

INTERNAL OMBUDSMAN

Shared Service

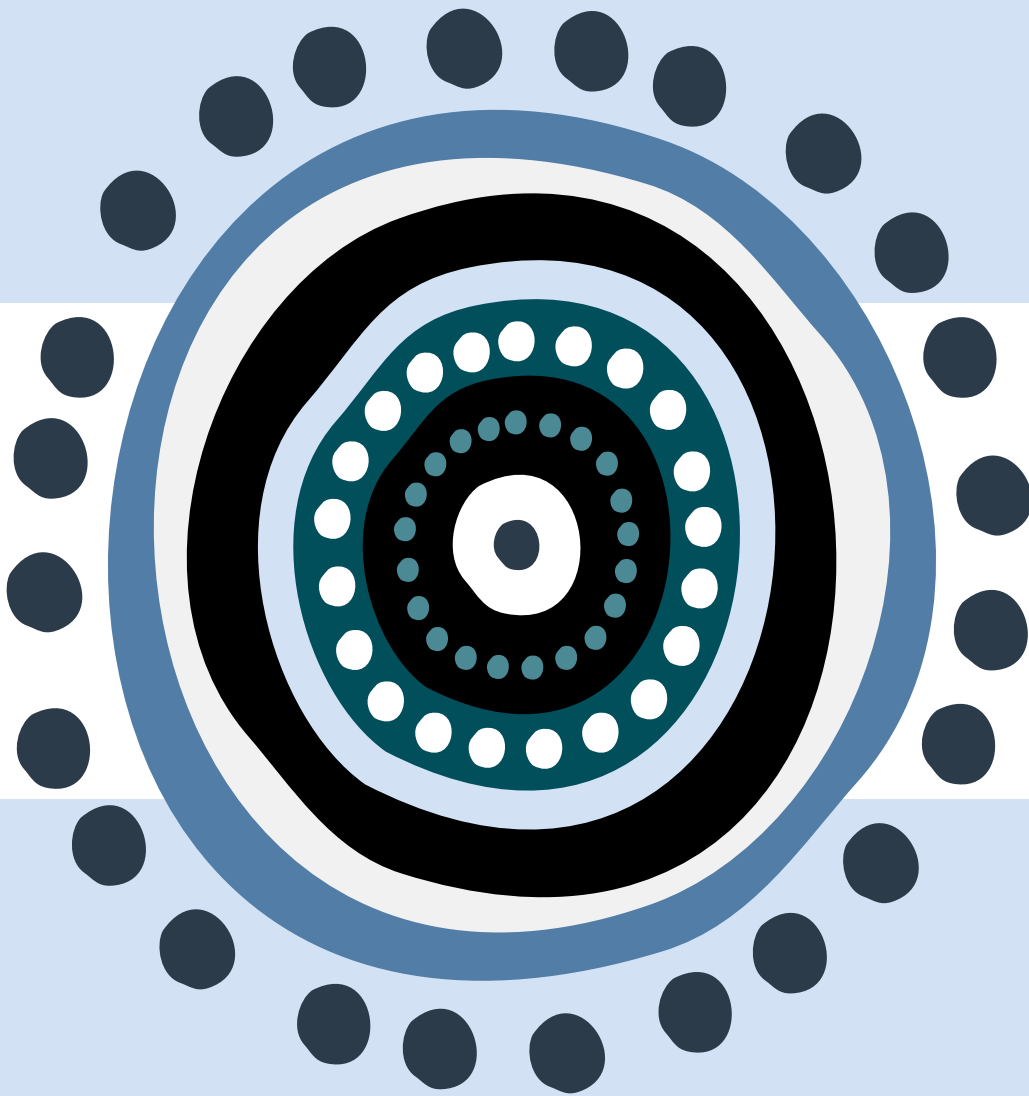


CUMBERLAND
CITY COUNCIL



Annual Report

2024 - 2025



Acknowledgment of Country

The Internal Ombudsman Shared Service acknowledges the traditional custodians of the lands on which we work, and we pay our respects to all Elders past and present, and to the children of today who are the Elders of our future.

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Introduction

Letter to the Chair of the Internal Ombudsman Shared Service Management Committee

Dear Mr Gainsford PSM,

Internal Ombudsman Shared Service Annual Report 2024-2025.

I am delighted to present the eighth Annual Report for the Internal Ombudsman Shared Service with City of Parramatta, Cumberland City and Inner West Councils, which contains an account of our work for the period 1 July 2024 to 30 June 2025.

Yours sincerely,



Elizabeth Renneberg
Internal Ombudsman

Message from the Chair of the Internal Ombudsman Shared Service Management Committee



On behalf of the three member Councils of the City of Parramatta Council, Cumberland City Council and Inner West Council, I am pleased to present to you the Internal Ombudsman Shared Service (IOSS) Annual Report for 2024-25.

As the IOSS continues for its eighth year, the team has continued its important work as a service for the community and all Council stakeholders, maintaining high levels of engagement.

The IOSS delivers work in accordance with its Triple Governance Track of Investigation, Education and Prevention.

The volume of activities undertaken by the IOSS continues to increase year on year. I am particularly pleased that the volume of preventative measures have increased in the past financial year to assist our Councils to continue to deliver quality services to the community. In addition, I am pleased at the significant number of recommendations, 174, made following IOSS investigations. These recommendations, accepted by all Councils, are targeted at improving our administrative conduct, bolstering corruption prevention strategies and assisting in building the capacity of our staff.

Throughout the year, the IOSS continued their high level engagement within Councils, regularly reporting to each Council's Executive and Leadership Teams, providing an update on the services delivered and sharing trends and concerns identified.

As an accountability and transparency measure, the IOSS reported quarterly to all Councils Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee, and reports to the IOSS Management Committee on an annual basis.

I congratulate the service on its achievements throughout the year.

Along with the City of Parramatta and Cumberland City Council, I look forward to the ongoing work of the IOSS to assist in promoting a high standard of ethical, transparent administrative conduct and decision making across our organisations which improves the level of service provided to our communities.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a series of loops and strokes, positioned above the printed name.

Peter Gainsford PSM
Chair 2024-25, Internal Ombudsman Shared Service
Management Committee
General Manager, Inner West Council

Message from the Internal Ombudsman

I am delighted to present the Internal Ombudsman Shared Service's (IOSS) Annual Report for 2024-25.

This report, my fourth, recognises the work delivered by the IOSS to the Councils of the City of Parramatta, Cumberland City and Inner West and their communities.

I am very proud of the work of our small team in undertaking investigation, education and prevention activities across the three Councils to assist in delivering improved services for all Council stakeholders.

Over the year, the IOSS undertook 622 activities across the three Councils, an increase from 549 in the year prior, including receiving 364 complaints and investigating 90 matters in the year prior. Throughout the year we finalised 377 matters, including 51 matters assessed as complex. Of significance, we resolved 86% of matters within six weeks and 66% in the first week. Given the volume of complex matters (14%), this is an outstanding result.

I am particularly pleased that we continue to be a trusted source for the community and Council officials, with stakeholders displaying comfort and confidence in the IOSS that we will seek to address their matter appropriately.

In terms of education activities throughout the year the IOSS developed and delivered 64 training and awareness sessions to almost 1500 staff across the three Councils at 12 Council sites. Given the size of our office and volume of investigation activities, this was a significant undertaking and achievement.

We also delivered 174 prevention activities – encompassing advice, proactive advice, reporting, sharing learnings, hosting shared services forums, undertaking projects and reviewing policies. The true value of our service is to seek to prevent poor administrative conduct before it occurs, an aim we seek to undertake from these measures.

Arising from our investigations, we made 174 recommendations broadly relating to taking relevant action to comply with policy/procedure/legislation, considering investigation outcomes, creating new or amending existing processes and procedures, undertaking audits, or providing education and training. I am pleased to report that all recommendations made to the three Councils were accepted and we continue to work with Councils to ensure these recommendations are implemented.

I acknowledge and appreciate the support and commitment of the service by the IOSS Management Committee, Chair, Mr Peter Gainsford PSM, General Manager, Inner West Council, Ms Gail Connolly PSM, Chief Executive Officer, City of Parramatta Council and Mr Peter Fitzgerald, General Manager, Cumberland City Council.

Most importantly I acknowledge and appreciate the support and diligence of Sarah Labone, Deputy Internal Ombudsman and Finbarr Cahalane, Complaints Assessment and Administration Officer. Our ability to deliver and achieve more year on year highlights their innovation, dedication, compassion and hard work.

This Annual Report will be presented to each Council's Audit Risk and Improvement Committee for endorsement.

I commend to you the IOSS Annual Report for 2024-25.



Elizabeth Renneberg
Internal Ombudsman



Highlights

13%

increase in
activities
undertaken

INVESTIGATION

86%

finalised within six
weeks

71%

of complaints
received from the
community

60%

resolved formally,
informally or
provision of advice

364

complaints
received

174

prevention activities
undertaken

PREVENTION

74

pieces of advice
provided

Two-fold
increase

of prevention
activities

20

Council policies and
procedures reviewed

174

recommendations
made to improve
Council services

Five

shared service forums
hosted to encourage
collaboration,
improvement and
share knowledge at our
member Councils

ADDING VALUE

Six

prevention projects
initiated

23

Code of Conduct
training sessions
delivered

1478

staff attended
training across 12
Council sites

64

training sessions
delivered

EDUCATION

90

matters formally
investigated

25

matters upheld

97%

rated the sessions as
high

About this Report

Our eight Annual Report provides a comprehensive account of the performance of Internal Ombudsman Shared Service (IOSS) throughout the 2024-2025 financial year and outlines our plan for the year ahead.

The IOSS strives to be a leader in transparency and accountability and this Annual Report, helps us deliver on this commitment by being a source of information for IOSS member Councils, their communities and stakeholders including ratepayers, residents, businesses, community and interest groups, news media, Council staff and Councillors.

This Annual Report is made up of four parts:

PART 1

About Us

Details of the IOSS and who we are, what we do and how we go about our work.

PART 2

Our Year in Review

Highlights of the IOSS work in 2024-2025, detail on investigation, prevention, education and promotion activities which form part of our performance against our strategic direction.

PART 3

Management and Accountability

Information on how the IOSS is accountable and transparent, including our financial summary.

PART 4

The Year Ahead

A summary of the IOSS's focus for 2025-2026.

Enquiries about this report should be directed to the Internal Ombudsman, Internal Ombudsman Shared Service. Contact details can be found at the end of this report.

Case study

Reviewing an Escalated Complaint from the Community from a Council

Summary of Complaint

The IOSS was referred an escalated complaint from the community from a Council, in relation to ongoing concerns with waste management for a neighbouring property following development of the site.

Their concerns related to the development application assessment process, decision making and actions taken to address ongoing waste concerns.

The complainant had been in contact with the Council on numerous occasions about these concerns but remained dissatisfied with the timeliness and quality of responses received.

What we Reviewed

Under the IOSS Governance Charter, the IOSS is unable to overturn a planning decision, however, can review the administrative process undertaken by Councils once the complainant has received a response to their complaint from the Council. Broadly this means reviewing whether the decision was open for Council to make, whether it was made in line with relevant legislation and policies, and whether adequate reasoning was provided to the complainant.

The IOSS therefore reviewed the administrative processes associated with this matter.

