

CODE OF PRACTICE



EUROBODALLA SHIRE COUNCIL

Code Title **COMPLAINTS AND SERVICE REQUESTS**

Reason for Code Council recognises complaints, compliments and service requests as a way of improving services to the community. The aim of this Code of Practice is to deal with complaints in a fair and equitable manner using complaints as a means of improving service quality.

Code Details: The aim of the Complaints and Service requests (CSR) system is to record and examine each request so that action can be taken, where possible, to:

- avoid the problem occurring again;
- implement a good suggestion or work request; and
- ensure the services council provides recognise the community's needs.

This Code of Practice should be read in conjunction with the Complaints Policy.

This Code covers:

- [Receiving Complaints and Services Requests \(CSRs\)](#)
- [Recording Complaints and Service Requests](#)
- [Responsibility](#)
- [Response and Inspection](#)
- [Advice to Complainant](#)
- [Repetitive Complaints](#)
- [Quality Audit \(Internal Assessment\)](#)
- [Analysis](#)
- [Reporting](#)
- [Conciliation](#)

1. Receiving Complaints and Service Requests (CSRs)

CSRs may be received through any mode and are to be courteously accepted by all staff. CSRs of a legal or technical nature should be made in writing.

Staff will make every effort to assist customers lodging a CSR however they are not expected to endure unacceptable behaviour from customers. Should a complainant's behaviour become offensive towards a staff member, the complainant should be asked to modify their behaviour. If the offensive behaviour continues, the complainant should be referred to the staff member's supervisor. Other methods/responses for dealing with rude or aggressive behaviour are outlined in the Difficult Complaint Code of Practice.

2. Recording Complaints and Service Requests

All CSRs, including:

- those received by council's after hours service;
- competitive neutrality CSRs; and
- requests that have been instantly resolved.

are to be recorded electronically on the Complaints and Service Requests database.

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The only exceptions to this are for those complaints that relate to the actions of staff or elected representatives, development applications or are protected disclosures.

Written CSRs, whether hand delivered or received through the mail, will be recorded on the CSR database by Records staff. CSRs will not be recorded in the correspondence system.

All verbal or emailed CSRs are to be keyed directly into the database by the staff member to whom the CSR is made. Where computer access is unavailable (for example with outdoor staff), a CSR form should be completed and given to either the Depot Clerk or IT staff for keying.

All relevant information including complainant, location, type and subtype of the CSR and a clear and concise account of the CSR is to be recorded. The complainant's name must be checked with the complainant to ensure correct spelling. As a complainant may seek a copy of the CSR, the use of emotive words should be avoided.

All CSRs are to be assigned a 'priority'. This priority will be automatic at the time of recording as each subtype of CSR has a standard priority allocated to it.

The following priorities will be assigned:

Works Request (Infrastructure)		Service Complaint (Regulatory)	
Emergency/Safety	Within 2 hours	Emergency/Safety	Within 4 hours
Priority 1	1 week	Priority 1	1 week
Priority 2	3 weeks	Priority 2	3 weeks
Priority 3	Next sector maintenance visit	Priority 3	Next inspection/ patrol cycle
Priority 4	In this financial year	Priority 4	In this financial year
Priority 5	Consider for funding in next financial year	Priority 5	Consider for funding in next financial year
Priority 0	No action	Priority 0	No response required

Once recorded on the database, a printed copy of the CSR is to be forwarded through the internal mail or via email to the Responsible Officer. If the CSR is received verbally at the counter, a printed copy should also be given to the customer.

If the matter is an emergency or safety issue, the Responsible Officer must be notified verbally. If that officer is not available the matter should be referred to his/her supervisor.

Complainant details will be recorded in accord with the Privacy Management Plan. Those details will not be provided to third parties unless the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act are applied and it is deemed appropriate to release that information.

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3. Responsibility

Depending on the nature and cause of a CSR, it will be referred to the Responsible Officer as listed in tables set on the CSR database system for that particular subtype of CSR.

