

Aligned City Value/s	Approachable	Responsive	Transparent	Innovative
Responsible Directorate	Community Development			
Responsible Business Unit/s	Customer and Communications			
Responsible Officer	Manager Customer and Communications			
Affected Business Unit/s	All			

Objective

This policy provides guidance to the management and handling of complaints.

The City of Stirling (the City) is committed to providing an accessible, responsive and accountable Complaints Management Framework that promotes organisational learning and continuous improvement. Accepting feedback, including complaints, assists the City in engaging with complainants to continually enhance the customer experience and City's services.

This policy:

- promotes the City's organisational corporate values of; *Approachable, Responsive, Transparent and Innovative*.
- reflects best practice as outlined by the Australian Standards - *Guidelines for complaint management in organisations*, and the WA Ombudsman Guidelines on Complaint Handling; and
- supports the City's commitment to the wider community: *To be a dynamic organisation that delivers effective services and maintains a strong customer focus*.

Scope

This policy applies to all employees and Elected Members.

For the purposes of this document all references to employees means employees, contractors and volunteers of the City of Stirling.

Policy

What is a complaint?

A complaint is:

“an expression of dissatisfaction made to or about an organization, 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” (as defined by the *AS/NZS 10002-2014 Guidelines for Complaint Management in Organisations*).

A complaint is not:

- The initial request for a service to be provided by the City;
- A request for documents, information or explanation of policies or procedures;
- Compliance enforcement action;

- The lodging of an appeal or objection in accordance with a statutory process, standard procedure or policy);
- A submission relating to the exercise of a regulatory function;
- A petition; and
- A civil dispute between private individuals.

The above will not be registered as a complaint as each is covered and managed by a separate process.

The City may determine to take the following courses of action:

- Take no further action and give the complainant reason/s;
- Resolve the complaint by use of appropriate strategies such as, but not limited to, mediation, informal discussion or negotiation; and
- Discontinue the assessment in circumstances where it becomes evident that the matter would be referred to another body or person and advise the complainant accordingly.

Making a complaint

The City accepts complaints via the Customer Feedback Form located on the City's website, letter, in person, via phone, webchat, or by completing a Feedback Form available from the City's Libraries, Community Centres and Recreation Facilities or Administration.

A complainant may nominate another person to assist or make a complaint on their behalf via written permission for another person to act on their behalf.

At a minimum, the following information is to be supplied to effectively process the complaint:

- Name and address.
- Contact details.
- Complaint details.
- Date of occurrence of complaint.

Anonymous complaints

The City accepts anonymous complaints however the complaint will not be investigated unless it raises a serious matter, such as an issue that poses a public health or safety risk or an emergency and there is sufficient information to enable the City to conduct an enquiry. The City is unable to verify information or communicate the outcome of the complaint without knowing the full identity of the complainant.

The City's three principles of complaint management are;

1. Customer Focus

The City is committed to providing an open, transparent and easily accessible complaints handling process .

2. Responsiveness

The City will address each complaint in a fair, objective, unbiased and timely manner. Complainants will be kept informed of the complaints progress and of any delays during the process.

3. Remedy

The complaint will be assigned to an officer with the authority to deal with the complaint in a timely manner.

Timeliness

All complaints submitted must be acknowledged within seven (7) business days in line with the Customer Service Charter with either with a final solution or, if the nature of the complaint requires a longer period to resolve, with an interim response outlining the reason for the delay, further action to be taken and anticipated timeframe that a full response will be provided.

Risk

In establishing the order in which complaints will be attended to, consideration will be given to the urgency of each complaint in terms of public safety implications, seriousness, frequency of occurrence, severity and the need for immediate action.

Mediation

Complaints about the City's actions may stem from neighbourhood disputes. The City offers free mediation services through the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) for neighbourhood disputes. Contact the City to request a CAB service.

Confidentiality

Complainants have the right to expect that their privacy will be respected when making a complaint or having a complaint investigated. unless required by law or the complainant provides their permission to release information.

There will be no adverse repercussions by the City for a complainant who, in good faith, chooses to make a complaint against the City or an employee of the City.

Request for internal review

Complainants have the right to request a review of a decision or outcome unless it relates to an employee disciplinary matter or a matter that is covered under a separate process, policy or legislation. Contact the City for to request an internal review service.

Dealing with unreasonable complainant conduct

An unreasonable complainant is defined as the following by the Ombudsman:

- A rude, angry and harassing customer;
- Aggressive customer;
- Habitual or obsessive. This includes:
 - cannot 'let go' of their complaint;
 - cannot be satisfied despite the best efforts of the agency;
 - make unreasonable demands on the agency where resources are substantially and unreasonably diverted away from its other functions or unfairly allocated (compared to other customers).

The City may regulate, withhold or withdraw the provision of service to an unreasonable complainant by taking one of the following actions:

- Only take calls at specific times on specific days.
- Require the complainant to make an appointment to meet with employees.
- Limit all future dealings to writing.
- Only respond to future correspondence which provides significant new information about the complaint or raises new issues which the City believes warrant fresh action.
- Suspend, or terminate, a City premise membership as per terms and conditions (of that membership).
- Direct all contact to be through a specific employee or area.

The decision to regulate, withhold or withdraw contact with the City will require approval from the Chief Executive Officer (or delegate) which is sought from the Manager Customer & Communications. The CEO may restrict communication to complainant about a complaint where it satisfies the requirements of the *Local Government Act 1995*.

The rationale and decision is to be documented and the unreasonable complainant is to be advised in writing of the reasons for the decision, what restrictions apply and for what period. Regulated provisions are to be reviewed on an annual basis.

At any time employees or Elected Members, who reasonably consider that managing unreasonable complainant conduct poses a psychosocial risk to their health and wellbeing, should notify Customer Experience who will take necessary steps to review and manage the risk, including regulating communication from the unreasonable complainant to the relevant City employee or Elected Member.

Recording complaints

All correspondence relating to complaints must be recorded within the City's business systems. Information recorded must be factual, accurate and current as per the *State Records Act 2000*.

Complaints about employees

Complaints about employees are to be made in accordance with the City's Code of Conduct for Employees. Where a complaint about an employee involves wrongdoing, or improper or unlawful conduct, a public interest disclosure can be made under the City's Public Interest Disclosure processes.

This policy does not apply to complaints against employees and Elected Members, which are to be made in accordance with the relevant Codes of Conduct adopted by the City.

Definitions

Business Day means a day when the City is normally open for business i.e. Monday to Friday, excluding public holidays and other Council approved closures.

Complainant is a person, organisation or its representative making a complaint.

Relevant management practices/documents

Compliance Enforcement Policy
Code of Conduct for Employees
Complaints Management Practice
Customer Service Standards Management Practice
Compliments, Suggestions and Feedback Management Practice
Unreasonable Customer Conduct Management Practice
Harassment and Bullying in the Workplace Management Practice

City of Stirling Correspondence Style Guide
City of Stirling Record Keeping Plan
City of Stirling Customer Service Charter
Guidelines on Complaint Handling: www.ombudsman.wa.gov.au/publications
State Administrative Tribunal Management Practice

Legislation/local law requirements

Corruption, Crime and Misconduct Act 2003
Freedom of Information Act 1992
Local Government Act 1995
Privacy Act 1998
Public Interest Disclosure Act 2003
Public Sector Management Act 1994

Office use only			
Relevant delegations	Not applicable		
Initial Council adoption	Date	25 October 2016	Resolution # 1016/024
Last reviewed	Date	26 August 2025	Resolution # 0825/029
Next review due	Date	26 August 2027	