This included reviewing and assessing information and documentation provided by the complainant and the Council and speaking with the Council's staff to understand what had occurred to date and speaking with the complainant to understand their current concerns.

Outcome

The review found that waste management was demonstrated and appropriately considered by the Council within the assessment of the development and was consistent with the requirements at the time.

It also found that the Council undertook a broad range of education methods, with significant time spent, to attempt to resolve the issues raised by the complainant, and that this was in line with their established approach to these types of matters.

However, we found that there were new activities which were contributing to the issues raised by the complainant. Therefore a number of process improvement recommendations were made to the Council to ensure effective communication between departments in relation to activities that may impact each other, as well as working with the relevant property owners to consider other more effective strategies.

All recommendations were accepted by the Council and either have been implemented or are in the process of being implemented.

Learnings

This matter highlighted that the perception of good complaint handling can be affected when repeated requests are made to multiple staff in multiple areas, with multiple responses provided.

In matters such as these, it can be advantageous to Councils to allocate a central point of contact for complaints that involves multiple areas. This allows a singular point of contact with one response that considers and addresses all relevant issues.



Part One

About Us



About Us

The Internal Ombudsman Shared Service (IOSS) was established on 31 July 2017, and operates between City of Parramatta, Cumberland City and Inner West Councils. The service is headed by the Internal Ombudsman, who is supported by the Deputy Internal Ombudsman and the Complaint Assessment and Administration Officer.

IOSS Team

Elizabeth Renneberg Internal Ombudsman

Elizabeth has been with the IOSS since January 2020. Elizabeth has previously worked across a number of federal government agencies and has significant experience in interpreting and applying administrative law, corruption prevention measures, capacity building, complaints handling, and internal and external investigations across senior management roles.

Elizabeth is passionate about improving the administrative conduct of the member Councils to improve the quality of important and critical services for the communities served by the IOSS. In order to deliver lasting change, Elizabeth continues to bolster the proactive, preventative measures undertaken by the IOSS.

Sarah Labone Deputy Internal Ombudsman

Sarah has been with the IOSS since January 2018. Focussed on people, Sarah has significant experience with investigations, insurance and enterprise risk, project management, customer outcomes and finance. Sarah has gained this experience in both the public and private sector in NSW, Victoria and the United Kingdom. This has given her a thorough understanding of the operations, challenges and opportunities of local government.

Sarah is passionate about working with all stakeholders to ensure the concerns, processes and outcomes are well understood, which are at times complex, to get the best possible result.

Sarah is focussed on identifying opportunities for improvements to Council processes as part of any investigation. This focus assists the member Councils to improve their administrative conduct, decision making, transparency, accountability and service delivery to their communities.

Finbarr Cahalane Complaint Assessment and Administration Officer

After two years with the IOSS, Finbarr resigned from his role in July 2025 to take up a promotion in the sector. Finbarr's skills, knowledge, experience and gentle empathetic manner will be missed by the team and the Councils we serve.

What We Do

The Internal Ombudsman Shared Service (IOSS) provides all member Council stakeholders, including residents and ratepayers, the general public, local businesses, Council staff and Councillors with an independent ear to raise concerns about administrative processes, unethical behaviour, corrupt conduct, misconduct and maladministration in relation to the member Councils' functions and services.

This reflects the commitment of each member Council in maintaining a high standard of ethical conduct and decision making; administrative conduct; corporate governance; and being corruption free.

The IOSS operates under a Governance Charter which sets out the IOSS's jurisdiction and governs how the IOSS works.

The work of the IOSS is overseen by the IOSS Management Committee which is comprised of the General Managers of Cumberland City and Inner West Council and the Chief Executive Officer of City of Parramatta Council.

To undertake our broad role, we operate under a 'Triple Governance Track' model.

This model has three approaches: **Investigation, Prevention and Education**. Utilising this model, the IOSS assists member Councils to identify areas for improvement in administrative conduct and decision making and to assist in high standards of probity and governance. This includes ensuring the member Councils are acting fairly, with integrity and in their communities' best interests; in accordance with their Code of Conduct; and working to improve the member Councils' complaint handling systems. We also aim to promote best practice in the member Council operations.

The IOSS is committed to providing effective, efficient, responsive and high-quality services that contributes to an improved service to the community and all stakeholders.

All operations of the IOSS are underpinned by the principles of procedural fairness, accountability, transparency and fairness.

Investigation

Investigation of complaints within our jurisdiction in accordance with our Governance Charter and each member Council's complaint handling policy with the view to making any recommendations for improvement. The IOSS may also instigate its own motion investigations on matters without first receiving a complaint, as well as any matters that are considered systemic, reflect a pattern of conduct, and/or are serious and significant.

Prevention

Assisting in policy review, undertaking projects/ reviews of Council processes, and providing ad-hoc advice on probity matters particularly to staff, Councillors or Council delegates. This also includes bringing together staff from the member Councils to form communities of practice and share challenges and strategies. It also includes providing proactive advice to each member Council arising from investigation outcomes and trends across the member Councils.

Education

Development and delivery of tailored training programs, bespoke to each business area in relation to good governance, ethical decision-making, administrative conduct, fraud and corruption awareness, adherence to the Code of Conduct and Public Interest Disclosure awareness. This also includes addressing any matters arising from investigation outcomes or as identified as a result of other training programs conducted.

Other Functions

Each member Council has delegated the Internal Ombudsman and Deputy Internal Ombudsman to the function of Code of Conduct Complaints Coordinator in accordance with the *Model Code of Conduct for Local Councils in NSW* in addition to the function of the Public Interest Disclosures Coordinator under the *Public Interest Disclosures Act 2022 (NSW)*.

The IOSS sit on Cumberland City Council's Child Protection triage team which handles allegations against staff in relation to child protection matters.

The IOSS is also a member of the Cumberland City Council Child Protection team. This team raises awareness and identifies potential concerns and risks in child safety and protection in Council business.

Case study

Gifts and Benefits

Matters investigated by the IOSS also included a small number of alleged breaches of the gifts and benefits provisions of the Code of Conduct. Central to these provisions within the Code of Conduct is that public officials are not to receive an additional gift or benefit for undertaking their role. Understanding the requirements surrounding Gifts and Benefits is regularly communicated to staff via training and awareness raising activities.

The IOSS investigated two instances of substantiated allegations of gifts or benefits received through the inappropriate use of Council resources; and two substantiated allegations where Council officials used a supplier for a personal benefit. In response to these matters, the IOSS made 41 recommendations across these four matters involving six staff. The implementation of these recommendations relating to procurement, probity, processes and WHS, will strengthen Council's position to seek to reduce the misuse of Council resources and ensure adherence to the gifts and benefits provisions of the Code of Conduct.

Complaint Handling and Investigation

In accordance with the IOSS's Governance Charter:

We can investigate:

- Council administrative processes
- failure to follow Council's Code of Conduct, policies or procedures
- Council's lack of attention to matters, or review of Council's complaint handling procedures
- allegations of poor administration, unreasonableness, maladministration, corruption, or other alleged improper conduct by Council Officials
- anonymous complaints where sufficient details are provided
- Referred internal matters from a General Manager, Mayor, Internal Audit or an external agency
- Own motion matters upon approval from the Management Committee
- Public Interest Disclosures, including breaches of disclosure obligations

We can't investigate matters:

- that are not part of Council's functions or businesses
- that have not firstly been reviewed or investigated in accordance with the member Council's relevant complaints handling policy
- the complainant has had knowledge of the matter for more than six (6) months before making the complaint unless it is a complaint about a staff member or a Councillor
- they relate to the conduct of staff or Councillors or delegates, where the complainant has had knowledge of the matter for more than three (3) months
- that require initial referral to external agencies including: the NSW Independent Commission Against Corruption (the ICAC), the NSW Office of Local Government, the NSW Ombudsman, or the NSW Police
- where adequate details of the complaint are not available to allow proper investigation
- that are frivolous, vexatious, or not made in good faith or are trivial in nature
- the complainant has no direct or sufficient interest in the subject matter of the complaint
- an adequate remedy or right of appeal already exists, whether or not the complainant uses that remedy or right of appeal
- they are already before or under investigation by a court, coroner or other tribunal or government agency
- they relate to the appointment or dismissal of an employee or any industrial or disciplinary issue, other than in relation to the administrative process of the appointment, dismissal or disciplinary issue
- they relate to internal grievances raised by staff, other than in relation to a failure in the administrative process
- they concern a private individual
- resources are not available, or the matter is of a low priority
- the complainant declines or refuses to provide further sufficient information to allow investigation
- the complainant has made threats against Council or the IOSS
- it concerns a review of a decision of the elected Council, or committee of Council, or matters awaiting determination
- it relates to a planning decision
- they have already been reviewed by the IOSS and/or external government agency

How we Action Complaints



Providing Initial Advice

Members of the public and Council officials often contact the IOSS requesting initial advice regarding their concerns, including the processes and aspects to consider in proceeding with a formal complaint. When people contact us, our aim is to seek to understand their concerns and see how we can help. To do this well, we ensure that people contacting the IOSS are given sufficient time to explain their problem and to feel heard. We also explain options, our role and what we may be able to do to help. It is important for the IOSS to remain objective and impartial; we do not advocate for Council or a complainant.

In all instances we endeavour to help by providing information so a person:

- understands the reasoning behind a decision
- obtains a response or action to a complaint or concern
- knows how to resolve a complaint directly with Council
- obtains informal resolution from the relevant Council to their enquiry, if appropriate
- has a complaint referred to Council for review and response, if appropriate

Our knowledge of the functions and policies of the member Councils enables us to provide the most appropriate assistance to the people who contact us.

If the matter is not within the remit of the IOSS or Council, we will endeavour to explain any possible alternative options available.

Referrals to Council

The IOSS triages complaints received, assessing information provided to us and taking appropriate action if the matter is within our jurisdiction.

In accordance with our Governance Charter and each member Council's complaint handling policy, it is reasonable that the member Council has an opportunity to review, address and respond to complaint, prior to being considered by the IOSS.

If the complaint has not been reviewed by the member Council in accordance with their complaint handling policy, we assist by referring it to the member Council's relevant Officer responsible for coordinating a response to the complaint. This is helpful to the complainant as it means they do not have to start their complaint process again by contacting the member Council.

Depending on the complexity of the matter and information obtained, we will often provide a summary of the matter to the member Council which includes the points that should be considered and responded to by the Council.

We invite the complainant to contact us again if they are not satisfied with the member Council's response and/or handling of the matter.

Informal Resolution and Investigation

If a complaint has been reviewed by the member Council, we may make preliminary enquiries and/or undertake informal investigative processes. This means we engage with relevant Council employees to obtain information and/or review relevant policies, procedures and legislation. This helps us understand the concerns raised and to consider whether a formal investigation is required.

In some cases, the information we receive, and review identifies no wrongdoing by the member Council. However, we are often able to provide further information to support the reasoning behind the decision, response or action to the complainant. As part of this, we may identify opportunities for process improvements by the member Council and we will make recommendations to the member Council as required.

