

COMPLAINTS HANDLING POLICY - DRAFT

Approval Body:	Council
Endorsement Date:	
Council Plan Reference:	5.1 Design and deliver fit for purpose customer experiences that are empathetic, consistent, accessible and responsive to customer needs. 5.4 Promote community engagement in Council decision making through transparent governance and accessible communication
Current Version:	1.1 <i>Council policy documents change from time to time, and it is recommended that you consult the electronic reference copy on Casey Council's Website to ensure that you have the current version. Alternatively, you may contact Customer Service on 9705 5200.</i>
Compulsory Review Cycle:	4 years
Review Date:	
Responsible Department:	Customer and Digital
Relevant Legislation:	• Local Government Act 2020 - Section 57 (Public Transparency Policy) • Local Government Act 2020 - Section 107 (Complaints Policy) • The Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 • Freedom of Information Act 1982 • Public Interest Disclosure Act 2012 • Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 • Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005
Relevant Council Documents:	• Customer Service Charter • Complaints against Councillors Policy • Public Interest Disclosures Policy • Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy • Managing Unreasonable Complainant Conduct Policy • Privacy Policy
Breaches:	
ECM ID:	

1. Purpose and Intent

As a customer-focused organisation, Council values feedback on the way we deliver our services and how we can continue to improve our services. Council is committed to providing a transparent, fair, accessible, safe and consistent process for receiving, managing and learning from complaints.

We realise that sometimes, despite our best efforts, customers may not be satisfied with how we delivered a service or the decisions that we made.

The Complaint Handling Policy provides information on what customers can expect when making a complaint to Council.

2. Scope

This policy applies to Council officers, volunteers and contractors carrying out services on Council's behalf.

If a complaint falls under another statutory review, appeal or complaint pathway, Council may decline to deal with it under this policy and will provide information about the appropriate pathway. This can include decisions, directions and processes relating to:

- allegations of fraud or corruption
- public interest disclosures
- complaints against Councillors
- internal staff grievances
- privacy and health records
- freedom of information
- matters under external review or legal proceedings
- liability claims
- decisions made under legislation that provide separate avenues of review, such as; decisions made under the Building Act, Planning and Environment Act, Local Government Act, Infringements Act and Valuation of Land Act, Public Health and Wellbeing Act - section 63 and Domestic Animals Act - section 98.

3. Definitions

Complaint	Communication, by any channel, whether verbally or in writing, to the Council by a person of their dissatisfaction with – • the quality of an action taken, decision made, or service provided by a member of council staff, or a contractor engaged by the council; or • the delay by a member of council staff or a contractor engaged by the council in taking action, making a decision, or providing a service; or • a policy or decision made by a Council or a member of Council staff or a contractor.
Contractor	A person, company or other entity that undertakes, provides materials or labour to perform a service or completes an activity on behalf of the City of Casey
Council	Casey City Council
Councillor	Council's elected representatives (the Mayor and Councillors) appointed to act in this capacity.
Council officer	Any person employed by the Council to carry out the functions of the Council, and the Council's CEO.
Customer	An individual, business or organisation that use the services of the City of Casey
Feedback	A compliment or criticism, comment or suggestion where a response is not sought or not reasonable to expect.
Frontline staff/ officer	A Council officer or anyone representing or contracted by the City of Casey who has direct contact with customers.
Request for service	Contact with the City of Casey to seek assistance, information, request for service, advice or inform/make a report about something the City of Casey is responsible for.

4. Guiding Principles

The Complaint Handling Policy is based on the principles outlined in the Victorian Ombudsman's *Good practice guide: Complaint handling for Victorian public sector organisations. (April 2025)*

Commitment	Council is committed to receiving and resolving complaints. We value complaints and recognise they are part of our core business of serving the community and improving our services.
Accessibility	All people can easily complain and staff actively assist them to navigate the complaints process.
Transparency	We make it clear how to complain, where to complain, and how the complaint will be handled. The steps taken to respond to a complaint are recorded and will stand up to scrutiny.
Objectivity and fairness	Complaints are dealt with courteously, impartially, within timeframes and are assessed on merit.
Privacy	Complaint information is handled according to privacy laws and other relevant legislation. We provide clear information about how we handle personal information. Complaint data is de-identified if reported on more widely.
Accountability	We are accountable internally and externally, for decision making and complaint handling. We provide reasons for decisions and ensure we are open to appropriate review processes.
Continuous improvement	Acting on, learning from and using complaint data helps us identify opportunities for improvement.

5.Roles and Responsibilities

All Council officers are accountable to the complaint handling procedure. Roles and responsibilities may vary depending on the structure of each team.

