

Request for Service Policy



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| Responsible Officer | Chief Executive Officer |
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| Due date of next Review | 2026 Election |

1. Purpose

- 1.1 Council is committed to the provision of quality service to customers and aims to provide services fairly and efficiently. Council also monitors requests to identify ways in which it can proactively improve its services.
- 1.2 Section 270 of the *Local Government Act 1999* (the Act) requires Council to develop and maintain a policy about “any reasonable request for the provision of a service by the Council or for the improvement of a service provided by the Council.”
- 1.3 This Policy aims to:
 - 1.3.1 provide guidance on what may constitute a reasonable request for a service or an improvement to a service
 - 1.3.2 distinguish between requests, complaints and feedback to Council and give direction on management of requests
 - 1.3.3 establish a standardised process for assessing and processing requests including the collation of information which can be used to directly inform service improvements.

2. Scope

- 2.1 This Policy applies to all Council employees who may be involved in receiving or processing a request for service in the course of their work.
- 2.2 Officers will act reasonably and transparently, demonstrate good customer service, undertake their responsibilities in a proficient manner and use their judgement where necessary to ensure an outcome in line with Council's *Request for Service Procedure* and *Customer Service Charter*.

3. Definitions

- 3.1 **Business Day** means a day when the Council is normally open for business, i.e. Monday to Friday, excluding public holidays and Christmas closure.
- 3.2 **Complaint** is an expression of dissatisfaction with a product or service delivered by the Council, or its representatives, that has failed to reach the standard stated, implied or documented. This includes complaints about a request for service that has been or should have been delivered.

- 3.3 Employee** includes a person employed directly by the Council in a full time, part time or casual capacity (whether permanent or contractual position) and persons providing services to, or on behalf of, the Council even though they may be employed by another party
- 3.4 Feedback** can take the form of comments, both positive and negative, about services provided by Council without necessarily requiring a corrective action, change of services or formal review of a decision. Feedback may, however, influence future service reviews and delivery methods. **Request for Service** is an application to have Council or its representative take some form of action to provide or improve a Council service.

Complaints about the activities of third parties [e.g. barking dogs or food premises] are to be treated as Requests for Service in the first instance where this is a reasonable interpretation.

However, if the complaint is about the way in which Council has dealt with a matter concerning the activities of a third party, this will be dealt with as a complaint (see [Complaints Policy](#)).

4. Policy

- 4.1** Requests for service will be assessed in the context of the services and work provided for in the Council's annual business plan and budget and according to the conditions of externally funded programs.

4.2 Principles underlying the Policy

- 4.2.1** This is policy based on five principles which will be fundamental in the way Council approaches requests for service:
- 4.2.1.1 Fairness:** treating customers fairly requires impartiality, confidentiality and transparency at all stages of the process
 - 4.2.1.2 Accessibility:** to be accessible there must be broad public awareness about Council's policy and procedure a range of contact options
 - 4.2.1.3 Responsiveness:** this will be achieved by providing sufficient resources, well trained staff and review and improvement of the systems
 - 4.2.1.4 Efficiency:** customer requests will be dealt with as quickly as practical while adhering to this policy and procedure
 - 4.2.1.5 Integration** of different areas of Council where the customer request overlaps functional responsibilities
- 4.2.2** In determining how to respond to a reasonable request for service Council will consider the community need in light of:
- 4.2.2.1** Public safety and emergencies;
 - 4.2.2.2** An assessment of risk;
 - 4.2.2.3** Statutory responsibilities;
 - 4.2.2.4** Council's Strategic Management Plans, Annual Business Plans, annual works program and Annual Budget;
 - 4.2.2.5** Relevant Council policies and codes;
 - 4.2.2.6** Established service standards and response times for regular Council activities;
 - 4.2.2.7** Guidelines and conditions of externally funded programs;
 - 4.2.2.8** Available service options;
 - 4.2.2.9** Efficient and effective use of Council resources; and
 - 4.2.2.10** Equitable provision of services and products within the community.

4.3 Reasonable Request for Service

In determining how to respond to a request for service Council will consider:

- 4.3.1** An assessment of risk

- 4.3.2 Statutory responsibilities
- 4.3.3 The content of Council's Strategic Management Plans, Annual Business Plans, annual works program and Annual Budget
- 4.3.4 Relevant Council policies and codes
- 4.3.5 Established service standards and response times for regular Council activities.