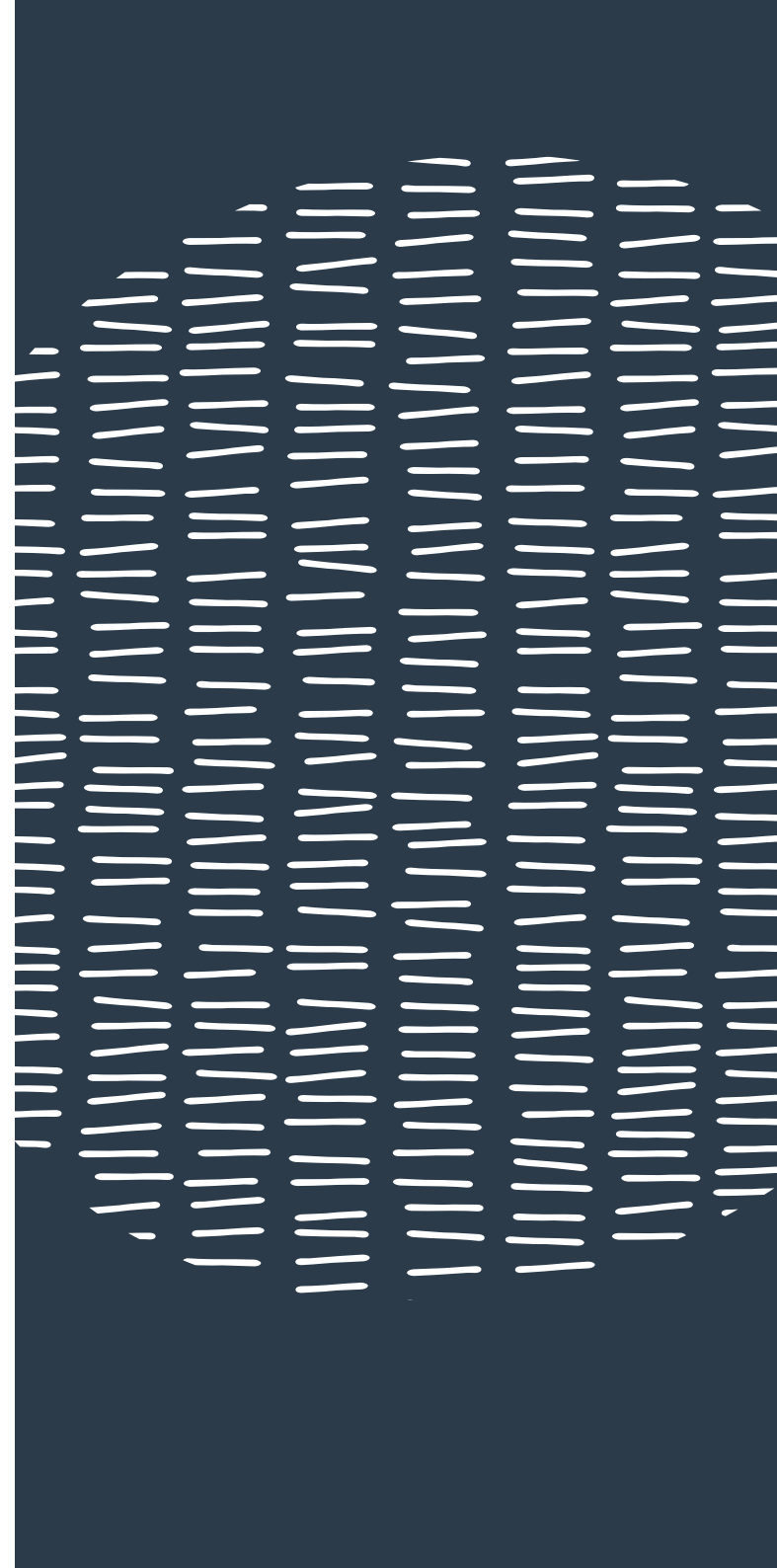
In other cases, we may identify that the member Council needs to take further action in relation to the complaint, including reconsidering a decision or providing further information and/or reasoning to the complainant that addresses their concerns. We will then request the member Council to undertake the relevant action and invite the complainant to contact us again if they continue to remain dissatisfied with the member Council's response or the handling of their matter.

Formal Investigation

The majority of complaints we receive do not result in a formal investigation. However, those complaints that do are considered either serious, sensitive or systemic and are formally investigated. This typically includes allegations of poor administration, maladministration, corruption or other alleged improper conduct by Council Officials. It also includes failures by Council employees to adhere to Council's Code of Conduct.

A formal investigation involves obtaining, reviewing and assessing information in relation to the matter. It can also include a statement being obtained from the complainant, and, if relevant, any witnesses and the respondent. This ensures procedural fairness to the parties that may be associated with the matter.

When an investigation is completed, a confidential report is provided to the relevant General Manager or CEO of the member Council. The report will include the findings related to the investigation, including any relevant recommendations relating to the conduct as well as any process improvements for the member Council. Further information about how recommendations are considered by the member Councils can be found later in this report.



Code of Conduct Complaints About Councillors and the General Manager/CEO

All complaints about Councillors or the General Manager/CEO are managed in accordance with the *Procedures for the Administration of the Model Code of Conduct* (Procedures).

The General Manager/CEO (in matters involving Councillors) or the Mayor/Lord Mayor (in matters involving the General Manager/CEO) considers the complaint to determine the course of action to undertake in accordance with the Procedures. The Procedures outline four options for the decision maker, including taking no action, dealing with the matter via alternative means (such as informal counselling or training or referring the matter to another agency) or commencing a preliminary assessment. A preliminary assessment is undertaken by an independent Conduct Reviewer from Council's dedicated panel of conduct reviewers to determine how the relevant matter should be handled as outlined in the Procedures.

The Internal Ombudsman and the Deputy Internal Ombudsman are the delegated Code of Conduct Complaints Coordinator for each member Council, which requires ensuring that the administrative functions of any matters referred from the General Manager/CEO (in matters involving Councillors) or the Mayor/Lord Mayor (in matters involving the General Manager/CEO) for preliminary assessment and, if required, formal investigation are undertaken, including coordination of the Conduct Reviewer, and in accordance with the Procedures. Timeframes for these processes are outlined in the Procedures.

Requests for Review

If the IOSS has investigated a complaint and a complainant is dissatisfied with the IOSS's written decision and reasons, a complaint can be made to an external government agency. The IOSS advises all complainants of this option. A complaint can be made to an external agency at any time, even if the IOSS is investigating a complaint, which is also in line with each member Council's complaint handling policy.

Our Vision, Purpose, Guarantee and Values

VISION

To promote, good ethical conduct and behaviour, fair and reasoned decision making, responsive administrative process, effective complaint handling practices and quality services.

PURPOSE

To assist each member Council to improve their service delivery and meet their obligations to the public in a timely manner through investigating complaints and providing recommendations, policy review, developing and delivering effective and relevant education services and promotion of our service to staff and the community.

GUARANTEE

We will consider each matter promptly and fairly, maintain confidentiality, provide clear and reasoned explanations for our decisions and always look to add value through our work.

VALUES

We will adhere to and uphold the values of each member Council. We will also act with:

INTEGRITY

behaving lawfully, honestly and ethically, with good judgement and high professional standards.

IMPARTIALITY

acting in a non-partisan manner.

FAIRNESS

providing procedural fairness, accountability and transparency.

RESPECT

treating everyone with dignity and respect.

Processes and Costs Associated with a Public Infrastructure Project

Summary of Complaint

The IOSS was referred a matter concerning a Council's public infrastructure project within its local government area. The concerns related to the procurement processes undertaken as part of a public tender process, including adequate scoping of the project cost, and the suitability of the contractor.

The project was partly funded by a state government grant.

What we Reviewed

The IOSS conducted an investigation into this matter.

This included reviewing and assessing relevant information and documentation in the Council's systems and speaking with relevant staff to understand the background of the project, the costs associated with the value of the project and the processes undertaken up to the finalisation of the public tender process.

This also included reviewing and assessing the submissions, evaluation and selection, and approval documentation related to the tender, as well as the project management processes.

Outcome

The investigation found that the allegations about the suitability of the contractor were not substantiated and that there were no indications of corrupt conduct.

It further found that the total cost of the project was significantly higher than anticipated.

This was due to a number of factors, including additional accessibility requirements imposed as part of the grant funding which increased the total cost significantly, poor oversight of the actual projected costs, and some related costs were also not accounted for due to an oversight by the relevant officer.

We found that it was reasonable that the Council accepted the conditions of the grant funding to ensure more accessible public infrastructure, to the benefit of

the community. We also found that while the estimated costs will differ between a design consultant and a quantity surveyor (who analyses the detailed costings to fulfill a project, typically completed at the later stages of the tender process), there could have been more oversight and diligence taken during the pre-tender and tender stages to ensure these costs, and the related costs, were not overlooked.

Overall, while there were a number of aspects that could have been better managed to ensure better oversight of the total project cost, the decision made by the Council to increase the expenditure of the project was a decision open for it to make to ensure that it met the grant conditions as well as its disability inclusion objectives in its local government area.

Learnings

This matter highlighted that the scope of a project can change substantially when there are additional requirements imposed, particularly as part of a condition of grant funding. While this ultimately created a better outcome for the Council's community, there was an opportunity for the Council to review its grant processes.

In this regard, the IOSS made a process improvement recommendation to the Council, which included the development of an internal grant procedure to provide better oversight over the end-to-end grant process, including addressing the financial aspects.

This matter also highlighted that poor oversight of a project can lead to the actual costs not being adequately forecasted and managed.

The IOSS therefore also made a number of other process improvement recommendations to the Council in relation to its project management framework.

All recommendations were accepted by the Council and either have been implemented or are in the process of being implemented.

Part Two

Our Year in Review

Our Year in Review

	City of Parramatta Council	Cumberland City Council	Inner West Council	Total
Investigation: Complaints	121	108	135	364
Education: Training and Education Programs	30	10	24	64
Prevention: Advice and Projects	63	41	70	174
Prevention: Policy Review and Development	4	12	4	20
Total	218	171	233	622
Percentage	35%	28%	37%	

* The variations in each of the member Council's statistics may be due to population differences across the three Local Government Areas (LGA), demographics and geographic location/proximity. The quantity of activities shown in the graphs does not represent time spent or complexity.

In 2024-25 the IOSS undertook **622 investigation, education and prevention activities** across the member Councils.

Of these activities, 59% of our work was spent responding to complaints. While this proportion is a slight decrease than the previous financial year (at 70%), investigation remains our largest activity undertaken across the member Councils.

Importantly, prevention activities increased significantly and accounted for 31% of our work (compared to 15% of our work in the previous financial year). This represents a doubling of this type of activity over the previous twelve months.

Training and education programs accounted for 10% of our work.

Investigation

The IOSS received a total of 364 complaints that related to a member Councils' function or service.

Of these, 218 complaints (60%) were managed directly by the IOSS and required appropriate action by the IOSS. This includes 25 complaints which were open and under investigation by the IOSS as of 30 June 2025.

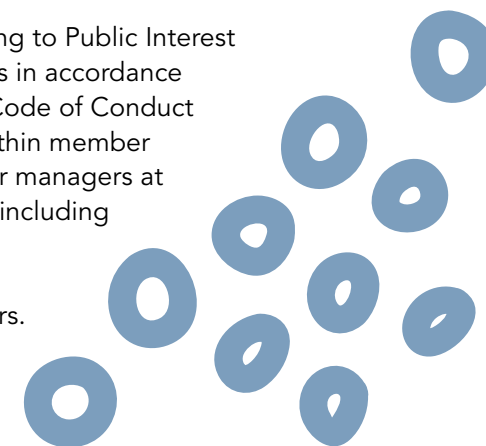
There were 118 complaints (32%) that were referred to the member Council as they had not had an opportunity to review and respond to the complaint initially in line with their complaint handling policy. This figure is similar to other government oversight agencies that receive complaints. There was still considerable work undertaken by the IOSS in establishing the status of these complaints and working with Council to ensure a response was provided to the complainant that addressed their concerns.

