



**GLAMORGAN
SPRING BAY
COUNCIL**

Glamorgan Spring Bay Council

Customer Service Charter

including Complaint Handling Process

Version 5.0

Adopted: 26 September 2023
Minute: 212/23

Document Control

Customer Service Charter	
Source of approval/authority	Council
Last reviewed	June 2023
Next review date	June 2025
Version number	V5
Responsible Officer	General Manager
Department responsible for charter development	Corporate & Community
Related Policies & Legislation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Local Government Act 1993 (Aust. Govt)</i>• <i>Privacy Act 1988 (Aust. Govt)</i>• <i>Personal Information Protection Act 2004 (Tas)</i>• <i>Right to Information Act 2009 (Tas)</i>
Publication of policy	Website Staff Intranet

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1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose

Our Customer Service Charter provides a framework for defining our service delivery standards, the rights of our customers, and how complaints from customers are handled by us.

1.2 Scope

This charter applies to all enquiries, requests and complaints made by customers in relation to Council's operations.

1.3 Definitions

A Customer is any person or organisation having dealings with or using the services of the Council.

An Enquiry is an act of asking Council for information.

A Request is an application to have Council take action to provide or improve a Council service.

A Complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with an action, decision or service provided by Council.

1.4 Policy Review & Update Cycle

This policy will be reviewed within 12 months after an election and then every two years.

2 Policy

2.1 Commitment To Our Customers

What you can expect from us is that at all times our Officers will as defined in the Local Government Act:

- Be professional, informative, polite and friendly;
- Execute tasks efficiently and accurately;
- Be committed to listening and responding to your needs as appropriate;
- Refer your requests to the appropriate person or agency if unable to fulfil your requirements;
- Protect your privacy and personal information.

2.2 Expectations Of Our Customers

a) What we ask of our customers:

- Be patient and understanding and treat our Officers with respect;
- Provide information that is clear, concise and complete;
- Respect the privacy, safety and needs of other members of the community;
- Make an appointment for a complex enquiry or a need to see a specific Officer.

b) Abusive Customers

Where personal abuse, vulgar language and/or intimidatory behaviour is used by the customer, the communication may be terminated immediately by the Officer. If delivered face to face, the Officer may walk away ceasing communications. If delivered on a call the Officer may terminate the call. If delivered by email, the address may be blocked.

When the issue a person has cannot be dealt with to their satisfaction, and it is not possible for Council to continue to respond, the Council may decide to limit or cease responses to that person. A decision of this nature will be communicated in writing to the person.

2.3 Enquiries & Requests

a) **When a customer visits or telephones**

Our Officers will attend the front counter and answer calls promptly, and if they cannot deal with the enquiry or request they will refer the customer to the appropriate department or provide the contact details of where the enquiry should be referred. Enquiries or requests that cannot be dealt with immediately will be responded to within 10 working days.

b) **When a customer writes or emails**

Our Officers will acknowledge and respond to all written enquiries or requests within 10 working days. Our response will be in full or an update outlining the name and contact details of the Officer handling the matter.

2.4 Complaint Handling Process

a) **What is a complaint?**

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with an action taken, decision made or service provided by Council or a Council contractor which can be investigated and acted upon.

b) **What is not a complaint?**

- A request for service (unless there was no response to a first request for service);
- A request for information or an explanation of a policy or procedure;
- An appeal or request for a review of a decision where a structured process applies;
- Notification or advice of damaged or faulty infrastructure;
- Notification or advice about neighbours, noise, dogs, waste, nuisances, unauthorised building work or similar issues that fall into the regulatory aspect of our service.

Many of the issues above are called 'complaints' because a customer is unhappy and wants something done. These 'complaints' are an everyday part of Council life due to the nature of services we provide, and are dealt with separately to the complaint process.

c) **Lodging a Complaint**

- To ensure a complaint can be assessed, recorded, assigned and investigated it should be made in writing via email, letter or online and include your name, contact details, the name of the person the complaint is against, the nature of the complaint and the outcome sought. If you are unable to submit a complaint in writing, a council Officer may assist by completing the online Complaint Form with you on your behalf, at our discretion.
- The appropriate Officer will be assigned to work through the issue to resolution, and if required the complaint shall be escalated as appropriate.
- All complaints received will be acknowledged within 5 working days.

d) **Recording and Reporting**

A Complaint Register is used by our Officers to record, assign and track complaints to closure. The Complaint Register allows for annual reporting to Council on the number and category of complaints received in accordance with the *Local Government Act 1993*.

e) **Investigation**

In considering a complaint the Officer will:

- Examine and analyse information provided and follow up any points requiring clarification;
- Look at the Council policies which might have a bearing on the complaint;
- Consider whether or not the Council is at fault;
- Consider any necessary action to be taken to correct any faults identified; and
- Consider a review of the Council's procedures to avoid recurrence in the future if required.

f) **Resolution**

In finding a solution to a complaint Council options may include:

- An acknowledgement and apology for an error;
- An explanation of a decision or action;
- A change of decision, policy or procedure;
- Repair / rework / replacement / refund;
- Counselling or disciplining of staff;
- Mediation to resolve disputes arising from a complaint investigated.

A resolution to a complaint can be expected within 20 working days from the date the complaint was received by Council. If more time is required we will keep you informed of progress.

g) **External Review**

If you are not satisfied with Council's resolution to your complaint, there are other external avenues available including:

- The Ombudsman;
- Office of the Anti-Discrimination Commissioner;
- Director, Division of Local Government.

h) **Vexatious Complaints**

If a complaint is considered by an Officer to be malicious, frivolous or vexatious, no further action will be taken on the complaint. The customer will be informed of this decision in writing.

i) **Anonymous Complaints**

Council will only act on anonymous complaints where the matter is considered to be serious and where there is sufficient information in the complaint to enable an investigation to be undertaken. This will be at Council's discretion.

j) **Customer Protection**

Council will take all reasonable care for reporting of complaints not to result in a customer experiencing any form of victimisation or retribution as a result of the complaint.

2.5 How To Contact Us

You can contact Council to make an enquiry, request or a complaint as follows:

- Visit Council at 9 Melbourne Street, Triabunna 9:00am to 4:30pm Monday - Friday
- Phone (03) 6256 4777 9:00am to 4:30pm Monday - Friday – after hours Emergency Service is provided
- Email to admin@freycinet.tas.gov.au
- Write to Glamorgan Spring Bay Council, PO Box 6, Triabunna, Tasmania 7190
- Online via our website www.gsbc.tas.gov.au

3 Implementation

The implementation of this charter is the responsibility of the General Manager.

4 Attachments

4.1 Enquiry/Request/Complaint Flowchart

