



Central Coast Council

Customer Service Charter

February 2023

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1 PURPOSE

The Customer Service Charter specifies the Central Coast Council's customer service principles and standards and provides guidance to staff and customers in relation to communications, service provision and the management of complaints.

2 CUSTOMER SERVICE PRINCIPLES

2.1 Honesty and Integrity

- (a) We will treat you with respect and be courteous at all times.
- (b) We will be open, honest and genuine in all of our interactions with you.
- (c) We will be consistent and impartial in administering our statutory and regulatory functions.
- (d) We will do what we say we'll do.

2.2 Professionalism

- (a) We will always be polite, listen to your enquiry and respond in an objective and timely manner.
- (b) We will endeavour to correct things promptly when they have gone wrong.
- (c) We will provide you with relevant information and explore other options where available.
- (d) Enquiries will be responded to within the timeframes set out in section 3 of this document.

2.3 Privacy

- (a) We will respect our customers' privacy and handle personal and confidential information in accordance with the *Personal Information Protection Act 2004*.
- (b) We will only access confidential information for authorised work-related tasks.

3 CUSTOMER SERVICE STANDARDS

3.1 Contact by Telephone

- (a) Our staff will answer telephone enquiries promptly and courteously.
- (b) We aim to answer all questions at the first point of contact.
- (c) If specialist attention is needed and the person required is available, they will answer the call. Where the person required is not available, the call will be returned within one working day.

3.2 Contact in Writing

- (a) We aim to acknowledge and respond to both written and electronic communication within 10 working days.
- (b) If we cannot respond within the set timeframes, we will make contact to explain the reason for the delay and when a full reply can be expected.
- (c) We will use language that is clear and concise.

3.3 Service Requests

- (a) Where a service request is urgent and the matter places the safety of the community at a high risk, the matter will be dealt with immediately.
- (b) Where the matter is urgent and there is little risk to the safety of the community, the matter will be responded to within 24 hours.
- (c) Routine service requests will be dealt with according to the policies and procedures of the Council and guidelines as required by legislation.

Full contact details for the Council are provided in section 6 of this document.

4 MUTUAL RESPECT

When interacting with the Council, we expect that you treat staff, Councillors and other community members with respect and civility. We ask that when requested you make every effort to provide accurate information and work with us to solve problems. The Council does not accept anti-social behaviour, such as offensive or abusive language, threatening behaviours, or harassment.

Should you exhibit any of these behaviours, the Council will terminate communication with you. This could mean walking away, terminating a phone call, or blocking your email address. If a staff member feels threatened by your behaviour, the police may be notified.

Should unacceptable behaviour towards the Council continue, or you will not accept that the Council is unable to provide any further assistance, the General Manager

may limit or cease contact with you. A decision of this nature will be communicated in writing.

5 COMPLAINTS MANAGEMENT

The Council is committed to its Customer Service Principles and Standards. Part of this commitment is ensuring the fair management of complaints.

This Charter helps ensure that the Council addresses every complaint received on its individual merits through a clear and consistent process.

Council recognises that members of the public have the right to complain and have complaints handled objectively.

5.1 Complaint Definition

For the purpose of this Charter, a complaint is a communication to the Council (either verbal or written) expressing dissatisfaction with a Council service or decision, or the behaviour of a Council employee, particularly as it relates to the Customer Service Standards of this Charter.

A complaint must relate to matters that the Council has the ability to resolve and must be of a nature that can be properly investigated.

It is important to note that a complaint is not an enquiry (appeal for information), request (appeal for assistance or action), or disagreement (conflicting opinion to a decision or policy of the Council).

This Charter does not cover complaints relating to:

- Decisions made or services provided by the Council under legislation (Act, Regulation, Rule or By-law) that makes special provision for appeal or review.
- An alleged breach under the Code of Conduct of Councillors.
- Complaints against parties outside of the Council.
- Complaints made on social media platforms.

5.2 Lodging a Complaint

To lodge a complaint, please contact the Council (contact details provided in section 6) and provide the following information:

- (a) Your full name, address and contact details.
- (b) Sufficient details for the complaint to be actioned, such as:
 - location and time of event;
 - who was involved, including names of Council staff;
 - any documents or reference numbers relating to the complaint;
 - what happened; and
 - how you would like the complaint resolved.