4.4 Processing a Request for Service

- 4.4.1 In Council's experience, most requests fit within well established guidelines which will be explained to an applicant at the outset. Council aims to manage requests efficiently and effectively. Staff are provided with a level of authority to advise applicants of the likely timeframe to complete the action required.
- 4.4.2 Where further evaluation is necessary before committing Council to undertake the work, the applicant will be informed accordingly. If a request cannot be fulfilled in a reasonable timeframe the applicant will be advised, including an explanation of why this decision was taken.
- 4.4.3 Where an applicant is not satisfied with the Council's decision, it is open to the applicant to lodge a complaint against the decision under Council's [Complaints Policy](#).

4.5 Timeframes for Response

- 4.5.1 Response to requests will be processed in accordance with the timeframes set by Council, with the applicant advised of the process and timeframe for a detailed response, where possible.
- 4.5.2 The circumstances of individual requests for service will vary greatly. In the majority of cases requests will be processed promptly and the applicant advised verbally or by return post/email/text message.
- 4.5.3 Council staff will acknowledge receipt of the request within three [3] business days advising of Council's intentions regarding the request, or explaining more time is required to respond to the request and provide a timeframe where possible.
- 4.5.4 If a request cannot be fulfilled in a reasonable timeframe, or is a service Council is otherwise not able to deliver, or is not the responsibility of the Council to deliver, the applicant will be advised, including an explanation of why this decision was made.
- 4.5.5 Service response standards may apply to routine requests, and pursuant to Council's *Customer Service Charter* (For example, uncollected rubbish bins will be typically collected within 48 hours). Other requests may be scheduled to coincide with work in a particular suburb or season. The circumstances of individual requests for service will vary greatly. In the majority of cases requests will be processed promptly and the applicant advised verbally or by return post/email/telephone call.
- 4.5.6 Response times may vary depending upon the volume of work currently being progressed within Council and the risk profile of the request. The assessment of public safety concerns will occur, where practicable, on the same day as the request is received. Other requests may be best suited to scheduling to coincide with work in a particular township, or season.
- 4.5.7 Requests for major works or new services will be referred to Council for consideration as part of the next annual budget cycle. Community consultation on proposed projects and services is included as part of the budget process each year.

4.6 How to make Request for Service

- 4.6.1 A person can make application for a service in a number of ways:
 - 4.6.1.1 Completion of the appropriate form on Council's website
 - 4.6.1.2 Telephone
 - 4.6.1.3 Email
 - 4.6.1.4 Letter
 - 4.6.1.5 Petition to Council
 - 4.6.1.6 Visit a Council customer service office

- 4.6.2 Comments and requests made through social media are not considered, nor treated as an official Request for Service.
- 4.6.3 Council will not investigate or action anonymous Service Requests. If a complainant is concerned about disclosing their identity, they may request that their identity be kept confidential.

4.7 Denied Requests

- 4.7.1 All denied requests will be recorded and may be reconsidered at a future date, such as in conjunction with the preparation of an Annual Business Plan and associated budget.

4.8 Record Keeping

- 4.8.1 All service requests will be captured and maintained in Council's records management system in accordance with the *State Records Act 1997* and *Council's Records Management Policy*.
- 4.8.2 Council records are subject to the *Freedom of Information Act 1991* and confidentiality cannot be guaranteed under the provisions of that legislation.
- 4.8.3 Information may be disclosed publicly in de-identified format for annual reporting, employee training and other purposes required by legislation.

5. Policy Responsibility

The Chief Executive Officer is responsible for ensuring the proper operation of this Policy.

6. Availability/Accessibility

- 6.1 This Policy and Council's Fees and Charges Register are available to be downloaded free of charge from Council's website: www.mid-murray.sa.gov.au.
- 6.2 This Policy is available for inspection at Council's principal office during ordinary business hours. Hard copies, for a fee in accordance with Council's schedule of Fees and Charges, can be provided upon request.

7. Legislative Framework / Other References

- 7.1 *Local Government Act 1999* Section 270
- 7.2 Customer Service Charter
- 7.3 *Complaints Policy*
- 7.4 *Requests for Service Procedure*
- 7.5 *Complaints Procedure*
- 7.6 Protocol – Ombudsman Enquiry Procedure

8. Document History

This Policy shall be reviewed at least every four (4) years or more frequently if legislation or Council requires.

| Version | Adopted | Minute | Description of Change |
|---------|-------------------|------------|---|
| 1 | 11 September 2018 | 20639/1 | Policy Adopted |
| 2 | 17 October 2023 | C10-23/015 | Policy reviewed following 2022 Council Election with changes made to Scope, Definitions, response timeframes and record keeping |