33 Goldie Street
PO Box 348
SMITHTON TAS 7330
council@circularhead.tas.gov.au
(03) 6452 4800
www.circularhead.tas.gov.au

CUSTOMER SERVICE CHARTER

PURPOSE

This Charter sets out Circular Head Council's approach to managing customer enquiries, requests, or complaints, and includes action customers can take if Council has not delivered a service to the agreed standard.

It also provides Council officers with clear standards to which they are required to adhere and that align with our Values. It commits staff to finding solutions and guiding customers through processes in a holistic way.

SCOPE

This charter applies to all council officers and customers of council

POLICY STATEMENT

1. Who are our customers?
Our customers are any person or organisation that has dealings with council.

2. Our Commitment
Council is committed to delivering customer-focussed services guided by our Values of Equity, Connection and Excellence that:

- Above all focus on the customer's needs and how we can assist them to find solutions
- Ensure information, resources and services are accessible to all
- Respect and protect personal information and adhere to all legislative privacy requirements
- Are delivered by qualified, motivated, and courteous staff who are professionally presented

3. Helping Us to Help You
To assist in delivering our services, we ask customers to:

- Provide accurate and complete information so we can respond appropriately to the enquiry
- Respect the privacy, safety, needs and rights of other customers
- Respect the community in which we live
- Work with Council to solve problems
- Treat our Council officers with courtesy and respect
- Provide Council with feedback to help us to continually improve service delivery

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4. What Customers can expect from Circular Head Council

At all times Council will:

- Greet customers in a polite and friendly manner
- Work with customers to solve problems and find solutions
- Respond to queries promptly
- Serve customers at the front counter in a timely manner
- Treat customers courteously and with respect
- Listen and respond to concerns within service standards
- Provide customers with necessary and relevant information
- Communicate clearly, and in plain language
- Act on commitments in a timely manner
- Value customer privacy by treating all personal information confidentially
- Be punctual for meetings and appointments
- Refer customers to an appropriate organisation if Council is unable to meet the request

5. Provision of Advice and Information

Council staff will ensure information and advice to the customer is accurate and current (at the time it is provided) and is provided within agreed timeframes.

Technical, complex or regulatory matters will generally be addressed by senior staff or appropriately qualified staff.

General information and basic enquiries will usually be responded to by the staff member at the point of contact.

Advice will generally be provided by senior or specialist staff with the appropriate knowledge, experience and/or professional accreditation in respect of the subject matter of the advice being offered/provided.

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6. Our Customer Service Standards

At all times, Council will endeavour to meet the following standards:

REQUESTED SERVICE	OUR STANDARD
Respond to requests for service and/or advice	Acknowledge within 3 business days. If unable to provide a full response within 10 days because the matter is technical or requires research, receipt will be acknowledged and details of progress and the relevant contact officer's details will be given.
Social media requests	Social Media is a channel for distribution of information and comments, not a formal customer service portal for response/requests
Any Safety Matter issue reported	Respond immediately. Make safe within 24 hours and repairs as soon as possible depending on the nature of the incident
Complaint Resolution	Acknowledged initially and then every effort made to resolve the complaint and provide a response within 10 working days. If complex investigations are required, the response we provide may be delayed. The customer will be kept informed of our progress and the relevant contact officer's details.
Other requests, applications, duties with timeframes listed in legislation. For example: *Local Government Act 1993* *Land Use Planning and Approvals Act 1993* *Food Act 2003* *Building Act 2000* *Monetary Penalties Enforcement Act 2005* *Dog Control Act 2000*	Any other requests or timeframes for service that is specified by legislation or Acts will be adhered to and where timeframes are not listed responses will be within 10 business days.

7. Abusive Customers

Should customers be abusive or use offensive language, in person, over the phone or by email, we will terminate the communication.

If Council officers feel threatened by a customer's offensive language or behaviour, the Police may be notified.

8. Cessation of contact

The General Manager may decide to limit or cease responses to a customer should they be abusive in their communication with us or if they do not accept that we have done all that we can to assist. A decision of this nature will be communicated in writing.

9. Customer Feedback

Feedback (compliments, complaints, and suggestions) helps us understand the expectations of the community and this feedback enables us to continuously improve our processes and service standards.

