Upper Hunter County Council

Public Interest Disclosure Policy

2026

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Purpose

All agencies in NSW are required to have a Public Interest Disclosure (**PID**) Policy under section 42 of the *Public Interest Disclosures Act 2022* (**PID Act**).

At Upper Hunter County Council **(UHCC**) we take reports of serious wrongdoing seriously. We are committed to building a 'speak up' culture where public officials are encouraged to report any conduct that they reasonably believe involves wrongdoing.

The integrity of our agency relies upon our staff, volunteers, contractors and subcontractors speaking up when they become aware of wrongdoing.

This policy sets out:

- how we will support and protect you if you come forward with a report of serious wrongdoing
- how we will deal with the report and our other responsibilities under the **PID** Act
- who to contact if you want to make a report
- how to make a report
- the protections which are available to you under the **PID** Act.

This policy also documents our commitment to building a speak-up culture. Part of that speak-up culture is having in place a framework that facilitates public interest reporting of wrongdoing by:

- protecting those who speak up from detrimental action
- imposing duties on agencies who receive reports of wrongdoing to take appropriate action to investigate or otherwise deal with them.

In NSW, that framework is the **PID** Act.
This policy should be read in conjunction with our Code of Conduct policy that articulates the agency's values and principles.

Accessibility of this policy

This policy is publicly available on our website https://**uhwa.org**.au.
A copy of the policy is also sent to all staff of **UHCC** on their commencement. A hard copy of the policy can be requested from the Biosecurity Operations Manager and the Biosecurity Administration Manager.

Who does this policy apply to?

This policy applies to, and for the benefit of, all public officials in NSW. You are a public official if you are:

- a person employed in or by an agency or otherwise in the service of an agency
- a person having public official functions or acting in a public official capacity whose conduct or activities an integrity agency is authorised by another Act or law to investigate
- an individual in the service of the Crown
- a statutory officer

- a person providing services or exercising functions on behalf of an agency, including a contractor, subcontractor or volunteer
- an employee, partner or officer of an entity that provides services, under contract, subcontract or other arrangement, on behalf of an agency or exercises functions of an agency, and are involved in providing those services or exercising those functions
- a judicial officer
- a Member of Parliament (**MP**), including a Minister
- a person employed under the *Members of Parliament Staff Act 2013.*

The General Manager and the Managers within **UHCC** have specific responsibilities under the **PID** Act. This policy also provides information on how people in these roles will fulfil their responsibilities. Other public officials who work in and for the public sector, but do not work for **UHCC** may use this policy if they want information on who they can report wrongdoing to within **UHCC**.

Who does this policy not apply to?

This policy does not apply to:

- people who have received services from an agency and want to make a complaint about those services
- people, such as contractors, who provide services to an agency. For example, employees of a company that sold computer software to an agency.

This means that if you are not a public official, this policy does not apply to your complaint (there are some circumstances where a complaint can be deemed to be a voluntary **PID**, see section 1(i) of this policy for more information).
However, you can still make a complaint to **UHCC**. This can be done by emailing the General Manager **admin@uhwa.org.au** or writing to Upper Hunter County Council PO Box 6, Muswellbrook NSW 2333

What is contained in this policy?

This policy will provide you with information on the following:

- ways you can make a voluntary **PID** to **UHCC** under the **PID** Act
- the names and contact details for the nominated disclosure officers in [**UHCC**]
- the roles and responsibilities of people who hold particular roles under the **PID** Act and who are employees of **UHCC**
- what information you will receive once you have made a voluntary **PID**
- protections available to people who make a report of serious wrongdoing under the **PID** Act and what we will do to protect you
- **UHCC** procedures for dealing with disclosures
- **UHCC** procedures for managing the risk of detrimental action and reporting detrimental action
- **UHCC** record-keeping and reporting requirements
- how **UHCC** will ensure it complies with the **PID** Act and this policy.

If you require further information about this policy, how public interest disclosures will be handled and the **PID** Act you can:

- confidentially contact a nominated disclosure officer within **UHCC**
- contact the **PID** Advice Team within the NSW Ombudsman by phone: (02) 9286 1000 or email: **PID**advice@ombo.nsw.gov.au, or
- access the NSW Ombudsman's **PID** guidelines which are available on its website.

If you require legal advice with respect to the **PID** Act or your obligations under the **PID** Act, you may need to seek independent legal advice.

