

COUNCIL POLICY



TITLE:	CUSTOMER COMPLAINT HANDLING POLICY
ID NUMBER:	CPO-CORPS-CUST-003
DEPARTMENT:	Corporate Services
UNIT:	Governance
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:	Director Corporate Services

ADOPTED DATE AND BY WHOM:	14 December 2021 Council
EXPIRY DATE:	14 December 2025
REVIEW DATE:	30 November 2025 <i>This policy will be reviewed every four years or as required by any legislative or council changes.</i>

AVAILABILITY:	Staff - Organisation wide Public – Website
ADVISE AVAILABILITY:	Sou Wester (Responsible Officer to prepare article)

(This document is uncontrolled when printed)

1. References

- Customer service charter
- Complaint handling Guideline
- Public interest disclosure procedure (DocSetID:2580165)
- *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic)*
- Glenelg Shire Council, Records Management Policy OPO-CORPS-RECM-001 (DocSetID: 1933907)

2. Purpose

This policy aims to ensure an open and transparent complaint handling system.

We are an organisation that view complaints and feedback as a positive opportunity to learn and ultimately improve the service we provide.

3. Scope

Dealing with complaints is a core part of Council business. We value complaints and encourage people to contact us when they an issue or concern with our services, actions, decisions, and policies.

Glenelg Shire Council are committed to:

- Enabling members of the public to make complaints about the Council
- Responding to complaints by taking action to resolve complaints as quickly as possible
- Learning from complaints to improve our services.

We treat every complaint we receive on its individual merits, through clear and consistent processes. Our complaints policy applies to all complaints from members of the public about Council staff, Council contractors and decisions made at Council meetings. This policy does not apply to complaints about individual Councillors.

4. What is a 'complaint'?

A complaint includes a communication (verbal or written) to the Council which expresses dissatisfaction about:

- the quality of an action, decision or service provided by Council staff or a Council contractor
- a delay by Council staff or a Council contractor in taking an action, making a decision or delivering a service
- a policy or decision made by the Council, Council staff or a Council contractor.

In this policy:

'Council staff' is any person employed by the Council to carry out the functions of the Council, and the Council's CEO.

'Council contractor' is any third-party engaged by the Council to carry out functions on the Council's behalf.

'the Council' means the body of elected Councillors.

This policy does not apply to the following matters or complaints, which are managed through other processes:

- complaints about allegations of fraud or corrupt conduct
- complaints about alleged privacy breaches
- complaints about Councillors
- complaints about matters for which there is a process of review or appeal or objection prescribed by legislation

A complaint does not include:

- a request for information, documentation or explanation of policy or procedure
- reports about neighbours or neighbouring properties (e.g. noise or unauthorised building works)
- an issue that is the responsibility of another authority or service provider
- an insurance claim
- a claim made under Protected Disclosure
- the lodgement of an appeal or objection in accordance with standard procedure or policy (eg. Objection to a development application or property valuation etc)

Some examples of how to determine a service request vs complaint:

Complaint	Service request
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> My bin was out but wasn't collected this morning. Can you pick it up? <i>(complaining that the Council didn't provide a service)</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I forgot to put my bin out, can someone collect it? <i>(requesting a service because of their own mistake)</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You haven't sent out my rates notice. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can you tell me when my next rates payment is due?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Council shouldn't have approved a development on Main Road. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is the process for objecting to the development on Main Road?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Council's website doesn't have enough information about when a planning permit is needed for a pool. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can you tell me whether a planning permit is required for a backyard pool?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Council's investigation into noise from a business wasn't rigorous, and didn't look at peak times. More investigation is needed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> My neighbour's business is very noisy. Can you make it stop?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A pothole I reported to Council two months ago hasn't been fixed, and is getting worse. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Could Council fill in a pothole in my street?

A complaint may lead to a service request being lodged. For example, a complaint about a missed bin might result in a service request for the bin to be collected – however, it should still be counted as a complaint.

4.1 Other types of complaints

4.1.1 Complaints about Councillors

Complaints that relate to the Mayor and Councillors are to be handled in accordance with the Councillor Code of Conduct and reported to the Chief Executive Officer.

4.1.2 Complaints about allegations of fraud and corruption

These complaints are to be referred to the Public Interest Disclosure Coordinator (PDC) or the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) or if an allegation relates to the CEO, the matter must be reported to the PDC.

4.1.3 Complaints about privacy breaches

Complaints about alleged privacy breaches should be referred to Council's Privacy and Freedom of Information Officer.

4.1.4 Complaints about Children's Services

Complaints about matters relating to Children's Services 'Notifiable and Serious Incidents' in regard to the *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010* and the *Education and Care National Regulations 2011* and Victorian kindergarten policy, procedures and funding criteria are to be referred to the Director Community Services.

