

---

## 5.30 - Community Complaints Policy

<b>Policy Owner</b>	<b>Administration</b>
<b>Person Responsible</b>	<b>Chief Executive Officer</b>
<b>Date of Adoption</b>	<b>23 August 2023 - Resolution 090823</b>
<b>Date of Last Review</b>	<b>23 August 2023 - Resolution 090823</b>
<b>Date Next Due for Review</b>	<b>3 years / or earlier if required</b>

### INTRODUCTION

The Shire recognises that from time to time, members of the community may not be satisfied with Shire services, processes or decisions and that there needs to be a clear and accountable process available for people to lodge and receive a response to their complaint.

It is also recognised that complaints can be an important tool to ensure accountability and promote continuous improvement.

### APPLICATION

This policy applies to employees, volunteers and contractors of the Shire of Wongan-Ballidu.

### POLICY INTENT

To establish an effective complaints handling system that will provide a framework and basis for all complaints relating to Shire services, processes or decisions to be resolved in a consistent, fair, and structured manner.

#### 1. Definitions

- (a) A **complaint** is an expression of dissatisfaction about the standard of service provided, or an action or inaction by the Shire of Wongan-Ballidu, its employees, volunteers and contractors.
- (b) *A complaint is not:*
- A first request for action or service (eg reporting a nuisance dog, request for footpath or pothole repair).
  - A request for information or explanation of Council decisions, practices or procedures.
  - A request for action or service that is outside the Shire's jurisdiction or is provided by other agencies.

- (c) A complaint is considered **anonymous** when the complainant declines to provide their name and/or contact details.
- (d) A complaint is considered **malicious** when its intent is to negatively affect another person's career, reputation, or livelihood.
- (e) A **vexatious** or **frivolous** complaint is where there is no evidence to support the complaint and/or there is evidence that the complaint is intended to cause inconvenience, harassment or financial burden.
- (f) A **volunteer** is a person who contributes time, effort and talent for the benefit of the Shire of Wongan-Ballidu without financial gain.
- (g) A **contractor** is a person, business or organisation contracted to provide products and/or services to the Shire for financial consideration.

## 2. Principles for Handling Complaints

- (a) **Customer focus** – complaints are managed in accordance with the *Shire of Wongan-Ballidu Customer Service Charter*.
- (b) **Accessible** – the process for making complaint and investigating it is easy for complainants to understand.
- (c) **Responsive** – complaints are acknowledged, addressed according to urgency and the complainant is kept informed.
- (d) **Objective** and **Fair** – complaints are dealt with in an equitable, objective and unbiased manner. Unreasonable complainants do not become a burden
- (e) **Confidentiality** – personal information related to complaints remains confidential.
- (f) **Continuous Improvement** – complaints are used as a source of improvement.

## 3. Lodgement of Complaints

- (a) Complaints can be made in writing or by telephone.
- (b) Complainants are encouraged to lodge their complaint in writing. If they insist on lodging the complaint verbally, the complainant must provide their name and contact details along with details of the complaint which are to be recorded by a Shire officer.
- (c) Written complaints are facilitated by completing Customer Service Charter – Feedback Form which is available on the Shire's website [www.wongan.wa.gov.au](http://www.wongan.wa.gov.au) or Shire Administration Building, Cnr Quinlan Street & Elphin Crescent, Wongan Hills WA 6603.
- (d) Customer Service Charter – Feedback Forms can be lodged via:
  - i. Facsimile: 08 9671 2509
  - ii. Email: [shire@wongan.wa.gov.au](mailto:shire@wongan.wa.gov.au).
  - iii. In person: by completing a *Customer Service Charter – Feedback Form*

- (e) All complaints will be registered by the officer receiving the complaint at the first point of contact.
- (f) Where complaints are made directly to Councillors, the complainant should be encouraged to contact the Shire office. However, Councillors may lodge a complaint on behalf of the complainant.
- (g) Frontline staff are responsible for receiving, registering and resolving minor complaints in an efficient and effective manner. The majority of complaints can be resolved immediately by acknowledging the customer's dissatisfaction, apologising where appropriate, and taking corrective action.

## *2. Complaints that will not be considered*

- (a) The complaint is anonymous unless the matter could be in breach of statutory provisions or the Shire of Wongan-Ballidu's Code of Conduct.
- (b) The complaint contains offensive language or is discriminatory in nature.
- (c) The complaint is malicious, vexatious or frivolous.
- (d) Notwithstanding parts (a) to (c) of this clause, all complaints received will be acknowledged.

## *3. Investigation and Referral*

- (a) Where the complaint cannot be resolved at the initial contact, the complaint will be referred to the appropriate officer for investigation.
- (b) The complaint will be referred to the relevant Manager when:
  - The complaint is outside the authority or expertise of the receiving officer;
  - The officer is unable to reach a resolution;
  - The customer remains dissatisfied;
  - The nature of the complaint warrants authority at a higher level.
- (c) The complaint will be escalated to the Shire of Wongan-Ballidu Complaints Officer where the Manager is unable to reach a resolution.
- (d) The complaint may be referred to an external agency when determined by the Shire's Complaints Officer.

## *4. Unresolved Complaints*

- (a) The Shire of Wongan-Ballidu recognises that not all complaints may be resolved within the above process and that complainants may not receive the outcome they seek.

- (b) If a customer is dissatisfied with the complaint resolution provided, other avenues for resolution include:
- (c) Making a request to have the matter considered at a more senior level.
- (d) The Ombudsman of Western Australia is an independent officer of Parliament who investigates complaints about state government departments, most statutory authorities and local governments. The Ombudsman can be contacted at:
  - Level 2, Albert Facey House
  - 469 Wellington Street
  - Perth WA 6000
  - Ph: (08) 9220 7555
- (e) Other legal advice or remedy.
- (f) Complainants are encouraged to allow the Shire of Wongan-Ballidu to investigate complaints prior to referral to an external agency.

## REFERENCE INFORMATION

**Related Documents** Shire of Wongan-Ballidu Code of Conduct  
Shire of Wongan-Ballidu Customer Service Charter  
Guidelines on Complaint Handling – Ombudsman Western Australia

**Related Legislation Associated** *Local Government Act 1995 (WA)*  
*Local Government (Rules of Conduct) Regulations 1996*

**Forms and Attachments** Customer Service Charter – Feedback Form

**REVIEW**

Reviews of this policy are to be undertaken every three years or earlier if required.

**RESPONSIBILITY FOR IMPLEMENTATION**

The Chief Executive Officer is responsible for implementing and applying this policy.