How to make a report of serious wrongdoing

Reports, complaints and grievances

When a public official report suspected or possible wrongdoing in the public sector, their report will be a **PID** if it has certain features which are set out in the **PID** Act.

Some internal complaints or internal grievances may also be **PID**s, as long as they have the features of a **PID**. If an internal complaint or grievance is a report of serious wrongdoing, we will consider whether it is a **PID**. If it is a **PID**, we will deal with it as set out in this policy, but we will also make sure we follow our [name of relevant policies].

It is important that we quickly recognise that we have received a **PID**. This is because once a **PID** is received, the person who has made the report is entitled to certain protections and we have certain decisions that we have to make on how we will deal with the **PID** and how we will protect and support the person who has made the report.

When will a report be a PID?

There are three types of **PID**s in the **PID** Act. These are:

1. ***Voluntary PID*:** This is a **PID** where a report has been made by the public official because they decided, of their own accord, to come forward and disclose what they know.

2. ***Mandatory PID*:** This is a **PID** where the public official has made a report about serious wrongdoing because they have a legal obligation to make that report, or because making that report is an ordinary aspect of their role or function in an agency.

3. ***Witness PID*:** This is a **PID** where a person discloses information during an investigation of serious wrongdoing following a request or requirement of the investigator.

This policy mostly relates to making a voluntary **PID** and how we will deal with voluntary **PID**s. People who make a mandatory **PID** or a witness **PID** are still entitled to protection. More information about protections is available in section 2 of this policy.

You can find more information about mandatory and witness **PID**s in the Ombudsman's guidelines 'Dealing with mandatory **PID**s' and 'Dealing with witness **PID**s'. Voluntary **PID**s are the kind of **PID**s most people have in mind when they think about public interest reporting and 'whistleblowing'.

They involve a public official making a report because they have information that they believe shows (or tends to show) serious wrongdoing, where they are not under a legal obligation to make that report and where it is not an ordinary part of their role to report such wrongdoing.

A report is a voluntary **PID** if it has the following five features, which are set out in sections 24 to 27 of the **PID** Act:

The report was made orally or in writing

1. A report is made by a public official
2. The report is voluntary (meaning it is not a mandatory or witness **PID**)
3. It is made to a person who can receive voluntary **PID**s
4. The public official *honestly and reasonably believes* that the information they are providing *shows (or tends to show) serious wrongdoing*
5. The report was made orally or in writing

If the report has all five features, it is a voluntary **PID**.

You will not be expected to prove that what you reported actually happened or is serious wrongdoing. You *do* have to honestly believe, on reasonable grounds that the information you are reporting shows or tends to show serious wrongdoing.

Even though you do not have to prove the serious wrongdoing happened or provide evidence, a mere allegation with no supporting information is unlikely to meet this test.

If we make an error and do not identify that you have made a voluntary **PID**, you will still be entitled to the protections under the **PID** Act.

If you make a report and believe we have made an error by not identifying that you have made a voluntary **PID**, you should raise this with a nominated disclosure officer or your contact officer for the report. If you are still not satisfied with this outcome, you can seek an internal review or we make seek to conciliate the matter. You may also contact the NSW Ombudsman. Further information on rights to internal review and conciliation is found in section 7 of this policy.

Who can make a voluntary PID?

Any public official can make a voluntary **PID** — see 'Who this policy applies to'. You are a public official if:

- you are employed by **UHCC**
- you are a contractor, subcontractor or volunteer who provides services, or exercises functions, on behalf of [**UHCC**], or
- you work for an entity (such as a non-government organisation) who is contracted by **UHCC** to provide services or exercise functions on behalf of **UHCC**— if you are involved in undertaking that contracted work.

A public official can make a **PID** about serious wrongdoing relating to *any* agency, not just the agency they are working for. This means that we may receive **PID**s from public officials outside our agency. It also means that you can make a **PID** to any agency, including an integrity agency like the Independent Commission Against Corruption (**ICAC**) and the NSW Ombudsman. Annexure B of this policy has a list of integrity agencies.

What is serious wrongdoing?

Reports must be of one or more of the following categories of *serious wrongdoing* to be a voluntary **PID** (in addition to having the other features set out here). Serious wrongdoing is defined in the **PID** Act as:

- *corrupt conduct* — such as a public official accepting a bribe.
- *serious maladministration* — such as an agency systemically failing to comply with proper recruitment processes when hiring staff.