Executive/Group Managers may re-allocate tasks based on complaints/work requests where appropriate.

4. Response and Inspection

Where CSRs are taken over the counter or phone, officers recording the CSR will inform the complainant of the standard priority that has been assigned to the particular subtype of CSR.

That priority will obviously impact on the timing of the inspection by the Responsible Officer. However, all CSRs should be inspected within no more than five (5) working days.

Following inspection the Responsible Officer may choose to change the assigned priority of a CSR if information received during the inspection warrants such a change.

Details of the inspection are to be keyed into the CSR database by the Responsible Officer or if he/she is unable to do so then by either IT staff (data processing) or the Depot Clerk if he/she has been delegated that task by a Division or Section.

5. Advice to Complainant

If at the time of making a CSR the complainant has requested to be kept advised of Council's intended course of action regarding their CSR a check box on the CSR database will be ticked.

In the case of such CSRs, following an inspection, the Responsible Officer will contact the complainant and advise how Council will to deal with or has dealt with their CSR.

If an inspection is deemed unnecessary by the Responsible Officer that officer will contact and advise the complainant once it has been determined what action will be taken to respond to the CSR.

The details of any advice given to the complainant, including the date and content of such advice, are to be entered into the CSR database by the Responsible Officer or if he/she is unable to do so, then by IT staff or the Depot Clerk if he/she has been delegated that task by a Division or Section.

6. Repetitive Complaints

If a complaint is unable to be resolved, after the initial inspection and correspondence, the staff are referred to the "*Repetitive Complaints*" Codes of Practice.

7. Quality Audit (Internal Assessment)

A survey of complainants will be conducted each month by Customer Service Section staff. A monthly report will be produced which lists those complaints completed within the preceding month. Every tenth complaint will then be selected and the complainant phoned to survey their 'satisfaction ranking' in regards to the time Council took to deal with their complaint and the complainant's reaction or comment on the outcome of Council's action.

The responses will be ranked on the following basis:

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1	=	Poor
2	-	Fair
3	=	Good
4	=	Very Good
5	=	Excellent

These ranking are then recorded in the quarterly Executive Information Report. Council has set a corporate target of 70% of rankings to be three (3) or greater.

Survey responses to complaints indicating a ranking of two (2) or less will be referred to the Executive/Group Manager for investigation.

8. Analysis

Each quarter, the CSR database will produce reports on the quantity, type and location/asset group or property system group of the CSR. The costs of actions may be recorded on the CSR..

Similarly, the customer follow-up ranking's will be analysed to assess change in customer satisfaction.

The reports will be used to analyse:

- (a) Frequency and cost of types of complaints/work requests;
- (b) Location of work requests and costs;
- (c) Reassessment of policy or work programs to prevent recurrence;
- (d) Reassessment of Budget provisions, and human and technical resources.

9. Reporting

Customer follow-up reports will be provided to Senior Management monthly.

A monthly report of outstanding CSRs per officer will be presented to Executive/Group Managers who should discuss the extent of outstanding CSRs and response profiles with staff.

CSR database analysis reports will be provided to Council quarterly.

Aggregated CSR outcomes; customer satisfaction ranking's and indicative costs will be provided in the Annual Report.

The opportunity for differentiation of planned works versus unplanned CSR works and their associated costs may be examined in Management Plan and Budget deliberations.

10. Conciliation

Where complaints involve disputes between neighbours or property owners, staff will discuss the matter and seek information from property owners. Trained conciliation staff may then arrange a meeting between the parties to:

- (a) clarify the issues;
- (b) explain Council's position or policy on the matter; and
- (c) seek some resolution to the dispute/complaint.

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Council's Alternate Dispute Resolution (ADR) Policy will be applied should the complainants seek an independent mediator.

If, in the opinion of the conciliator, a change in Council policy or practice is required, then a suggested improvement is to be referred to their Divisional Manager.

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