

1 PURPOSE

For the Burnie City Council to formally document it's Customer Service Charter.

2 OBJECTIVE

To facilitate a consistent standard of customer service across the Council and to set expectations with our community around response times for matters raised.

3 SCOPE

This policy covers all services provided by Council to all of its customers including those at the Council Office, Works Unit, Burnie Arts and Function Centre, Multi-Storey Car Park and Waste Management Centre.

Every one of our employees, volunteers and contractors working on behalf of the Burnie City Council have a responsibility to uphold our customer service standards and response times.

4 POLICY

Your feedback is important to us

This Customer Service Charter sets out the Council's service standard and explains what you as our customer can do if we have not delivered a service to that standard. Our Charter has been developed to further build and enhance relationships and partnerships with our community and customers and to enable a system for continuous improvement to our levels of customer service.

We welcome and value any feedback on our services and facilities.

What you can expect from us

At all times we will:

- Be respectful and courteous
- Handle your enquiry promptly in accordance with our response times
- Respect your privacy
- Consult with and listen to you, without making commitments we cannot keep
- Maintain the Council's facilities in a safe and proper manner to ensure your convenience and comfort
- Provide a high standard of presentation and performance
- Greet you in a friendly way and identify ourselves

- Be helpful and sensitive to your needs
- Communicate clearly and in plain English
- Work with you to solve problems

What we need from you

- Treat our employees courteously and with respect
- Respect the rights and privacy of other people in the community
- Provide accurate and complete information in your dealings with us
- Work with us to resolve issues when things go wrong
- Report any damage to Council owned infrastructure on 03 6430 5700 or using the Snap Send Solve App
- Advise us when your contact details change
- Provide us with feedback on our services
- Be open to advice and information given
- Take part in Council's Customer Survey bi-annually so that we know about your expectations

Our response to abusive or intimidating customers

In any interaction with members of the community where personal abuse or vulgar language is used, or the customer exhibits intimidating behaviour, the communication may be terminated immediately by the Council officer. These incidents will be recorded and reported. Additionally if an employee at any time feels threatened by the language or behaviour of the customer, they may notify the Police.

There may be occasions when the issue(s) a person has cannot be dealt with to their satisfaction and they are relentless in their pursuit of an alternate outcome. In these cases, Council may decide to limit or cease responses to the person on the issue(s). A decision of this nature will be communicated in writing to the person.

Response times

Council wide customer service levels

Council strives to deliver Council wide customer service in a consistent manner across our organisation. Burnie City Council has however a lean staffing compliment and therefore despite our best efforts we acknowledge that sometimes our service levels may be outside of what we would like, such as for example during peak periods.

Where appropriate, Council will have voice mail in place across our Council services in order to accept your call and enable a return call to be provided to you.

Council-Wide Customer Service	Standard
Answer you telephone call (personally or by voice mail)	7 Rings
Return you call	3 working days
Acknowledge your letter or email	2 working days
Answer your letter or email If we cannot give you a complete answer in this time we will advise you of the reason why and keep you informed	10 working days
If you come in to see one of our specialist staff we will book you an appointment to ensure that you see the right person at the right time and receive the technical and professional advice and response appropriate to your enquiry.	3 working days
Respond to complaints	Always
Notify as soon as practical if there is a delay on our service commitment to you	Always
Provide after-hours service for emergencies	Always
Respond to applications (compliance, parking and reserves)	15 working days
Leave a card with contact details if we call at your residence and you are not at home	Always
Endeavour to refer you to an appropriate service provider if Council cannot provide the service you require	Always
A counter service queuing time	< 10 minutes
Confidentiality of your personal information	Always
Reasons for our decisions whether they are agreeable to you or not	Always
To be seen on time if you have an appointment	Always
Requests for service will be logged into our Customer Request Management System	Response times will vary depending upon a number of variables
Stormwater and Drainage	
Respond to drainage / seepage problems	10 working days
Rates and Finance	
Accounts Payable or Accounts Receivable Enquiry	3 working days
General Rates Enquiries	3 working days
Complex Rates Enquiries	10 working days

People and Safety	
Acknowledgment of job applications	48 hours after receipt
Job application outcomes	10 days after finalisation
Roads and Infrastructure	
Inspect, assess and respond to requests about potholes, edge breaks and cracks	10 working days
Inspect identified damaged street furniture	10 working days
Waste	
Provide a new waste service	10 working days

Statutory activities customer service levels

There are many activities that are undertaken by the Council that have their own response times that are outlined in legislation or policy. This means the Council needs to ensure that we keep to these timelines when dealing with these matters.

