

# CCSP 29 Complaint Handling



August 2018

*This policy was adopted by Council to set governing principles in place that align the strategic direction of the organisation with the following Strategic Outcome of the Community Strategic Plan 2036.*

5.4 *Community and customer focus.*

## Objectives

To establish a systematic framework for the Shire of Augusta Margaret River to manage complaints received from customers who are dissatisfied with a process, product or service offered by the Shire.

## Policy

The Shire of Augusta Margaret River recognises the right of customers to make a complaint. An effective complaints handling system is essential to our business with the organisation benefiting by improved product quality and service delivery, better understanding of customer's needs, greater customer loyalty and improved business reputation.

### Complaint Definition

The Shire considers a complaint to be an expression of dissatisfaction with a process or service such as:

- Insufficient information communicated about services or policies
- Customers not receiving a service when they expected it
- Delivery of services which do not meet customer's expectations.

This policy does not apply to complaints involving the following issues:

- An appeal against a decision that is subject to other appeal processes such as dissatisfaction with a planning approval determination by the Shire
- A freedom of information enquiry
- An appeal against an infringement or fine issued for non-compliance of State Acts, Regulations or Local Laws
- Complaints by one member of the community about another member.

## **Process**

The complaint handling process is an organised way of receiving, investigating, resolving and responding to complaints to improve service to customers.

Complaints will be accepted in writing by email and on-line. Complaints are to be lodged on a Customer Feedback Form. In person complaints will be accepted if they are recorded on a Customer Feedback Form completed by the complainant or by a Shire officer on behalf of the complainant, provided the details on the form are verified and signed by the complainant. In exceptional circumstances complaints will be accepted by phone, however, the details of the complaint must be recorded on the Customer Feedback Form and verified verbally by the complainant.

The Shire will acknowledge all complaints received within 2 business days.

Complaints will be directed to the relevant Manager or the CEO depending on the subject of the complaint.

Any further information required to assist with the investigation of a complaint, may be requested by the CEO. The CEO may review the matter in consultation with the Director or Manager of the responsible Business Unit in order to resolve the complaint.

The Shire will provide the complainant with written notification of the decision within 10 working days. Where a complaint outcome is delayed due to the nature of the complaint or associated process, complainants will be provided with a status report.

Where a complaint is unable to be resolved by the CEO, or is considered to have been resolved after the processes above have been followed, the complainant will be advised to seek an independent review from an external body such as the Ombudsman Western Australia or Department of Local Government Sporting and Cultural Industries (DLGSCI).

## **Guidelines**

This policy applies directly to the delivery of services as documented in the Shire of Augusta Margaret River Customer Service Charter.

The Shire will provide customers with a Complaint Handling Information Sheet and Form which includes the process of how to lodge a complaint.

All complaints are confidential and the Shire will adhere to the record keeping requirements of the State Records Act 2000. Incoming records will be registered as Record Type Complaint, File No PRL/1 Complaints about staff and File No PRL/2 Complaints about services.

All complaints as defined above are to be assigned to the CEO. The CEO may investigate a matter in consultation with the Director or Manager of the responsible Business Unit and may choose to establish a complaint panel.

Complaints considered to be anonymous, vexatious or from a habitual complainer are to be assigned to the CEO. The complaint may be managed under the guidelines of the Shire's

Dealing with Difficult Customer Procedure endorsed by the Executive Leadership Team. The decision not to investigate a complaint is at the CEO's discretion.

- Anonymous complaints will only be dealt with if the complaint involves an allegation of misconduct, including official misconduct, or a breach of privacy. Anonymous complaints must be in writing and will be investigated by the CEO
- A complaint may be considered vexatious when its purpose is to harass, annoy, delay or cause detriment to the Shire or it's staff. A complainant may lack unreasonable grounds for lodging a complaint or possess insufficient direct interest in the issue complained about
- Habitual complainants are persons who continually and persistently raise vexatious complaints, complain often, abuse the complaints process, persistently refuse to acknowledge the Shire's attempts to resolve their complaint/s and seeks to constantly maintain a position within the complaints process.

Complaints about Elected Members are to be directed to the CEO. The CEO is responsible for the initial investigation, administration and response. Matters that may require disciplinary action are to be referred to the Shire President and dealt with under the guidelines in the Shire's Code of Conduct.

Complaints from Elected Member, Ombudsman, Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries (DLGSC) or from Members of Parliament, shall be referred to, and dealt with by the CEO unless the complaint relates to the CEO. If the latter is the case, the complaint will be dealt with by a complaints panel to be appointed by the Shire President.

## Application

Responsibility for the implementation of this policy rests with the Director Corporate and Community Services. The Policy is to be reviewed every three years.

Document and version control table			
<b>Strategic outcome</b>	5.4 Community and customer focus		
<b>Responsible Directorate</b>	Corporate and Community Services		
<b>Authority of original issue</b>	Council		
<b>Date of original issue</b>	27 February 2019		
<b>Contact officer</b>	Coordinator Revenue and Customer Service		
<b>Date of next review</b>	1 October 2021		
<b>Document No.</b>	AM1442	<b>File No.</b>	COR/11
Version	Date issued	Brief description	
1.0	27/2/2019	Initial Release Adopted by Council OM2019/33	
1.1			