

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 by addressing and resolving enquiries, complaints and feedback, improving service delivery and increasing community satisfaction. 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 Complaints and Feedback.

2. Scope

- 2.1. This Policy applies to all Workers and Elected Members and relates to:
- All Customer interactions
 - All Requests for Service, Complaints and Feedback 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 assist you to determine the most appropriate avenue to resolve your Complaint or Request for Service and guide you through the process. This may change during the management of your engagement with us.

3. Policy Statement

- 3.1 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 Complaints and Feedback, regarding them as opportunities to improve.

4. Guiding Principles

- 4.1 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.



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5. Requests for Service

- 5.1 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.
- 5.2 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
- 5.3 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
- 5.4 Petitions should be actioned in accordance with Council's Code of Practice for Meeting Procedures.
- 5.5 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
 - Legislative obligations

6. Customer Complaints and Feedback

- 6.1 Quality Customer Service is efficient, fair, impartial, and responsive. We aim to provide quality Customer Service whilst responding to Complaints and Feedback. We are committed to learning from and listening to our Customers.
- 6.2 We have professional Workers committed to managing your Complaints and Feedback 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.
- 6.3 Council will acknowledge receipt of a complaint in writing within 5 working days where the identity and contact details of the complainant are provided and an acknowledgement is wanted.



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- 6.4 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.
- 6.5 Where we are unable to satisfactorily address your complaint, you may exercise your right to request an Internal Review of a Council Decision – Section 270, the *Local Government Act 1999* 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.
- 6.6 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.
- 6.7 We will treat all complaints we receive seriously. However, where we deem your conduct is unreasonable or it appears that the application is frivolous or vexatious; we reserve the right to cease communicating with you and take reasonable action as required.

7. Other Options

- 7.1 Whilst we prefer to address our Complaint directly, you may choose to raise your Complaint with the following agencies:
- Ombudsman SA
 - Office of Public Integrity
 - Minister for Local Government
 - Water Industry Ombudsman
 - Court or Tribunal
 - South Australian Civil and Administrative Tribunal
 - Or any other relevant authority

8. Supporting Processes and Documents

- 8.1 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.
- 8.2 The following documents also support this Policy:
- Code of Conduct for Employees
 - Code of Conduct for Elected Members
 - Request for Service Fact Sheet
 - Customer Complaints and Feedback Fact Sheet
 - Complaint Handling Process
 - Request for Service Process
 - Customer Service Charter
 - Complaints Handling Process under the Code of Conduct for Council Members

9. Related Policies

- Human Resources Management Policy
- Fraud and Corruption Policy
- Internal Review of a Council Decision Policy
- Privacy Policy
- Records Management Policy
- Training and Development Policy
- Public Interest Disclosure Policy
- Whistleblower's Protection Policy
- Council Development Assessment Panel Complaints Handling Policy

10. Legislation and References

- Section 270 *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

11. Review

- 11.1 This Policy will be reviewed in consultation with the relevant stakeholders, every three (3) years or more frequently if there are legislative changes or at the request of Council.

12. Further Information

- 12.1. 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 the Council branches, during ordinary business hours. A printed copy of this Policy can be obtained at those venues upon payment of a fixed fee.
- 12.2. Complaints regarding this Policy or its application can be made to the Customer Support Team on 8563 8444 or barossa@barossa.sa.gov.au in the first instance, who will refer you to the most appropriate officer according to Council's Complaint Handling Process (see clause 9.2 for availability).



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13. Document Control

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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10. 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; 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 g) a student gaining work experience; or h) a volunteer of Council; or i) a person of a prescribed class. j) as defined in the WHS Act, 2012 (7)).



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Unreasonable Conduct	Unreasonable conduct may include unreasonable persistence or demands, lack of co-operation, argumentative, abusive or threatening behavior, or conduct that puts our Workers, equipment or resources at risk of harm or injury.
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