The remaining 28 complaints (8%) related to matters that were either resolved prior, there was a more appropriate avenue for the complainant to pursue their complaint, it was considered a comment only, insufficient information was provided to proceed with the complaint, or the matter was withdrawn.

Education

The IOSS developed and delivered 64 training and awareness sessions to staff and Councillors across the member Councils to 1478 attendees at 12 Council sites.

This included the delivery of mandatory training to Public Interest Disclosure Officers across all member Councils in accordance with the *Public Interest Disclosure Act 2022*, Code of Conduct training sessions to staff from various areas within member Councils, Public Interest Disclosure training for managers at City of Parramatta Council, Induction training including information on the IOSS and Public Interest Disclosure awareness across all member Councils, including to new staff and Councillors.



Prevention

The IOSS provided feedback on 20 policies across the member Councils.

There was also the request and provision of 74 pieces of probity advice to staff and Councillors at the member Councils to assist in good administrative conduct, decision making, corruption prevention and ethical conduct.

The IOSS provided 94 pieces of proactive advice to various areas within the member Councils, including in relation to learnings from investigations, complaint trends, areas of concern, emerging issues and information to improve Council’s processes and services, particularly in relation to complaint handling and corruption prevention strategies.

The IOSS also undertook six projects throughout the year to proactively review Council processes to ensure better outcomes for Council and the community.

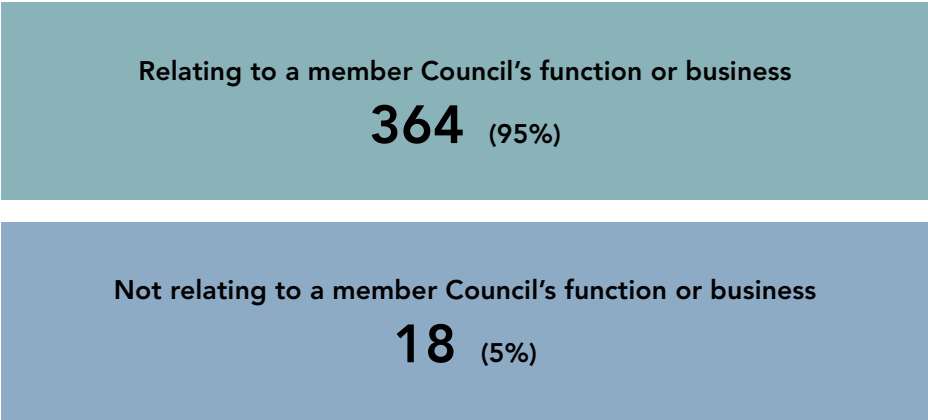
A comprehensive breakdown of our investigation, education and prevention activities during the financial year, including further information about these activities, can be found later in this report.

Complaints Facts and Figures 2024 – 2025

Volume of Complaints:

During 2024-2025, we received 382 complaints. Of these, 364 were about a member Council’s functions or business. 18 complaints were misdirected as they did not relate to a member Council’s functions or business. This is a slight decrease in the total number of complaints received in 2023-24 of 401.

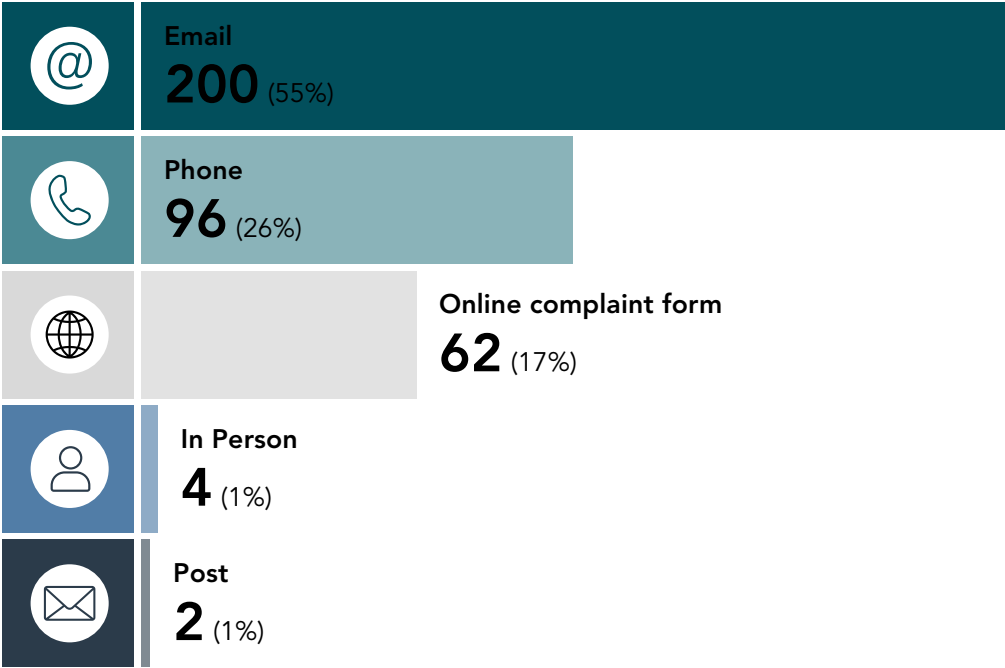
While misdirected complaints do not relate to a member Council’s function or business, the IOSS still seeks to assist these resident customers by providing advice about who they may contact about their concerns and other considerations they may wish to take into account.



The information following relates to the 364 complaints received about member Council’s functions or business.

How we Received Complaints

We aim to provide a variety of contact options for customers to the IOSS, including via email, phone, our online complaint form, in person or by post.



The majority of complaints received by the IOSS were via email (55%) and phone (26%) consistent with the previous year. We have again seen an increase in the usage of our automated online complaint form (17%) compared to the previous year (14%). Electronic means remains the preferred method for customers to contact the IOSS (72%), an increase on the previous year (69%).

The IOSS continues to receive very low volumes of complaints in person (four complaints) and post (two complaints), consistent with the previous year. However it is important to provide a range of accessible options for our customers. This includes retaining our ‘shop front’ in Auburn for customers that prefer to contact discuss their concerns in person. Our office is also an important discreet space to meet with complainants, witnesses and respondents.

Who Made the Complaints

Origin of Complaints

2023-2024	Origin of Complaint	2024-2025
(68%) 261	Community	260 (71%)
(10%) 37	General Manager/CEO and Councillor (Referral)	21 (6%)
(12%) 46	Council Employee (Referral)	29 (8%)
(7%) 28	Council Employee (Complaint)	51 (14%)
(3%) 10	Statutory Body (Referral)	2 (1%)
(-) 1	Anonymous	1 (-)

The majority of complaints received by the IOSS were directly from the community (71%), which is consistent with the previous year (68%). This reflects the community’s continued awareness of and trust in the IOSS as a service to raise concerns about the member Council’s functions and business.

Referrals of matters to the IOSS from staff, Councillors and the General Managers/ CEO, across the member Councils as well as from statutory bodies accounted for 15% of complaints managed by the IOSS, a decrease from the previous year (25%). These included complaints escalated from the community and matters relating to staff and Councillor conduct.

There was an increase in staff across the member Councils approaching us directly to raise concerns about their member Council, accounting for 14% of our managed complaints. This is a significant increase compared to the previous year (7%). This reflects staff engagement, confidence and trust in the IOSS, as a result of IOSS building awareness and relationships of its service across the member Councils.

We receive a small number of complaints from Council officials stating they wish to remain anonymous. We acknowledge and appreciate concerns people may have about coming forward to raise issues and we seek to protect the identity of complaints in accordance with legislation, where possible. We assess that complaints are anonymous where the identity of the person is not known, and we have no practical means to contact the complainant. We received a number of complaints throughout the year where we were unaware of the identity of a complainant, but we had a practical method to communicate with the complaint. Therefore, while we have recorded that we only received one anonymous complaint, this does not include the volume of complainants who have advised that they wished to remain anonymous.

What Area The Complaints Related To

The largest proportion of complaints were received about the Planning and Regulatory Services directorates across the three Councils (37%) which is an increase from the previous year (32%). This is not unexpected given that this directorate can have a direct impact on the day to day lives of residents, as this directorate is responsible for planning and development and regulatory compliance. Regulatory compliance relates to building and development compliance, environment and health and parking. These business areas receive high levels of engagement from the community.

The second largest proportion were about the Waste and Infrastructure directorates (29%) which is an increase from the previous year (23%). This directorate is responsible for public spaces (parks and recreation, public trees), traffic related matters, waste management, and matters relating to works (capital works, engineering, infrastructure, roads) and accordingly receives high levels of engagement from the community.

There were 13% that related to the Community Services directorates with functions and services in relation to aquatic centres, children's centres, customer service, libraries and other community-based programs. This is consistent with the previous year (14%).

There were 11% that related to the Corporate Services directorates, which covers functions and services in relation to communications and events, compensation claims, council meetings, financial services (such as rates), public information and human resource activities. This represents a slight decrease to the previous year (15%).

Any allegations against staff have been recorded against the relevant business area. However, the remaining 10% related to matters about Council Officials (Councillors and staff).

Planning and Regulatory Services

136 (37%)

Waste and Infrastructure

105 (29%)

Community Service

47 (13%)

Corporate Services

41 (11%)

All (relating to Council Officials)

35 (10%)

What the Complaints Were About:

Complaint Theme	
Alleged misconduct	104 (29%)
Lack of action/timeliness	103 (28%)
Decision making	79 (22%)
Dissatisfaction with council service provided to the community	42 (12%)
Dissatisfaction with Council process	29 (8%)
Administrative conduct and quality of response	7 (1%)

The largest proportion of complaints received related to alleged misconduct (29%) in matters including child protection, code of conduct and corrupt conduct, consistent with the previous year (28%).

The second largest proportion related to the member Councils' lack of action and timeliness in resolving concerns raised by the community (28%). This is a significant increase on the previous year (18%).

There were 22% that related to decision making undertaken by the member Councils, which decreased from the previous year (30%).

There were 20% where the community were either dissatisfied with a service provided or a process undertaken by the member Councils. This a slight increase on the previous year (18%).

The remaining matters (1%) related to administrative conduct, or the quality of response received, which decreased from the previous year (6%).

How we Managed the Complaints:

Consistent with other government agencies that handle complaints, most complaints we receive do not result in an investigation. Generally, only those complaints that are considered either serious, sensitive or systemic are investigated.

Handling of complaints	
Referred to Council	118 (32%)
Advice Provided	128 (35%)
Investigate	90 (25%)
Issue resolved prior, insufficient information or withdrawn	28 (8%)

Referred to Council

The IOSS referred 118 (32%) complaints to member Councils for initial review and response. The IOSS assessed that the member Councils had not had an opportunity to review the matter in accordance with their complaint handling policy.

This figure is similar to the industry average of other oversight government agencies that handle complaints, who report an average of around 30% of complaints that are referred to or referred back to an agency for initial review and response.

There is still considerable work undertaken by the IOSS in establishing the status of such complaints including providing advice and working with Council in resolving the matter.