- *a government information contravention* — such as destroying, concealing or altering records to prevent them from being released under a Government Information Public Access application.
- *a local government pecuniary interest contravention* — such as a senior council staff member recommending a family member for a council contract and not declaring the relationship.
- *a privacy contravention* — such as unlawfully accessing a person's personal information on an agency's database.
- *a serious and substantial waste of public money* — such as an agency not following a competitive tendering process when contracting with entities to undertake government work.

When you make your report, you do not need to state to **UHCC** what category of serious wrongdoing you are reporting or that you are reporting serious wrongdoing.

Who can I make a voluntary PID to?

For a report to be a voluntary **PID**, it must be made to certain public officials.

Making a report to a public official who works for UHCC.

You can make a report inside **UHCC** to:

- The General Manager

- your manager — this is the person who directly, or indirectly, supervises you. It can also be the person who you directly, or indirectly, report to. You may have more than one manager. Your manager will make sure that the report is communicated to a disclosure officer on your behalf or may accompany you while you make the report to a disclosure officer.

Making a report to a recipient outside of UHCC

You can also make your report to a public official in another agency (meaning an agency you do not work for) or an integrity agency. These include:

- the *head of another agency* — this means the head of any public service agency
- an *integrity agency* — a list of integrity agencies is located at Annexure B of this policy
- a *disclosure officer for another agency* — ways to contact disclosure officers for other agencies is located in an agency's **PID** policy which can be found on their public website
- a *Minister or a member of a Minister's staff* but the report *must be made in writing*.

If you choose to make a disclosure outside of **UHCC**, it is possible that your disclosure will be referred back to **UHCC** so that appropriate action can be taken.

Making a report to a Member of Parliament or journalist

Disclosures to MPs or journalists are different to other reports. You can only disclose a report of wrongdoing as a voluntary **PID** to an MP or journalist in the following circumstances:

- You must have first made substantially the same disclosure (described here as a 'previous disclosure') to someone who can receive disclosures.

- The previous disclosure must be substantially true.

- You did not make the previous disclosure anonymously.

- You did not give a written waiver of your right to receive information relating to your previous disclosure.

- You did not receive the following from [**UHCC**]:

a) notification that **UHCC** will not investigate the serious wrongdoing and will also not refer the previous disclosure to another agency, or

b) the following information at the end of the investigation period:

1) notice of **UHCC** decision to investigate the serious wrongdoing
2) a description of the results of an investigation into the serious wrongdoing
3) details of proposed or recommended corrective action as a result of the previous disclosure or investigation.

Investigation period means:

- after six months from the previous disclosure being made, or
- after 12 months if you applied for an internal review of the agency's decision within six months of making the disclosure.

If all the above requirements are met, your disclosure to an MP or journalist may be a voluntary **PID**.

What form should a voluntary PID take?

You can make a voluntary **PID**:

- *in writing* — this could be an email or letter to a person who can receive voluntary **PID**s.
- *orally* — have a private discussion with a person who can receive voluntary **PID**s. This can be face-to-face, via telephone or virtually.
- *anonymously* — write an email or letter or call a person who can receive **PID**s to make a report without providing your name or anything that might identify you as the maker of the report. A report will only be considered anonymous if there is no reasonable or practical way of communicating with the person making the report. Even if you choose to remain anonymous, you will still be protected under the **PID** Act. It may be difficult, however, for **UHCC** to investigate the matter(s) you have disclosed if we cannot contact you for further information.

What should I include in my report?

You should provide as much information as possible so we can deal with the report effectively. The type of information you should include is:

- date, time and location of key events
- names of person(s) involved in the suspected wrongdoing, their role, title and how they are involved
- your relationship with the person(s) involved, such as whether you work closely with them
- your explanation of the matter you are reporting
- how you became aware of the matter you are reporting
- possible witnesses
- other information you have that supports your report.

What if I am not sure if my report is a PID?

You should report all wrongdoing you become aware of regardless of whether you think it is serious wrongdoing. It is important for **UHCC** to understand what is or may be occurring.

We are then responsible for making sure your report is handled appropriately under the **PID** Act, or if it is not a **PID**, in line with our other procedures. Even if your report is not a **PID**, it may fall within another one of the agency's policies for dealing with reports, allegations or complaints.

