

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to outline Wodonga Council's approach to complaint management, ensuring that every complaint is handled fairly and objectively.

OBJECTIVE

This policy aims to:

- Ensure staff are aware of their obligations in relation to complaint handling;
- Inform the community of how the council will manage their complaints;
- Put in place an open and transparent complaint handling system;
- Specify the key performance indicators to which the council will hold itself accountable;
- Establish timeframes for resolving complaints;
- Ensure the council handle complaints fairly and objectively; and,
- Set out how the council records and analyse complaint data to identify where the council can improve services.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all council staff. It also applies to third party contractors carrying out services on the council's behalf.

DEFINITIONS

complaint: an expression of dissatisfaction with –

- The quality of an action taken, decision made, or service provided by the council or its contractor
- A delay or failure in providing a service, taking an action, or making a decision by the council or its contractor

A complaint is not:

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- A request for service;
- Reports of damaged or faulty infrastructure;
- Reports of hazards eg fallen tree branch or road pot hole;
- Reports concerning neighbours or neighbouring property eg, noise or unauthorized building works;
- Anything that relates to the appointment or dismissal of any staff member or an industrial issue or an internal staff disciplinary issue;
- A matter that is, has been or is scheduled to be before a court, panel coroner or tribunal;
- The lodging of an appeal or a submission in accordance with council procedure or policy;
- Matters where statutory submission, hearing, review or appeal processes exist;
- A request for information or explanation of policies, procedures or decisions of council;
- An expression concerning the general direction or the performance of council or its elected representatives.

feedback: can take the form of comments, both positive and negative, about services provided by the council without necessarily involving corrective action, change of services or formal review of a decision. Feedback may however, influence future service reviews and delivery methods.

request for service: contact with the council to seek assistance, to access a new service, to seek advice, or to inform or make a report about something for which the council has responsibility.

unreasonable complaint: Unreasonable complainant conduct (UCC) can be defined as any behaviour by a current or former complainant which, because of its nature or frequency, raises substantial health, safety, resource or equity issues for the council and its staff, or the complainants themselves. Unreasonable complaint conduct can be in the form of any of the following:

- Unreasonable persistence;
- Unreasonable demands;
- Unreasonable lack of cooperation;
- Unreasonable arguments; and,
- Unreasonable behaviours.

POLICY

The council understands that the community expects the delivery of service and interactions with staff to be personalised and responsive. The council is committed to providing exceptional levels of service for every customer. The council values the feedback that the community provides and welcomes any suggestions for improvement in relation to the services that are delivered. The council recognises that all members of the public have a right to complain where service delivery does not meet reasonable expectations.

This policy is based on seven principles, as outlined in the Victorian Ombudsman's *Councils and complaints – A good practice guide*.

1. Commitment

The council is committed to resolving complaints that are received. Council culture recognises people's right to complain and considers complaint handling to be part of the council's core business of serving the community and improving service delivery.

2. Accessibility

The community can easily find out how to complain to council and the council will actively assist them with the complaint process.

3. Transparency

The complaint handling system clearly sets out how to complain, where to complain, and how the complaint will be handled. The steps taken to respond to a complaint are recorded and will stand up to scrutiny.

4. Objectivity and fairness

Under the complaint handling system, complainants and staff are treated with respect and courtesy, and complaints are judged on merit and fact.

5. Confidentiality

The complaint handling system protects the personal information of people making a complaint, and the council staff are informed only on a 'need to know' basis.

6. Accountability

The council is accountable, both internally and externally, for decision making and complaint handling performance. The council will provide explanations and reasons for decisions, and ensure that decisions that are made are subject to appropriate review processes.

7. Continuous improvement

The council will regularly analyse complaint data to find ways to improve service delivery.

ATTACHMENTS

Nil

RELATED POLICIES

- *Governance code incorporating the Councillors' Code of Conduct.*
- *Privacy Policy*

RELATED LEGISLATION

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- *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*
- *Freedom of Information Act 1982*
- *Information Privacy Act 2000*
- *Local Government Act 1989*
- *Protected Disclosure Act 2012*

REFERENCES

- *Victorian Ombudsman; Councils and complaints – A good practice guide February 2015*
- *Protected Disclosure Procedure*
- *Customer focus standards for staff & volunteers*
- *Employee code of conduct*
- *Rural City of Wangaratta; Complaints handling policy*

REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed two years from the date of adoption, with operational amendments as required in accordance with Council / CEO approval.

Title:	Complaint Handling Policy
Reference No:	
Business Unit:	Community Relations - Customer Service
Category:	Policy
Version:	
Approved By:	
Next Review:	