

Customer Complaints Handling Policy

Policy Type: Operational Policy Policy Owner: Director Community Development	Policy No. OP-039 Last Review Date: September 2023
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Policy Objectives

- To document the position of the City in relation to its complaints handling processes.
- To ensure that complaints are managed efficiently, effectively, and fairly from the time of receipt through to a satisfactory resolution or final determination of the matter.
- To ensure that complaints data collected is used to improve the effectiveness of complaint processes based on customer experience, satisfaction, and resolution.
- To enhance community confidence by handling complaints in line with the City's Values, Customer First Charter, the Code of Conduct, and the International Customer Service Standard (ICSS:2020 -2025).

Policy Scope

This policy applies to all complaints received from customers in relation to:

- A City policy, product, service, event, or facility.
- City employees, Contractors, or Volunteers.
- A third party who is under the jurisdiction of the City.

This policy and the principles within it, apply to all City staff, Elected Members, contractors, and volunteers of the City who receive or manage complaints.

This policy **does not apply** to other types of feedback (compliments and suggestions) or the following matters:

- Complaints made by City staff that are employment related.
- Complaints made about the CEO.
- Feedback obtained during stakeholder and community engagement processes.
- Enquiries and requests for specific information.
- An initial request for service or action to be undertaken by the City.
- Reports about neighbours, noise, dog, cats, nuisances, unauthorised building work or similar issues that apply to regulatory compliance.
- Infringement appeals.
- An expression of dissatisfaction concerning the general direction and performance of the City.
- A petition.

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- Complaints within the scope of this policy about matters (including about staff, volunteers and contractors) that have occurred more than six months ago.
- Matters currently being dealt with or have previously been dealt with by a court, tribunal, or external complaints agency and communicated to the customer.
- Matters that have already been subjected to an internal review and an outcome has been determined and communicated to the customer.
- Report of any suspected minor or serious breach/misconduct by an individual employee or Elected Member.
- Report of any suspected fraud and corruption by an individual employee or Elected member.

Definitions

For this policy the following definitions will apply:

Feedback includes any compliments or suggestions received from customers where a response is not explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required.

Complaint 'Based on the AS/NZS ISO 10002:2014, a complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction made to or about an organisation, related to its products, services, staff or the handling of a complaint, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required'.

Complainant means the customer or any entity expressing dissatisfaction

Customer includes residents, rate payers, members of the public receiving advice or a service, using facilities, or engaging in a business relationship or any other person or organisation having an interest in the functions or activities of the City.

Request for Service is provision of a City service, or some action required to be taken to address a problem or a request for a change to the way a City service is delivered. For example, a customer at the Aquatic Centre tells a staff member there is not hot water in the shower. This is a request for service and the staff member must rectify the problem. If the problem is not rectified and the customer must repeatedly ask for hot water over several visits the request is likely to escalate to a complaint.

Policy Statement

The City recognises that effective complaints management is integral to customer service excellence and values all complaints. We encourage a people-focused and proactive approach to complaints handling across the organisation.

The City is committed to providing quality customer service. Complaints will be handled, as follows:

- Promptly
- In a consistent manner
- Without bias and in a manner that promotes procedural fairness and principles of social justice
- In accordance with legislative requirements as well as the WA Ombudsman's Guidelines on Complaint Handling
- Having regard for the City's OP-042 Managing Unreasonable Customer Behaviour Policy.

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Request for internal review

Customers have the right to request a review of a decision or outcome made by the City regarding a complaint, except for an employee disciplinary or a matter associated to a separate policy or legislation.

Right to Appeal

Should the complainant wish to appeal a decision or review made by the City, or seek alternative advice, the customer may escalate their complaint to the Ombudsman of Western Australia or the relevant external agency.

When advising a complainant of the outcome of a complaint investigation, the City will provide information about the right to appeal via the Ombudsman or other relevant external agencies.

Roles and Responsibilities

All relevant staff are to receive appropriate complaints handling training and are to make use of the available City's resources to handle customer complaints.

The Management Leadership Team (MLT) is responsible for managing all complaints received within their service areas.

The Executive Leadership Team (ELT) is responsible for review of complaint resolutions, as part of the internal escalation or appeal process.

The WA Ombudsman is responsible for conducting administrative investigations as part of the external escalation or appeal process. There are other instances that the review of the decision may need to be referred to another relevant external agency such as the State Administrative Tribunal.

All City staff have the responsibility to:

- Record all complaints, actions taken to resolve the complaint and relevant correspondence in the City's Customer Request Management System (CRMS/Pathway) and document management system (DMS).
- Acknowledge all complaints made in writing within 2 working days, providing information to the complainant about the complaint handling process and a complaint reference number.
- Assist the complainant to effectively resolve the complaint in accordance with this policy and the City's Complaint Handling Procedure.
- Handle all complaints courteously, professionally, and efficiently.
- Aim to resolve all complaints within ten working days, depending on the complexity of the complaint.
- Notify the complainant with an interim response including reason for any delay and anticipated new timeframe if the complaint cannot be resolved within ten working days.
- Communicate to the complainant as to the decision made or action taken with respect to the matter complained, including their rights of appeal or review.
- Identify opportunities to minimise the chance of reoccurrence.

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Complainants have a responsibility to:

- Provide enough information and detail about the complaint to ensure it can be actioned.
- Treat all City staff with courtesy and respect.
- Allow the City enough time to investigate and resolve the complaint within identified timeframes.
- Listen to the response provided by the City.
- Inform the City if they believe their complaint has not been satisfactorily resolved.
- Pursue any appeals process relevant to the WA Ombudsman jurisdictions following any final City review if still dissatisfied.
- Keep the complaint confidential – breaching confidentiality may compromise the City's ability to investigate the complaint further.