Deeming that a report is a voluntary PID

The General Manager can, in certain circumstances, determine that a report is a voluntary **PID** even if the report does not otherwise have all the features of a voluntary **PID**. This is known as the 'deeming power'. By deeming that a report is a voluntary **PID**, it ensures that reporters are provided with protections under the **PID** Act.

If you make a report that has not met all the requirements of a voluntary **PID**, you can refer your matter to the General Manager to request that they consider deeming your report to be a voluntary **PID**.
A decision to deem a report to be a voluntary **PID** is at the discretion of the General Manager. For more information about the deeming power, see the Ombudsman's guideline 'Deeming that a disclosure is a voluntary **PID**'.

Protections

How is the maker of a voluntary PID protected?

When you make a voluntary **PID** you receive special protections under the **PID** Act. We are committed to taking all reasonable steps to protect you from detriment as a result of having made a **PID**. We are also committed to maintaining your confidentiality as much as possible while the **PID** is being dealt with.

We will not tolerate any type of detrimental action being taken against you because you have made a report, might make a report or are believed to have made a report.

The maker of a voluntary **PID** is protected in the following ways:

a) *Protection from detrimental action*

– A person cannot take detrimental action against another person because they have made a voluntary **PID** or are considering making a **PID**. Detrimental action includes bullying, harassment, intimidation or dismissal.

– Once we become aware that a voluntary **PID** by a person employed or otherwise associated with [agency] that concerns serious wrongdoing relating to [agency] has been made, [we/**UHCC**] will undertake a risk assessment and take steps to mitigate the risk of detrimental action occurring against the person who made the voluntary **PID**.

– It is a criminal offence for someone to take detrimental action against a person because they have made or may make a voluntary **PID**. It is punishable by a maximum penalty of 200 penalty units or imprisonment for five years or both.

– A person may seek compensation where unlawful detrimental action has been taken against them.

– A person can apply for a court order (injunction) where detrimental action is threatened or has occurred (for example, an order to prevent dismissal or to require reinstatement).

Note that a person who makes a **PID** can still be subject to reasonable management action (such as ordinary performance reviews and performance management). Provided such action is not taken because of the **PID**, it is not detrimental action under the **PID** Act.

b) *Immunity from civil and criminal liability*

Some public officials are often subject to a duty of confidentiality that prevents them disclosing certain information that they obtain or become aware of at work. Sometimes, in order to make a **PID**, public officials will need to breach or disregard such confidentiality duties. If that happens, a public official cannot be disciplined, sued or criminally charged for breaching confidentiality.

c) *Confidentiality*

Public officials and agencies must not disclose information tending to identify a person as the maker of a voluntary **PID** unless doing so is permitted by the **PID** Act.

d) *Protection from liability for own past conduct*

The Attorney General can give the maker an undertaking that a disclosure of their own past conduct will not be used against them if a person discloses their own wrongdoing or misconduct while making a report. This undertaking can only be given on application by an integrity agency to the Attorney General.

Protections for people who make mandatory and witness PIDs

Apart from **PID**s that are made voluntarily by public officials, there are other types of reports that are recognised as **PID**s under the **PID** Act:

• *A mandatory **PID***: This is a **PID** where the public official has made the report about serious wrongdoing because they have a legal obligation to make that report, or because making that report is an ordinary aspect of their role or function in an agency.
• *A witness **PID***: This is a **PID** where a person discloses information during an investigation of serious wrongdoing following a request or requirement of the investigator.

Protections for makers of mandatory and witness **PID**s are detailed in the table below.

Protection	Mandatory PID	Witness PID
Detrimental action — It is an offence to take detrimental action against a person based on the suspicion, belief or awareness that a person has made, may have made or may make a PID.	✓	✓
Right to compensation — A person can initiate proceedings and seek compensation for injury, damage or loss suffered as a result of detrimental action being taken against them.	✓	✓
Ability to seek injunction — An injunction can be sought to prevent the commission or possible commission of a detrimental action offence against a person. For example,	✓	✓

an order to prevent dismissal or to require reinstatement.		
Immunity from civil and criminal liability — a person will not incur civil or criminal liability if the person breaches a duty of confidentiality while making a disclosure. This means that legal action cannot be taken against a person for: **• breaching a duty of secrecy or confidentiality, or** **• breaching another restriction on disclosure.**	✓	✓

Reporting detrimental action

If you experience adverse treatment or detrimental action, such as bullying or harassment, you should report this immediately. You can report any experience of adverse treatment or detrimental action directly to the General Manager, or to an integrity agency. A list of integrity agencies is located at Annexure B of this policy.

