

REQUESTS FOR SERVICE POLICY	
Statutory Policy	
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1. POLICY STATEMENT

Providing services to the community is a key component of Council's operations and requests for work to be undertaken or a service provided are a daily occurrence. Council is committed to the provision of quality service to customers and aims to provide services fairly and efficiently.

Council welcomes requests for service as a way of improving its services and programs as well as fulfilling the needs of its customers. It also monitors requests to identify ways in which it can proactively improve its services.

2. PURPOSE

2.1 Purpose

Section 270 of the *Local Government Act 1999* requires Council to develop and maintain a policy about 'any reasonable request for the provision of a service by the Council or for the improvement of a service provided by the Council'.

This policy aims to:

- a) provide guidance on what may constitute a reasonable request for a service or an improvement to a service;
- b) distinguish between requests, complaints and feedback to Council and give direction on management of requests;
- c) establish a standardised process for assessing and processing requests including the collation of information which can be used to directly inform service improvements;
- d) ensure services are delivered in a professional, coordinated and timely manner.

2.2 Scope

- 2.2.1 Requests for service will be assessed in the context of the services and work provided for in the Council's annual business plan and budget and according to the conditions of externally funded programs.
- 2.2.2 Council also receives complaints and feedback across all areas of operations and clarification may be necessary to make the distinction for the purposes of this policy. The handling of complaints is covered by the Complaints Policy.
- 2.2.3 Where Council has failed to meet the normal standards for a service which has been, or should have been, delivered the Complaints Policy will apply. Where ambiguity exists, Council will deal with a matter as a request for service, rather than a complaint, in the first instance.

2.3 Definitions

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

Employee includes a person employed directly by Council (whether that position is permanent or contractual) and persons providing services to, or on behalf of, the Council even though they may be employed by another party.

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

Request for Service is an application to have Council or its representative take some form of action to provide a Council service.

2.4 Strategic Reference

5 Governance and Financial Sustainability

5.4 We put the customer first and give each customer a great experience of Council's services.

5.5 We meet or exceed legislative and accreditation requirements for all relevant programs.

3. PRINCIPLES

3.1 PRINCIPLES

This policy is based on five principles, which will be fundamental in the way Council approaches requests for service. They are:

- a) Fairness: treating complainants fairly requires impartiality, confidentiality, and transparency at all stages of the process
- b) Accessibility: to be accessible there must be broad public awareness about Council's Policy and a range of contact options.
- c) Responsiveness: this will be achieved by providing sufficient resources, well trained staff and review and improvement of the systems.
- d) Efficiency: complaints will be resolved as quickly as possible, while ensuring that they are dealt with at a level that reflects their level of complexity.
- e) Integration: cooperation of different areas of Council where the complaint overlaps functional responsibilities.

3.2 SERVICE STANDARDS

Council is committed to providing prompt, courteous, respectful and efficient service. The collection, use and storage of personal information will remain confidential in line with privacy principles and Council's Privacy Policy.

To assist in providing quality service, Council offers:

- a) a 24 Hour Call Centre Service to assist with enquiries
- b) an Online Customer Request for Maintenance service via Council's website
- c) the My Local Services app to provide information about Council services and for reporting maintenance issues
- d) an Electronic Records Management System for record keeping for incoming emails and written service requests
- e) face-to-face customer service at Council locations and the ability to contact Council staff via phone or email

3.2 REQUESTS FOR SERVICE CONSIDERATIONS

In determining how to respond to a request for service Council will consider:

- a) an assessment of risk
- b) statutory responsibilities
- c) the content of Council's Strategic Management Plans, Annual Business Plans, annual works program and Annual Budget
- d) relevant Council policies
- e) established service standards and response times for regular Council activities
- f) public safety and emergencies (the need and requirement of immediate action)
- g) using Council resources efficiently and effectively
- h) the conditions which apply to externally funded programmes
- i) the complexity of the response by Council (an integrated approach from more than one department is required).

3.3 REQUEST FOR SERVICE PROCESS

3.3.1 All requests will be recorded in Council's customer request system and the information will be analysed for service improvement opportunities. An application for a service can be made in a number of ways:

- a) Completion of the appropriate form on Council's website
- b) Telephone
- c) Email
- d) Letter
- e) Petition to Council
- f) Visit to a Council customer service office

3.3.2 When lodged verbally Council will advise customers of the process that Council will undertake in assessing and actioning their request for service. If requests for service are lodged in writing, a response will be provided, by the relevant nominated Departmental representative or Manager within 10 business days of lodgement.

3.3.3 It is acknowledged that the circumstances of individual requests for service will vary greatly, however a response in writing, will be provided **within 10 business days** from lodgement, advising of Council's intentions in regard to the request.

3.3.4 **Routine requests** are to be logged into Council's customer request system by customer service staff and referred onto the relevant Department for attention.

3.3.5 The customer will be advised that the request has been logged and every attempt will be made to complete the request within a two month period, however this will depend upon availability of resources.

3.3.6 Any requests that have not been actioned within two months of lodgement, must be identified by the nominated departmental representative and the applicant advised, in writing, of the reason for delay in actioning the request and when the request will be completed.

3.3.7 **Complex requests** should be forwarded to the relevant Departmental Manager for determination of how to respond. The relevant Departmental Manager is to provide feedback to the applicant, within 10 business days of lodgement of the request for service, outlining what action will be taken and the timeframe.

3.3.8 Where an applicant is not satisfied with the Council's decision, they may lodge a complaint against the decision under Council's Complaints Policy.

- 3.3.9 Where requests are for major work or new services they will be considered by Council in the preparation of the next Annual Business Plan. The relevant Departmental Manager will advise the customer accordingly.
- 3.3.10 Where a request cannot be accommodated it is to be identified in the records management system/customer request system, by the relevant Departmental Manager as a rejected request. Rejected requests may be reconsidered at a future date.

3.4 SERVICE IMPROVEMENT

- 3.4.1 Learning from requests for service is a way of helping to improve Council's processes and procedures. Council therefore has systems to record, analyse and report on the types of requests for service it receives, and apply the information to improve customer service.
- 3.4.2 Understanding the number of type of requests initiated by customers may suggest changes to policies, procedures or systems to improve service delivery. It is important to ensure that lessons learnt are put into practice.
- 3.4.3 Customer feedback can be provided online via Council's website: 'Send Customer Feedback' or alternatively, in writing, via email, phone or in person.

3.5 REPORTING

Council will receive a biannual report including information on the number and nature of requests.

4. RESPONSIBILITY & REVIEW

4.1 Responsible Officer

- 4.1.1 The Director Corporate and Community Services is responsible for ensuring that all staff abide by the provisions of this policy/procedure.
- 4.1.2 This policy/procedure applies to all staff who may be involved in receiving or processing a request for service in the course of their work.
- 4.1.3 Officers will act reasonably and transparently, demonstrate good customer service, undertake their responsibilities in a proficient manner and use their judgement where necessary to ensure an outcome in line with Council's Request for Service Policy.

4.2 Availability

This policy will be available on Council's website.

4.3 Review

This policy will be reviewed within 12 months of a General Election for Local Government, or as required to meet other obligations.

5. REFERENCES

5.1 Legislation

Section 270 *Local Government Act 1999*

5.2 Other References

Complaints Policy