

THE BAROSSA COUNCIL CUSTOMER SERVICE POLICY



1. Purpose

- 1.1 The Barossa Council values our Customers and we are committed to delivering a quality Customer experience. We believe that listening to and learning from our Customers is the best way to achieve this.
- 1.2 In accordance with Section 270 of the Local Government Act 1999, this Policy provides guidance on our response to Requests for Service or for the improvement of a Service delivered by us and to provide direction on the handling of Feedback and Complaints.

2. Scope

- 2.1 This Policy applies to all Workers and Elected Members and relates to:
- All Customer interactions.
 - All Requests for Service, Feedback and Complaints to Council from Customers.
- 2.2 We acknowledge that other council policies or legal mechanisms may apply in addition to or instead of this policy. We will advise you at the outset as to which is the most appropriate avenue to resolve your Complaint or Request for Service and guide you through the process.

3. Definitions

Complaint	An expression of dissatisfaction with Council's Policies, Processes, Fees and Charges, Workers, Elected Members, quality of Service or goods sold or provided which requires a formal response.
Customer	A user of products and/or Services of the Council.
Customer Service	The manner in which Council interacts with its Customers.
Feedback	Positive or negative information from Customers regarding their experience with Council which is used as a basis for continuous improvement.
Level of Service	A measurable and quantifiable standard to which it is anticipated or planned that a Service will be provided. The Level of Service is dependent on the resources and priorities determined by the Council and taking into account legal obligations.
Request for Service	An application to have Council or its Workers take some form of action to provide or improve a Council Service.
Service	An action received and/or experienced by the Customer from the Council.
Worker	A person is a Worker if the person carries out work in any capacity for a person conducting a business or undertaking, including work as; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) an employee; or b) a contractor or sub-contractor; or c) an employee of a contractor or sub-contractor; or d) an employee of a labour hire company who has been assigned to work in the person's business or undertaking; or e) an outworker; or f) an apprentice or trainee; or

	<p>g) a student gaining work experience: or h) a volunteer of Council: or i) a person of a prescribed class. (as defined in the WHS Act, 2012 (7)).</p>
Unreasonable Conduct	Unreasonable conduct may include unreasonable persistence or demands, lack of co-operation, argumentative, abusive or threatening behaviour, or conduct that puts our Workers, equipment or resources at risk of harm or injury.

4. Policy Statement

- 4.1 This Policy aligns with our Customer Service Charter. We value our Customers and strive to provide the right people, efficient processes and systems to deliver a quality Customer experience. We recognise the importance of Feedback and Complaints, regarding them as opportunities to improve.

5. Guiding Principles

- 5.1 Our Customer Service Charter is underpinned by the following values:
- **Accountability** – We will be competent, reliable and responsive.
 - **Respect** – We will treat our Customers with courtesy and understanding.
 - **Honesty and Integrity** – We will be transparent and ethical in our dealings with you and make decisions to benefit the community and future generations.
 - **Teamwork** – We will work together to action your Request/Feedback/Complaint in the most efficient and effective way, taking into account our adopted Policies and legal obligations.

6. Requests for Service

- 6.1 We acknowledge the diversity of our community and understand that everyone has individual rights and needs. Our aim is to offer quality Customer Service to provide straightforward and logical access to our Services, facilities and information.
- 6.2 We recognise that you may wish to contact us in a variety of ways and we are committed to providing choice about how you can access our Services. You can contact us via:
- Our Websites and Social Media
 - Telephone
 - Email
 - In Person
 - Mail
 - Petitions
- 6.3 Our systems enable the logging, allocating, tracking and reporting of Requests for Service. We use the system to measure our performance in the completion of your Requests for Service. For most Requests for Service, contact names, addresses or phone numbers are required to confirm information or if necessary to obtain additional information. We may not accept or investigate anonymous Requests for Service; however it depends on the nature of the information you provide and the severity of the situation or the Service requested. Our Privacy Policy provides further information on how we collect, use and store Personal Information.
- 6.4 Petitions should be legibly written or typed or printed, clearly set out the request/submission of petitioners, include the name and address of each person who signed or endorsed the petition, be addressed to council and delivered to the principal

office. If your Petition does not comply with these requirements it may not be accepted. Your Petition will be actioned in accordance with legislation and Council's Privacy Policy.

6.5 In determining how to respond to a Request for Service, we will consider the following:

- Council's Strategic Management Plans and Annual Budget and Business Plan.
- Adopted Levels of Service
- An assessment of risk
- Statutory responsibilities.

