

Council Policy (WCC.009)

Customer Service Charter

Responsible Officer: General Manager

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1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This policy applies to all Council staff and customers of Council and provides guidance on the process for making compliments, enquiries, requests, or complaints and the high standard of customer service to expect.

2 POLICY

This Customer Service Charter is made in accordance with the requirements of the *Local Government Act 1993* and outlines our commitment to all customers in conformity with our mission statement and values: Responsiveness, Leadership, Unity of Purpose, Consistency, Respect & Trust and Partnership.

2.1 Our Commitment

Council is committed to engaging with the community delivering consistent quality services provided by helpful and knowledgeable staff.

If Council is unable to meet a request or provide complete satisfaction, it will refer them to an appropriate organisation.

2.2 Who are Our Customers?

A customer is any person or organisation who has dealings with or is using the services of Council.

What you can expect from Council staff and services:

- Professional, prompt, and confidential service.
- Greet you in a courteous and friendly manner.
- Communicate clearly and work with you to solve your matter.
- That Council will formally acknowledge receipt (within 2 working days) of a customer request, with further information to be provided to the customer as the request is progressed and actioned.

How a customer can contact Council

- Visiting Council's Offices at 11 Sticht Street, Queenstown during the hours of 8:30am to 5:00pm Monday to Friday.
- Phoning (03) 6471 4700 during the hours of 8:30am to 5:00pm Monday to Friday. An After-Hours Emergency Service is also provided on the same number.
- Email to wcc@westcoast.tas.gov.au
- More complex works requests may be required in writing, a works request form can be completed at the Council office, agencies or electronically.

Please note: Council's social media channels are currently not monitored.

To assist with efficiency, enquiries or service requests are encouraged to be submitted in writing and include the following information.

- Name, address and contact number.
- Dates, times, locations / descriptions.
- Supporting documentation, if required.

Customers will receive an acknowledgement / response or appointment to discuss, in writing within 15 (fifteen) working days.

2.3 Our Expectations of the Customer

To assist in providing our services Council asks customers to:

- Treat staff with respect and in a civil and courteous manner.
- Provide information that is clear and concise, including any reference received from Council correspondence.
- Respect the privacy, safety and needs of other members of the community.
- Put matters in writing or to make an appointment where required.

Abusive Customers

Any interaction with members of the community where personal abuse, vulgar language, or aggressive behaviour is experienced, communication whether by phone, email or in person will be terminated immediately by the member of staff.

If a staff member feels threatened by the language or behaviour of a customer, they will be asked to leave, failure to do so will result in the Police being contacted.

Threats made against Council or any of its Staff members will be forwarded to the Police.

Council may decide to limit or cease responses to any such person behaving in this manner, a decision of this nature will be communicated in writing.

3 COMPLAINTS

3.1 What is a complaint

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.

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

Customers who believe that a council, councillor or general manager may have committed an offence under The Local Government Act 1993 (the Act) or failed to comply with the requirements of the Act can contact the Local Government Division to seek information about making a complaint.

Office of Local Government

Phone: 03 6232 7022

Email: localgovernment@dpac.tas.gov.au

3.2 What is not a complaint

- A request for service (unless no response to a first request), including reports of damaged or faulty infrastructure, neighbours, noise, dogs, nuisances, unauthorised building work or similar issues that fall into the regulatory aspect of our service.
- Information request, explanation or disagreement with a policy or decision of the Council.
- An appeal or request for internal or external review of a decision for which a structured process applies.
- An expression concerning the general direction and performance of Council or its Councillors.
- An expression of dissatisfaction with the behaviour of Councillors.

These issues are not for the purpose of the Local Government Act 1993, deemed complaints because a customer is unhappy about the situation and wants action, many are resolved everyday as part of organisational life and the nature of services we provide these are dealt with separately from the formal complaint's management process.

3.3 Complaints Management Process

There are times when complaints require detailed investigation and are to be received in writing, an acknowledgment to the complaint can be expected within fifteen (15) working days. To ensure the correct first-hand information is received, staff and Councillor's should advise a customer to submit their complaint direct rather than to do so on a customer's behalf without contact details.

Customers will be kept informed (where appropriate) as any process progresses.

Recording

The relevant complaint will be recorded in the Complaint Register as will the response to the complaint.

Form of Complaint

A complaint must be lodged in writing and include all the following documentation:

- Date, time(s) and location of events.

- Description of what happened.
- Whom the customer has spoken (names, position in Council and dates).
- Copies or references to letters or documents relevant to the complaint.
- Statement of desired outcome to the complaint.

Internal Review

Most complaints will be satisfactorily resolved by the initial review. However, a person who is not satisfied with the outcome may request in writing an internal review of the complaint.

The customer will be informed in writing of the outcome of any internal review.

3.4 Vexatious Complaints

All complaints received by Council will be treated with the utmost seriousness. If, however, a complaint is found to be malicious, factitious, or vexatious no further action will be taken on the complaint. The customer will be Informed of this decision in writing.

3.5 Anonymous Complaints

Council will only act on anonymous complaints where the matter is serious and there is sufficient information to enable an investigation to be undertaken.

3.6 if a customer is not satisfied with the resolution of the Complaint?

Councils, on occasion make difficult and complex decisions involving many people and individual customers do not always receive their desired outcome.

If the customer is not satisfied with the complaint outcome, the customer has the right of review either by the Tasmanian Ombudsman, but they will only do so after the Council has fully investigated the matter. Complaints can also be directed to the Office of Local Government.

The Ombudsman
GPO Box 960 Hobart Tas 7001
1800 001 170
ombudsman@ombudsman.tas.gov.au

Office of Local Government
03 6232 7022
localgovernment@dpac.tas.gov.au

3.7 Reporting

The General Manager will include the number and nature of complaints received in accordance with section 339F(5) of the *Local Government Act 1993* in the Annual Report.

3.8 Personal Information Protection

Council has a commitment to protect all 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*.

The *Right to Information Act 2009* allows for a person to obtain certain information that is held by Council that is not already publicly available. The application form (Application for Assessed Disclosure) is available on Council's website.

The Customer Service Charter is available from:

- The Council Office during normal office opening hours.
- Council's website.
- Council agencies.

4 LEGISLATION & RELATED DOCUMENTS

- *Local Government Act 1993*
- *Local Government (General) Regulations 2015*
- *Personal Information Protection Act 2004*
- *Right to Information Act 2009*
- *Public Interest Disclosures Act 2002*
- *West Coast Community Plan 2025*
- *West Coast Corporate Plan 2020-2030*