



## Policy 18 – Customer Service Charter

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Minute 208/03

Version: 10

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Minute 199/23

Author Administration Manager

Responsible Officer Administration Manager

Statutory Authority *Local Government Act 1993*  
*Local Government (General)*  
*Regulations 2015*  
*Personal Information Protection*  
*Act 2004*  
*Right to Information Act 2009*

### OBJECTIVE

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Our Customer Service Charter defines our service delivery approach and commitment to customers, the rights and responsibilities of customers that interact with us and how customers can report and resolve complaints.

### SCOPE

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This policy applies to all parties that engage in customer service interactions including staff, councillors and customers.

### POLICY

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#### 1 OUR COMMITMENT TO CUSTOMER SERVICE

We are committed to engaging with the community and striving to deliver the highest standard of customer focused services that:

- Are guided by our vision and values
- Are focused on the needs of the community
- Give opportunity for consultation and community feedback
- Are delivered in a friendly, professional and efficient way
- Ensure information, resources and services are easily accessible
- Respect and protect personal information

## **2 OUR SERVICE STANDARDS**

### **2.1 Your feedback is important to us**

Feedback, compliments and complaints are valuable to us as they help us to understand the needs of our individual customers and our community, and to evaluate what is working well and how we can focus efforts to improve our services. We may contact you to discuss your feedback or ask for more information as needed.

### **2.2 What you can expect from us**

At all times we strive to:

- Treat you with respect, courtesy and professionalism
- Handle your enquiry efficiently and effectively
- Consult with you, listen to you and clarify our understanding of your needs
- Communicate openly and honestly with you and work with you to solve problems
- Be positive and receptive to new ideas
- Explain any decision making processes and timelines
- Make realistic commitments and act on those commitments in a timely manner
- Provide you with relevant and up-to-date information
- Communicate clearly and in plain language
- Respect your privacy by treating all personal information confidentially
- Deliver the best possible solution

### **2.3 What we need from you**

To assist us to deliver quality services, we need you to:

- Treat us with courtesy and respect
- Respect the privacy, safety, needs and rights of other customers
- Provide accurate and complete information in your dealings with us
- Make an appointment before presenting to discuss a complex enquiry, planning enquiry, building enquiry or needing to see a specific officer
- Work with us towards a resolution when things don't go as expected
- Advise us when your contact details change
- Engage and speak up using recommended contact channels
- Remain open-minded about your expectations of the advice, information and outcomes that we can provide

### **2.4 Our response to unreasonable customer conduct**

We have a duty of care to everyone at our worksites to provide a safe environment. This means we have zero tolerance for unreasonable customer conduct, which is behaviour that has an adverse impact on the health or safety of another person due to its nature or frequency.

## 2.5 Customer service levels

Where a statutory timeframe exists in relation to your enquiry or request, we commit to meeting those statutory timeframes and communicating those timeframes to you so that you are informed.

Where a statutory timeframe does not exist in relation to your enquiry or request, we will endeavour to:

- **Return your call** within 2 business days
- **Acknowledge your letter, email or request** within 5 business days

We are committed to considering the unique circumstances of each request as it is received and will endeavour to prioritise your enquiry or request if we assess it as being urgent.

When a full response isn't available at the time of acknowledging your letter, email or request we will notify you which officer is handling your enquiry and when you can expect a response or a progress update. Some enquiries and requests are more complex than others and may depend on factors that are outside of our control, however we are committed to maintaining open lines of communication with you as your enquiry progresses and providing updates at intervals that are relevant to the circumstances.

## 3 COMPLAINTS

Council's aim at all times is to provide a quality service. Council may not be able to provide complete satisfaction but will always endeavour to identify a solution.

### 3.1 What is a complaint or structured process?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with a decision (outside of a structured process), level or quality of service, or behaviour of an employee or agent, which can be investigated and acted upon and has been specifically referred to us for action.

A structured process is where legislation (Act, Regulation, Rule or By-law) specifically makes provision for an appeal, internal or external review of a decision.

### 3.2 What is not a complaint?

Many of the issues raised with us are called 'complaints' because a customer is unhappy about the situation. However, they are issues that we deal with on a day-to-day basis, are not formal complaints and do not form part of the formal complaints management process.

Examples of matters that are not formal complaints are:

- A request for service (unless there was no response to a first request for service)
- A request for information or an explanation of a policy or procedure
- Disagreement with a policy or decision of Council
- A request for a review of a decision for which a structured process applies
- An expression concerning the general direction and performance of Council or its councillors
- An anonymous complaint, except where the matter is considered very serious and where there is sufficient information in the complaint to allow an investigation to be undertaken
- Reports of damaged or faulty infrastructure

- Reports about neighbours, noise, dogs, nuisances, unauthorised building works or similar issues that fall into the regulatory aspect of our service

### 3.3 How to make a complaint

Our customer service team is your first point of contact for all enquiries and complaints. A complaint can be lodged verbally with a customer service officer, or in writing via:

- Our website
- Email at [dorset@dorset.tas.gov.au](mailto:dorset@dorset.tas.gov.au)
- Post to PO Box 21, Scottsdale
- In person at the customer service counter or at a pre-arranged meeting with the relevant manager

The information we will require from you in order to deal with your complaint is:

- Your name and contact details
- Date, times and location of events
- What happened
- Who you have spoken to previously about the matter (names, position in Council and dates)
- Copies or references to letters or documents relevant to the complaint
- What you hope to achieve as an outcome to the complaint

If the complaint relates to a complex matter, you are encouraged to submit your complaint in writing rather than verbally.

