



District Council of Yankalilla

# CUSTOMER SERVICE CHARTER





# District Council of Yankalilla

**At The District Council of Yankalilla we are committed to working in partnership with you, our community, to deliver excellent service through dedication, innovation and continuous improvement.**

As a service organisation, the District Council of Yankalilla is committed to providing quality services to its customers. We have introduced a number of initiatives to provide the best possible service to our customers.

This document explains the key initiatives so that you, our customers, know:

- what to expect from us in the way of services;  
and
- what to do if you are not satisfied with some aspect of our service.

While we take pride in these initiatives and in the standard of our services, we recognise that there will always be room for improvement. You, as our customers, are best placed to suggest where these improvements can be made. We encourage you to take the time to let us know your concerns and suggestions.

## Who is a customer?

A customer is any person or organisation having dealings with The District Council of Yankalilla.

## Our customer service standards

Customers contact Council for a wide variety of issues ranging from enquiries and requests for information or advice, to the provision of direct services such as Development Applications and Dog Registrations.

Our responsibility to you – at all times we aim to:

- treat customers courteously and with respect
- deal with customers in a polite and helpful manner
- listen to customers and take their views into account
- provide customers with necessary and relevant information





# District Council of Yankalilla

- treat customers fairly and take account of their particular needs
- act on our commitments in a timely manner
- value customer's privacy by treating all personal information confidentially
- be punctual for meetings and appointments

## When a customer telephones Council

- We will answer the telephone promptly, courteously and deal with an enquiry directly without unnecessary referrals or transfers.
- If we cannot deal with the enquiry we will provide you with the name of the person the request or enquiry will be referred to or, if that information is not readily available, we will request the relevant person to contact you directly.
- Telephone calls will be returned at the first opportunity, however if information is not readily available verbal enquiries will be answered within 5 (five) working days.
- Only make promises that will be met.
- Welcome your comments and feedback as an opportunity for improvement.
- Accept the customer's right to complain and ensure an appropriate investigation and considered response.

## When a customer visits Council

- We will attend the counter and deal with an enquiry directly without unnecessary referrals or transfers.
- If we cannot deal with the enquiry we will provide you with the name of the person the request or enquiry will be referred to or, if that information is not readily available, we will request the relevant person to contact you directly.
- Accept the customer's right to complain and ensure an appropriate investigation and considered response.
- If follow up action is promised, ensure appropriate action or referral is provided in a timely manner.

**The District Council of Yankalilla aims to make contact with Council a positive experience, through seeking to provide information quickly, courteously and in a clear and understandable manner.**





# District Council of Yankalilla

## When a customer writes to us

- Upon receipt of correspondence an acknowledgement letter will be received within two (2) working days
- All correspondence will be recorded in Council's record management system.
- We will respond to correspondence by letter or by making personal contact with the sender within 10 working days with a substantive reply or an interim reply detailing when a substantive reply can be expected.
- All letters will be produced following the corporate style and will contain a reference to the contact officer and a contact telephone number.
- The name and position of the signatory will appear at the end of each letter.

## When a customer emails us

- We will acknowledge your email within one (1) working day.
- If a full reply is not possible, then you will receive an acknowledgement which will indicate the time the reply can be expected and the name of the officer to contact with queries.
- All correspondence will be as prompt as possible, courteous and written in plain language.
- All emails will be recorded in Council's record management system.
- An email will be responded to within 10 working days with a substantive reply or an interim reply detailing when a substantive reply can be expected.

## Requests for Service

- Council aims to manage requests efficiently and effectively. Customers when submitting a request for service shall received an acknowledgment of their request through a reference number allocated by the customer service system. The reference number can be used to follow up on the status of your request. For further information please refer to our Request for Service Policy.





# District Council of Yankalilla

## Our expectations of the customer

To make our job easier in providing our services we ask customers to:

- treat Council officers with respect
- respect the privacy, safety and needs of other members of the community
- provide accurate and complete details
- phone to make an appointment for a complex enquiry or a need to see a specific officer.
- phone the officer nominated on correspondence sent to the customer and quote the document number on the letter.
- customers that consume an unwarranted amount of council resources may have restrictions applied.
- Reports about neighbours, noise, dogs, nuisances, unauthorised building work or similar issues that fall into the regulatory aspect of our service.

## Abusive customers

- Where the customer is personally abusive or uses bad language, the communication may be terminated immediately by the officer.
- If face to face, the officer may walk away.
- If by telephone, the officer may terminate the call. If in an email, the address may be blocked or not responded to.
- The Chief Executive may decide to limit or cease responses to any person who is abusive and or derogative in his/her communication with Council or who fails to accept that Council has done all that it can to assist.
- A decision of this nature will be communicated in writing to the person.
- If an officer feels threatened by the language or behaviour of the customer, the Police may be notified.

## Complaints

### What is a complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with a decision, level or quality of service, or behaviour of an employee or agent, which can be investigated and acted upon where no right of appeal or review is available under any other legislation. Some legislation (Act, Regulation, Rule by By-Law) specifically makes provision for an appeal, or an internal or external review of a decision.





# District Council of Yankalilla

## What is not a complaint?

- 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 policy of the Council.
- An appeal or request for internal or external review of a decision for which a structured process applies, other than that made as the result of a complaint.
- An expression concerning the general direction and performance of Council or its Councillors.
- An expression of dissatisfaction with the behaviour of a Councillor.
- Reports of damaged or faulty infrastructure.

Many of the issues above are called 'complaints' when a customer contacts us. They are called complaints because a customer is unhappy about a situation and wants something done. The actions we take to resolve many 'complaints' are an everyday part of organisational life for us due to the nature of services we provide and will be dealt with, apart from the formal complaints management process.