These complaints also serve a purpose by identifying any trends in issues about member Councils' functions or services that the community is experiencing. In this regard, the IOSS proactively advises the member Councils about any trends in issues identified, often providing informal recommendations for Council to consider preventing an issue continuing.

Investigated

There were 90 complaints (25%) that were investigated by the IOSS.

Of these, 36 matters related to concerns about administrative conduct, decision making and employee conduct, with 11 of these resulting in recommendations being made regarding an administrative action, process, practice or decision making.

Of the 90, 12 complaints were handled in accordance with the Councillor /GM Code of Conduct Complaint Process.

There were also 17 complaints that were handled under child protection legislation. These include complaints assessed or investigated by the IOSS and referred to the relevant statutory body, with four of these resulting in recommendations being made regarding an administrative action, process, practice or decision making.

Of the complaints investigated, 25 matters were upheld.

At the end of the financial year, 25 matters remained open and were being investigated by the IOSS.

Advice Provided

Advice was provided to complainants and/or member Councils in relation to 128 complaints (35%). This reflects the ability of IOSS staff to provide advice and resolve matters from the outset without progressing to a formal investigation.

This included the IOSS providing initial verbal advice to 93 complainants about how to resolve their matter.

This also included the IOSS providing written advice in 35 matters. Generally this means that we undertook enquiries with member Councils and then provided written advice to complainants that explained the decision and process. In some matters, we worked with the member Council and provided verbal and written advice in order to obtain a resolution for the complainant. We also provided advice in order for the matter to be referred to the relevant statutory body.

Issue Resolved Prior, Insufficient Information, Withdrawn or More Appropriate Avenue for Review

The remaining 28 complaints (8%) were either withdrawn, insufficient information was provided despite attempts by the IOSS to follow-up, the issue was resolved prior to consideration, the complaint was considered a comment only or there was a more appropriate avenue to pursue their complaint.

The following graph provides a detailed breakdown of how the complaints were handled in 2024-25 and compares this to the 2023-24 financial year.

2023-2024	Comparison of how complaints were handled 2024-25 vs 2023-24	2024-2025
140	Referred to Council for review and response	118
53	Informal resolution and written advice provided	35
47	Initial advice provided to complainant	93
45	Investigations conducted	36
21	Assessed under Child Protection legislation	17
22	Issue resolved prior, insufficient information, considered a comment only, withdrawn or more appropriate avenue for review	28
17	Code of Conduct – Councillor	12
38	Investigation underway (as of 30 June)	25

Complexity of Matters

Of the 364 complaints received, 339 of these were **finalised** during the financial year. At the commencement of the financial year, there were 38 matters on hand. Therefore of the 377 matters finalised in the year:

- 208 were resolved promptly, by:
 - » the IOSS providing initial advice to the complainant to resolve the matter,
 - » referring the matter to the member Council to review and respond in the first instance in accordance with their complaint handling policy, or
 - » conducting initial enquiries with the member Councils to enable the IOSS to provide advice to the complainant to resolve the matter.
 - » This figure also includes matters that were withdrawn, insufficient information was provided despite follow-up, the issue was resolved prior to consideration, the complaint was considered a comment only or there was a more appropriate avenue to pursue the complaint.
- 79 were routine matters involving:
 - » the IOSS providing advice to the member Councils to resolve a matter, or
 - » making further enquiries with the member Councils to either provide advice to the complainant to resolve the matter or prior to referring the matter to the member Councils for action.
- 39 matters required further assessment by the IOSS:
 - » providing comprehensive advice to the member Councils to resolve a matter,
 - » conducting an investigation and providing a written response to the complainant, or
 - » making significant enquiries with the member Councils resolve the matter.
- 51 matters were complex requiring significant assessment and investigation by the IOSS. Of these 30 were assessed as requiring more than 35 hours to complete. These were mostly resolved through formal investigation, including interviewing relevant parties, and then preparing a formal investigation report with findings and recommendations to the member Councils for consideration of next steps. In a small number of matters, this also included providing significant written advice to the complainant or the member Councils to resolve a matter.

Case Study

Conflicts of Interest

Alleged breaches of the Code of Conduct investigated by the IOSS included a small number of alleged breaches of the conflict of interest provisions. Broadly, a conflict of interest is a circumstance when a public official has a conflict between their professional duties and their personal life in a decision they are required to make as part of their role.

It is expected that public officials will have conflicts of interests, particularly given that a percentage of Council officials reside and undertake activities within the local government area of their employer. Identifying a conflict of interest is important for all public officials to ensure the matter is declared and effectively managed and that all decisions made by public officials are in the best interests of the Council.

Matters investigated by the IOSS included:

- A substantiated failure to declare a pecuniary conflict of interest, noting the respondents stated the matter was 'managed' therefore did not need to be declared;
- A substantiated failure to effectively manage a declared non-pecuniary conflict of interest, noting there appeared to be a lack of understanding of appropriate probity principles;
- A number of occasions of a substantiated failure to recognise and declare pecuniary and non-pecuniary conflicts of interest, and;

- Unsubstantiated allegations of alleged conflicts of interest in relation to professional relationships rather than personal conflicts;
- Unsubstantiated allegations of alleged conflicts of interest, which could be more accurately described as conflicts of duties. In these circumstances, we have recommended Council implement processes to improve probity in decision making.

Of relevance, not all allegations were found to be substantiated, noting that there can be a misunderstanding of the provisions by complainants, and also respondents.

Arising from these matters, the IOSS recommended:

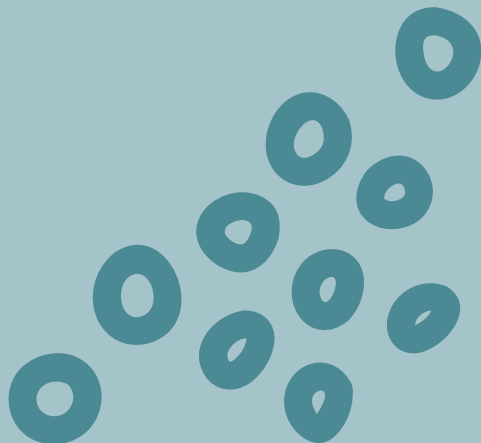
- further training and awareness sessions to staff;
- workshops between business areas to promote understanding and awareness;
- implementation of new processes and procedures including specific procurement and probity measures, and;
- new measures in relation to the storage, management and oversight of conflict of interest declarations.

Pleasingly, all member Councils have a strong focus on the effective management of conflict of interest declarations and are working to implement all recommendations.

Response Time for Complaints:

The IOSS aims to resolve complaints in a timely manner and has a service standard of six weeks to finalise a matter. The IOSS also undertakes complex, large or serious matters and matters investigated under statutory requirements which require a longer processing time.

Of the 377 complaints finalised during the financial year, 86% (324) were finalised within six weeks and 66% (250) were finalised in the first week. The IOSS has a six-week timeframe for standard, routine complaints. Given the volume of matters assessed as complex, 51 (14%), this is an outstanding result. This reflects positively on the IOSS and its member Councils to ensure complainants are satisfied that their matter is being actioned in an appropriate timeframe. The complaints finalised outside this timeframe related to complex and serious matters, with the complainant being advised of the timeframe from the outset and regularly updated throughout the matter.



Summary of Recommendations Provided for Investigations Conducted

If an investigation from the IOSS finds that there has been an act or omission by a Council Official contrary to a policy or procedure or good administrative conduct, the Internal Ombudsman can recommend that specific appropriate action be taken. In accordance with our Guarantee, we always strive to add value in our work, and this includes identifying any possible recommendations for improvements at the member Council's to ensure good administrative conduct, decision making, corruption prevention and ethical behaviour and thus provide an improved service to staff and the community

The IOSS cannot change or amend any operational decisions made by Council officers, however, can recommend that a decision be revoked or varied.

When issuing an investigation report, the IOSS may recommend to the relevant General Manager or Chief Executive Officer or as appropriate to the Mayor, or the Chair of the relevant member Council's Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee (ARIC) that:

- a) The matter be referred to the General Manager or Chief Executive Officer for further consideration
- b) An omission or delay be rectified
- c) A decision or recommendation by an employee or employees of the Council be revoked or varied
- d) Reasons be given by an employee or employees of the Council for a decision
- e) A practice or procedure be altered
- f) A statute, regulation or by law be reconsidered
- g) The Council pay compensation to a complainant
- h) The Council provide a particular service
- i) The Council amend, or not impose, a charge or condition in relation to a particular service, application or consent
- j) The Council supply a good or service to undertake any necessary corrective or other work to resolve a complaint
- k) The Council make an appropriate correction, deletion or addition to a record; or
- l) Such other steps are taken as the Internal Ombudsman Shared Service considers reasonable and just.

It is the General Manager or Chief Executive Officer’s responsibility to address recommendations made by the Internal Ombudsman and ensure implementation within the Council. Each member Council is required to record each recommendation made by the Internal Ombudsman, take appropriate action, and record what action has been taken by Council. This is currently reported via each Council’s ARIC. The Internal Ombudsman has the right to request information regarding Council’s action on the implementation and progress of previous recommendations.

During the 2024-25 financial year, the IOSS made 174 recommendations to the member Councils following investigations finalised during the reporting period. These were all accepted by the relevant General Managers and the CEO of themember Councils.

Total Recommendations Made	
City of Parramatta Council	36
Cumberland City Council	59
Inner West Council	79
Total:	174

What the recommendations related to	
Investigation outcomes	69 (40%)
Prevention activities	69 (40%)
Education activities	36 (20%)

Of these:

- 40% related to Investigation outcomes, including the member Council considering an investigation outcome, considering a new decision, conducting an audit, taking relevant action to comply with policy/procedure/legislation, or referring the matter to a relevant statutory body;
- 40% related to Prevention activities, including the member Council developing and implementing a new policy or procedure, making improvements to an existing policy or procedure, developing and implementing a new process or system, or making improvements to an existing process or system; and,
- 20% related to Education activities, including specific training to staff or general awareness raising to staff.

Trends Identified in Matters Received or Investigated from the Community

Each year the IOSS identifies and communicates key trends from its complaints received across the member Councils.

If the service identifies that the same issue is being raised by complainants, possibly due to an internal process at the member Councils, we proactively provide advice to the relevant areas to ensure an improved service to the community and other stakeholders.

We have also commenced formally meeting with each member Council's Audit, Risk and Governance departments to provide trend information from the complaints we receive, to feed into the Council's review, audit and process improvement program if relevant.

We continue to provide advice to relevant departments to ensure customer expectations are managed throughout each matter.

Over 2024-25, the majority of complaints received from the community across the member Councils related to decision making and complaints regarding a lack of action. While these complaints were received across the breadth of Council's services, the largest volume of complaints received were in relation to regulatory services, planning and development, child protection, waste, public spaces and trees, and works (roads and infrastructure). This is to be expected as there is a high level of engagement from the community with these functions of Council.

Throughout the year, the member Councils have continued to implement further customer experience strategies, service and system improvements to improve responsiveness and ensure accountability for relevant officers when responding to customers and complaints.

Regulatory Services

Of all complaints received from the community, 34% related to regulatory services, mainly allegations of unauthorised works, non-compliant works, concerns relating to parking, and concerns relating to illegal dumping and noise.

