

Customer Complaints

Council Policy 114



Policy Number	CP114
Replaces Policy Number	DCS001
Category	Governance
Strategic Plan Reference	Goal 4 – A Supportive Organisation
Approval date	13/04/17
Minutes Reference	Item 13.2 Ordinary Council Meeting 13/04/17
Last Reviewed	13/04/17
Next Review Date	30 June 2020

1. Purpose

To provide guidance for staff on how to respond to complaints from members of the public

2. Scope

This Policy applies to all external complaints made to any officer or office of the Council.

3. Policy Objectives

This policy (and accompanying procedures) is aimed at complaints being resolved by negotiation and discussion between the parties. It provides opportunities for communication and a focus on working towards a constructive resolution of the complaint.

4. Policy Statement

An effective complaints handling process is integral to providing all of our customers and stakeholders with the highest possible quality service.

MacDonnell Regional Council (MRC) recognises that handling complaints is an important part of service provision. This is about accountability and needs to be managed effectively.

Policy Principles

This complaints policy is underpinned by the following general principles:

1. Any person or organisation affected by MRC's operations has the right to complain about any part of the service.
2. Those complaining are entitled to be heard and have their concerns addressed in ways that ensure access and equity, fairness and natural justice, accountability and transparency.
3. Resolving complaints where possible is the goal; however it is recognised that in some cases complaints will not be able to be resolved to the satisfaction of all concerned.
4. The process for people to make complaints will be clear and simple, and effectively promoted.
5. Service users, including whistleblowers, will be supported to make complaints and assured of their right to do so without retribution or discrimination. Complaints will be confidential and only those who need the information to manage the complaint will have access to the information.
6. Complaints will be dealt with according to set procedures whether they are written, verbal or made with the assistance of a third party. MRC will engage interpreters if required at no cost to the complainant. Anyone making a complaint has the right to access a support person at all stages of the complaints resolution process.

Customer Complaints

Council Policy 114



7. Feedback data will be used to contribute to organisational reviews and follow-up.
8. Induction processes will ensure that all Councillors, management and staff are aware of MRC procedures for making complaints.

Definitions

For the purposes of this policy, complaints will be identified as follows:

1. Simple complaints – straightforward issues with service provision that can be resolved quickly.
2. Complex complaints – may involve challenges to a decision or policy, or a complaint about a staff member or elected member.
3. Serious complaints – complaints concerning matters that come under legislation: discrimination, sexual harassment, fraud, child protection issues etc.

For the purposes of this policy, routine housing maintenance or other routine service requests are not considered to be complaints unless the initial request has not been resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant.

Timeframe for complaints resolution

MRC will respond to:

- simple complaints within 3 working days
- complex complaints within 10 working days
- serious complaints within 30 days.

If these timeframes cannot be kept, the complainant will be kept informed of progress and alternative timeframes.

Responsibility

All staff, management and Councillors are responsible for understanding the complaints procedure.

Responsibility for ensuring complaints are dealt with in the first instance is the Customer Service & Records Officer who will refer on to the appropriate Manager or Director to deal with.

5. Legislation and References

Related Legislation	Information Act (including Privacy Provisions)
Related Policies	CP135 Privacy and Freedom of Information CP116 Records Management
Related Procedures	PR114 Complaints Procedure
Associated Documents	Communications and Engagement Plan Customer Service Charter

6. Delegation and Implementation

Delegate	Director Corporate Services
Implementation Officer	Manager Governance and Planning

7. Administration

InfoXpert file number	
On Internet (Council Policy)	28/04/17

Customer Complaints

Council Policy 114



On Intranet (Operational Policy)	
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