

<b>Title:</b>	Customer Complaints and Feedback Policy
<b>Type:</b>	<b>Council</b>
<b>Adopted:</b>	October 2016
<b>File No:</b>	16/3935
<b>Attachments:</b>	Customer Complaints and Feedback Procedures

### 1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide standards for receiving, managing and responding to feedback provided by customers about Council's performance and to ensure feedback is used to assist the goal of continuous improvement within Council.

### 2. Rationale

This policy intends to ensure that Murrindindi Shire Council takes a fair, objective and transparent approach to resolving complaints and other feedback from the community of Murrindindi Shire and other customers who use our services. It sets standards for managing complaints, including escalation of unresolved complaints. It also establishes the role customer feedback plays in Council's continuous improvement processes.

### 3. Scope

This policy applies to all types of customer feedback received by the organisation, while noting that the focus of this policy is to ensure customer complaints are managed appropriately.

For the purposes of this policy, a complaint is defined as

*An expression of dissatisfaction with*

- *the quality of an action taken, decision made or service provided by Council, Council Officers or its contractors*
- *a delay or failure to act or provide a service to a promised standard*

Complaints can be made by any customer who comes in contact with Murrindindi Shire Council or the services it provides.

For the purpose of this policy, a complaint **does not** include

- Ordinary requests for service (i.e. a customer request)
- Follow up queries about an existing request, if that request still falls within Customer Service Charter timeframes for response or action
- Reports of a hazard or emergency
- Reports concerning neighbours or neighbouring properties and disputes between neighbours
- A request for information, including Freedom of Information requests or an explanation of a policy or procedure
- Expressions of dissatisfaction with decisions made under legislation which provides for separate avenues of appeal, for example, those which fall under Freedom of Information legislation.
- An alleged breach under the Councillor Code of Conduct (which is dealt with under provisions of the Councillor Code of Conduct).

#### 4. Definitions

Reference Term	Definition
Complaint	See above
Customer	Includes ratepayers, residents, members of local community groups, volunteers, other agencies, visitors and the general public.
Customer Request	A request for service includes contact with the Council to seek assistance, access to a new service, advice or to inform/make a report about something for which the Council has responsibility.
Customer Feedback	An umbrella term for positive (compliment) or negative (complaint) communication from the public about Council officers, Council services or Council decisions.

#### 5. Policy

Council is committed to providing high quality, efficient and friendly service to the community of Murrindindi Shire and any other people, businesses or organisations with which Council has contact.

As part of this commitment, Council continuously looks for ways to improve how Council conducts its business and delivers its services. Customer feedback is critical to this process, providing Council with information and suggestions on how it can enhance and improve services. Importantly, customer feedback is a useful means by which Council can gauge community satisfaction with the services we deliver.

Customers are therefore to be encouraged to provide feedback on Council's decisions, actions and on the services it delivers. Council's commitment to those customers who do provide feedback is to respond in a timely, professional and constructive manner.

#### **Complaints**

When a customer makes a complaint to Council, they can expect that Council will:

- Respond in a timely, professional and constructive manner, in accordance with Council's Customer Service Charter.
- Record all complaints and subsequent actions taken by Council to respond to complaints, in an approved Council database in order to make our processes both transparent and accountable and to ensure we are handling complaints effectively for customers.
- Make it easy and simple for customers to make a complaint and we will help to facilitate that process, including by assisting customers to lodge a complaint.
- Ensure the public has access to our policy for making, managing and escalating complaints, including access to this information on our website.
- Consider customer complaints in our business planning and improvement processes to ensure the service we provide continues to meet our customers' needs.
- Provide a consistent level of service to any customers who make complaints, regardless of how, or through whom, they make contact with Council.

When a customer makes a complaint, Council expects the following:

- Customers providing feedback will be respectful. While Council officers will extend every courtesy to those making complaints, abusive or threatening behaviour towards Council

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officers will not be tolerated. As an employer, Council considers the health and safety of its officers as paramount. Communications that become abusive or threatening will be terminated, and may be reported to the appropriate authorities.

- Customers must also assist Council to resolve any complaints by providing sufficient detail and information about the issue of concern and accurate contact details, to ensure follow up is possible.
- Customers should be aware that if they express dissatisfaction to us about an aspect of Council's performance, but do not wish to formally lodge a complaint, Council is unable to record or act on this information. The only exception to this rule is a situation where the information provided concerns public safety or potentially violates Council's Employee Code of Conduct.
- In the event Council receives an anonymous complaint, Council will generally only act where the matter is considered to be serious and there is sufficient information to enable an investigation to take place.
- In the event complaints made by an individual are considered to have been made vexatiously, mischievously or are voluminous in nature, Council might enact exceptional procedures to manage that feedback. These procedures might include suspension of standard Council complaint response times and escalation processes.

### **Notification to Councillors**

Councillors would not ordinarily be advised of customer complaints unless these relate to decisions of Council, strategic issues or concern the Chief Executive Officer.

Any complaints which are directed to Council by Councillors on behalf of their constituents are to be recorded and dealt with according to Council's normal procedures and service standards.

### **Compliments**

Compliments for work well done or for exceptional customer service will be recorded in the same way as complaints. Compliments provide recognition and encouragement for Council officers in their work, their interactions with the community and provide useful information about how to keep customer satisfaction levels high. Compliments should be sent to the officer/s who is the subject of the communication, their manager and forwarded to the Executive Management Team for information.

## **6. Related Policies, Strategies and Legislation**

Employee Code of Conduct  
*Local Government Act 1989*  
Customer Service Charter  
Customer Complaints and Feedback Procedures

## **7. Council Plan**

This policy is consistent with the annual action in the Council Plan 2013-2017 to deliver quality customer outcomes by continuing to find better ways of doing things.

## **8. Management and Review**

All managers and officers are responsible for implementation of this policy. The Manager Communications, Library and Customer Service will review this policy every three years.

## **9. Consultation**

Council has consulted the Victoria Ombudsman's recent (2015) publications regarding councils and complaints handling and adopted some of its recommendations in the preparation of this policy.

## **10. Human Rights Charter**

This policy has been developed with consideration of the requirements under the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities.