Risk Committee outlining an assessment and recommendations for change.

The PID Coordinator also conducts an annual review of the effectiveness of Council's PID Management Program.

2 RELEVANT LEGISLATION, POLICIES AND STANDARDS

- *Crime and Corruption Act 2001*
- *Local Government Act 2009*
- *Ombudsman Act 2001*
- *Public Interest Disclosure Act 2010*
- *Public Sector Ethics Act 1994*
- [Public Interest Disclosure Policy](#)
- [Public Interest Disclosure Procedures](#)
- Code of Conduct
- Public Interest Disclosure Standard No.1/2019
- Public Interest Disclosure Standard No.2/2019
- Public Interest Disclosure Standard No.3/2019