Animal Control	
Respond to emergency dog attacks/animal control	24 hours a day
Respond to routine dog complaints such as lost or nuisance dogs	3 working days
Building / Plumbing / Planning	
Respond to requests for general building / plumbing / planning information	5 working days
Complete formal Building Information Requests	10 working days
Environmental Health	
Acknowledge food complaint and start investigation	3 working days
Acknowledge urgent nuisance and start investigation	3 working days
Fire Hazards	
Respond to fire hazard notifications	5 working days
Issue Legal Certificates	
Issue 132 Certificate	10 working days
Issue 337 Certificate	15 working days

Emergencies

The Council defines an emergency situation as an incident that threatens life or property or one that may cause significant environmental harm.

How to contact us

- In person: Council Offices, 80 Wilson Street, Burnie – Monday to Friday from 8.30am to 5.00pm (except public holidays)
- In writing: PO Box 973, Burnie TAS 7320
- By phone: 03 6430 5700 – Monday to Friday from 8.30am to 5.00pm (except public holidays)
- By email: burnie@burnie.tas.gov.au
- Online: We have a range of services available online or visit the 'Contact Us' page at www.burnie.tas.gov.au

Snap Send Solve

Snap Send Solve is a free App for your iPhone or android device that lets you report issues and provide feedback to the Council in less than 30 seconds. You can easily capture and report on common issues such as litter, graffiti, damage, parking related matters such as signage, but not those related to infringements, street cleaning and noise.

If we visit you

If we call at your residence we will always be recognisable as a Council officer and if you are not home we will either leave a 'visit card' with our contact details or a business card for you to call us back.

Contacting councillors

Individual contact details for the Burnie City Council councillors are found on the Council's website at burnie.tas.gov.au or by calling the Council's Customer Service Centre on 03 6430 5700.

How did you find our service?

We place great emphasis on the prompt and efficient handling of all enquiries and requests. Our aim at all times is to provide a quality service. If we've let you down we've let ourselves down and we would like to work with you to improve our service. Please call our Customer Service Centre on 03 6430 5700 to discuss your concerns.

We would also like to hear from you with any positive feedback on our service.

Complaints

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 and has been specifically referred to Council for action.

A structured process is where legislation (Acts, Regulations, Rules or By-laws) specifically make provision for an appeal, internal or external review of a decision.

What is not a complaint?

The following are not considered a complaint:

- A request for service (unless there was no response to the first request for a service).
- A request for information or an explanation of a policy or procedure.
- Disagreement with a policy or decision of the Council.
- An appeal or request for internal or external review of a decision for which a structured process applies, other than that made as the result of a complaint.
- An expression concerning the general direction and performance of Council or its councillors.
- An anonymous complaint, except where the matter is considered very serious and where there is sufficient information in the complaint to enable an investigation to be undertaken.
- An expression of dissatisfaction with the behaviour of a councillor.
- Reports of damaged or faulty infrastructure.
- Reports about neighbours, noise, dogs, nuisances, unauthorised building work or similar issues that fall into the regulatory aspect of our service.
- An issue that falls outside of the Council's jurisdiction or for which it has no power to act.

Many of the issues above are called 'complaints' when a customer contacts us because a customer is unhappy about the situation and wants something done. The actions we take to resolve many 'complaints' are just an everyday part of organisational life for us, due to the nature of the range of services we provide. Therefore these operational issues are dealt with separately from the formal complaints management process.

