



# Customer Experience Policy

<b>Reference Number:</b>	4.37
<b>Type:</b>	Council Policy
<b>Category:</b>	Customer Service
<b>Relevant Community Plan Outcome:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be bold and innovative in our practices, leadership and decision making.</li> </ul>
<b>Responsible Officer(s):</b>	Manager Customer and Community Services
<b>First Issued/Approved:</b>	February 1998
<b>Minutes Reference:</b>	CoS 4/10/2016, Item 3.53
<b>Last Reviewed:</b>	September 2016
<b>Next Review Due:</b>	September 2018
<b>Applicable Legislation:</b>	Local Government Act 1999
<b>Related Policies:</b>	Staff Code of Conduct Policy Training and Development Policy Public Consultation Policy Electronic Communications Policy Internal Review of Council Decision Policy Council Members Code of Conduct Policy Whistleblowers Policy DAP Complaint Handling Policy
<b>Related Procedures:</b>	Customer Experience Procedure <i>(includes Complaints Handling and Request for new or increased service procedure)</i>

## 1. Purpose

The City of Charles Sturt is committed to delivering the highest level of service to its customers and ensuring that the way in which Council delivers its customer experience has a positive influence on the Community's perception of the effectiveness and value of Council. The customer experience includes not only face to face or over the phone transactions, but also those conducted via the web and social media.

Section 270 of the Local Government Act 1999 requires Council to establish policies and procedures to respond to reasonable requests for the provision of a service by the Council or for the improvement of a service provided by the Council and to deal with complaints about the actions of the Council, employee and/or other persons acting on behalf of the Council:

The purpose of this policy is to:

- provide a customer experience across all aspects of Council business that is professional and treats every customer with respect, courtesy, fairness and responsiveness.
- provide guidance on what may constitute a reasonable request for a service or an improvement to a service
- distinguish between requests, complaints and feedback to Council and give direction on management of requests and complaints
- establish a standardised process for assessing and processing requests and complaints

## 2. Scope

This policy applies to all Council staff and volunteers who have contact with the public and is applicable to:

- All aspects of customer interactions.
- All requests for service and complaints made to the City of Charles Sturt, from individuals and organisations that utilise the services provided by Council.

Request for review of Council decisions should be referred to the mechanisms identified in the following policy:

- Internal Review of Council Decisions Policy

## 3. Policy Statement

Council is committed to the provision of a quality experience to customers and aims to provide services fairly and efficiently. It also assesses reasonable requests for the provision of a new or increased service and monitors requests to identify ways in which it can proactively improve its services.

We also recognise the importance of complaints to the organisation and regard them as opportunities to improve our services by resolving complaints in a prompt, impartial and just manner. Complaints provide the organisation with an opportunity to gather information on a variety of services, service delivery methods, and customers' needs and expectations. This information helps us work towards improving our customer's experience.

## 4. Guiding Principles

- **Courtesy**- Council will provide a customer experience which is based on quality and pride in the services delivered to the Community by using common sense, compassion and courtesy.
- **Responsiveness** – Council will be responsive to the needs of the Community.
- **Fairness** – Council be open, honest and will follow through with our commitment.
- **Respect** – Council will treat all customers respectfully and in an equitable manner.

## 5. **How to make a reasonable Request for Service**

In processing requests for service emphasis will be placed on:

- Public safety and emergencies
- Fulfilling Council's strategic and business plans
- Using Council resources efficiently and effectively

The operations of Council are based on a range of planned actions, many of which have been the subject of community consultation processes. The annual budget is set, and the rates determined, to fund a specific range of activities, which includes responding to reasonable requests as well as the completion of business plans and public works. Requests for service are viewed in this context.

A person can make application for a service either verbally or in writing. In determining how to respond to a request for service Council will consider the community need in light of:

- An assessment of risk
- Statutory responsibilities
- The content of Council's Strategic Management Plans, Annual Business Plans, annual works program and Annual Budget
- Relevant Council policies and codes
- Established service standards and response times for regular Council activities.

In Council's experience, most requests for existing Council services fit within well established guidelines which will be explained to the customer/applicant at the outset. Where further evaluation is necessary before committing Council to undertake the work the applicant will be informed accordingly.

Other requests may be best suited to scheduling to coincide with work in a particular suburb or season. Reasonable requests for additional major works or new services will be referred to Council for consideration as part of the next annual budget cycle of review and public consultation.

If a request cannot be fulfilled in a reasonable timeframe or is a service that is not the responsibility of the Council to deliver, the applicant will be advised, including an explanation of why this decision was taken.

