



TATIARA DISTRICT COUNCIL

**CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS
AND DISPUTE
RESOLUTION POLICY**

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 “A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the Council or its staff, affecting an individual customer or group of customers”.
- 1.2 Tatiara District Council is committed to achieving transparency and accountability in its administrative and management practices and hence needs an efficient and effective complaint handling process.

2. PURPOSE.

Tatiara District Council recognises the value of customer complaints as an important tool in monitoring and responding to customer expectations. In order for Council to respond appropriately to complaints, the complaints should be properly recorded and assessed as part of an on going complaints management process.

- 2.1 The purpose of the Tatiara District Council Customer Complaint and Dispute Resolution Policy (Policy) is to:
 - (a) Recognise, promote and protect customers’ rights to complain about their dealings with Tatiara District Council.
 - (b) Ensure that an accessible complaints management process is in place.
 - (c) Take appropriate action to resolve complaints as required.
 - (d) Provide a mechanism for resolving complaints in a timely, efficient and courteous manner.
 - (e) Record, assess and review complaints on an ongoing basis in order to improve the products and services offered by Tatiara District Council.
- 2.2 Council acknowledges that a complaint may not always be legitimate and/or may be exaggerated. However, the same principles and procedures apply for all complaint resolution.
- 2.3 The use of this Procedure does not negate the right of the customer to make a complaint to the State Ombudsman or to the Minister for State/Local Government Relations or to take other legal action.

3. OBJECTIVE.

- (a) The objective of this Policy is to embed an effective and efficient complaints management process that is aligned with Tatiara District Council’s business values, core vision and strategic objectives.
- (b) This Policy applies to all employees and Elected Members of Tatiara District Council and all individuals who wish to make a complaint relating to Tatiara District Council.
- (c) In developing this Policy, Tatiara District Council has adopted industry best practice and ensured that its customer complaints management process is compliant with the Australian

Standard AS ISO 10002-2006 'Customer Satisfaction – Guidelines for complaints handling in organisations'.

- (d) The Policy is also supported by the various Council policies and procedures that form part of our broader Governance Framework, in particular, Tatiara District Council's:
- (i) Customer Charter.
 - (ii) Risk Management Policy.
 - (iii) Code of Conduct for Staff and for Elected Members.

4. POLICY STATEMENT.

- (a) Tatiara District Council recognises that all individuals have the right to complain, have their complaint heard and be treated with dignity and respect. Any individual who makes a complaint also has the right to not be discriminated against as a result of making the complaint. This means customers will not be treated unfavourably, including in the way Council communicates and provides services both during the resolution of the complaint and once the complaint is resolved.
- (b) Tatiara District Council recognises that complaints can often highlight gaps in our processes and encourages customers to raise issues so that they can be addressed.
- (c) The guiding principles from the AS ISO 10002-2006 'Customer Satisfaction – Guidelines for complaints handling in organisations' apply to Council in the following manner:

Commitment - Tatiara District Council members, the CEO and Senior Management are committed to an integrated dispute resolution system and providing the necessary support and resources for the system to operate effectively (including the provision of appropriately trained employees, the implementation of an enterprise-wide internal complaints management process and the existence of a robust complaints reporting procedure).

Resources – Tatiara District Council has deployed the necessary resources to ensure that the Internal Dispute Resolution process operates effectively and efficiently, and that complaints are managed by staff who have received sufficient training and are competent to deal with complaints that are received.

Visibility – Tatiara District Council informs its customers of its complaints management process by making it publically available at all times on the Council website www.tatiara.sa.gov.au. Employees who also receive and/or manage complaints have a thorough understanding of the Council complaints management process and can provide this information to customers upon request.

Accessibility – All individuals have the right to make a complaint to Council by any reasonable means (eg.in person, telephone, email, online and in writing). See attached form for written complaints.

Responsiveness –Council will deal with and respond to complaints promptly and will keep complainants informed of the process and the progress of their complaint.

Objectivity – Each complaint is addressed in an equitable, objective and unbiased manner. Council recognises the need to be fair to both the complainant and any employee involved in the handling of the complaint.

