

SUBJECT: <i>CUSTOMER SERVICE CHARTER</i>	FILE NO:	COU/0303
ADOPTED BY COUNCIL ON: 13 April 2006	MINUTE NO:	142.04.06
AMENDED BY COUNCIL ON: 12 June 2008	MINUTE NO:	264.06.08
AMENDED BY COUNCIL ON: 23 September 2010	MINUTE NO:	282.09.10

Introduction

Council's intention is for both staff and customers of Council to have a benchmark against which they can establish service delivery.

Objectives

Council has established the Customer Service Charter to set standards for delivery of service to customers and to allow the public to understand what they can expect from Council and vice versa.

Procedure

What is meant by Customer Service

In line with the Local Government Act 1993, this Customer Service Charter outlines Council's commitment to customers in accordance with its Strategic Plan. It also provides a formalised process for addressing customer enquiries and complaints. Council endorses that a customer is entitled to a prompt response to a complaint, to be kept informed of the progress and outcome of the complaint, to be assured of complete confidentiality and objective investigation in the handling of personal details of a complaint.

Flinders Council places great emphasis on the prompt and efficient handling of service delivery and complaints. Flinders Council is committed to providing quality services to its community and other customers with whom it has dealings with. Within its resources, Flinders Council is continually striving to improve services through professional consultative support, providing appropriate employee training, importing new technology and skills and undertaking consultation and communication with our community.

Its customers are any persons or organisations having internal or external dealings with Flinders Council.

Differentiating between a customer enquiry, a customer request or a customer complaint?

A customer enquiry is an appeal for information. An answer is to be provided to a specific question or a decision is to be made in relation to a specific matter. A list of Council's general enquiry numbers has been provided at the end of this document to assist you.

A customer request is an appeal for assistance to provide, inspect, remove, replace, repair or reinstate Council's facilities or amenities that are damaged or missing as a result of a number of circumstances.

A customer complaint is dissatisfaction with a service or product offered or provided, or not provided, or an appeal for action.

Under Council's commitment to our customers, we intend to:

- Treat customers courteously and with respect;
- Deal with customers in a polite and helpful manner;
- Be positive and receptive to new ideas;
- Listen to customers and take their views into account;
- Aim to communicate clearly and concisely;
- Act on its commitments in a timely manner;
- Be punctual at meetings and appointments.
- Provide customers with necessary and relevant information;
- Treat customers fairly and take account of the customer's particular needs;
- Take a fair, balanced and long-term approach with its decisions;
- Value customer privacy by treating all personal information confidentially;
- Leave a business card with our name and contact number following a visit to a customer's residence if that customer is absent;
- Deal with requests in a timely manner (take messages and phone them back) and ensure the message is passed on to the relevant staff member for action.

Expectations from its customers

To assist Council and staff in providing the services Council asks its customers to:

- Treat Council Officers and Elected Members with respect;
- Provide accurate and complete details of any dealings with Council;
- Phone to make an appointment for a complex enquiry or a need to see a specific Officer.
- Respect the privacy, safety and needs of other members of the community;
- In line with modern prohibitive practices involving harassment and bullying, abusive customers using vulgar language will not be tolerated.
- Where Officers feel threatened by the language or behaviour of the customer, they may refer the incident to the police.
- Respect employees personal time (i.e. out of hours)

Customer complaints

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with a decision (outside of a structured statutory process), level or quality of service, staff or agent issues which can be investigated and acted upon.

A structured Statutory process is where legislation (Act, Regulation, Rule or By-Law) specifically makes provision for an appeal, internal review of a Council decision or some other Statutory process. Any Council Officer having difficulty in determining

whether the query is a complaint or a customer service request should seek advice from the General Manager.

Complaint management process

Each Council Department is responsible for handling its own complaints. Your complaint should be directed to the relevant Department (see back page). If in doubt, ask for help at reception.

Whilst most issues can be resolved very quickly, there may be times when additional or more detailed investigations are required. If your complaint is of a serious nature it will be referred to the General Manager.

Normally your complaint will be responded to within ten (10) working days. If a Councillor has submitted a complaint on your behalf, Council will endeavour to respond to the Councillor within ten (10) working days.

In matters where the complaint is of a complex nature requiring detailed professional investigations and Council involvement, you will be informed of the process of the complaint as it is progressed.