The majority of the complaints received related to a perceived lack of action, decision making with the action or inaction taken, or perceived insufficient action. As part of this, there were also a number of complaints received about the decision making surrounding the issuance of building information certificates.

The IOSS recognises that this is a complex area, with the requirement for a measured, proportionate response by the member Councils, in line with legislation and their policies, while also acknowledging the impact these concerns can have on residential amenity.

While the IOSS cannot review the associated planning decisions behind the regulatory action, in a number of matters we made significant enquiries with the member Councils and either provided advice to the complainant to resolve the matter or provided specific and detailed points to the member Councils to adequately address the concerns raised with the complainant.

Trees and Public Spaces

Of complaints received from the community, 12% were about trees and public spaces. Two thirds of these related to trees located on a complainant's property, a neighbour's property or Council land. The remainder related to concerns with toilet and waste facilities at parks and verge mowing.

The majority of the complaints received related to a perceived lack of action, particularly with obtaining information, including to facilitate the release of bonds, for the complainant to progress a related matter. Other complaints received related to the decision making with tree removal or pruning requests.

The IOSS recognises that tree management is a contentious community issue with opposing concerns over potential damage to property and safety versus retaining important tree species and managing an effective tree canopy to reduce heat.

Most matters were referred to the member Council for initial action in accordance with their relevant complaint handling policy. Some matters were resolved by providing information and advice to the complainant to resolve the matter. A small number of complaints were investigated with further information provided to complainants to explain Council's decision making, however no administrative errors were identified.

Planning and Development

Planning and Development functions received 10% of complaints from the community, mainly relating to decision making surrounding approvals of neighbouring developments.

While the IOSS has no jurisdiction over the merits of a decision, the IOSS can review administrative aspects once the member Council has had the opportunity to review and respond to the matter.

In a number of matters, we were able to explain the decision making and processes to the complainant to resolve the matter. In other matters we made enquiries with the member Council in order to obtain relevant information and further explain the reasoning and processes behind the decision to the complainant.

Child Protection

The IOSS has additional functions with Cumberland City Council in relation to Child protection. The IOSS sits on the Council's Child Protection triage team, triaging allegations about staff or contractor's conduct towards children receiving a Council service. Given this specific focus and involvement, the IOSS received a higher volume of matters relating to child protection from Cumberland City Council than the other member Councils. The triage team follows established processes to respond to any allegations, noting only a small number of cases required full investigation. This model continues to work well in quickly identifying and responding to child protection issues and implementing strategies to support and provide guidance to staff and Children's Centres.

Waste

Waste services received 9% of complaints from the community, mainly relating to missed bin collections and provision of bins, including replacement bins.

The majority of the complaints received related to a perceived lack of action or perceived insufficient action, including repeated missed bin collections.

Most matters were referred to the member Council for initial action in accordance with their relevant complaint handling policy.

Works (Roads and Infrastructure)

Works and infrastructure services received 8% of complaints from the community. The majority of complaints received related to the timeliness of bond refunds, and consultation processes.

Most matters were referred to the member Council for initial action in accordance with their relevant complaint handling policy. Some matters were resolved by providing information and advice to the complainant to resolve the matter. A small number of complaints were investigated with further information provided to complainants to explain Council's decision making, however no administrative errors were identified.



Case Study

Small, Targeted Review of Corporate Purchase Cards

The IOSS was requested to undertake a small, targeted review of the usage of Corporate Purchase Cards utilised by Council Officials. This review was requested following some concerns regarding procurement practices within a particular business unit.

This review did not indicate evidence of corrupt conduct, however the review identified evidence of poor procurement practices in the utilisation of purchase cards, particularly in relation to small, portable and attractive items, by the persons subject of the review. The review also indicated a reliance on purchase cards which appeared to be outside the requirement for use for emergency or ad hoc purchases.

This review recommended better promotion of corporate suppliers to ensure more efficient methods of procurement, further oversight of expenditure by approvers/finance to ensure all expenditure is within Purchase Card Guidelines and further guidance be issued to card holders. The IOSS also recommended the requirement to sign a declaration regarding adherence to appropriate card use on renewal, as well as first issuance, to reiterate to staff the relevant requirements.

Prevention

Policy Review

Across 2024-25, the IOSS contributed to the review and assisted in the development of 20 different policies across member Councils.

Our role here is important as we bring our significant experience in good governance and improvement to ensure any new or revised policies best support the work of the member Councils. We also consider any learnings from investigations undertaken as part of our review and ensure implementation of these learnings into new or revised policies.

A number of these policies were devised or revised as a result of recommendations arising from IOSS investigations.

City of Parramatta Council

- Close Personal Relationship Conflict of Interest Procedure
- Complaints Handling Policy
- Media Policy and Social Media Policy
- Workplace Surveillance Policy

Cumberland City Council

- Alcohol and/or Other Drugs Policy
- Child Protection Allegations Against Staff Checklist
- Child Protection Allegations Against Staff Flowchart
- Child Protection Provider Supplier Factsheet
- Child Protection Triage Team Process
- Child Safe Guideline
- Code of Conduct E-learning Module
- Community Grants and Donations Policy
- Conflict of Interest Management Procedure
- Good Governance Guide - Conflict of Interest
- Operational Risk Register – Child Protection Related Risks
- Unattended Children Procedure

Inner West Council

- Complaints Management Framework
- Leaseback Motor Vehicle Policy
- Model Code of Conduct
- Managing Unreasonable Customer Behaviours Operating Management Standard

Environmental Scans

We conduct proactive environmental scans, reviewing reports and publications issued by government agencies for information, particularly in relation to complaint handling and corruption prevention, which may assist and improve member Council's processes and services.

Over 2024-25, the IOSS provided proactive advice to the member Councils regarding the following:

- NSW ICAC's *Warning candidates standing in upcoming elections from weaponising the Commission as part of their campaigns*
- Office of Local Government's *Discussion Paper on proposed changes to Councillor conduct and meeting practices*
- NSW Ombudsman's new Complaint Handling Community of Practice
- NSW State Government's new Ethical Behaviour Community of Practice
- Office of Local Government's *Free Speech in Local Government in NSW*

The IOSS also provided a submission to the Office of Local Government's discussion paper on proposed changes to Councillor conduct and meeting practices.

Advice and Projects

As our members Councils' 'independent ear', we hear from all areas of Council requesting probity advice across a range of issues. Providing advice is an important part of the IOSS' prevention function and assists the member Councils to ensure good administrative conduct and decision making, ethical obligations are met, and corruption strategies are considered.

Over 2024-25, in response to requests received, the IOSS gave member Councils 74 pieces of advice.

Theme of probity advice	City of Parramatta Council	Cumberland City Council	Inner West Council	Totals
Guidance on complaints processes	8	3	12	23
Code of Conduct	7	5	10	22
Internal Processes	1	2	9	12
Corrupt Conduct	1	-	3	4
Learnings from investigations	1	2	1	4
Public Interest Disclosures	2	1	-	3
Procurement Practices	1	1	-	2
Recruitment	-	-	2	2
Decision Making	1	-	-	1
Privacy	-	-	1	1
TOTALS	22	14	38	74

Prevention Projects

We conduct proactive reviews of Council processes to ensure better outcomes for Council and the community and make recommendations as relevant. This reflects the value-add service of the IOSS.

In 2024-25, the IOSS undertook six projects across the member Councils.

Project focus	City of Parramatta Council	Cumberland City Council	Inner West Council	Totals
Bribery and corruption prevention	1	2	1	4
Internal Processes	1	1	-	2
TOTALS	2	3	1	6

Advice from Finalised Matters

We share the learnings from finalised matters, advice and training sessions as appropriate, across the member Councils. This is an important part of the IOSS's prevention role and aims to ensure that the same issue does not arise at another member Council. This is an excellent demonstration of the value of the shared service.

Sharing learnings in this way helps member Councils better tackle emerging issues, building off the knowledge and experiences of other member Councils.

Theme of Proactive Advice	Details
Identifying potential risks	Ensuring adequate processes in place to address child protection issues.
Improve systems	Ensuring adequate processes regarding payroll activities.
Improve processes	Recommended improved processes in the management of conflicts of interest.
Corruption prevention measures	Ensuring sufficient controls in place to prevent attempts of bribery to Council Officials.
Procurement compliance	Ensuring adequate systems and controls in place for legacy service agreements.
Code of Conduct compliance	Ensuring sufficient controls in place to prevent personal benefit while undertaking Council services to the community.



Case Study

Assisting Customers to Receive a Response that Adequately Addresses their Concerns

Summary of Complaint

The IOSS received a complaint from the community about a Council issuing a footpath license to a hotel which the complainant stated was impacting on the amenity of the area.

The complainant had been in contact with the Council on numerous occasions about their concerns in relation to consultation processes, consideration of impacts to neighbours as part of the decision-making process, consideration of previous conditions, consideration of its outdoor dining guidelines, customer service and processes to raise concerns about noise levels and other impacts.

The complainant was finding it difficult to obtain a response that adequately addressed their concerns from the Council.

What we Reviewed

The IOSS undertook a preliminary review of information and documentation in relation to the matter, including speaking with the Council's staff to understand what had occurred to date as well as speaking with the complainant to understand their current concerns.

Outcome

As a result of the conversations with the Council's staff and the complainant, the IOSS was able to explain the footpath license processes to the complainant but also assessed that there were some aspects requiring Council response.

In this regard, the IOSS was able to succinctly summarise the current concerns from the complainant and provide this, with the questions that remained, to the Council to formally review and respond to the complainant.

As part of this, for transparency, this request to the Council was shared with the complainant.

Learnings

This matter highlighted the importance of good complaint handling, which if it had occurred, would have addressed the complainant's concerns without needing our involvement. Similarly, it highlights that it is important for customers to feel heard when raising concerns, as well as being able to understand the relevant processes.

Even though some aspects had been responded to, perhaps due to the repeated contacts other aspects had been missed.

In matters where there are multiple concerns being raised, it is often beneficial to genuinely speak to a complainant to understand their concerns and to seek to explain the related process in a matter which is understood by a layperson. This makes it possible to ensure that any response to a complaint is well considered, well explained and adequately addresses the concerns raised by the complainant. This then prevents the complainant continuing to raise concerns.

Training Programs

An important area of our work is providing training and education to Council staff and Councillors.

This helps to promote awareness and adherence to the Code of Conduct and the *Public Interest Disclosure Act 2022*, including specific responsibilities for Council officials such as fraud and corruption awareness and best practice in complaint management and administrative practices.

The training we deliver may be focussed on high-risk areas or areas which have a higher volume of complaints so we can achieve the greatest impact.

Following training delivery, we are often approached by staff, including managers, with queries and/or concerns specific to the learnings gained from the training session. We provide relevant advice, including information about best practice and strategies. In addition, if relevant, we escalate any trends or concerns identified in the training to appropriate staff for awareness and/or further action. This highlights the importance of in-person training to staff.

Over the 2024-25 year, the IOSS delivered training to **1,478** Council officials (staff and councillors).

Delivering Code of Conduct training to staff was our largest education activity with a total of 23 sessions delivered across the year, representing 36% of our training activities. This incorporated fraud and prevention awareness over two sessions at one member Council. This was delivered as a tailored one-and-a-half-hour session and included activities, case studies and discussion points to enhance engagement and learning.