Charges – Tatiara District Council does not charge customers for the lodgement and processing of complaints.

Confidentiality – All complaints are recorded and dealt with in the strictest confidence. Personal information of the complainant is accessed only as necessary, and only for the purposes of addressing the complaint. All personal information is treated by Council consistent with its obligations under the Privacy Act.

Customer-focused approach – Council is committed to the efficient and equitable resolution of complaints, and acknowledges each individual’s right to complain.

Accountability – Complaints are reported to Senior Management and to the Council body as considered appropriate. An overview of complaints statistics is reported to the Council’s Audit Committee for review, together with information on the Council complaints management process.

Continual Improvement – Tatiara District Council has established a complaints tracking system to ensure that systemic problems are identified, classified and analysed. The Council Internal Dispute Resolution process is reviewed on an annual basis to ensure it is delivering effective outcomes.

5. DEFINITION OF A COMPLAINT

5.1 A complaint:

- In accordance with the AS ISO 10002-2006 definition: an expression of Dissatisfaction made to Tatiara District Council where a response or resolution is expected (either explicitly or implicitly). The expression of Dissatisfaction may be related to Council’s products, services, policies, procedures or the complaints management process. It is to be differentiated from an ‘Enquiry’.
- Is an expression of dissatisfaction with the way that Council conducts its business and could be an Expression of dissatisfaction with any of the following:
 - the Council’s policies or procedures,
 - determinations or decisions made by council, its officers or agents
 - level or quality of service provided by Council,
 - charges levied by council
 - behaviour of a Council employee or agent, which can be investigated and acted upon
- Is a formal statement usually received in writing, by e-mail or by informal means to the CEO, Council members or staff.
- May require a senior level of involvement to resolve the matter.
- Is distinct from a request for service, however a request for service may develop into a complaint where the provision or timeliness of the service is considered unsatisfactory.
- Complaints lodged about decisions made within a structured process are not treated as ‘complaints’ for the purposes of the complaints management process described in

this document. A structured process is where legislation specifically provides for an appeal, or an internal or external review of a decision. Eg. A planning appeal

5.2 Complaints **do not** include:

- A request for service (unless there was no response to a first request for service)
- A request for information or an explanation of a policy or procedure
- Disagreement with a Council policy
- Reports of damaged or faulty infrastructure
- An expression of dissatisfaction with the behaviour of a Councillor
- Reports about neighbours, noise, dogs, nuisances or unauthorised building work

5.3 This Policy applies to customers who:

- Raise complaints on the level of services provided.
- Raise complaints on the standard of service provided.
- Have concerns regarding the conduct of an employee.
- Have concerns regarding the processes in relation to the assessment of development (not any decision arising from a development application assessment).

5.4 This Policy does not apply to customers who wish to make a complaint about the conduct of a Council member, such a complaint needs to be lodged in writing with the CEO or the Mayor.

5.5 This Policy does not apply to customers who wish to review a Council, Council Committee or Officer decision made under delegation, such a complaint needs to be lodged under Council Policy – Procedure for Internal Review of Council Decisions Policy.

6 OPERATION PROCEDURE

6.1 How to Submit a Complaint

Customers can provide their complaint to Council Administration in writing via letter, email, facsimile or Council's website (www.tatiara.sa.gov.au) or via the use of Council's (green) Complaint form. Job requests are submitted on Council's yellow Job Docket form

Council staff will assist a customer to make a complaint when requested. Assistance could include provision of information, assistance with the procedure and/or lodging of the complaint form/documentation.

6.2 Procedure for Handling the Complaint Report Form

Upon receipt of the Complaint Report Form the Officer receiving the request shall:

- a) Ensure all details have been entered correctly on the form.
- b) Write his/her name, title and date in the space provided.
- c) Give the Complainant a duplicate copy of the form for their record purposes.
- d) Forward the original to the Records Section for logging into the Complaint Register and allocation of a file number.
- e) Once the complaint form has been registered, the Records Section shall forward it for consideration to the relevant Manager (or CEO, if appropriate) for review, investigation, remedial action and response.
- f) The Manager (or CEO if appropriate) may direct an appropriate Officer to investigate the complaint and respond as necessary.