All complaints raised by phone or verbally with staff will need to be put in writing or be sent by email to the respective Department or the General Manager. This will ensure that complaints are processed as quickly as possible.

Complaint recording and initial investigation process

When lodging a formal written complaint, an officer will record your concerns. Details of your complaint will be entered into the Council database and forwarded to the appropriate Council Officer for action. You will be given a reference number so that your complaint can be identified and duly processed. If you need to check on the progress of your request or complaint, call the Council and quote your reference number.

Experience has shown that the majority of complaints will be satisfactorily resolved by the Department staff and Managers. However, if you are not satisfied with the outcome, you can ask for a review of your complaint by the Council's General Manager.

Complaint review process by General Manager

Upon submitting your written concern to the General Manager that you are not satisfied with the Departmental or Manager's response, your complaint will be treated in the following manner.

- The General Manager (GM) will examine and analyse the information already available and follow up on issues requiring clarification;
- The GM will consider whether or not the Council is at fault;

- The GM will specify any necessary action to be taken to correct the fault(s) identified and recommend a review of Council's procedures to avoid recurrence of any similar complaint in the future.
- As soon as the investigation is completed, the GM will inform you of the findings and offer an apology if appropriate.

Other options for non-statutory review of complaints

You have the right to approach any of the elected Councillors in writing, specifying the precise nature of your dissatisfaction to the response to your initial complaint and stating that you are seeking further review of your complaint. The Councillor may decide to then raise your concern with the full Council and respond to you accordingly.

It should be noted that whilst this is the final stage of Council's complaint's procedure, other avenues remain open for you to explore such as the State Ombudsman's Office, or the Local Government Office.

The addresses of these Organisations are:

Ombudsman's Office

Ground Floor,
99 Bathurst Street
Hobart, TAS 7000 Ph. 1300 362 072

Local Government Division (Dept. of Premier & Cabinet)

Department of Premier and Cabinet,
GPO Box 123,
HOBART, TAS 7001 Ph. 1300 135 513

Whilst you are entitled to refer your complaint to these bodies at any time, you are encouraged to allow the Council to address your complaint in the first instance.

Availability and review of this Customer Service Charter

This Customer Service Charter is available for public inspection at the Flinders Council Office during normal office hours and will be displayed on the Council Web page. Being a living document, Council will review its Customer Service Charter bi-annually. A report on the number and nature of complaints received will be submitted to Council by the General Manager and highlighted in Council's Annual Report.

COUNCIL SERVICES

FLINDERS COUNCIL OFFICE:

Address: 4 Davies Street, Whitemark, TAS, 7255.
Postal Address: P.O. Box 40, Whitemark, Flinders Island, TAS, 7255.
Office Hours: 9.00am to 4.30 pm

Telephone: (03) 6359 5001
 Facsimile: (03) 6359 2211
 Email: office@flinders.tas.gov.au
 All Correspondence to: *The General Manager*

WORKS AND SERVICES DEPOT:

Address: 9 Patrick Street, Whitemark, Flinders Island, TAS, 7255
 Hours: Weekdays 8.00am to 5.00 pm
 Telephone: (03) 6359 5020
 Mobile: 0427 592 211 & 0427 592 069
 Facsimile: (03) 6359 2069
 Email: les.pitchford@flinders.tas.gov.au

After Hours Emergency Service: Ph: 0427 592 211 or 0427 592 069
This is for emergency situations e.g. Trees across roads

AIRPORT: Palana Road, Whitemark, Flinders Island, TAS, 7255
 Telephone: (03) 6359 2144
 Facsimile: (03) 6359 2145
 Mobile: 0428 592 144
 Email: airport@flinders.tas.gov.au

INFORMATION CENTRE

Mail address: 4 Davies Street, Whitemark or
 P.O. Box 40, Whitemark, Flinders Island, TAs 7255
 Hours: Weekdays 9.00am to 4.30pm
 Telephone: (03) 6359 5002
 Email: info@flinders.tas.gov.au

CHILD CARE CENTRE:

Address: Davies Street, Whitemark, TAS, 7255
 Hours: Tuesday to Friday 8.30 pm – 4.30 pm
 Telephone: (03) 6359 2007

Related Legislation, Regulations and Policies

Local Government Act 1993

Responsibilities

The responsibility of this policy rests with the General Manager and the Office Manager.