Frontline staff	The first point of contact for the customer. This is not limited to customer service frontline; it includes all officers who have direct contact with customers. They are responsible for clarifying and attempting to resolve the complaint where possible. If they are unable to resolve the complaint, they will refer the complaint to the relevant specialist for investigation.
Case Management Team	The Case Management team are responsible for liaising with services for level 2 complaints and facilitating a coordinated response for complaints that involve multiple Council services. This includes communicating with customers about timeframes, next steps, outcomes and escalating the complaint if requested by the customer.
Managers or Heads Of	Managers or their delegated Head Of position are responsible for level 3 internal review of complaints including the final decision and providing a written outcome. Managers are expected to promote and ensure staff are adhering to this policy. Investigation of a complaint may be delegated to a leadership team member with no prior involvement.
Directors	On occasion managers may seek advice or support from Directors regarding a complaint. However, the manager remains the officer responsible for the final decision and written outcome.
Chief Executive Officer (CEO)	The CEO will have oversight of any formal complaints received from the Victorian Ombudsman's Office or against a direct report to the CEO.
Mayor	The elected Mayor is responsible for management of complaints received against the CEO.
Councillors	Councillors are responsible for ensuring all complaints received from members of the community are directed to the relevant service in accordance with this policy.

6. How to make a complaint

Complaints can be made using any of the following channels and we will do our best to interact with customers on the channel of their choice.

To help us respond to a complaint please include as much detail as possible including name, address, contact details as well as a brief description of the issue and issue location.

Council accepts anonymous complaints and will assess and act on them to the extent possible based on the information provided, risk, seriousness and ability to investigate. It can be difficult to resolve issues or to enforce legislation without the ability to thoroughly investigate and gather evidence and witness information. In some cases, Council will only be able to investigate a complaint where all the necessary information is provided. As Council is unable to contact an anonymous complainant, we cannot provide updates or an outcome on anonymous complaints

Online	www.casey.vic.gov.au via complaint form, webchat, or social media direct messaging
Email	caseycc@casey.vic.gov.au
Telephone	03 9705 5200
Post	City of Casey, PO Box 1000 Narre Warren Vic 3805
In person	At one of our Customer Service Centres • Civic Centre: Bunjil Place, 2 Patrick Northeast Drive, Narre Warren • Cranbourne Park Shopping Centre: Shop 156, South Gippsland Highway, Cranbourne Complaints may also be received in person at any other customer facing spaces, events, forums etc.

Accessibility

Council is committed to ensuring that all people can make a complaint, including people with a disability, people who need an interpreter, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, children and young people, and people experiencing vulnerability.

If customers are unable to make a complaint themselves, we will assist people who may need help or accept complaints from authorised representatives.

Accessible options to make a complaint include;

National Relay Service (NRS)	Phone: 1800 555 677 Web: www.relayservice.com.au
Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS)	Phone: 131 450

7. Complaint Handling Procedure

Council has a four-level approach to complaint handling.

Level 1 – Frontline resolution

Where possible, Council will aim to resolve complaints the first time a customer contacts us.

When a complaint is received, our frontline staff will:

- Acknowledge the complaint promptly in line with our *Customer Service Charter*
- Clarify the issue and the desired outcome to ensure the complaint is clearly understood
- Make an initial assessment and seek to resolve the complaint. If further assessment is required to resolve your complaint, we will keep you informed of the expected timeframe for resolution.
- Record the complaint and relevant details for transparency and continuous improvement.

If Council is not the right organisation to address the complaint, we will assist customers by providing details of the appropriate organisation.

If a complaint involves multiple Council services, the complaint may be referred to our Case Management team who will liaise with relevant officers to provide customers with an outcome.

If a complaint cannot be resolved at first contact, requires further assessment or investigation, or relates to staff conduct, it will be escalated to Level 2.

Level 2 – Investigation

If a complaint cannot be resolved at first contact, it will be escalated to Level 2 for investigation. This is managed by our Case Management Team.

Our Case Management team will:

- Contact the customer in line with our *Customer Service Charter* to clarify the details of the complaint and the customers desired outcome.
- Record all details and correspondence relating to the complaint.
- Engage with relevant Council officers to investigate the complaint.
- Provide an outcome to the customer, including reasons and any actions taken within 10 working days. If we need more time or information, we will contact the customer to inform them and provide further explanation.

Complaints about staff members' conduct will be investigated and managed accordingly by the relevant supervisor. We may not be able to provide details on the outcome or actions taken in relation to the staff member.

If the customer believes that Council have made the wrong decision in the complaint investigation, then we will advise internal review options.

Level 3 – Internal review

If a customer believes Council officers have made the wrong decision in a complaint investigation or are dissatisfied with how the complaint was handled, they can request an internal review.

The complaint is then referred to a manager who has not previously been involved in the complaint. The manager or their delegate will:

- Acknowledge the complaint inline with our Customer Service Charter.
- Review the complaint to consider whether it was handled fairly, the outcome was reasonable, and if any further remedy or service improvement is required.
- Contact the customer in writing within 28 working days to advise the outcome, including the reasons for their decision. If we need more time or information to review a complaint, the customer will be contacted with an update and timeframe for resolution.
- All details and correspondence relating to the complaint will be recorded.

Once an internal review has been completed, we will consider the complaint closed and provide relevant options for external review. We will not revisit the same complaint unless new or relevant information is provided that was not previously available.

Level 4 – External review

If the customer is dissatisfied with the process or outcome of their complaint through Council's complaint handling process, the customer may refer the matter to the relevant external organisation.

External review avenues for complaints

There are several organisations that can provide an external review of complaints relating to a council.

