

CP.57 Complaints Management

<i>Responsible Department</i>	Chief Executive Officer Office
<i>Resolution Number</i>	C.4690
<i>Resolution Date</i>	15/03/2023
<i>Next Scheduled Review</i>	2024/25
<i>Related Shire Documents</i>	Customer Service Charter Record Keeping Plan Policy G 1.4 Code of Conduct for Councillors, Committee Members and Candidates Policy G 1.15 Code of Conduct – Employees, Volunteers, Contractors and Agency Staff Policy G 1.19 Public Interest Disclosure Policy A 8.3 Records Management Manage Complaints Process
<i>Related Legislation</i>	Local Government Act 1995 State Records Act 2000 Freedom of Information Act 1992 Australian Standard Guidelines for complaints management in organisations (ISO:10002:2022)

OBJECTIVE

The objectives of the Complaints Management Policy (policy) are to:

1. Ensure complaints are managed in accordance with best practice as outlined by the Australian Standard for Complaints Management ISO 10002:2022 – Guidelines for complaint management in organisations, and the Western Australian (WA) Ombudsman Guidelines on Complaint Handling;
2. Ensure that the complaints received by the Shire of Northam (the Shire) are managed effectively and fairly from the time of receipt through to a satisfactory resolution or final determination of the matter; and
3. Support a culture of continuous improvement, by valuing the opportunity to identify business improvements and increase the levels of satisfaction with the delivery of services.

This policy is underpinned by a Complaints Management Framework.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all complaints received from customers relating to:

- A Shire service, process, product, policy, event or facility.

- The services provided by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), a Shire employee, volunteer, contractor, Council Member or committee member.
- A third party under the jurisdiction of the Shire.

This policy does not apply to:

- Employment or behavioural/conduct of Shire employees or CEO – refer to Policy G 1.15 Code of Conduct – Employees, Volunteers, Contractors and Agency Staff.
- Behavioural/conduct related complaints regarding volunteers or contractors– refer to Policy G 1.15 Code of Conduct – Employees, Volunteers, Contractors and Agency Staff.
- Behavioural/conduct of Council Members, Committee Members or Candidates – refer to Policy G 1.4 Code of Conduct for Councillors, Committee Members and Candidates.
- Public Interest Disclosure – Refer to Policy G 1.19 Public Interest Disclosure.

POLICY

1. Definitions

Shire means Shire of Northam.

Complaint means 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” (ISO 10002:2022).

A complaint is not:

- The initial requests for a service or action by the Shire (unless there was inaction or an unsatisfactory response to the initial request for service).
- Feedback on a service where there is not an issue to be resolved or does not necessitate action by the Shire.
- Feedback obtained during stakeholder and community engagement processes
- Requests for information or explanations of policies, procedures or decisions of Council
- Reports of damaged, faulty infrastructure or a hazard
- Reports concerning neighbours or neighbouring property
- The lodging of an appeal or an objection in accordance with policy or procedure
- A petition
- A civil dispute between private individuals
- Made on social media or letters to the editor
- Matters regarding State or Federal Government or matters not within the Shire’s jurisdiction.

Complaints Management Framework refers to the policies, procedures, processes, practices, staff and systems involved in the managing of complaints across the Shire.

Customer refers to a person who is accessing the Shire's services, facilities, policies, products, programs or events.

2. Principles of complaint management

The following complaints management principles apply:

- a. Complaints are people focused, transparent and accessible to all:
 - i. People Focus: the Shire will be proactive in listening and responding to complaints, treating all people with respect, and actively involving them in the complaints process as far as practicable and appropriate.
 - ii. Visible & Transparent: the Shire will actively publicise information about how and where to complain and make it easy to understand what to expect.
 - iii. Accessible: the Shire will ensure that our complaint handling process is accessible and easy to use for all our customers.
- b. Complaints are managed in an efficient, fair and equitable manner:
 - i. Responsive: the Shire will respond to all complaints as quickly as possible and endeavour to regularly communicate and inform parties involved.
 - ii. Objective and Fair: the Shire will review all complaints in an equitable, fair and unbiased manner using evidence submitted by both the complainant and officers.
 - iii. Equality and Privacy: the Shire will be consistent and ethical in our treatment of complaints and customers involved.
- c. Complaints are managed in a supported manner:
 - i. Conduct: the Shire will work together to resolve problems respectfully and cooperatively and as far as practical maintain the confidentiality of all parties.
 - ii. Empowerment: the Shire will continually work to improve the complaint management process to meet operational needs and the expectations of customers, including providing support to vulnerable people, people with disability, indigenous people, young people and culturally and linguistically diverse people.
 - iii. Facilitate: the Shire will work together to reach a solution that provides the best outcome for all parties wherever practical and actively communicate with all involved
- d. Complaints are used as an opportunity to improve services:
 - i. Accountability: the Shire will ensure that our staff are aware of and accountable for complaints.
 - ii. Learning: the Shire will respond to and learn from complaints with the intention to continually improve our services
 - iii. Prevention: the Shire will effectively report on and analyse complaints to identify trends and endeavour to minimise the escalation of complaints.

The Shire will maintain a complaints management process as part of its Complaints Management Framework to ensure that the above principles are applied for the management of all complaints.