6.3 Response

- Responses must be comprehensive and deal with all the issues contained in the complaint. The response must be accurate because an inaccurate response undermines the credibility of the organisation
- All complaints will be regarded seriously and will be dealt with in the shortest possible time, and every endeavour will be made to resolve complaints satisfactorily
- The relevant Manager (or CEO) will make contact with the complainant to inform them of the investigation outcome and, if required, further actions taken. This contact may be made in person, via telephone or via written response
- Council will strive to respond within 15 days of receipt of the complaint. Where the matter needs Council consideration or detailed investigation (especially complaints about third parties) the complainant will be notified of the next Council meeting date or when investigations may be concluded and when they can expect a final response.

6.4 Finalising Documentation

The relevant manager will complete the complaint documentation outlining response and/or actions taken and return it to the Administration Officer for input into the Complaint Register.

- 6.5 If complainants are not satisfied they may seek for the Chief Executive Officer to review the complaint and response.

7 REPORTING

Regular reporting is important for the identification of improvement opportunities for the Council. At least monthly the Management team will review the Complaint Register so that trends can be reviewed, successes reported and the Council's processes can be continuously improved. It will also enable the CEO to monitor if no action has been taken by any officers who have been given the task to deal with a complaint.

8 REVIEW & EVALUATION

The effectiveness of this Procedure will be reviewed once in the term of Council by the Management Team.