4.1.5 Complaints about matters relating to Aged and Disability Services

Notifiable and Serious Incidents in regard to the Aged Care Quality Standards, Commonwealth Home Support Program Manual 2020-22 and Victorian Home and Community Care program manual 2013 will be referred to the Director Community Services.

4.1.6 Complaints received via Social Media

When a complaint has been received via social media, the system administrator will take the matter off line and in conjunction with the relevant Service Unit determine the most appropriate Council officer for investigation and resolution.

5. How to make a complaint

Any member of the public can make a complaint.

Complaints can be made by:

Online: www.glenelg.vic.gov.au [details on where form is located when GSC webpage is ready]

Telephone: 1300GLENELG (1300 453 635) normal business hours

Hearing or Speech Impaired:

Call us via the National Relay Service (www.relayservice.com.au) on 13 36 77 then ask for 1300 453 635.

Speak and Listen users phone 1300 555 727 then ask for 1300 453 635.

Email: complaints@glenelg.vic.gov.au

Post: Glenelg Shire Council, PO Box 152, Portland Victoria 3305

In person: Customer Service Centre

Portland – 71 Cliff Street
Casterton – 67 Henty Street
Heywood – 77 Edgar Street

Additional information that will help the complaint being resolved:

- Name and contact details. You can complain anonymously, but this may limit how the Council responds to you
- Identify the action, decision, service or policy you are complaining about, and why you are dissatisfied
- Give us relevant details, such as dates, times, location or reference numbers, and documents that support your complaint
- The outcome you are seeking from making your complaint
- Whether you have any communication needs.

We are committed to ensuring our complaints process is accessible to everyone.

Tell us if you have specific communication needs or barriers, and we can assist you by:

- using an assistance service, such an interpreter or TTY (teletypewriter) (for free) and Hearing or speech impaired: Call us via the National Relay Service (www.relayservice.com.au) on 1300 553 467 then ask for 1300 453 635.

- Customers need to register with the NRS to be able to use this service (unless for an emergency). If someone needs help to register, they can call 1800 555 660 or TTY 1800 555 630
- talking with you if you have trouble reading or writing
- communicating with another person acting on your behalf if you cannot make the complaint yourself.

6. Our complaints process

When you complain to us, we will record and acknowledge your complaint within five business days. (an automated response will be sent if you provide an email address, or a letter via post will be sent within the 5 days)

We will initially assess your complaint to decide how we will handle it. This may happen while we are talking with you.

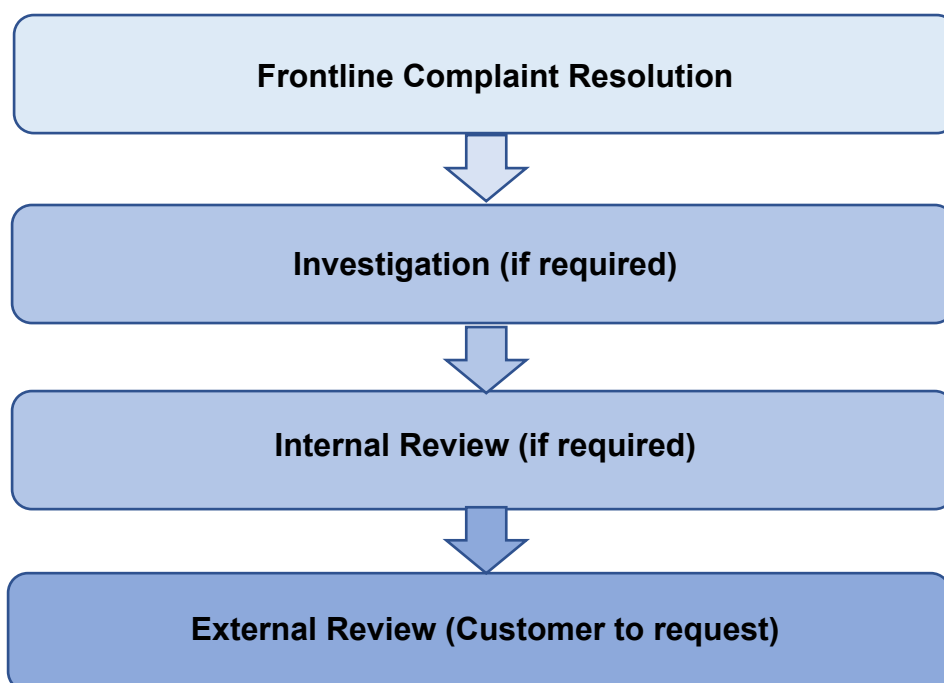
After our initial assessment, we may:

- take direct action to resolve your complaint
- refer your complaint to the relevant team or manager for investigation
- decline to deal with your complaint if you have a right to a statutory review of your complaint (such as a right of appeal to Victorian Civil Appeals Tribunal).