Organisation to contact for external review	Type of complaint
Victorian Ombudsman www.ombudsman.vic.gov.au 03 9613 6222	Actions or decisions of a council, council staff and contractors. This includes failure to consider human rights or failure to act compatibly with a human right under the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic)
Local Government Inspectorate www.lgi.vic.gov.au	Breaches of the Local Government Act
Office of the Victorian Information Commission www.ovic.vic.gov.au	Breach of privacy. Complaints about a freedom of information application
Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission www.ibac.vic.gov.au	Corruption or public interest disclosure ('whistleblower') complaints
Victorian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission www.humanrights.vic.gov.au	Complaints regarding discrimination, sexual harassment and racial or religious vilification.
Victorian Electoral Commission www.vec.vic.gov.au	Council elections

8. Complaints with alternative procedures

Complaints about contractors	Council may refer complaints about contractors to the contractor in the first instance where appropriate, but remains responsible for oversight of complaints about services delivered on its behalf. If a customer is not satisfied with the outcome of a complaint managed by a contractor, they can request for the complaint to be escalated to Council in accordance with this policy.
Complaints about allegations of corrupt conduct	Complaints involving allegations of improper or corrupt conduct will be handled in accordance with the <i>Public Interest Disclosures Policy</i> .
Complaints against Councillors	Complaints regarding Councillors will be handled in accordance with the <i>Complaints Against Councillors Policy</i> .
Complaints about the Chief Executive Officer	Complaints regarding the Chief Executive Officer will be investigated by the elected Mayor. Complaints can be emailed to officeofcouncil@casey.vic.gov.au
Complaints, reports or allegations concerning abuse, harm or neglect of a child or young person by a City of Casey employee, Councillor, contractor or volunteer	Complaints can be made by a child, young person or adult about alleged reportable conduct by emailing childsafes@vic.gov.au or calling 9705 5200 and asking to speak to a member of Council's Child Safe Team. All child safety concerns and allegations are taken seriously and responded to in a timely, thorough and confidential manner. The Internal Response Team (IRT) responds to child safety incident reports. Referring to Council's Code of Conduct and guidance from the Social Services Regulator (SSR), each incident report is considered to determine whether it needs to be reported to Victoria Police, Child Protection and/or SSR, as required under the Reportable Conduct Scheme. For further information on child safe reporting, refer to Casey's <i>Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy</i>.

9. Unreasonable complainant conduct

While most customers have legitimate concerns and genuinely seek resolution, a small proportion of customers demonstrate unreasonable concerns and uncooperative behaviour or conduct which can impact Councils' resources and efficiency levels, as well as the productivity, safety and wellbeing of staff.

Unreasonable Complainant Conduct (UCC) is defined as "behaviour by a current or former complainant which, because of its nature and frequency, raises substantial health, safety, resource or equity issues."

Unreasonable conduct is recognised as falling into five categories:

- Unreasonable persistence
- Unreasonable demands
- Unreasonable lack of cooperation
- Unreasonable arguments
- Unreasonable behaviour

Unreasonable complainants will be managed in accordance with the ***Managing Unreasonable Complainant Conduct Policy***

10. Remedies

Where Council has made an error, we will apologise and take steps to address the situation, which may include; an explanation, service correction, reconsideration, expedited action, or improvement to reduce the risk of recurrence.

11. Learning from complaints

Complaints provide us with valuable feedback about how we are performing and potential improvements to how we deliver our services.

We record and regularly analyse our complaint data to monitor timeframes, identify trends and repeat issues that require further attention. We use this information to identify how we can improve our services.

We record the following information for each complaint:

- customer's details
- how the complaint was received
- a description of the complaint
- location of the issue (where relevant)
- customer's desired outcome (if known)
- Council officer responsible for handling the complaint
- any action taken, including contact with the customer, response times and the outcome
- any recommendations for improvement, and who is responsible for implementing them

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

12. Privacy and confidentiality

Council values our community's privacy when collecting information to respond to a complaint. Information is collected in accordance with our ***Privacy Policy***, Council will only:

- use it to deal with the complaint or to address systemic issues arising from the complaint
- disclose it in a de-identified format when disclosing data to the public
- share it with Council officers on a need-to-know basis

13. Relevant policies

Policy	Link
Complaints Against Councillors Policy	www.casey.vic.gov.au/policies-strategies/complaints-againstcouncillors-policy
Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy	www.casey.vic.gov.au/policies-strategies/child-safe-policy
Customer Service Charter	www.casey.vic.gov.au/customer-service-charter
Managing Unreasonable Complainant Conduct Policy	www.casey.vic.gov.au/policies-strategies/managingunreasonable-complainant-conduct-policy
Privacy Policy	www.casey.vic.gov.au/policies-strategies/privacy-policy
Public Interest Disclosures Policy	www.casey.vic.gov.au/policies-strategies/public-interests-disclosures-policy

14. Document history

Date approved	Change Type	Version	Next Review Date
12 July 2024	Administrative change changing title of a role contained in roles and responsibilities	1.1	14 December 2025
14 December 2021	Document Initiation	1.0	14 December 2025