General support

The following supports will be made available to people who have made a report and how they can access these supports.

Agencies may refer to the NSW Ombudsman if an employee has questions about the PID Act and reporting generally.

UHCC will allocate to the maker of the report a person who will be their key contact person and who will take steps to protect their interests, for example, if they are at risk of detrimental action.

UHCC may also link the person who has made the report to wellbeing support through the Employee Assistance Program.

Roles and responsibilities of **UHCC** employees

Certain people within **UHCC** have responsibilities under the PID Act.

General Manager

The General Manager is responsible for:

- fostering a workplace culture where reporting is encouraged
- receiving disclosures from public officials
- ensuring there is a system in place for assessing disclosures
- ensuring the **UHCC** complies with this policy and the PID Act
- ensuring that the **UHCC** has appropriate systems for:

- overseeing internal compliance with the PID Act
- supporting public officials who make voluntary PIDs, including by minimising the risk of detrimental action
- implementing corrective action if serious wrongdoing is found to have occurred
- complying with reporting obligations regarding allegations or findings of detrimental action
- complying with yearly reporting obligations to the NSW Ombudsman.

Disclosure officers

Disclosure officers are responsible for:

- receiving reports from public officials
- receiving reports when they are passed on to them by staff
- ensuring reports are dealt with appropriately, including by referring the matter to the appropriate complaint unit (if relevant)
- ensuring that any oral reports that have been received are recorded in writing.

All employees

All employees must:

- report suspected serious wrongdoing or other misconduct
- use their best endeavours to assist in an investigation of serious wrongdoing if asked to do so by a person dealing with a voluntary PID on behalf of **UHCC**
- treat any person dealing with or investigating reports of serious wrongdoing with respect.

All employees must not take detrimental action against any person who has made, may in the future make, or is suspected of having made, a PID.

How we will deal with voluntary PIDs

UHCC will acknowledge that we have received a report and keep the person who made it informed.

When a disclosure officer in **UHCC** receives a report which is a voluntary PID, or looks like it may be a voluntary PID, the person who made the report will receive the following information:

- You will receive an acknowledgment that the report has been received. This acknowledgement will:
    - state that the report will be assessed to identify whether it is a PID
    - state that the PID Act applies to how **UHCC** deals with the report
    - provide clear information on how you can access this PID policy
    - provide you with details of a contact person and available supports.
- If the report is a voluntary PID, we will inform you as soon as possible how we intend to deal with the report. This may include:
    - that we are investigating the serious wrongdoing
    - that we will refer the report to a different agency (if appropriate) to deal with the voluntary PID. If we do this, we will provide you with details of this referral

    - If we decide to not investigate the report and to not refer it to another agency for it to be investigated, we will tell you the reasons for this decision. We will also notify the NSW Ombudsman of this decision.
    - If we have investigated the serious wrongdoing, we will provide you with the following information once the investigation is complete:
- a description of the results of the investigation — that is, we will tell you whether we found that serious wrongdoing took place.
- information about any corrective action as a result of the investigation/s — this means we will tell you what action we took in relation to the person who engaged in the serious wrongdoing or if the serious wrongdoing was by our agency, what we have put in place to address that serious wrongdoing.

Corrective action could include taking disciplinary action against someone or changing the practices, policies and procedures that we have in place which led to the serious wrongdoing.

There may be some details about both the findings made as a result of the investigation and the corrective action taken that cannot be revealed to you. We will always balance the right of a person who makes a report to know the outcome of that report, with other legal obligations we have.

If you have made an anonymous report, in many cases we may not be able to provide this information to you.

What will **UHCC** do as soon as a report is received

UHCC will in writing acknowledge that the report has been received, this correspondence will also set expectations with the person who made the report about the next steps, and how and when the agency will keep the maker of the report up to date.

UHCC will have in place support structures to protect and support the maker of the report. This will include information about:

- the name and contact details of the person that will update the maker (in many cases it will be the disclosure officer who received the report, or it may be the investigator to whom the matter is allocated)
- the expected timeframes for updates from **UHCC**
- how the acknowledgment and updates will be provided, that is, by way of secure email, by phone discussions or virtually via Teams or another platform
- how the agency will engage with the maker of the report to establish whether they are at risk of detrimental action, whether they need support networks to be put in place and how this will be assessed on an ongoing basis

How **UHCC** will deal with voluntary PIDs

Once a report that may be a voluntary PID is received **UHCC** will look at the information contained in the report to see if it has the features of a voluntary PID. This assessment is undertaken to identify whether the report is a voluntary PID or another type of disclosure, and to make sure that the right steps are followed. If it is a voluntary PID, we will ensure that we comply with the requirements in the PID Act.