Providing information to new staff about the role of the IOSS, administrative decision making, and the *Public Interest Disclosures Act 2022* was our second largest activity with a total of 21 sessions delivered over the year, representing 33% of our training activities. These sessions were delivered as a short in-person engaging session as part of each member Council's new staff induction program. These induction sessions are important for new staff to be aware of and understand our role and their obligations.

We also delivered training on the roles and responsibilities outlined in the *Public Interest Disclosure Act 2022*, with a total of 16 sessions delivered over the year, representing 25% of our training activities. This is delivered as a tailored two-hour session and included Disclosure Officers, Managers and Councillors.

Following training delivery, surveyed staff stated:

- 97% strongly agreed/agreed that the training improved their knowledge of the subject
- 94% strongly agreed/agreed that they understood their obligations as a result of the training
- 92% strongly agreed/agreed that they would recommend the training to others



Focus of Training	City of Parramatta Council	Cumberland City Council	Inner West Council	Totals
Code of Conduct	7	-	16	23
Staff Induction: administrative decision making and Public Interest Disclosure awareness	11	6	4	21
Public Interest Disclosure: Officer responsibilities	5	2	3	10
Public Interest Disclosure: awareness to Councillors	3	-	-	3
Public Interest Disclosure: Manager responsibilities	3	-	-	3
Councillor induction: IOSS role, Public Interest Disclosure awareness and Code of Conduct obligations	1	1	-	2
Team Briefing: Public Interest Disclosure awareness	-	-	1	1
Team Briefing: supervising and working with young people	-	1	-	1
TOTALS	30	10	24	64

Great information session.

Engaging facilitator.

Very satisfied with both presentation and knowledge.

I think the content and style were effective.

Great facilitation. Engaging and clear. Thank you.

The questions and scenario discussions helped the understanding and made the training more enjoyable.

Well run and engaging.

Briefings

Briefing Council staff, Councillors and Council delegates is an important aspect of raising awareness of the valuable role of the IOSS for stakeholders.

With a Councillor election in 2024, the IOSS conducted a number of briefings to newly elected and returning Councillors to outline the role of the service. This included providing information about the work undertaken by the IOSS across the triple governance track of investigation, education and prevention activities.

The IOSS conducted regular meetings/briefings with the member Councils' Executive Teams and regularly presented at Leadership Forums. The IOSS shared information about trends in complaints, learnings and improvements from investigations and new processes and strategies.

The IOSS also met with new senior staff across member Councils, including Executive Directors and Senior Managers to discuss the work of the IOSS, trends for their respective areas, priorities and to plan any prevention and education activities. These briefings also provided an excellent opportunity to discuss any improvement recommendations that may have arisen from recent investigations for the respective area.

We also connected new staff with their counterparts across the member Councils to assist in building professional networks.

Promotion

Connecting with our Communities

The following promotional activities were undertaken by the IOSS to assist in promoting the IOSS to staff and the community during the financial year:

- The IOSS Annual Report 2023-24 was made available on each member Councils' website and staff intranet in December 2024.
- Information about the IOSS and its activities for the 2023-24 financial year was included in each member Councils' Annual Report 2023-24.

Adding Value: Shared Services

An important benefit of the IOSS working across three Councils is that we are able to bring together staff to form communities of practice to develop strong professional relationships to leverage skills and experience. Across the last year we have continued to host communities of practice, referred to as Shared Service Forums, in the areas of Human Resources and Industrial Relations, Customer Service and Experience, Governance, and Regulatory Services across member Councils to share knowledge and experience. This encourages Council officers and departments to work with their counterparts across the member Councils to share knowledge, challenges, learnings, best practice techniques, ideas and successes to improve their work and promote economies of scale.

Human Resources and Industrial Relations Shared Services Forum

This is attended by representatives from People and Culture / Human Resources from member Councils.

Two forums were held during the financial year.

Topics of interest discussed by forum members included effective training programs, including induction and leadership programs, implementing new legislation, processes and policies, work from home protocols, psychosocial hazards, health and wellbeing initiatives, obtaining and managing staff engagement and feedback and importantly, successes and new projects such as Inner West Council's Disability traineeship program.

Discussions were also held on learnings from environmental scans and other publications.

Regulatory Services Forum

This is attended by management representatives with responsibilities for building compliance, environmental

health, parking, ranger services and other regulatory functions at member Councils.

One forum was held during the financial year.

Topics of interest discussed by forum members included building staff engagement and capability, collaborating on specific training, responding to legislative and procedural changes, undertaking mandatory reporting obligations, staff well-being, and importantly success stories.

Governance Forum

This is attended by relevant representatives with responsibilities within Governance areas at member Councils.

One forum was held during the financial year.

Topics of interest discussed by forum members included strategies to deliver mandatory training, promotion of Public Interest Disclosures legislation and strategies for encouraging engagement with mandatory reporting processes.

A representative from the Office of Local Government also attended the forum to provide sector updates and the NSW Ombudsman Whistleblower Support Unit provided a briefing on the commencement of their new support service.

Customer Service and Experience Forum

This is attended by relevant representatives from Customer Service and Customer Experience sections at member Councils.

One forum was held during the financial year.

The forum focused on customer experience transformation strategies and metrics.

Case Study

Compensation Claims

In accordance with the IOSS Governance Charter, the IOSS can conduct a review of Council decisions to decline compensation claims in the event an administrative error is identified.

The IOSS received 15 requests for review throughout the year, a reduction from 19 in 2023-24 and 37 in 2022-23.

In relation to compensation claims, Councils are open to rely upon the *Civil Liability Act 2002 NSW* (the Act). Generally, the Act contains provisions that agencies are only liable for compensation when there is evidence that the Council was negligent. In relation to damage to motor vehicles, the Act has provisions that Councils are not liable for compensation where they had no prior knowledge of the relevant road condition or where they were aware but took reasonable action, in accordance with resources available.

The complaints related to:

- Damage to vehicles from potholes;
- Damage to vehicles from golf balls from Council-owned golf courses;
- Damage to property (including houses and vehicles) branches falling from trees;
- Damage to vehicles from Council works;
- Damage to vehicles from driving into a tree; and,
- Personal injury from playground equipment.

Of the 15 matters received:

- In seven, advice was provided and the complainant did not proceed with a formal complaint*;
- In six, an investigation was conducted and no administrative error was identified;
- In one, the matter was referred to Council in the first instance, and;
- In one, the matter was referred back to Council to reconsider the decision as it appeared Council had relied on incorrect or irrelevant information within its decision.

*Of the seven that did not progress to complaint, the IOSS initially advised the complainants that in order to proceed with a complaint, an administrative error needed to be identified, rather than dissatisfaction with the outcome.

This year has seen a reduction in the administrative errors identified in compensation claims, with three identified the year prior.



Part Three

Management and Accountability



Internal Ombudsman Shared Service Management Committee

The IOSS Management Committee (the Management Committee) is composed of the two General Managers of Cumberland City and Inner West Councils and the Chief Executive Officer of the City of Parramatta Council. The Management Committee operates in accordance with an adopted Terms of Reference.

The Management Committee meets annually, and the Internal Ombudsman presents a performance report and summary of the IOSS's operations for the previous financial year.

The IOSS Governance Charter sets out the mandatory reporting requirements to be included in the performance report, which are: a summary of the matters received; a summary of the investigations conducted and their recommendations; education activities conducted; probity advice provided; promotion and media activities; issues identified for future review; trends identified in matters received or investigated; other performance indicators; financial performance; future directions; and, other procedural matters of note.

Audit, Risk and Improvement Committees

The Internal Ombudsman continues to attend the Audit, Risk and Improvement Committees (ARIC) for the three member Councils.

The Internal Ombudsman reports to the ARIC to advise and report on the work of the IOSS and escalate any concerns or issues which may be relevant to ARIC, including attendance at in-camera briefings as relevant.

In addition to transparency, oversight and accountability, an additional benefit of attending such meetings is that issues being considered by the IOSS may impact on the considerations of ARIC, addressing the Improvement aspect of the role of the ARIC.

Statutory Reporting

Public Interest Disclosure Reporting

In accordance with the *Public Interest Disclosures Act 2022* (PID Act) each Council is required to appoint a Public Interest Disclosures Coordinator. This role is responsible for the coordination and management of all Public Interest Disclosures (PIDs) received by the Council, including notification processes and risk mitigations. Each member Council has delegated this function to the Internal Ombudsman and the Deputy Internal Ombudsman.

The PID Act also outlines reporting obligations for public authorities (which includes each member Council) to provide the NSW Ombudsman an Annual Return outlining information on PIDs received and dealt within the reporting period. This return includes information about our handling of PIDs and the outcomes, as well as information about staff training and awareness activities that have been undertaken during the period. This reporting has been completed for the period ending 30 June 2025 for each member Council.

The Internal Ombudsman also completes an annual PID self-assessment audit for each member Council to the NSW Ombudsman. This looks at Council's compliance with the PID Act and is completed in conjunction with the respective Governance Managers. This audit has been completed for each member Council.

Code of Conduct Complaints Against Councillors Reporting

In accordance with the *Procedures for the Administration of the Model Code of Conduct for Local Councils in NSW 2020* (Procedures), each Council is required to appoint a Complaints Coordinator. The Internal Ombudsman is appointed as the Complaints Coordinator for each Council.

The Complaints Coordinator is responsible for the administrative coordination of any preliminary assessments and investigations. These preliminary assessments and investigations are undertaken by Conduct Reviewers for complaints received against Councillors or the General Manager/CEO. The General Manager/CEO is referred any complaints about Councillors while the Mayor is referred any complaints regarding the General Manager/CEO.

The Procedures also outline annual reporting obligations, with an Annual Return to be submitted to the Office of Local Government on a range of complaint statistics. This reporting has been submitted for the period ending September 2024 for each member Council. These statistics are also reported to Council and published in Council meeting minutes.



Corporate Governance Practices

Risk Management and Business Continuity Planning

It is important that we identify and manage any potential events which could affect us achieving our objectives.

The IOSS has a Risk Management Plan, which identifies key risks and mitigation strategies that apply to its operational and strategic work. Our Business Continuity Plan is also a key risk management strategy for the service. It sets out our strategies for ensuring that the most critical work of the IOSS can continue to be undertaken, or quickly resumed, in the event of an impact on our business operations. These plans form part of our risk register and is reviewed as part of our business planning process.

The IOSS also meets Work Health and Safety obligations with regular discussions to raise and address potential issues. The IOSS holds and documents monthly WHS meetings in accordance with the host Council's (Cumberland City Council) procedures.

Privacy

The IOSS manages privacy in accordance with the host Council's (Cumberland City Council) Privacy Management Plan which addresses the requirements of both the *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 (NSW)* and the *Health Records and Information Privacy Act 2002 (NSW)*.

Financial Summary

Each member Council equally contributes financially to the IOSS, with Cumberland City Council designated the host Council for administrative arrangements.

Our financial position as 30 June 2025

The net result for the year is a surplus of \$49,495. This is mainly attributable to savings with outsourced investigations during the year.