Where the complainant fails to meet their responsibilities, the City may set limits or conditions on the handling of their complaint. Any abuse, or threats to the safety or welfare of City staff will be handled under the City's ***Managing Unreasonable Customer Behaviour Policy (OP-042)*** and may result in the immediate cessation of the complaint investigation and any contact with the complainant will cease.

Anonymous Complaints

The City understands that some customers may wish to remain anonymous. Whilst anonymous complaints will not be rejected, they may limit the City's ability to fully investigate the matter and resolve the complaint. Where sufficient information is provided, the City will manage the complaint in accordance with the City's ***Complaint Management Procedure***. However, due to the anonymity, the City will be unable to provide any response on decisions made or action taken.

Guiding principles

The City's handling of customer complaints is based on the City's values and is in line with the standards set by the Code of Conduct and Customer First Charter.

The following guiding principles are adopted when handling complaints:

Customer Focus

The City is committed to effective complaints handling and values the opportunity for improvement through complaints.



Visibility

The City will ensure that the complaint handling policy and processes are well promoted to customers, staff and other interested parties via the City's intranet, website, and front counters.

Accessibility

The City is committed to making it easy for customers to raise complaints ensuring:

- the process to raise a complaint is easy by all members of the diverse community, including First Nations people, children and young people.
- that no fee will be charged for dealing with complaints unless relevant legislation requires the City to charge a fee.
- assistance to those customers wishing to raise a complaint, including customers with special needs or requiring special needs assistance (including translating and interpreting services).
- several different ways verbally and in writing are available for customers to complain. For example: email, letter, via the Feedback online form on the City's website and in person to any City staff, Elected Member, or contractor of the City.

Accountability

All City staff are accountable for effective complaint handling in their area of responsibility. If staff do not have the necessary expertise or experience, they are to refer the complaint onto the next level of management within their team. Support for managing complaints can be sought at any time from the Customer Relations Coordinator.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality and privacy of complainants will be protected. Personal information collected in relation to a complaint will only be used for the purpose of addressing the complaint and any follow up actions.

To ensure that complaints are dealt with quickly, courteously, fairly and within established timeframes, staff in the service areas most relevant to the complaint are empowered to resolve complaints at first point of contact.

The City records all complaints in the City's CRMS for recording, tracking, and responding to complaints to ensure that they are actioned appropriately and within agreed timeframes.

The following timelines will be complied with in respect to complaints

Responsiveness

- Verbal / in-person complaints will be responded to immediately, if possible, providing a resolution to the customer.
- Verbal / in-person complaints which must be referred to a manager, or other designated staff member will be acknowledged in accordance with the City's Customer First Charter within 2 working days, and where possible, a timeframe by which resolution should be expected will be provided.
- Written complaints will be acknowledged in accordance with the City's Customer First Charter within 2 working days and referred to a manager who will aim to resolve the complaint within ten working days.
- For complaints that are complex in nature and are unable to be resolved within the ten (10) working days, the City will provide update on the progress of the complaint, every ten working days or as agreed with the customer.

Complainants will be kept informed regularly of the progress made to resolve their complaint, either by telephone, in writing or meeting in- person. If additional time is required, the complainant must be informed of the revised timeframe and reason for delay.

Fairness and Objectivity

Complaints are dealt with in an equitable, objective, and unbiased manner. This helps to ensure that the complaint handling process is fair and reasonable. Unreasonable complainant conduct is not allowed to become a burden.

City staff are trained in complaint resolution and evidence-based techniques and effective handling of unreasonable conduct by complainants or people who are the subject of a complaint.



Complainants will be provided with:

- sufficient opportunity to present their position ensuring the information they provide is given adequate consideration, considering all relevant material and factors.
- the opportunity to comment on any adverse findings.
- reasons for the decisions made about the complaint outcome.

Remedy

If the complaint is upheld, the City will determine an appropriate remedy that is fair to both the complainant and to the City. The City will provide a formal response to the complainant detailing the remedies. These may include:

- An apology.
- Change to a City's decision, documentation, policies, procedures, products, or services.
- Conciliation process.
- Provision of additional information and
- Referral to another agency. For example: the WA Ombudsman Office.

Continual Improvement

The City will analyse the complaints data to identify and address recurring or systemic issues and used to improve service.

How to make a complaint

Customers can make a complaint via the following methods:

Website: **www.melvillecity.com.au**

Email: **melinfo@melville.wa.gov.au**

Telephone: During business hours (Monday to Friday from 8:30am – 5:00pm):

1300 635 845 or 9364 0666

For hearing or speech impaired:

National Relay Service (TTY) **133 677**

For interpreting:

TIS National **130450**

In person: At any City of Melville facility and to any City staff, Elected Members, or contractor of the City

Mail: **To:**
City of Melville
Locked Bag 1
BOORAGOON
WA 6954

References that may be applicable to this Policy

Legislative Requirements:

Procedures, Process Maps, Work Instructions:

Complaints Handling Procedure

Other Plans, Frameworks, Documents Applicable to Policy:

Customer Services Framework
Customer Feedback Operational Policy
The Australian Standards on Complaints Handling (ISO 10002:2006)
Unreasonable Customer Behaviour Policy

Customer Service Charter

Customer Service Charter for Our Contractors

Origin/Authority
Executive Management Team Meeting

5 August 2020

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