Report not a voluntary PID

Even if the report is not a voluntary PID, it will still need to be dealt with in a manner consistent with a complaints or grievance handling process or through an alternate process.

If the report is not a voluntary PID, we will let you know that the PID Act does not apply to the report and how we will deal with the concerns raised in the report.

If you are not happy with this assessment or otherwise disagree with it, you can raise it with the person who has communicated the outcome with you or a disclosure officer, request an internal review or request that the matter be conciliated. **UHCC** can, but do not have to, request the NSW Ombudsman to conciliate the matter.

Cease dealing with report as voluntary PID

UHCC may stop dealing with a voluntary PID because it is not actually a voluntary PID (meaning it does not have all the features of a PID).

The PID Act states that agencies must provide reasons to the maker of a purported PID if the agency has ceased dealing with the report as a voluntary PID. A purported PID is one that is made to one of the recipients of voluntary PIDs set out in the PID Act, and it is not a witness or mandatory PID and the maker has stated it is a voluntary PID.

It is best practice to always notify makers of reports that an agency has ceased to deal with their matter as a voluntary PID.

Where the report is a voluntary PID

If the report is a voluntary PID:

- In most cases we will conduct an investigation to make findings about whether the serious wrongdoing disclosed in the report occurred, who was involved, who was responsible, and whether the people involved, or the agency engaged, in serious wrongdoing. There may be circumstances where we believe an investigation is not warranted — for example, if the conduct has previously been investigated.
- There may also be circumstances where we decide that the report should be referred to another agency, such as an integrity agency. For example, reports concerning possible corrupt conduct may be required to be reported to the ICAC in accordance with section 11 of the *Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1988*.
- Before referring a matter, we will discuss the referral with the other agency, and we will provide you with details of the referral and a contact person within the other agency.
- If we decide not to investigate a report and to not refer the matter to another agency, we must let you know the reasons for this and notify the NSW Ombudsman.

How UHCC will protect the confidentiality of the maker of a voluntary PID

We understand that people who make voluntary PIDs may want their identity and the fact that they have made a report to be confidential.

Under the PID Act, information tending to identify a person as the maker of a voluntary PID (known as identifying information) is not to be disclosed by a public official or an agency.

There are certain circumstances under the PID Act that allow for the disclosure of identifying information. These include:

- where the person consents in writing to the disclosure
- where it is generally known that the person is the maker of the voluntary PID because of their voluntary self-identification as the maker
- when the public official or [we/agency] reasonably considers it necessary to disclose the information to protect a person from detriment
- where it is necessary the information be disclosed to a person whose interests are affected by the disclosure
- where the information has previously been lawfully published
- when the information is disclosed to a medical practitioner or psychologist for the purposes of providing medical or psychiatric care, treatment or counselling to the individual disclosing the information
- when the information is disclosed for the purposes of proceedings before a court or tribunal
- when the disclosure of the information is necessary to deal with the disclosure effectively
- if it is otherwise in the public interest to disclose the identifying information.

We will not disclose identifying information unless it is necessary and authorised under the PID Act.

We will put in place steps to keep the identifying information of the maker and the fact that a report has been made confidential. It may not be possible for us to maintain complete confidentiality while we progress the investigation, but we will do all that we practically can to not unnecessarily disclose information from which the maker of the report can be identified. We will do this by:

- We will limit the number of people who are aware of the maker's identity or information that could identify them.
- If we must disclose information that may identify the maker of the PID, we will still not disclose the actual identity of the maker of the PID, unless we have their consent to do so.
- We will ensure that any person who does know the identity of the maker of a PID is reminded that they have a legal obligation to keep their identity confidential.
- We will ensure that only authorised persons have access to emails, files or other documentation that contain information about the identity of the maker.
- We will undertake an assessment to determine if anyone is aware of the maker's identity and if those persons have a motive to cause detrimental action to be taken against the maker or impede the progress of the investigation.

We will provide information to the maker of the PID about the importance of maintaining confidentiality and advising them how best to protect their identity, for example, by telling them not to discuss their report with other staff.

