



Customer Experience Policy

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Type:	Council Policy
Category:	Customer Experience
Relevant Community Plan Outcome:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">We provide excellence in customer experience by ensuring our customers are at the heart of everything we do
Responsible Officer(s):	Manager Public Health & Safety, Manager Media, Marketing and Communications
First Issued/Approved:	February 1998
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Last Reviewed:	March 2024
Next Review Due:	March 2026
Applicable Legislation:	Local Government Act 1999 Public Interest Disclosure Act 2018
Related Policies:	Employee Code of Conduct Policy Public Consultation Policy Electronic Communications Policy Internal Review of Council Decision Policy Council Members Behavioural Management Policy Unreasonable Requests for Service, Information and Complaints Policy
Related Procedures:	Customer Experience Procedure <i>(includes Complaints Handling and Request for new or increased service procedure)</i> Public Interest Disclosure Procedure

1. Purpose

We are committed to delivering excellence in customer experience and ensuring that the way in which we deliver services and provide support to our customers has a positive influence on the community's perception of the effectiveness and value of Council, and our customers are at the heart of everything we do.

Our Customer Experience (CX) Strategy identifies our CX vision to prioritise our customers, live our values which will guide our decision-making processes, and to develop our CX capabilities.

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, employees and/or other persons acting on behalf of the Council.

The purpose of this Policy is to:

- Identify the strategic importance of providing excellence in customer experience across all aspects of Council business, underpinned by our Customer Experience Strategy and its principles (refer to Section 4);
- 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; and
- Establish a standardised process for assessing and processing requests and complaints.

2. Scope

This Policy applies to all Council employees and volunteers who have contact with our customers 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.

Requests 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

We will be passionate, courageous, caring and progressive. We will prioritise our customers, so they are at the centre of what we do. Our employees will show care in all interactions with our customers, whether they are internal or external, and we will be passionate about connecting with all customers. We will be courageous in our decision making and will commit to delivering progressive services and projects for our community.

We will assess all reasonable requests for the provision of new or increased services and monitor requests to identify ways in which we can proactively improve our services.

Complaints and constructive feedback provide an opportunity to gather information on services and service delivery methods and to identify changes in customer needs and expectations. This information helps us to enhance and continuously improve the customer experience.

4. Customer Experience Principles

Our Customer Experience (CX) Strategy and our strategic focus on CX is underpinned on the following four principles:

- **Customer experience excellence is our commitment:** We have a clear purpose and prioritise our customer first in the way we interact with them.
- **Progressive and flexible decision making:** We trust and support each other to make progressive decisions, being flexible for our customers.
- **Connection, communication and collaboration:** We will work together to deliver a consistent and positive experience for our customers, building effective relationships with internal and external customers.

- **Our success is measured by our behaviour and outcomes:** We consistently monitor our customer experience performance and remain responsive to customer feedback.

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 priorities, statutory requirements and established business plans; and
- Using Council resources efficiently and effectively.

Our operations are based on delivering and maintaining a range of services and assets, many of which have been the subject of community consultation processes. The annual budget is set, and 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 considered in this context.

A customer can make a request for a service either verbally or in writing and in assessing a request, we will consider:

- An assessment of risk;
- Statutory responsibilities;
- Council's strategic management plans, annual business plans and budget, and the annual works program;
- Relevant Council policies and codes; and
- Established service standards and response times for regular Council activities.

Customer requests for services often fall within well-established guidelines, which can be communicated to the customer at the time of request submission. Should further evaluation be required before Council agrees to undertake the work, the customer will be informed.

Other requests may be best suited to scheduling the activities required to coincide with programmed work in a particular suburb or season. Reasonable requests for additional major works, new services or increases to services will be recorded and may be referred to Council for consideration as part of the next annual budget cycle review and public consultation. We encourage our community to participate in our Annual Business Plan and Budget consultation where they can have input into how funds are allocated across the vast range of services and activities that Council undertakes.

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

5.1 Timeframes for Response

We aim to acknowledge service requests within 2 business days, and the time it takes to complete these requests may vary based on established service standards. Customers will receive information about the process in managing their request and the anticipated timeframes for completing their request, in accordance with the Customer Experience Procedure. Major works, changes to service levels or suggestions to implement new service requests may be considered as part of the Annual Business Plan and Budget through our public consultation processes.