## Complaints Management Process

- The Manager of each department of Council is responsible for handling complaints relevant to that Department.
- While most problems can usually be resolved at an early stage, there are times when they require detailed investigation.
- If a complaint is of a very serious nature, it will be referred to the Chief Executive.
- Irrespective of the manner in which the complaint was received a response to the complaint can be expected within ten (10) working days.
- If an Ombudsman has submitted a complaint on a customer's behalf, we will also try to respond to the Ombudsman within ten (10) working days.
- There are times when it is not possible to meet this deadline e.g. where a complaint is a complex one or the Ombudsmen needs to be briefed on the outcome of the investigations.
- In these cases, we will endeavour to keep the customer informed of progress.

## Form of complaint

- A complaint may be lodged in person, by phone, letter or email, and responded to in the same format or by meeting with the Manager of the relevant Department to discuss the complaint as per Councils Complaint Policy.





## District Council of Yankalilla

- The Chief Executive is Council's Internal Ombudsman contact and is responsible for overseeing the management of complaints from the public concerning Council's affairs.
- Any Councillor in receipt of a complaint should refer the matter directly to the Chief Executive.
- If the complaint relates to a complex matter or there is no resolution from discussing the matter with staff or the relevant Manager, a complaint should be made in writing setting out the complaint as simply as possible.

To assist Council in dealing with your complaint a customer should include the following, if relevant:

- a) date, time and location of events
- b) nature and description of complaint
- c) to whom the customer has spoken (names, position in the Council and dates)
- d) copies of references to letter or documents relevant to the complaint
- e) state what the customer hopes to achieve as an outcome to the complaint

### Internal review and escalation

- Experience has shown that the majority of complaints will be satisfactorily resolved by the relevant Manager.
- However, a person who is not satisfied with the outcome may request a review of the complaint by the Chief Executive under the Internal Review of a Council Decision policy.
- A request for a review of the complaint is to be in writing and addressed to the Chief Executive.
- The Chief Executive will inform the customer of the findings on completion of an investigation.

### Consideration of a complaint

In considering a complaint the relevant Manager or the Chief Executive will:

- examine and analyse the information already available and follow up points requiring clarification
- look at the Council Policies which might have a bearing on the complaint
- consider whether or not the Council is at fault
- consider any necessary action to be taken to correct the faults identified
- consider a review of the Council's procedures, to avoid recurrence of any similar complaint in the future
- The relevant Manager or the Chief Executive may enter into informal discussions or mediation on a complaint with a view to reaching a resolution.





# District Council of Yankalilla

## Vexatious complaints

- All complaints received by Council will be treated with the utmost seriousness, however if a complaint is found to be malicious, frivolous or vexatious, no further action will be taken on the complaint.
- The customer will be informed of this decision in writing by the Chief Executive.

## Anonymous complaints

While we will receive anonymous complaints, we will generally only act on them where the matter is considered to be serious and there is sufficient information in the complaint to enable an investigation to be undertaken.

## Complaints alleging misconduct, corrupt conduct or improper behaviour

- Complaints alleging serious misconduct, including corrupt conduct are to be directed immediately to the Chief Executive, even where such a complaint is made verbally or anonymously.
- Complaints alleging improper behaviour are to be directed immediately to the Manager of the Department, even where such a complaint is made verbally or anonymously.

## Conflict of interest OR improper use of positions

- All such complaints are to be referred immediately to the Chief Executive.

## Competitive neutrality complaints

- The District Council of Yankalilla supports the principles of competitive neutrality by ensuring that Council business operates without any net competitive advantages over other businesses as a result of its public ownership.
- It will receive and deal with any complaints in relation to these issues.
- All such complaints are to be referred to the Chief Executive.





# District Council of Yankalilla

## Protection of customer

- We will take care to ensure that the reporting of complaints will not result in a customer experiencing any form of victimisation or unfair treatment as a result of the complaint.

## What if a customer is not satisfied with the resolution of the complaint?

Council is confident that it can resolve the majority of complaints received, however we understand that we may not be able to satisfy every customer on every occasion. Sometimes Councils have to make difficult and complex decisions involving many people and individual customers do not get the outcome they want.

If a complaint remains unresolved or a customer is dissatisfied with our process in dealing with a complaint other avenues remain for the customer to explore which include:

- alternative dispute resolution procedure, such as mediation or conciliation
- the Ombudsman of SA is an independent officer of the South Australian Parliament who investigates complaints about state government departments, most statutory authorities and local government
- the Ombudsmen can be contacted by phoning on 08 8226 8699 or email [ombudsman@ombudsman.sa.gov.au](mailto:ombudsman@ombudsman.sa.gov.au)
- complainant informed of appeal procedure or other legal remedy
- while a customer is entitled to refer a complaint directly to these Bodies at any time, customers are encouraged to allow the Council to investigate the complaint first.

## Personal information protection

Council has a commitment to the protection of personal information provided by a customer to Council in accordance with the requirements of Council's Privacy Policy and the Freedom of Information Act 1991.





# District Council of Yankalilla

## Review

This Customer Service Charter is to be reviewed at least once every two years.

Relevant Legislation:

- Privacy Act
- Freedom of Information Act 1991
- Whistleblowers Protection
- Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 2012

## Contact Us

You can contact us to make an enquiry, suggestions or a complaint:

The District Council of Yankalilla  
P O Box 9  
Yankalilla SA 5203

Phone : 08 8558 0200

Fax : 08 8558 2022

Email : [council@yankalilla.sa.gov.au](mailto:council@yankalilla.sa.gov.au)

Website : [www.yankalilla.sa.gov.au](http://www.yankalilla.sa.gov.au)

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