



11 September 2025

Tom Hunt
tom.hunt@stuff.co.nz

Tēnā koe Tom,

Request for Information – Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act (LGOIMA) 1987

We refer to your official information request dated 4 September 2025, seeking information about complaints or incidents of inappropriate conduct directed toward Council staff. Specifically, you requested:

“...any records or documentation held by the Council regarding general complaints or incidents of inappropriate conduct directed toward council staff over the past three months. Specifically, I am interested in any such issues that involve elected members or candidates at the upcoming local body election”.

Answer:

We have identified one instance within the past three months that falls within the scope of your request. This relates to an interaction involving a candidate in the upcoming local body election.

We are releasing an email chain and three audio recordings that document the incident and illustrate the nature of the conduct in question. To protect the staff members who were subjected to abusive behaviour, we have redacted their names under sections 7(2)(a) and 7(2)(f)(ii) of the LGOIMA. This reflects our obligation to protect their privacy and to prevent any further harm or harassment that could impact their wellbeing or ability to carry out their roles.

You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of this response. Information about how to make a complaint is available at: [Office of the Ombudsman – Complaints](#), or freephone 0800 802 602.

Please note that this response to your information request may be published on Hutt City Council's website: [Proactive releases – Hutt City Council](#).

Ngā mihi nui



Rebekah van der Splinter

Senior Advisor, Official Information and Privacy

The Audio recordings relating to this request are available via the links provided below. If you experience any issues accessing these files or would prefer to receive them in an alternative format, please contact:
informationrequests@huttcity.govt.nz

- **[Supporting Document – Call Recording \(1\)](#)**
- **[Supporting Document – Call Recording \(2\)](#)**
- **[Supporting Document – Call Recording \(3\)](#)**

From: [GeorgeMacKayCentralWard](#)
To: [Frances Van Vuuren](#)
Subject: Re: Unacceptable behaviour in recent call
Date: Thursday, 4 September 2025 6:22:36 pm

Hi Frances

Yes this was unacceptable on my part.

I have responded to an email from Jerome at pncc and had offered my apology to the team.

I was extremely frustrated that I was put on hold several times,

Not told that they had a contact at hcc which they had tried to ring,

hung up on,

and having to ring back to see if someone else was available,

I was ringing my local council and was put through to a call centre in palmerston north regardless of the situation.

So its rather frustrating talking with the pncc this time and in the past too after hours.

However my reaction was over the top, and my phone etiquette and language unacceptable.

I am sorry!

The team at hcc are fantastic to deal with and I have good relationships with them on the phone.

Regards

George

On 4 Sept 2025 1:49 pm, Frances Van Vuuren <Frances.VanVuuren@huttcity.govt.nz> wrote:

Kia ora George,

I am writing to address concerns arising from your recent call to our Palmerston North contact centre.

Yesterday you called requesting to speak to Bruce Hodgins. You were advised that staff transfers were not possible at the time, as Palmerston North was handling calls, and you were offered the option to leave a message for Bruce to return your call.

For your awareness, we have a longstanding arrangement with Palmerston North, who

manage after-hours contact on our behalf and also provide cover when staff are attending quarterly management meetings. This ensures that all enquiries are followed up as soon as possible.

Your interactions during this call were escalated to me, and I have had the opportunity to review the recordings directly. During your call, your behaviour and language towards the staff was unacceptable and included the use of inappropriate language and swearing, including comments such as:

"I don't want to speak to you guys in Palmerston North because you guys don't know sh*t"

"Put me through to the bloody manager now, stop pissing about"

"You can't just f*cking hang up on someone, I'm a f*cking taxpayer, I'm paying you guys in f*cking Palmerston North where I can do your job right now, get f*cked, don't hang up on me, cocksuckers" (said while on hold)

"Don't sit here and have a go at me, you guys work for me remember, I'm a Hutt City Council member, I'm a ratepayer and you guys work for us"

"Get f*cked, ya dumb b*tch, get f*cked ya dumb bitch"

We want to be clear that such behaviour will not be tolerated. Our staff are entitled to a safe and respectful working environment, and we expect all customers to treat them with courtesy. We ask that you acknowledge this behaviour and provide an apology.

Please also note that your query was followed up and resolved once Bruce was able to contact you.

Looking ahead, if behaviour of this kind occurs again, we will need to consider whether we continue to accept telephone calls from you. If necessary, we may determine that all communication should instead be conducted in writing via email.

I trust this makes our position clear.

Ngā mihi

Frances

027 268 7314

Frances Van Vuuren

Head Of Customer, Communications & Engagement

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Thank you

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