

PURPOSE

The aims of this Policy are to:

- a) recognise Council's commitment to providing a good service;
- b) increase the level of community satisfaction by resolving complaints in an effective, timely, fair, respectful, professional and objective manner.
- c) provide a flexible approach for complaint resolution which takes into consideration the individual, and special circumstances;
- d) build a positive culture and good systems around complaints management and encourage constructive feedback.
- e) recognise that complaints are best dealt with at the individual level, as soon as is practicable and to promote fairness for all parties;
- f) provide a framework for the management and review of feedback with a view to continually improving services, systems, and capabilities; and
- g) ensure all statutory requirements are satisfied and outcomes are communicated clearly, including review and escalation options.

SCOPE

- a) This Policy applies to all employees, volunteers, or authorised persons.
- b) This Policy does not cover or apply to complaints that:
 - i. are covered by another law, policy, or process that prescribes dispute management procedures.
 - ii. are directed at the conduct of Elected Members or the General Manager. A grievance where the office of the General Manager is named as a respondent must be dealt with by the "Grievances Involving the General Manager Policy". Complaints relating to the conduct of an Elected Member are handled in accordance with the Code of Conduct for Elected Members. If the complaint relates to the failure of Council, an Elected Member or the General Manager to comply with the requirements of the *Local Government Act 1993* or any other Act, that may be made to the Director of Local Government.
 - iii. are about a policy or strategy of the Council. They may be directed to the Mayor and/or individual Elected Members.
 - iv. relate to enforcement decisions, however the behaviour of staff in the conduct of their enforcement duties is covered by this Policy.

RELATED DOCUMENTS

Code of Conduct

Grievances against the General Manager Policy

Dealing with Unreasonable Customer Conduct Policy

Privacy Policy

Code for Tenders and Contracts

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

Acts	<i>Local Government Act 1993 (Tas)</i> <i>Public Interest Disclosure Act 2013</i> <i>Personal Information Protection Act 2004</i>
Regulations	N/A
Australian/International Standards	N/A

DEFINITIONS

Enforcement Decision means a decision of the Council or Council staff to undertake enforcement action including fines and prosecution, that is subject to the Council's enforcement policy.

Complaint means contact made by a member of the community to express dissatisfaction about the quality or timeliness of a Service Request, a Council provided service or an action of a Council staff member or contractor, where an expectation of a solution and response is requested or implied.

Other Persons at the Workplace Any person, other than an Elected Member, at the Workplace who is not a Worker.

Service Request is a request lodged with Council following contact made by the community to report the failure of a Council facility or service, or the request to provide a Council facility or service.

Worker A person, other than an Elected Member, who carries out work in any capacity for Council, including work as:

- (a) an employee;
- (b) a contractor or subcontractor;
- (c) an employee of a contractor or subcontractor;
- (d) an employee of a labour hire company who has been assigned to work at Council;
- (e) an outworker;
- (f) an apprentice or trainee;
- (g) a student gaining work experience; or
- (h) a volunteer.

Workplace A place where work is carried out for Council.

POLICY STATEMENT

1. CUSTOMER SERVICE COMPLAINTS RESOLUTION PRINCIPLES

Fairness

We treat all feedback we receive on its individual merits, through clear and consistent processes.

Commitment

We are committed to resolving complaints and have a culture that recognises an individual's right to provide feedback. We recognise feedback as being an important part of our business of serving our communities and improving service delivery.

Accessibility

People requiring assistance to provide feedback will be supported by Council staff to follow the complaints resolution process.

Transparency

We are committed to an open and transparent process. We will make it clear how to seek resolution of complaints, and explain the resolution process.

Objectivity and fairness

Complaints are dealt with courteously, impartially, within established timeframes and are assessed using evidence-based, objective decision making.

Privacy

Customer information is handled according to privacy laws and other relevant legislation. We provide clear information about how we handle personal information. Feedback data is de-identified if reported more widely.

Accountability

We are accountable internally and externally for our decision making and complaint handling performance. We treat feedback fairly, provide explanations and reasons for decisions and ensure that our decisions are subject to appropriate review processes. We systematically record, analyse and report on complaints resolution.

Continuous improvement

We act on, and learn from, feedback. It helps us identify problems and improve services.