If confidentiality cannot be maintained or is unlikely to be maintained, **UHCC** will:

- advise the person whose identity may become known
- implement strategies to minimise the risk of detrimental action
- provide additional supports to the person who has made the PID
- remind persons who become aware of the identifying information of the consequences for failing to maintain confidentiality and that engaging in detrimental action is a criminal offence and may also be a disciplinary matter.

How UHCC will assess and minimise the risk of detrimental action

UHCC will not tolerate any detrimental action being taken by any person against a person who has made a PID, investigators if appointed, witnesses or the person the report is about.

UHCC will assess and take steps to mitigate detrimental action from being taken against the maker of a voluntary PID, the person whose conduct is the subject of a PID, investigators and witnesses.

UHCC will take steps to assess and minimise the risk of detrimental action by:

- explaining that a risk assessment will be undertaken, and a risk management plan will be created (including reassessing the risk throughout the entirety of the matter)
- providing details of the unit/role that will be responsible for undertaking a risk assessment
- explaining the approvals for risk assessment and the risk management plan, that is, rank or role of the person who has final approval
- explaining how the agency will communicate with the maker to identify risks
- listing the protections that will be offered, that is, the agency will discuss protection options with the maker which may including remote working or approved leave for the duration of the investigation
- outlining what supports will be provided.

Further information on assessing the risk of detrimental action is found in the Ombudsman's guideline 'Agencies — assessing and managing the risk of detrimental action'.

What is detrimental action.

Detrimental action against a person is an act or omission that causes, comprises, involves or encourages detriment to a person or a threat of detriment to a person (whether express or implied). Detriment to a person includes:

- injury, damage or loss
- property damage
- reputational damage
- intimidation, bullying or harassment
- unfavourable treatment in relation to another person's job
- discrimination, prejudice or adverse treatment
- disciplinary proceedings or disciplinary action, or
- any other type of disadvantage.

Detrimental action does not include:

- lawful action taken by a person or body to investigate serious wrongdoing or other misconduct
- the lawful reporting or publication of a finding of serious wrongdoing or other misconduct
- the lawful making of adverse comment, resulting from investigative action
- the prosecution of a person for a criminal offence
- reasonable management action taken by someone in relation to a person who made or may make a PID. For example, a reasonable appraisal of a PID maker's work performance.

How UHCC will deal with allegations of a detrimental action offence

If **UHCC** become(s) aware of an allegation that a detrimental action offence has occurred or may occur, the General Manager will:

- take all steps possible to stop the action and protect the person(s)
- take appropriate disciplinary action against anyone that has taken detrimental action
- refer any evidence of a detrimental action offence to the Commissioner of Police and the ICAC or the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission (whichever is applicable)
- notify the NSW Ombudsman about the allegation of a detrimental action offence being committed.
- A victim of detrimental action should speak directly with the General Manager
- The General Manager will inform the person who the alleged detrimental action has been taken against will be updated and what support will be offered.

What UHCC will do if an investigation finds that serious wrongdoing has occurred

If, after an investigation, it is found that serious wrongdoing or other misconduct has occurred, **UHCC** will take the most appropriate action to address that wrongdoing or misconduct. This is also known as corrective action.

Corrective action can include:

- a formal apology
- improving internal policies to adequately prevent and respond to similar instances of wrongdoing
- providing additional education and training to staff where required
- taking employment action against persons involved in the wrongdoing (such as termination of employment, relocation, a caution or reprimand)
- payment of compensation to people who have been affected by serious wrongdoing or other misconduct.

Taking Corrective Action

The General Manager will be responsible for adopting and implementing corrective action. Corrective action may be recommendations following an independent investigation. Internal investigations finding wrongdoing will require developing the necessary steps to be taken to address any recommendations in the findings.

The General Manager will respond to the maker of the Voluntary PID informing them of the corrective actions taken.

Review and dispute resolution

Internal review

People who make voluntary PIDs can seek internal review of the following decisions made by [**UHCC**]:

- that **UHCC** is not required to deal with the report as a voluntary PID
- to stop dealing with the report because **UHCC** decided it was not a voluntary PID
- to not investigate the serious wrongdoing and not refer the report to another agency
- to cease investigating the serious wrongdoing without either completing the investigation or referring the report to another agency for investigation.

UHCC will ensure internal reviews are conducted in compliance with the PID Act.