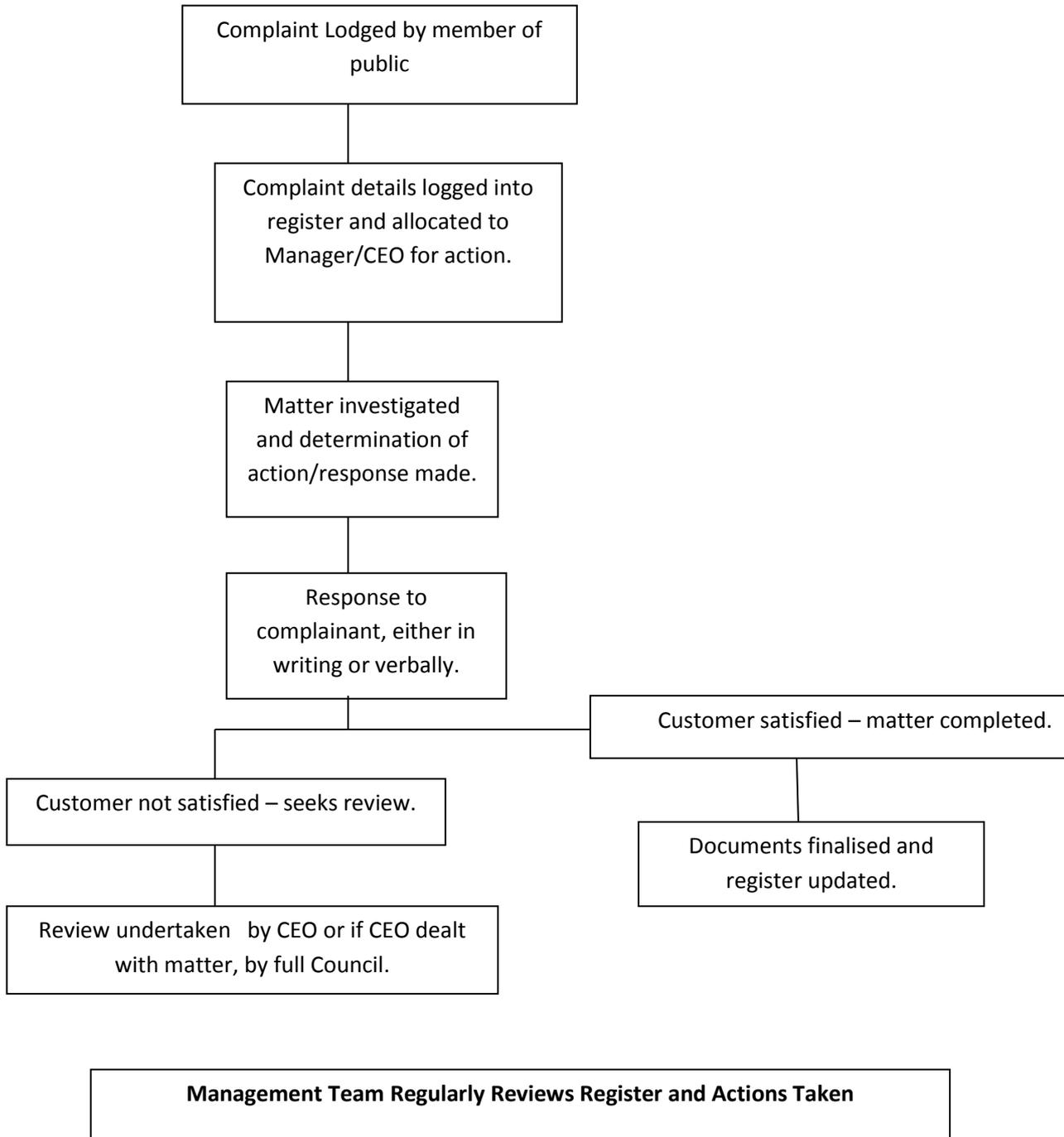
9 AVAILABILITY OF PROCEDURE

This Procedure will be available for inspection at the Council Office during ordinary business hours and on the Council's website www.tatiara.sa.gov.au. Copies will also be provided to interested members of the community upon request.

10 RECORD OF AMENDMENTS

Date	Revision No	Reason For Amendment
2 nd November 2011	Rev: 00	Draft Customer Complaint Handling Procedure Prepared
13 th December 2011	Rev: 01	Procedure Adopted – Council Res No: 3
12 th August 2014	Rev: 02	Procedure renamed and amended in line with AS ISO 10002 - 2006

Tatiara District Council Complaint Procedure





CUSTOMER COMPLAINT FORM

All personal details remain CONFIDENTIAL

Use this form to lodge a complaint about Council's services, administrative action(s) or the conduct of our people. Please do not use this form to request normal services from Council eg reporting of potholes or overhanging trees. These should be reported by calling (08) 8752 1044, filling out a Job Docket, emailing office@tatiara.sa.gov.au or in person at the Council office.

COMPLAINT DETAILS

Title: _____ Last Name: _____ First Name/s: _____

Address: _____ P/Code: _____

Telephone (Home): _____ (Work): _____ (Mobile): _____

Other ways to contact you (eg facsimile, e-mail): _____

Details of Complaint*

Please provide full details of your complaint including times, dates, places, people involved and any background information you think would be useful. If necessary please provide additional information on a separate sheet.

WITNESS DETAILS (if applicable)

Name: _____

Address: _____ Daytime Contact Number: _____

COMPLAINT OUTCOME:

As a result of making this complaint, is there any outcome you would like? Yes No

If yes, please provide details:

Have you raised your complaint with us before? Yes No If yes, tell us who you spoke to, what you were told and why you are still dissatisfied. Attach any documentation you have from your previous contact. Use a separate sheet if needed.

WHAT TO EXPECT

We take complaints seriously. Your information will be treated confidentially. We will inform you of progress and we will endeavour to resolve your complaint within 15 days.

(Signature): _____

Date: _____

OFFICE USE ONLY

Complaint received by:

- | | | | |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Telephone | <input type="checkbox"/> E-mail | <input type="checkbox"/> Fax | <input type="checkbox"/> Councillor |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Letter | <input type="checkbox"/> In Person | <input type="checkbox"/> Web | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify): _____ |

Date Received: __/__/__

Staff Member who received the Complaint: _____

Position: _____

Summary of Advice provided to complainant on initial contact:

INVESTIGATION DETAILS

Name of person investigating incident: _____

Title: _____ Date of investigation: __/__/__

Investigation Details: _____

(If no action is to be taken, please explain why)

ACTIONS ARISING FROM INVESTIGATION

Date to be completed _____

Immediate _____

Further Recommendations

INVESTIGATION OFFICER

Signature _____

Date: _____

Complainant Advised Yes No File No _____

Date: _____