2. SERVICE COMPLAINT RESOLUTION PROCEDURE

2.1 STAGE ONE

Customer raises a complaint for resolution

2.1.1 Any member of the public can provide feedback by:

- Telephone: (03) 6216 6800.
- Online: www.gcc.tas.gov.au/contact-us/
- Email: [GCCMail@gcc.tas.gov.au/](mailto:GCCMail@gcc.tas.gov.au)
- Post: Glenorchy City Council PO Box 103 Glenorchy Tasmania 7010.
- In Person: Glenorchy City Council Chambers, 374 Main Road, Glenorchy, Tasmania.

We provide assistance to customers

2.1.2 If customers have specific communication needs or barriers, we can assist. Our staff will talk with customers if they have trouble reading or writing. For other support, this can be provided by:

- **National Relay Service**

Web: www.accesshub.gov.au (online chat and video calls available)

Phone: 1800 555 660

TTY: 1800 555 630 (Teletypewriter)

Fax: 1800 555 690

SMS: 0416 001 350

Email: helpdesk@relayservice.com.au

Post: PO Box 99, Mount Clear, VIC 3350

- **Interpreter Service**

Web: www.tisnational.gov.au

Phone: 131 450 (within Australia)

Phone: +613 9268 8332 (outside Australia)

2.2 STAGE TWO

Information Gathering

2.2.1 Customers are encouraged to raise concerns directly with the Council staff member or contractor involved. If the complaint is not resolved, the complaint can be escalated to a more senior person.

2.2.2 When providing more formal feedback, customers can help us to deal with a complaint by providing the following information:

- Name and contact details. People can raise complaints anonymously, but this may limit Council's ability to fully investigate the matter and respond.
- Identify the action, decision, service, or policy they are concerned about, and why they are dissatisfied.
- The relevant details, such as dates, times, location or reference numbers, third party and/or witness/es contact details, and documents that support the concern.
- The outcome the customer is seeking by raising the complaint.
- Whether the customer has any special communication needs.

2.2.3 We will record and acknowledge the complaint within five business days.

Initial Assessment

2.2.4 We will initially assess the complaint to decide how to respond. After an initial assessment, we may:

- Take direct action to resolve the complaint at the time the customer first contacted us.
- Refer the complaint to the relevant team or manager for investigation.
- Advise the customer how to redirect the complaint resolution request, if they have a right to a statutory review (such as a right of appeal under the *Land Use Planning and Approvals Act 1993* or other legislation).
- Provide information on how to seek a review otherwise dealt with through another process.
- Deal with any frivolous or vexatious request in accordance with the "Dealing with Unreasonable Customer Conduct Policy".

2.2.5 Service requests and complaints and the steps to resolution:

Service Requests – The enquiry is resolved at first point of contact, usually with the creation of a service request. For example: a Council-owned asset needs maintenance, or a collection of household waste was missed, which is resolved by a CSO creating a service request to have the issue attended to. Where an enquiry should be dealt with by an external body or through a statutory review process, we will provide guidance on how to progress the enquiry. If we decide not to take action, we will explain why, and, where possible, inform the customer about other options.

Complaints – When a complaint is received, it will be investigated by an officer from the area that provided the service. Any third party or witness/es involved will be informed they are now part of a formal process, and may be provided with a copy of this policy. The officer will gather additional information and make an evidence-based decision. We aim to complete investigations within 15 working days and will update the customer if the investigation will take longer. If this is the case, we will update the customer every 10 working days about progress until the investigation is completed. We will provide a written outcome of the investigation, and explain our reasons.

Internal Review – Where a customer believes the Council has made a wrong decision then they can request an internal review. An independent internal review is undertaken by the General Manager or their delegate who will consider whether the complaint should have been dealt with differently. The review may find that the original decision should be upheld, varied, or overturned.

External Review – Where a customer still believes that the Council has made a wrong decision, customers are to be advised that they can request an alternative external review, such as by contacting: The Ombudsman, Equal Opportunity Tasmania, or the Director of Local Government. Council will participate and cooperate in the external review process.

3. INVESTIGATION

3.1 As part of the complaint investigation process, we will:

- Assess the information against relevant legislation, policies, and procedures to determine how a complaint is to be managed. For example, a complaint about serious misconduct may need to be dealt with as a Public Interest Disclosure depending on who requests complaint resolution, or if a complaint will trigger a right of statutory review/appeal this would need to be considered under the provisions of the relevant legislation.
- Refer to relevant Council documents and records and third party/witness statements.
- Meet with affected parties to gain further insights and consider possible solutions.

- The General Manager may initiate independent mediation where the facts or substance of a complaint remain in dispute after all information gathered has been considered, further discussions have taken place with the complainant, and the investigating or review officer is unable to make an objective and fair decision.
- Make an objective and fair decision based on the available evidence and information.
- Advise the customer in writing of the outcome of the investigation and reasons for the decision made.

