



1/026 Customer Feedback, Complaints, and Suggestions

1. Objective

This Policy provides guidance for the management and handling of customer feedback, complaints, and suggestions. The Town of Port Hedland (the Town) is committed to delivering an accessible, responsive, and accountable framework that promotes continuous improvement. Feedback, whether positive or negative, enables the Town to enhance its services and maintain strong customer focus.

The Policy:

- Promotes the Town's values of unity, quality and integrity.
- Aligns with best practices outlined in the Australian Standards (AS/NZS 10002-2014 Guidelines for Complaint Management) and WA Ombudsman Guidelines on Complaint Handling.
- Reflects the Town's commitment to provide quality customer service at all Town facilities, as per the Town of Port Hedland Customer Service Charter. [customer-service-charter](#)

This policy ensures that all customer concerns are handled with professionalism, fairness, and efficiency, fostering trust and continuous improvement within the Town of Port Hedland.

2. Content

This Policy applies to all Elected Members, employees, and consultants or contractors engaged by the Town.

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about the Town's products, services, employees, or handling of a matter, where a response or resolution is expected or required.

A complaint is not:

- An initial request for service.
- A request for information or explanation of policies.
- Compliance enforcement actions.
- Lodging an appeal or objection under statutory processes.
- A submission related to regulatory functions.
- Petitions or civil disputes between private individuals.



When customers contact the Town, they should expect:

- To be heard and listened to;
- To be informed;
- To be understood and taken seriously;
- To be treated with respect;
- To be given an explanation or reason for a decision;
- To get action or resolution as soon as possible; and
- To be given an apology, where appropriate.

Complaints can be submitted via:

- The Customer Feedback, Suggestion or Complaint Form on the Town's website.
- Email, letter, in-person, or by completing a Feedback Form available at Town facilities. [customer feedback-suggestion or complaint docx.pdf](#)

Complainants must provide:

- Name and contact details.
- Details and date of the issue.

Principles of Complaint Management

- **Customer Focus:**
Open, transparent, and easily accessible complaint processes.
- **Responsiveness:**
Fair, objective, and timely resolution with progress updates.
- **Remedy:**
Assignment of complaints to an officer with authority to resolve them promptly.

Timeliness

- Complaints acknowledged within five business days.
- Complaints resolved or interim responses provided within ten business days.

3. Customer Feedback, Complaints and Suggestion Handling Procedure

The Town of Port Hedland recognises the right of customers to discuss matters when feeling dissatisfied with services of the local government and, wherever possible, to resolve these issues and to prevent similar occurrences.



Levels of Escalation

There are three different levels of escalation that the Town uses to process customers feedback, complaints and suggestions.

Level 1 – Initial Assessment

Customer feedback or suggestions are promptly assessed by a Town employee, who records the details and directs the customer to a responsible officer for resolution. The responsible officer aims to address concerns and follows up with the customer via call or email within 48 business hours.

Level 2 – Customer Complaints

Official complaints are lodged in writing with contact details. A review is conducted within 10 business days, or longer if additional investigation is required, with the timeline communicated to the complainant. Complaints are addressed objectively, and a responsible manager provides a formal response.

Level 3 – CEO Internal Review

If dissatisfied with the complaint outcome, the customer may request an internal review by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO). The CEO reviews prior actions and determines a resolution, informing the customer of the final outcome within 15 business days via letter, phone, or meeting.

The complaint will be closed detailing all action taken to resolve the complaint.

Confidentiality

Customer privacy will be respected. Personal information is managed in accordance with the *Freedom of Information WA Act 1992*.

4. Unreasonable or Unacceptable Complainants

Unreasonable complainants include those who are:

- a) Unreasonably persistent complainants: Those who make excessive phone calls, demand excessive personal contact, or engage in lengthy correspondence.
- b) Unsatisfiable complainants: Those who refuse to accept the Town's inability to assist further, reject decisions made, or demand services beyond what has been provided.



c) Complainants with unreasonable demands: Those who seek excessive information, disproportionate services, or make frequent and unwarranted approaches.

d) Rude or abusive complainants: Those who engage in personal abuse, make inflammatory or intimidating statements, or attempt to harass Town employees.

In such cases, the Town may limit communication methods, designate a single contact point, or cease communication after informing the complainant. Verbal or physical aggression may result in referral to the WA Police.

Managing Unacceptable or Unreasonable Complaints

The Town rarely deems complaints unacceptable or unreasonable. However, if a complaint disrupts employees' ability to work or serve others, the Town may restrict the complainant's contact.

Guidelines for Limiting Access

Access may be limited when:

- a) It compromises the Town's obligations as an employer.
- b) It conflicts with statutory obligations.
- c) It wastes Town resources through excessive contact or service use.
- d) It enables or encourages rude or abusive behaviour.

Actions for Managing Persistent or Excessive Behaviour

If someone repeatedly contacts the Town unnecessarily or raises previously resolved issues, the Town may:

- Restrict calls to specific times or designate one employee to handle all contact.
- Require written communication or pre-scheduled appointments for visits.
- Limit the number of issues addressed within a set period.
- Cease all communication, with prior notification to the complainant.

Persistent Complaints

Actions may be deemed unreasonably persistent if all internal reviews are complete, yet the complainant continues to dispute the outcome or process.



Aggressive Behaviour

The Town will report verbally or physically aggressive, threatening, or harassing behaviour to the WA Police.

5. Elected Member Complaints

Complaints against Elected Members should be initially referred to the Chief Executive Officer.

The Town is committed to addressing complaints in line with statutory requirements, including the *Local Government Act 1995*, *Local Government (Model Code of Conduct) Regulations 2021*, and other relevant laws.

Complaints, whether minor or serious, will be referred to appropriate agencies. For instance, allegations of corruption will go to the Corruption and Crime Commission, while illegal behaviour may be referred to the Western Australia Police or the relevant State Government Department.

6. External Agencies

If dissatisfied, customers may escalate complaints to external agencies, including:

- Ombudsman Western Australia.
- Department of Local Government.
- Western Australia Police.
- Crime and Corruption Commission.

Definitions

“Complaint” A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the Town of Port Hedland, its employees or contractors, affecting an individual customer or group of customers.

“Complainant” A complainant is a person, organisation or its representative making a complaint.

“Business Day” means a day when the Town is normally open for business i.e. Monday to Friday, excluding public holidays and other Council approved closures.



Relevant Documents

- Customer Service Charter.
- Town of Port Hedland Code of Conduct.
- WA Ombudsman Complaint Handling Guidelines.
- *Local Government Act 1995.*

<i>Relevant legislation</i>	<i>Local Government Act 1995, Local Government (Model Code of Conduct) Regulations 2021, Freedom of Information WA Act 1992</i>
<i>Delegated authority</i>	<i>Nil</i>
<i>Business unit</i>	<i>Customer Service</i>
<i>Directorate</i>	<i>Corporate Services</i>

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