In general, the more information you provide about a complaint, the better it can be addressed and resolved.

Where verbal complaints are made a record will be raised within the Council's Records Management System.

Anonymous complaints may be accepted where there is a potential risk to persons or property, providing there is sufficient information to enable proper investigation.

5.3 Refusing a Complaint

All complaints will be treated with seriousness, however if the complaint is found to be malicious, or is a repeated complaint to which a response has previously been given, the Council may decide to take no further action. The customer will be informed of this decision in writing by the General Manager.

Where a complaint is more appropriately dealt with by an external body or through a statutory review process, Council will provide the relevant contact details.

5.4 Managing a Complaint

Once a complaint is accepted, the Council's process for managing the complaint is:

- (a) The Council will acknowledge receipt of your complaint in accordance with our Customer Service Standards.
- (b) If we are unable to resolve your complaint within 10 working days, we will contact you to explain why and advise the timeframe in which we will be able to resolve it.
- (c) We will ensure all of our correspondence includes the name and contact details of the Officer dealing with the matter.
- (d) If you are not satisfied that your complaint has been adequately resolved you can request that a review goes to the General Manager, who will undertake an investigation of the complaint. The General Manager will inform you of the outcome of the investigation in writing.

5.5 Further Complaint Options

If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of the General Manager's investigation of your complaint, you may contact the Mayor, or escalate your complaint further by contacting:

- (a) The Ombudsman
GPO Box 960
HOBART TAS 7001
Phone: 1800 001 170
Email: ombudsman@ombudsman.tas.gov.au

- (b) The Director
Office of Local Government
Department of Premier and Cabinet
GPO Box 123
HOBART TAS 7001
Phone: 03 6232 7022
Email: localgovernment@dpac.tas.gov.au

While you can refer your complaint directly to these bodies at any time, we strongly encourage you to approach the Council to investigate your complaint first.

5.6 Reporting of Complaints

In accordance with the *Local Government Act 1993*, the General Manager provides the Council with a report once a year detailing the number and the nature of complaints received.

6 CONTACTING THE COUNCIL

6.1 In Person

- (a) The Council's Administration Centre at 19 King Edward Street, Ulverstone is open Monday to Friday from 8.30am – 4.30pm (closed on Public Holidays).
- (b) The Penguin Service Centre at 78 Main Road, Penguin is open Monday to Friday from 9.30am – 12.00pm and 12.30pm – 3.00pm (closed on Public Holidays).

6.2 By Phone

- (a) The Council's telephone number is (03) 6429 8900. The switchboard is operational Monday to Friday from 8.00am – 4.30pm (closed on Public Holidays).
- (b) The Council's after-hours telephone number for limited emergency services is (03) 6429 8999.
- (c) If you are a non-English speaker or need assistance translating you can call the Translating and Interpreting Service on 131 450 for assistance.
- (d) If you are deaf, or have a hearing or speech impairment, the Council accepts calls through the National Relay Service on 1800 555 660.

6.3 Email or Website

- (a) Email: admin@centralcoast.tas.gov.au
- (b) Online: <http://www.centralcoast.tas.gov.au>

6.4 In Writing

The General Manager
Central Coast Council
PO Box 220
ULVERSTONE TAS 7315

6.5 Service Request

A service request may be lodged for a range of issues, including matters relating to Council infrastructure, services and the reporting of nuisances.

To make a service request, please use one of the following options:

- (a) Complete an online Service Request on the Council's website.
- (b) Complete a Service Request form. These forms are available from the Administration or Service Centres.
- (c) Telephone (03) 6429 8900.

7 ACCESS TO THE CUSTOMER SERVICE CHARTER

The Customer Service Charter is available for public inspection at the Council's Administration Centre during opening hours, or on the Council's website.

8 RELATED LEGISLATION

This Charter was developed in accordance with:

- *Local Government Act 1993*
- *Local Government (General) Regulations 2015*
- *Personal Information and Protection Act 2004*
- *Right to Information Act 2009*

9 REVIEW

The Customer Service Charter will be reviewed within twelve months after each council election, unless organisational or legislative changes require more frequent review.