How to make a complaint

If we've let you down, we've let ourselves down and we would like to work with you to improve our service. The Council's Customer Service Centre is your first point of contact for all enquiries and complaints.

The information we will require from you in order to deal with a complaint is:

- a) your name and contact details
- b) date, times and location of events
- c) what happened
- d) to whom the customer has spoken (names, position in the Council and dates)
- e) copies or references to letters or documents relevant to the complaint
- f) state what the customer hopes to achieve as an outcome to the complaint

What if I am not happy with the resolution of my complaint?

Investigation of complaints are the responsibility of Departmental Directors who will inform the customer in writing of their findings upon completion of an investigation. Experience has shown that the majority of complaints will be satisfactorily resolved. However, a person who is not satisfied with the outcome may request a review of the complaint by the General Manager. A request for a review of this nature is to be in writing.

There is also the Ombudsman who may review actions and decisions taken by the Council. The Ombudsman is 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 (Ground Floor) 99 Bathurst Street, Hobart and can be contacted on 03 6233 6217.

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

Consideration of a Complaint

In considering a complaint the relevant Director or the General Manager will:

- Examine and analyse the information already available and follow up 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 the faults identified; and
- Consider a review of the Council's procedures to avoid recurrence of any similar complaint in the future if necessary.

Vexatious Complaints

All complaints received by Council will be treated with the utmost seriousness however if a complaint is found 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.

Anonymous Complaints

While Council will receive anonymous complaints, it will generally only act on them where the matter is considered to be very serious and where there is sufficient information in the complaint to enable an investigation to be undertaken.

Protection of Customer

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

Personal Information Protection

Council is committed to the protection of personal information provided by a customer in accordance with the requirements of the *Personal Information Protection Act 2004* and the *Right to Information Act 2009*.

The *Right to Information Act 2009* allows for a person to obtain certain information that is held by the Council that is not already publicly available.

Reporting

The General Manager is to provide Council with a report at least once a year of the number and nature of complaints received in accordance with section 339F(5) of the *Local Government Act 1993* and does this by including this information in the Council's Annual Report.

Availability

This Customer Service Charter is available:

- for public inspection at the Council Office during normal office hours,
- on the Council's website free of charge, and
- from the Council offices free of charge.

4.1 Review

This Customer Service Charter will be reviewed within 12 months after a council election in accordance with section 339F(4) of the *Local Government Act 1993*.



COUNCIL POLICY

Customer Service Charter

Approved By: **Council**
Doc Controller: **Director Corporate and
Commercial Services**
File: 4/14/2

Document Code: **CP-CBS-SG-022**
Version: **5.0**
Approved Date: **26 Apr 2023**
Next Review Date: **26 Apr 2027**

5 LEGISLATION

Local Government Act 1993
Local Government (General) Regulations 2015
Personal Information Protection Act 2004
Right to Information Act 2009
Public Interest Disclosures Act 2002

6 RELATED DOCUMENTS

CP-CBS-SG-008 Personal Information Protection Policy
CP-CBS-SG-013 Public Interest Disclosure Policy

Policy Endorsement	
Responsibility:	<p>It is the responsibility of the General Manager to keep a register of formal complaints received by Council.</p> <p>It is the responsibility of the Director Corporate and Commercial Services to maintain and review this policy.</p> <p>It is the responsibility of the Manager Customer and Information Services to operationalise this policy.</p> <p>This policy must be reviewed within 12 months of an ordinary election (section 339F(4) Local Government Act 1993)</p>
Minute Reference:	AO061-23
Council Meeting Date:	26 April 2023
Strategic Plan Reference:	Strategy 7.1.1 Formulate policy that is equitable, inclusive and responsive to current needs, and ensure decision-making is informed and accountable.
Previous Policies Replaced:	This policy replaces the previous Customer Service Charter CP-CBS-SG-022 version 4.1, dated 30 January 2018.
Date of Commencement:	27 April 2023
Publication of policy:	Members of the public may inspect this policy at the City Offices where copies can be obtained free of charge. Alternatively it can be accessed on Council's website (www.burnie.tas.gov.au)