4. RESOLUTION

4.1 In finding a solution to a complaint we are committed to a range of options which may include:

- An acknowledgement and apology for an error
- An explanation of a decision or action
- A change of decision
- A change to policy or procedure
- Repair / rework / replacement / refund
- Counselling or disciplining of staff
- Mediation to resolve disputes arising from a complaint investigated under this policy

5. REVIEW

5.1 Where the customer believes the Council has made a wrong decision in dealing with their complaint then they can request an internal review. The review will be undertaken independently of the person who took the action, the person who made the decision and the person who provided the action, decision or service. This may be a member of the Management Team or the General Manager.

5.2 A customer can request a review of the decision by replying to the officer who dealt with the complaint.

5.3 The internal review will evaluate the complaint process and associated evidence collected to date and determine whether the outcome of the initial investigation decision should be upheld, varied, or overturned.

5.4 We aim to complete a review of an internal complaint within 10 working days and will tell the customer if the review will take longer. We will provide a written outcome of the internal review and explain our reasons.

5.5 A customer who remains dissatisfied with the outcome of a review is entitled to seek external review from:

- **The Ombudsman:**

NAB House, Level 6 86 Collins Street Hobart GPO Box 960 Hobart Tas 7001
Tel: 1800 001 170 (free call in Tasmania)
Email: ombudsman@ombudsman.tas.gov.au
Web: www.ombudsman.tas.gov.au/home

- **Equal Opportunity Tasmania:**

Level 1 54 Victoria Street Hobart GPO Box 197 Hobart Tas 7001
Tel: 1300 305 062
Email: office@equalopportunity.tas.gov.au
Web: www.equalopportunity.tas.gov.au/home

- **Commissioner for Children and Young People**

Email: childcomm@childcomm.tas.gov.au
Tel: (03) 6166 1366
Web: childcomm.tas.gov.au

- **The Director of Local Government:**

GPO Box 123 Hobart Tas 7001
Tel: 03 6232 7022
Email: lgd@dpac.tas.gov.au
Web: www.dpac.tas.gov.au/divisions/local_government

A request made to the Director under section 339E of the Local Government Act 1993 must be:

- a) In writing; and
- b) identify the complainant and the person against whom the complaint is made; and
- c) give particulars of the grounds of the complaint; and
- d) be verified by a statutory declaration.

6. COMPLAINT ANALYSIS AND REPORTING

6.1 Complaints resolution provides us with valuable feedback about how we are performing.

6.2 We regularly analyse our complaints resolution data to identify trends and potential complaints that require further attention. We use this information to come up with solutions about how we can improve our administration and delivery of services.

6.3 Complaint information will be recorded and be uniquely categorised to enable retrieval, analysis and reporting of complaints.

6.4 The General Manager will provide an annual report to Council on the number and nature of complaints received as required under section 339F of the *Local Government Act 1993*

6.5 We are open and transparent about the complaints we have received, and what we have done to resolve them.

7. PRIVACY

7.1 We keep customer personal information secure and manage it in accordance with the requirements of the *Personal Information Protection Act 2004* and the *Right to Information Act 2009*.

7.2 We use customer information to respond to the complaint and may also analyse the information customers have provided for the purpose of improving services that relate to the complaint.

7.3 Where we publish complaint data, personal information is removed.

8. RESPONSIBILITIES

8.1 Managers and Coordinators

- Promoting positive behaviours and continual improvement practices relating to enabling, recording, responding to, and learning from complaints. Supporting service and administrative improvements that arise from complaints.
- ensuring appropriate management of complaints under the Complaint Resolution Procedure.
- Reviewing and publishing complaint data.
- Identifying and delivering staff training.
- Managing conflicts of interest in the complaint resolution process.
- Reporting on and identifying improvements from complaint data.
- Supporting staff who deal with complaints.

8.2 All Council Staff

- comply with this Policy, including reasonably raising or responding to and resolving complaints;
- Familiarising themselves with this Policy.
- Assisting members of the public to give feedback and raise complaints.
- Treating members of the public respectfully and professionally.
- Raising suggestions to continuously improve complaints resolution systems and administration.

DOCUMENT CONTROL

Version:	1	Adopted	27 November 2023	Commencement Date	28 November 2023
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Previous Versions:					
Responsible Directorate	Community & Corporate Services			Controller:	Manager Contact & Guidance
ECM Document No.:					