INTERNAL OMBUDSMAN SHARED SERVICE

Financial Performance for the period to 30.06.2025

	Budgeted \$	Actual \$
Income		
City of Parramatta Council Contribution	293,250	293,250
Cumberland City Council Contribution	293,250	293,250
Inner West Council Contribution	293,250	293,250
Subtotal	879,750	879,750
Total Income	879,750	879,750
Expenses		
Salary and On-costs	623,371	636,964
Training & Conferences	8,600	5,567
Outsourced Investigations	75,000	56,330
Consultants	10,900	0
Stationery and Office Supplies	5,500	593
Internal charges	130,800	130,800
Subtotal	854,171	830,255
Total Expenditure	854,171	830,255
Net Surplus for the FY	25,579	49,495

External Stakeholder Liaison and Proactive Awareness Strategies

The IOSS strives to remain aware of strategies, legislation changes and information across the public sector to assist our investigation, prevention and education activities and contribute to providing an improved service to the member Councils.

The IOSS continues to engage with external government agencies including the NSW Ombudsman, Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC), Office of Local Government (OLG), Office of the Children's Guardian, NSW Police and the NSW Audit Office regarding the work of the IOSS. We make and receive referrals of complaints to action. Referrals to these agencies may be in accordance with mandatory statutory requirements. In addition, we receive referrals of matters with both mandatory and discretionary investigation requirements. We also conduct reviews of the external government agencies' audit and investigation reports to inform the work of the IOSS.

The IOSS attends and participates quarterly in the Internal Ombudsman Network (ION) with other Internal Ombudsman across NSW Local Councils, being Central Coast Council, Lake Macquarie Council, Liverpool Council, Northern Beaches Council and Wollondilly Shire Council.

The ION meets to discuss matters of common interest and shared learnings, including code of conduct issues and training, and key challenges for an Internal Ombudsman within NSW Local Councils. Representatives from the external government agencies have also been invited to present to the network throughout the year. This has included the ICAC, OLG and the NSW Ombudsman.

Professional Development

Staff in the IOSS continue to undertake training and development opportunities that are meaningful to our work, so we are equipped with relevant information to add value to the member Councils.

The IOSS team regularly attends sessions delivered by the Corruption Prevention Network covering an array of relevant aspects; sessions facilitated by the NSW Government's Community of Practice for Ethical Behaviour; sessions facilitated by the NSW Ombudsman Complaint Handling Community of Practice; information sessions offered by the NSW ICAC regarding trends and reports; and information sessions offered by the NSW Ombudsman regarding Public Interest Disclosures.

The Internal Ombudsman delivered a presentation on "*ensuring diligent reporting of potential fraud and corruption risks in your organisation*" at the 14th National Fraud and Corruption Congress, 13-14 November 2024.

In addition:

- All staff of the IOSS attended the National Investigations Symposium, jointly run by the NSW ICAC, NSW Ombudsman and the NSW IPAA, 28-29 May 2025;
- The Internal Ombudsman attended The NSW Independent Commission Against Corruption pilot course, "*Building a culture of integrity: corruption, ethics and governance.*", 8 May 2025;
- The Deputy Internal Ombudsman and the Complaint Assessment and Administration officer attended the 2024 Corruption Prevention Network Forum, 23 September 2024; and,
- The Internal Ombudsman and the Deputy Internal Ombudsman attended the LGNSW Court-Safe Communication training, 29 July 2024.

The Internal Ombudsman and Deputy Internal Ombudsman are accredited Mental Health First Aid trained. The Internal Ombudsman refreshed her qualifications, completing a Diploma in Government Investigations in October 2024.

Case Study

Request to a Patron to Leave a Community Event

Summary of complaint

The IOSS received a complaint from the community about their removal from a Council's community event. The complainant advised that they were dissatisfied with the Council's actions undertaken on the day of the event and its processes to review and respond to their initial complaint.

The complainant alleged that the evidence that the Council relied on to make its decision to request the complainant to leave the event was insufficient, and, further, that it had relied on false information about the sequence of events as part of the complaint response.

What we reviewed

The IOSS conducted an investigation into this matter.

This included reviewing the initial complaint and the Council's response, obtaining and reviewing further information from the complainant, a related person and relevant staff to understand the events that occurred on the day.

This also included obtaining and reviewing information and documentation in the Council's record keeping systems and reviewing relevant records that were undertaken on the day of the event.

Outcome

The investigation found that the complainant was initially granted entry to the event, despite the Council's conditions of entry stating otherwise.

Due to the risks associated with the decision, including to other patrons attending the event, a briefing was provided to the complainant prior to entering the event to outline the requirements of entry.

The investigation identified that these requirements were not adhered to by the complainant while within the event, and we found that the Council had sufficient evidence to rely on to make its decision to request the complainant to leave the event. The IOSS found that Council was open to make this decision and the decision was reasonable.

Overall, we found that the Council should not have deviated from its conditions of entry in place to control the risks to patrons' safety within the event. However we found that it was open for the member Council to exercise its discretion to allow entry, and we further found that it did this in attempt to accommodate the complainant who presented at the entrance to the event.

Learnings

This matter highlighted that deviating from a prepared plan, even with the best intention to accommodate customers, can cause consequences, including in relation to the safety of staff and other customers.

In this regard, a process improvement recommendation was made to the Council to ensure that the risk assessment prepared for the next event contemplates managing customers who do not meet the conditions of entry to the event, including issuing advice prior regarding conditions of entry, safely declining entry and assessing when to utilise discretion.

We also made process improvement recommendations to the Council to ensure staff awareness of reporting safety incidents, including information about what behaviours may trigger a report, when to report, and escalation processes.

All recommendations were accepted by the Council and either have been implemented or are in the process of being implemented.



Part Four

The Year Ahead



The Year Ahead

The 2025-26 year will see the Internal Ombudsman Shared Service continue to deliver on its key focus of the triple governance track of prevention, education and investigation to continue to improve the delivery of services to communities by Councils. The service continues to deliver high levels of training and has undertaken a significant lift in the advice provided to Councils. Along with these key priorities, as resourcing and capacity permits, the IOSS will seek to undertake the following throughout the year:

Trend Identification

Given our data from across our years of operation since 2017, the IOSS will work with business areas to provide information on complaint volumes and work to identify strategies for improvement. The IOSS will also work with Audit and Risk teams across the member Councils to feed into audit plans and reviews.

Obligations Under the PID Act 2022

To continue to build a strong speak up culture within the Councils, the IOSS will continue to deliver a program of training to Public Interest Disclosure Officers and new starters to understand their rights and obligations under the *Public Interest Disclosure Act 2022* (NSW). This important, mandatory training informs public officials of the protections available to those who report serious wrongdoing to prevent the risk of reprisal action.

Cementing Collaboration

The IOSS has established Shared Services Forums between the three member Councils to bring practitioners together to seek and share ideas and views. The IOSS has established a regular program of forums with the HR/IR, Governance and Customer Service/Experience forums now established as business as usual.

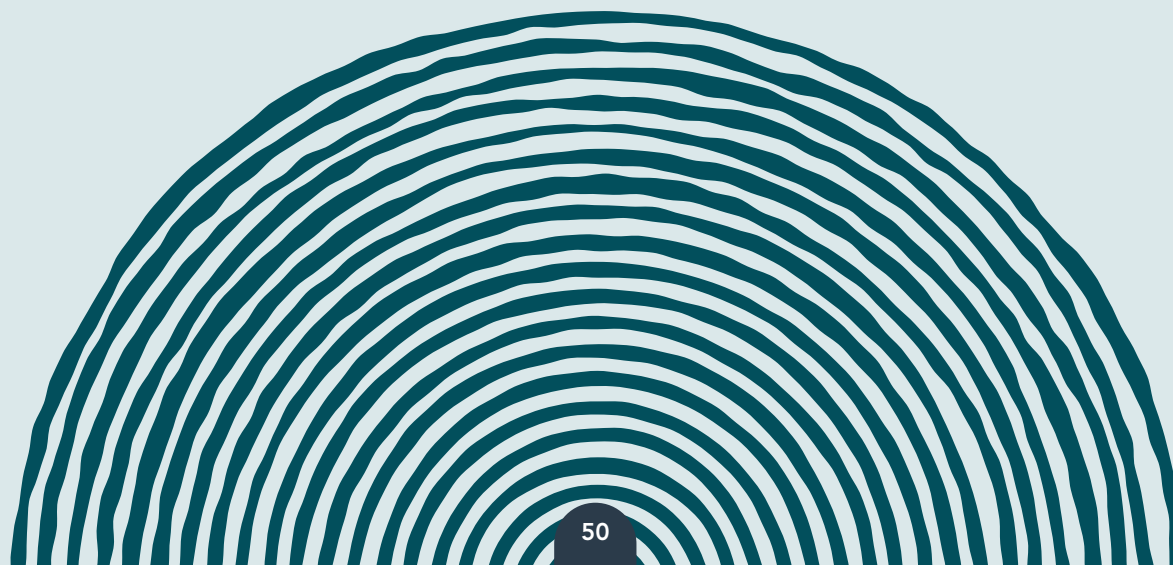
We will seek to restructure and improve the focus of the Regulatory Services forum to better leverage off the experience within the teams.

Promotion of the Service to Staff

The IOSS will return to structured engagement with business areas, particularly staff working outdoors and without regular access to information technology, with facilitated drop in times to promote the service across Council.

Professional Development

The IOSS will continue to ensure staff are trained and equipped to deliver a high quality service to the member Councils through ongoing professional development opportunities.



Internal Ombudsman Shared Service Governance Charter

Scan the QR code or visit:
www.cumberland.nsw.gov.au/internal-ombudsman



Contacting the Internal Ombudsman Shared Service

Anyone can make a complaint to the IOSS, free of charge.

All complaints are assessed in accordance with our Governance Charter. There are no fees or charges at any stage with the IOSS for matters to be considered.

IOSS staff are available in person, by telephone or email to discuss whether the IOSS is the correct entity to handle the complaint. If required, the IOSS can refer matters to Council if appropriate or advise on the relevant avenue for review.

Before making a complaint, the complainant should take reasonable steps to try and resolve the matter with the relevant Council first. If the matter relates to administrative decision making, the complainant should request the Council review its processes before contacting the IOSS. The IOSS typically allows each Council six weeks to review and respond to a complaint, however this timeframe may be longer depending on the complexity of the matter.

The complainant can contact the IOSS after they have received a final response from Council, or in the event the Council does not respond within six weeks or within the agreed timeframe, if the matter is complex.

While the IOSS is available on the phone or in person, where possible complaints should be made in writing and include full details of the matter and any relevant documents. IOSS staff can assist where a person is not able to make a complaint in writing or requires any other assistance to make a complaint to the service.

IOSS Contacts

Phone: 02 8757 9044
Operating Times: 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday.
Messages can be left on this service out of hours.

City of Parramatta Council

Email: internalombudsman@cityofparramatta.nsw.gov.au
Online: <https://www.cityofparramatta.nsw.gov.au/council/contact-council/internal-ombudsman>



Cumberland City Council

Email: internalombudsman@cumberland.nsw.gov.au
Online: <https://www.cumberland.nsw.gov.au/internal-ombudsman>



Inner West Council

Email: internalombudsman@innerwest.nsw.gov.au
Online: <https://www.innerwest.nsw.gov.au/about/the-council/internal-ombudsman>



In writing or in person by appointment:

The Internal Ombudsman Shared Service
11 Northumberland Road
Auburn NSW 2144

Services available to assist you:

If you are a non-English speaking person, we can help you through the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) on 131 450. If other assistance is needed to communicate with the IOSS, this can be arranged by contacting us either by email, post, telephone or in person.

2024-2025 Annual Report

Internal Ombudsman Shared Service