Whilst it is Council's aim to satisfy our customers, circumstances will, at times necessitate outcomes which may not be to the satisfaction of all of our customers. When this happens, we will explain why.

10. Complaint Handling

We understand that a customer may sometimes be dissatisfied with the quality of service or behaviour of an employee or contractor.

Complaints are different from requests for service. Many issues raised with us are often referred to as 'complaints' when they may be a request for service (such as a pothole repair) and these will be resolved as a standard customer service request.

The formal complaints management process is outlined below.

COMPLAINTS MANAGEMENT PROCESS

What is a complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with a decision (outside of a structured process), level or quality of service, or behaviour of an employee or agent, which can be investigated and acted upon. A structured process is where legislation (Act, Regulation, Rule or By-law) specifically makes provision for an appeal, internal or external review of a decision.

The Manager of each Department of the Council is responsible for handling complaints relevant to that Department. While most situations can usually be resolved at an early stage, there are times when they require detailed investigation. If a complaint is of a serious nature, it will be referred to the department Director or General Manager.

An acknowledgement of a complaint can be expected as soon as practically possible and within three (3) working days.

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Time limits for complaints will vary according to the complexity, however the customer will be kept informed of the process. Timeframe of updates – bi-weekly.

Lodging a complaint

You can **contact us** to make an enquiry or a complaint:

- **in person** by visiting Council's Offices at 33 Goldie Street, Smithton during the hours of 9.00am to 4:00pm Monday to Friday
- by **telephone** on 6452 4800 during the hours of 8:15am to 5:00pm Monday to Friday. Council provides an After-Hours Emergency Service on the same number.
- by **email** to council@circularhead.tas.gov.au.
- by **post –** PO Box 348 Smithton TAS 7330
- by **internet** - click on www.circularhead.tas.gov.au/our-council/feedback-form

To assist Council in dealing with complaints a customer should include the following information:

- Customer name and contact details
- Date, time, and location of events
- What happened
- To whom the customer has spoken (names, position in the Council and dates)
- Copies or references to letters or documents relevant to the complaint; and
- State what is the ideal outcome to the complaint

Internal Review

Experience has shown that most complaints will be satisfactorily resolved by the relevant Officer or Manager. However, a person who is not satisfied with the outcome may request a review of the complaint by the Council's General Manager. A request for a review of the complaint to the General Manager is to be in writing.

The General Manager will inform the customer of the findings on completion of an investigation.

What if the customer is not happy with the resolution of a complaint?

Council is confident that it can resolve most complaints received, however, it is understood that Council may not be able to satisfy every customer on every occasion.

Sometimes there are difficult and complex decisions involving many people and individual customers do not get the outcome they want.

If a complaint remains unresolved or a customer is dissatisfied with our process in dealing with a complaint, other avenues remain for the customer to explore which include:

- Available **Administration Appeals Process**
- The **Judicial Review Act 2000**; or

Contact external agencies which can review actions and decisions taken by the Council, these include:

The Ombudsman, who is an officer responsible to Parliament for investigating complaints made about administrative actions (or inactions) of Tasmanian Government Departments, most Statutory Authorities and Local Government.

The Ombudsman is located at:
Level 6, 86 Collins Street, Hobart 7000
by mail: GPO Box 960, Hobart 7001
Telephone: 1800 001 170
or by email ombudsman@ombudsman.tas.gov.au

Local Government Division
Located at Level 5, 15 Murray Street, Hobart
Mail: GPO Box 123 HOBART 7001
By Phone: (03) 6232 7022
www.dpac.tas.gov.au/divisions/local_government

While a customer is entitled to refer a complaint directly to these bodies at any time, customers are encouraged to allow the Council to investigate the complaint first.

10. Evaluating and Improving our Performance

Council uses customer satisfaction surveys and community engagement to collect feedback from customers. Council also welcomes feedback at any time. Your feedback helps us monitor and improve our services. You can contact us in person, by telephone, email or via our website.

LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS

Local Government Act 1993
Personal Information Protection Act 2004
Right to Information Act 2009
Complaint Handling Policy

RELATED DOCUMENTS

NIL