If you would like to make an application for an internal review, you must apply in writing within 28 days of being informed of **UHCC**'s decision. The application should state the reasons why you consider **UHCC** decision should not have been made. You may also submit any other relevant material with your application.

Requests for internal review of decisions must be lodged in writing either email or postal addressed to the General Manager.

Voluntary dispute resolution

If a dispute arises between **UHCC** and a person who has made a report which is, or may be, a voluntary PID, we may request the NSW Ombudsman to conciliate the dispute. Conciliation is a voluntary process and will only be suitable for disputes where **UHCC** and the maker of the report are willing to resolve the dispute.

Other agency obligations

Record-keeping requirements

UHCC must keep full and accurate records with respect to all information received in connection with the PID Act. This ensures that **UHCC** complies with its obligations under the State Records Act 1998.

Council's electronic records are cloud based using Microsoft 365 and secured Hard files are stored in an internal secure vault.

Reporting of voluntary PIDs and **UHCC** annual return to the Ombudsman

Each year **UHCC** provides an annual return to the NSW Ombudsman which includes:

- information about voluntary PIDs received by **UHCC** during each return period (yearly with the start date being 1 July)
- action taken by **UHCC** to deal with voluntary PIDs during the return period
- how **UHCC** promoted a culture in the workplace where PIDs are encouraged.

How **UHCC** will ensure compliance with the PID Act and this policy

Councils Audit Risk & Improvement Committee annual plans include reviews of Council Policy that includes the PID Policy. The Committee reports its findings to the Council.

Recommendation requiring change to existing practices or adoption of new procedures from ARIC adopted by Council requires the implementation by the General Manager.

Annexure A – Council Disclosure Officers

Position	Location	Contact Details
General Manager	**Muswellbrook Depot**	**admin@uhwa.nsw.gov.au**
Senior Biosecurity Officer	**Muswellbrook Depot**	**muswellbrook@uhwa.nsw.gov.au**

Annexure B — List of integrity agencies

INTEGRITY AGENCY	WHAT THEY INVESTIGATE	CONTACT INFORMATION
The NSW Ombudsman	Most kinds of **serious maladministration** by most agencies and public officials (but not NSW Police, judicial officers or MPs)	**Telephone**: 1800 451 524 between 9am to 3pm Monday to Friday **Writing**: Level 24, 580 George Street, Sydney NSW 2000 **Email**: info@ombo.nsw.gov.au
The Auditor-General	**Serious and substantial waste of public money** by auditable agencies	**Telephone**: 02 9275 7100 **Writing**: GPO Box 12, Sydney NSW 2001 **Email**: governance@audit.nsw.gov.au
Independent Commission Against Corruption	**Corrupt conduct**	**Telephone**: 02 8281 5999 or toll free on 1800 463 909 (callers outside Sydney) between 9am and 3pm, Monday to Friday **Writing:** GPO Box 500, Sydney NSW 2001 or faxing 02 9264 5364 **Email**: icac@icac.nsw.gov.au
The Inspector of the Independent Commission Against Corruption	**Serious maladministration** by the ICAC or the ICAC officers	**Telephone**: 02 9228 3023 **Writing**: PO Box 5341, Sydney NSW 2001 **Email**: oiicac_executive@oiicac.nsw.gov.au
The Law Enforcement Conduct Commission	**Serious maladministration** by the NSW Police Force or the NSW Crime Commission	**Telephone**: 02 9321 6700 or 1800 657 079 **Writing**: GPO Box 3880, Sydney NSW 2001 **Email**: contactus@lecc.nsw.gov.au
The Inspector of the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission	**Serious maladministration** by the LECC and LECC officers	**Telephone**: 02 9228 3023 **Writing**: GPO Box 5341, Sydney NSW 2001 **Email**: oilecc_executive@oilecc.nsw.gov.au
Office of the Local Government	**Local government pecuniary interest contraventions**	**Email**: olg@olg.nsw.gov.au

The Privacy Commissioner	**Privacy contraventions**	**Telephone**: 1800 472 679 **Writing**: GPO Box 7011, Sydney NSW 2001 **Email**: ipcinfo@ipc.nsw.gov.au
The Information Commissioner	**Government information contraventions**	**Telephone**: 1800 472 679 **Writing**: GPO Box 7011, Sydney NSW 2001 **Email**: ipcinfo@ipc.nsw.gov.au