Where possible, we will attempt to resolve your complaint at the time you first contact us.

If we decide not to take action on your complaint, we will explain why, and, where possible, inform you about other options.

Below is the flow of how our complaint handling moves through process if required



6.1 Frontline Complaint Resolution

Complaint registration and acknowledgement (within 5 business days)

- Initial triage and basic information gathering
- Early resolution of straightforward complaints

Early resolution of a complaint may involve arranging for the Council to give you advice or explaining why we are not going to take action on your complaint.

- It may not be possible to resolve your complaint when you first contact us if your complaint requires deeper consideration or investigation by a particular team or officer, or needs to follow a statutory process or cannot be resolved satisfactorily.

6.2 Investigation if required

Further information gathering (providing a decision within 30 calendar days or advising the complainant if this will take longer than the 30 days)

- Evidence-based decision and remedy (if any)
- Ongoing communication with and written outcome to complainant

We aim to complete investigations within 30 calendar days and will tell you if the investigation will take longer. We will update you every 30 calendar days about progress until the investigation is completed. We will inform you of the outcome of your complaint and explain our reasons.

6.3 Internal Review

If you are dissatisfied with our decision and how we responded to your complaint, you can request an internal review.

The Internal review will be conducted by a senior Council officer (providing a response and advising if this will take longer than 30 days) who has not had any prior involvement with your complaint. We will inform you of the outcome of the internal review and explain our reasons within 30 calendar days of the date of this letter.

If you request an internal review it must be in writing. The request must contain the full details of the complaint, including the cause and reason why you are dissatisfied with the way the matter was handled. Address the request to:

Director Corporate Services
Glenelg Shire Council
PO Box 152, Portland 3305 or email
complaints@glenelg.vic.gov.au

6.4 External Review

You can request an external review on your complaint via an external organisation.

There are external bodies that can deal with different types of complaints about us.

You can request an external review from the following organisations.

Complaint	Organisation to contact for external review
<p>Actions or decisions of a Council, Council staff and contractors.</p> <p>This includes failure to consider human rights or failure to act compatibly with a human right under the <i>Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006</i> (Vic)</p>	<p>Victorian Ombudsman www.ombudsman.vic.gov.au</p>
<p>Breaches of the Local Government Act</p>	<p>Local Government Inspectorate www.lgi.vic.gov.au</p>
<p>Breach of privacy.</p> <p>Complaint about a freedom of information application</p>	<p>Office of the Victorian Information Commission www.ovic.vic.gov.au</p>
<p>Corruption or public interest disclosure ('whistleblower') complaints</p>	<p>Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission www.ibac.vic.gov.au</p>
<p>Discrimination</p>	<p>Victorian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission www.humanrights.vic.gov.au</p>
<p>Council elections</p>	<p>Victorian Electoral Commission www.vec.vic.gov.au</p>

7. How we learn from complaints

Complaints from people who use or who are affected by our services provide us with valuable feedback about how we are performing.

We regularly analyse our complaint data to identify trends and potential issues that deserve further attention. We use this information to come up with solutions about how we can improve our services.

We are open and transparent about the complaints we have received, and what we have done to resolve them. We publish our complaint data including in our annual report.

8 Privacy and Confidentially

Council is committed to protecting individual's right to privacy when gathering information to respond to a complaint. We will only:

- Collect the personal information to investigate and resolve the complaint, or to address systemic issues arising from the complaint.
- forward the complaint to the appropriate Council Department as part of our investigation or complaint resolution processes, or if the law requires us to do so; and
- disclose it in a de-identified format when reporting data to the public.

If you choose not to provide the required information, Council may not be able to assist in resolving your complaint.

If you have any questions about how your personal information will be handled or would like to gain access to your personal information, you can contact the following details:

Council's Privacy and Freedom of Information Officer
Glenelg Shire Council
PO Box 152
PORTLAND 3305
Phone 03 5522 2305.
Email enquiry@glenelg.vic.gov.au

9. Records Management

All Council records created and managed as a result of implementing this policy will be managed in accordance with the Council's Records Management Policy.

The Records Management Policy assigns responsibilities for records management to employees, supervisors, volunteers and other specific positions.

No Council records are to be destroyed without consideration of the requirements of the Act(s) that govern the functions relevant to this policy. Prior to destruction, advice must be sought from the Information and Data Unit, with consideration to the requirements of the appropriate Retention and Disposal Authority (RDA).

10. Victorian State Legislation Copyright Acknowledgement

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