6. Complaint Process

6.1 Complaints relating to services delivered by the City of Charles Sturt

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with a service delivered by the organisation or its representatives that fails to meet the standard stated, implied or expected.

A complaint is not:

- a request for works or services to be provided, including a report of damaged or faulty infrastructure;
- requests for information or an explanation of a process or Policy; or
- the lodgement of a request for an internal review of a Council Decision.

A customer may register a complaint verbally or in writing. Where required, assistance will be made available in preparing a complaint about a service.

All employees 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 2 business 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 Chief Executive Officer has the discretion to refer the complaint to an independent third party for mediation, conflict resolution or neutral evaluation where they believe appropriate.

6.2 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 responsible Manager or Leader.
- 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 Manager or Leader 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 Manager or Leader of that volunteer.

6.2 Complaints governed by legislation or statutory review

Council may be limited in its authority by policies and/or legislation. This may include where legislation determines a specific process. When a customer complains about a problem which exceeds Council's jurisdiction, they may be referred to an external authority.

In these circumstances, the complainant will be provided with details of the relevant authority, policy and/or legislation to assist them to understand Council's role. The lodging of a complaint will not automatically suspend or put on hold the matter that is the subject of the complaint.

6.3 Complaints disclosing public interest information

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

If a customer forms a reasonable suspicion that this is not happening, and the conduct could raise a potential issue of corruption, misconduct or maladministration in public administration, then a complaint or report can be made to the Office for Public Integrity (OPI).

The Office of Public Integrity contact details are:

Telephone: (08) 8207 1777

Website: www.publicintegrity.sa.gov.au/

6.4 Disclosures under the Public Interest Disclosure (PID) Act

There are two categories of disclosures of Public Interest Information:

1. Environmental and Health Information

- information that raises a potential issue of a substantial risk to the environment or to the health or safety of the public generally, or significant section of the public

2. Public Administration Information

- information that raises a potential issue of corruption, misconduct or maladministration in public administration

What is an Appropriate Disclosure of Public Interest Information?

Environmental and Health Information Disclosure

An appropriate disclosure made to a relevant authority (e.g. Council)

- informant (ie the person making the disclosure) believes on *reasonable grounds* that the information is true (or may be true, and is of *sufficient significance* to justify disclosure so truth may be investigated) and
- that the disclosure is made to the Responsible Officer, member, officer or employee of the Council.

Public Administration Information Disclosure

An appropriate disclosure made by a Public Officer where:

- informant *reasonably suspects* the information raises a potential issue of corruption, misconduct or maladministration in public administration;
- informant is a Public Officer;
- that the disclosure is made to a:
 - Responsible Officer or a person responsible for the supervision of public officer or Responsible Officer (for a disclosure about a Public Officer) or
 - Member, officer or employee of Council (in relation to a disclosure made about a location within the Council area)
- wants to have their information kept confidential and have the protections under the PID Act

Council's management of the assessment and investigation of these disclosures is contained in its ***Public Interest Disclosure Procedure***.

6.5 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 directly with our customers, it does not negate a customer's right to seek an external review of a decision through the State Ombudsman or other legal appeal processes or the Courts at any time during the complaint handling process. Contact details for the State Ombudsman are:

Ombudsman SA
PO Box 3651, Rundle Mall SA 5000
Telephone: (08) 8226 8699
Website: www.ombudsman.sa.gov.au/
Email: ombudsman@ombudsman.sa.gov.au

8. Definitions

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

Key Term – Acronym	Definition
Complaint (service related)	A complaint is made when a customer: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • expresses or infers dissatisfaction with a service delivered by the organisation which has, or should have, been received that has failed to reach the standard stated, implied or expected. This may include decisions of Council, its policies, procedures, charges, employees, agents or the quality of Council services; and/or • informs and notifies the Council of his/her belief that the Council has failed to act upon a request for service within a reasonable timeframe.
CX	Customer Experience Customer experience is best described as the sum of all experiences a customer has with an organisation over the duration of their relationship, including how their complaints are handled.
Feedback	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
Public Officer	<p>Schedule 1 of the Independent Commissioner Against Corruption Act provides a list of public officers. Public Officers include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members of the South Australian Parliament • Members of the South Australian judiciary • South Australia Police officers • Public service employees • Councillors • Council employees • Persons contracted to perform work for a public authority or the Crown