### 5.1 **Timeframes for Response**

Response to requests will be processed within 3 working days. Any requests that are unable to be responded to within 5 days, the applicant will be advised of the process and timeframe for a detailed response.

The circumstances of individual requests for service will vary greatly. Routine requests are often subject to established service response standards. Requests for additional major works or new services will need to be referred to Council for consideration as part of the next annual budget cycle of review and public consultation.

## 6. Complaint Process

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with a product or service delivered by the organisation or its representatives that have failed to reach the standard stated, implied or expected. This includes complaints about a service that has been, or should have been delivered.

Complaints can originate from members of the public, elected members, contractors or staff. A customer may register a complaint verbally or in writing. Where required, assistance will be made available in preparing a written application, including the use of an interpreter, in providing assistance with a disability or by referring applicants to an advocate.

All staff are empowered to handle complaints in the first instance and it is preferred they are dealt with promptly at the initial point of contact. Where this is not possible, we will seek to resolve the complaint as soon as possible and acknowledge the customer within three working days.

The principles of natural justice will be observed. This means processes will be fair, equitable and reasonable. All parties will have access to relevant information and are able to respond where relevant.

The CEO has the discretion to refer the complaint to an independent third party for mediation, conflict resolution or neutral evaluation where the CEO believes appropriate.

### 6.1 Complaints involving a representative of the City of Charles Sturt

There are many representatives of the City of Charles Sturt. Complaints of this nature are handled differently depending on the representative involved.

- a. **Staff member** – this may relate to how a staff member has behaved or undertaken their responsibilities. All complaints regarding a staff member are referred to the appropriate Manager.
- b. **Council member** - this may relate to how a Council member has conducted themselves or undertaken their responsibilities. All complaints regarding Council members are handled in accordance with the Council Member Code of Conduct Policy.
- c. **Contractor** - this may relate to how a contractor has conducted themselves or undertaken their responsibilities. All complaints are referred to the Business Unit Manager/Supervisor responsible for the specific work being undertaken by the contractor.
- d. **Volunteer** – this may relate to how a volunteer has conducted themselves or undertaken their responsibilities. All complaints regarding volunteers are referred to the Volunteer Coordinator.

### 6.2 Complaints governed by legislation or statutory review

Council may be limited in its authority by policies and/or legislation. When a customer complains about a problem which exceeds Council's jurisdiction they may be referred to an external source.

It is important that the complainant is provided with details of the relevant authority and policy and/or legislation to assist them to understand Council's role.

### 6.3 Complaints disclosing public interest information

The community have a right to demand that Council conducts itself with integrity, honesty and diligence.

If you have formed a reasonable suspicion that this is not happening, and you consider the conduct could raise a potential issue of corruption, misconduct or maladministration in public administration, then you should consider making a complaint or report to the Office for Public Integrity (OPI).

The Office of Public Integrity contact details are:

Level 1, 55 Currie Street Adelaide,  
GPO Box 11066, Adelaide SA 5001  
(08) 8207 1777

### 6.4 Internal Review of Council Decision Complaints

Sometimes complaints regarding a Council decision policy, procedure, service or fee require a formal application to be lodged and in this instance the formal complaint will then be handled in accordance with Council's Internal Review of Council Decisions Policy and Procedures.

## 7. Other Options

While Council prefers to resolve requests for review directly with our customers, it does not negate citizens' rights to seek an external review of a decision through the State Ombudsman

Ombudsman SA  
Level 9, 55 Currie Street, Adelaide  
PO Box 3651, Rundle Mall SA 5000  
Telephone: (08) 8226 8699  
Facsimile: (08) 8226 8602  
Email: [ombudsman@ombudsman.sa.gov.au](mailto:ombudsman@ombudsman.sa.gov.au)

and, other legal appeal processes or the Courts at any time during the complaint handling process.

## 8. Definitions

List all key terms and acronyms that are used in the policy, and their definition.

Key Term – Acronym	Definition
Complaint	an expression of dissatisfaction with a product or service delivered by the organisation which has, or should have, been received that has failed to reach the standard stated, implied or expected.
Feedback	can take the form of comments, both positive and negative, about services provided by Council without necessarily forming the basis of a complaint.

Request for Service	an application to have Council or its representative take some form of action to provide or improve a Council service
New Service	A service not currently provided by Council
Internal Review of Council Decision	A formal request for a review under the Local Government Act 1999 Section 270