7. Customer Feedback and Complaints

7.1 Quality Customer Service is efficient, fair, impartial and responsive. We aim to provide quality Customer Service whilst responding to Feedback and Complaints. We are committed to learning from and listening to our customers.

7.2 We have professional Workers committed to managing your Feedback and Complaints confidentially and as efficiently as possible in accordance with our processes and legal obligations. If you are making a Complaint, your identity will be made known only to those who need to know for the purpose of investigating and resolving the Complaint.

7.3 We will endeavour to be consistent, fair and amicable in facilitating an outcome to your Complaint or Feedback. Outcomes will be proportionate and appropriate to the circumstances. They may include providing the desired service, changing a decision, issuing an apology or providing compensation (only where loss and suffering is considered to be substantial) and will be determined in accordance with our supporting processes.

7.4 Where we are unable to satisfactorily address your Complaint, you may exercise your right to request an Internal Review of Council Decision or where appropriate, consider mediation, conciliation or neutral evaluation under section 271 of the *Local Government Act 1999* (the costs of which may be shared between you and Council). Alternatively you may consider another option as outlined in Section 8.1.

7.5 We may be limited in our authority to respond to those Complaints that are governed by legislation or statutory review. When you advise us of a problem outside of our jurisdiction, you may be referred to the appropriate agency.

7.6 We will treat all Complaints we receive seriously. However, where we deem your conduct is unreasonable we reserve the right to cease communicating with you and take reasonable action as required.

8. Other Options

8.1 Whilst we prefer to address your Complaint directly, you may choose to raise your Complaint with the following agencies:

- Ombudsman SA
- Office of Public Integrity
- Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC)
- Minister for Local Government
- Water Industry Ombudsman
- Court or Tribunal
- Journalist or Member of Parliament (in accordance with the *Public Interest Disclosure Act 2018*, where applicable)
- South Australian Civil and Administrative Tribunal

- Or any other relevant authority

9. Supporting Documents

- 9.1 Our Customer Service Charter is the overarching statement of commitment to the delivery of Service to our community. We deliver a range of Services for which more specific Charters may be adopted.
- 9.2 The following documents also support this Policy:
- Request for Service Fact Sheet
 - Customer Feedback and Complaint Fact Sheet
 - Complaint Handling Process
 - Request for Service Process

10. Related Policies

- Code of Conduct for Employees
- Code of Conduct for Elected Members
- Council Development Assessment Panel Complaints Handling Policy
- Human Resource Management Policy
- Fraud and Corruption Policy
- Internal Review of Council Decision Policy
- Privacy Policy
- Records Management Policy
- Whistleblower's Protection Policy
- Customer Service Charter
- Complaints Handling Process under the Code of Conduct for Council Members

11. References

- s270,s271 Local Government Act 1999
- Local Government (Procedures at Meetings) Regulations 2013
- Independent Commissioner Against Corruption Act 2012
- Public Interest Disclosure Act 2018
- Local Government Association – Guide to preparing and maintaining Council Policies, Codes of Practice and Codes of Conduct (March 2012)
- Managing Unreasonable Complainant Conduct Practice Manual endorsed by Australian Parliamentary Ombudsman
- Ombudsman SA - Complaint Management Framework March 2016

12. Review

- 12.1 This Policy will be reviewed. In consultation with the relevant stakeholders, every three (3) years or more frequently if legislation or Council needs change. This may include a review of:
- Legislative Compliance Issues
 - Audit finding related to incident reporting and investigation
 - Other relevant information
- 12.2 Results of reviews may result in prevention and/or corrective actions being implemented and revision of this document.

13.	Further Information
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- 13.1 This Policy and supporting documents are available on our website www.barossa.sa.gov.au. They can also be viewed electronically at Council's Principle Office at 43 – 51 Tanunda Road, Nuriootpa and all of our Council branches, during ordinary business hours. A copy of this Policy can be obtained at those venues upon payment of a fixed fee.
- 13.2 Complaints regarding this Policy or its application can be made to the Customer Support Team on 8563 8444 or barossa@barossa.sa.gov.au at first instance, who will refer you to the most appropriate officer according to Council's Complaint Handling Process (see clause 9.2 for availability).

Signed:

Dated:

Mayor Bim Lange

Corporate Plan Link:	6.2 Ensure that Council's policy and process frameworks are based on principles of sound governance and meet legislative requirements 6.6 Define and deliver on agreed Customer Service Standards for Council service delivery. 6.16 Provide contemporary internal administrative and business support services in accordance with mandated legislative standards and good practice principles.		
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