

Council Policy

Request for Services



COUNCIL POLICY

 <p>Adelaide Hills COUNCIL</p>	REQUEST FOR SERVICES
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Policy Number:	GOV-03
Responsible Department(s):	Community and Customer Service
Other Relevant Policies:	Internal Review of Council Decisions Policy Complaint Handling Policy
Relevant Procedure(s):	None
Relevant Legislation:	Local Government Act 1999, Section 270
Policies and Procedures Superseded by this policy on its Adoption:	Request for Services Policy 10 June 2014, item 12.1, 34
Adoption Authority:	SPDPC
Date of Adoption:	13 June 2017
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Next Review:	June 2020

REQUEST FOR SERVICES POLICY

1. INTRODUCTION

This Policy sets out the principles and guidelines to be used when responding to requests for service.

This Policy is to be read in conjunction with other relevant Council policies, especially in making the distinction between a request for service and a complaint or a request for a review of a Council decision.

2. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this policy are:

- To provide guidance on what may constitute a reasonable request for a service or an improvement to a service
- To distinguish between requests, complaints and feedback to Council and give direction on management of requests
- To establish a standardised process for assessing and processing requests including the collation of information which can be used to directly inform service improvements

3. DEFINITIONS

A **“Request for service”** is an application to have Council or its representative take some form of action to provide or improve a Council service.

“Complaint” means 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 expected. This includes complaints about a service that has been, or should have been delivered. A complaint may be made in any form, including verbal, written or electronic means.

A request for a formal **“review of a decision”** is distinguished from a complaint by virtue of the person clearly and purposefully asking for the decision to be reviewed so as to achieve a different outcome.

“Feedback” means those comments, which are sometimes framed as complaints, where the intent is clearly for the matter to be noted, but where there is no implied or expressed expectation of follow up, review or action.

4. POLICY STATEMENT

Principles

The following principles will be applied to managing requests for service:

- The community should be aware of the range of functions and services provided by the Council.
- The community should be aware of, and have access to, channels for requesting services, the level at which the service is provided and the standard for the provision of that service.
- It is not a reasonable use of the Council's, i.e. the community's, resources to allocate time and money to satisfying every request for service or improvement to service provision. Rather, resources should be allocated to meet service priorities required by legislation risk and those contained in adopted policies, strategic plans and business plans.
- Each request will be considered on its merits. People making requests will be treated fairly, with impartiality and transparency being applied to extent possible.
- Requests will be taken seriously and sufficient resourcing will be allocated to consider requests in a professional and timely manner.
- The outcome of a request should be communicated to the requestor where practicable.
- The manner in which a request is handled, and by whom, will depend on the level of complexity and seriousness of the request. At all times, requests should be handled by people competent to manage the process and communicate the outcomes.

Policy position

The following reflects the Council's position in respect to applying the above principles:

- A list of normal Council functions and services will be made available on the Council's website and reflected in Annual Business Plans and Annual Reports. Service levels and standards, as adopted and amended from time to time, will also be made available on the website.
- A range of communication strategies will be used to promote new or enhanced functions or services, or to inform the community of significant changes to service provision.
- In respect to requests for the provision of new or enhanced services, the Council will give consideration to:
 - Legislative obligations
 - An assessment of risk
 - Alignment with strategic priorities as identified within approved strategic management plans
 - Adopted policies and business plans

In all cases, requests will be assessed on their merits and considered against competing priorities and available resources.

- In respect to requests for the provision of existing services, the Council will provide those services in line with adopted services levels and standards and within the limitations of resources available at the time. There will be instances where requests need to be prioritised and these will generally be assessed on the basis of urgency.

- Procedures and systems will be developed which contain, as a minimum:
 - a. Processes for receiving and recording requests for services
 - b. Appropriate training and development to ensure Council staff and representatives can appropriately assess and respond to requests for services
 - c. Protocols for advising the requestor of the outcome of their request
 - d. Methods for recording and escalating requests for new or enhanced services to the appropriate staff and, where applicable, for recommendations to be made to the Council
- No distinction will be made between the method of requesting a service, i.e. requests will be given the same regard whether they are made remotely or in person. Requests made through any form of media will be accepted, but depending on the seriousness and complexity of the complaint, the complainant may be requested to provide further information in a defined form.
- For the sake of clarity, requests made through an indirect channel, such as on 'blogs' or through social media directed to a third party, cannot reasonably be monitored and therefore cannot be accepted as a request for service.

Special provisions

Some requests for service may in fact be complaints about a service already provided or refused. Some requests may constitute feedback about service provision or may request a review of a Council decision. In these instances, the provisions of the Complaint Handling Policy and Internal Review of Council Decision Policy should be observed.

5. DELEGATION

The Chief Executive Officer has the delegation to approve, amend and review any procedures that shall be consistent with this Policy.

6. AVAILABILITY OF THE POLICY

This Policy will be available for inspection at the Council's Offices during ordinary business hours and via the Council's website www.ahc.sa.gov.au. Copies will also be provided to the public upon request, and upon payment of a fee in accordance with the Council's Schedule of Fees and Charges.