### 3.4 Complaints management

The manager or authorised officer of each department is responsible for handling complaints relevant to that department. If a complaint is about a manager, or of a very serious nature, it will be referred to the General Manager. If the complaint is about the General Manager, it will be referred to the Mayor.

Irrespective of the manner in which the complaint was received, you can expect an acknowledgement within 5 working days. If a Councillor has submitted a complaint on your behalf, we will respond to the Councillor and the complainant within 5 working days. We will make every effort to respond to the complaint within 20 working days.

There are times when it is not possible to meet this deadline, e.g. where a complaint is a complex one or councillors are to be briefed on the outcome of the investigations. In these cases we will keep you informed of progress.

### 3.5 Consideration of a complaint

In considering a complaint the relevant manager or the General Manager will:

- Examine and analyse the information already available and follow up points requiring clarification
- Look at the Council Policies which might have a bearing on the complaint
- Meet with the relevant officer to discuss the matters in the complaint
- Consider whether or not the Council is at fault

- Consider any necessary action to be taken to correct the faults identified
- Consider a review of the Council's procedures to avoid recurrence of any similar complaint in the future

The relevant manager or the General Manager may enter into informal discussions or mediation on a complaint with the view of resolution.

### **3.6 Vexatious complaints**

All complaints that we receive will be treated with the utmost seriousness. However, if a complaint is found to be malicious, frivolous or vexatious no further action will be taken on the complaint. The customer will be informed of this decision in writing by the relevant manager, authorised officer or General Manager.

### **3.7 Terminating correspondence**

Where a matter has been previously addressed, with all options having been exhausted, we may terminate any further correspondence with the individual or organisation. The affected parties will be advised accordingly by the relevant manager, authorised officer or General Manager.

### **3.8 Anonymous complaints**

While we will receive anonymous complaints, they will generally only be acted upon where the matter is considered to be serious and where there is sufficient information in the complaint to enable an investigation to be undertaken.

### **3.9 Protection of customer**

All reasonable care will be taken to ensure that you do not experience any form of victimisation or retribution as a result of reporting a complaint.

### **3.10 Internal review**

Experience has shown that the majority of complaints will be satisfactorily resolved by the relevant manager or authorised officer. However, if you are not satisfied with the outcome you may request a review of the complaint by the General Manager.

A request for a review of your complaint must be in writing to the General Manager and on completion of an investigation the General Manager will inform you of the findings.

### **3.11 External review**

We are confident that we can resolve the majority of complaints received however, we may not be able to satisfy every customer on every occasion.

If a complaint remains unresolved, relates to the General Manager or you are dissatisfied with the process we used to deal with a complaint, you may refer the complaint to:

- **The Ombudsman** who is an officer responsible to parliament for investigating complaints made about administrative actions (or inactions) of Tasmanian Government Departments, most Statutory

Authorities and Local Government. Visit [ombudsman.tas.gov.au/home/contact-us](http://ombudsman.tas.gov.au/home/contact-us) to find out how to contact the Ombudsman.

- **The Director of Local Government** who oversees the Office of Local Government, is responsible for managing the State Government's relationship with Local Government and is responsible for the administration of the *Local Government Act 1993* and its associated regulations. Visit [dpac.tas.gov.au/divisions/local\\_government](http://dpac.tas.gov.au/divisions/local_government) to find out how to contact the Director.

While complaints may be referred directly to the Ombudsman or the Director at any time, you are encouraged to allow us the opportunity to investigate the complaint first.

## 4 PERSONAL INFORMATION PROTECTION

Council has a commitment to protect the personal information provided by a customer to Council in accordance with the requirements of the *Personal Information Protection Act 2004* and the *Right to Information Act 2009*. Council's Policy 36 – Personal Information Protection provides further information.

## 5 REPORTING

The General Manager must provide Council with a report at least once a year of the number and nature of complaints received in accordance with section 339F(5) of the *Local Government Act 1993* and does this by including this information in the Annual Report.

## 6 AVAILABILITY

This Customer Service Charter is available:

- For public inspection at 3 Ellenor Street, Scottsdale during normal office hours
- On our website

## RELATED DOCUMENTS

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- Policy 41 – Council Meeting Procedures
- Policy 36 – Personal Information Protection
- Policy 60 – Dealing with Unreasonable Customer Conduct
- Operational Customer Service Standards

## REVIEW

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This Customer Service Charter will to be reviewed within 12 months after a Council election in accordance with Section 339F(4) of the *Local Government Act 1993*.

## DOCUMENT INFORMATION

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Version	Doc Ref	Date Reviewed	Author	Comments
V1	IN05/694	21 November 2005	Sirppa Khan	Policy established
V2	12/14680	17 December 2012	Guy Jetson	Minor review
V3	12/14680	16 March 2015	Guy Jetson	No changes
V4	17/12240	18 December 2017	Samantha Hunt	Minor review
V5	17/12240	21 May 2018	John Marik	Minor review after feedback from Ombudsman
V6	17/12240	15 October 2018	John Marik	Minor review after feedback from Ombudsman
V7	DOC/18/557	16 September 2019	John Marik	Reviewed due to Council election – no changes
V8	DOC/18/557[v1]	19 April 2021	John Marik	Minor review
V9	DOC/18/557[v2]	20 November 2023	Lauren Tolputt	Reviewed due to Council election – major review
V10	DOC/18/557[v2]	23 January 2024	Sarah Forsyth	Inclusion of Policy No. 60 in related documents section as per Council Meeting Minute No. 14/24