



GUARANTEE OF SERVICE STATEMENT

PURPOSE

To establish clear and concise standards of service the council aspires to deliver in its operations and provide a guarantee of service in respect of those services, to its customers.

SCOPE

The development of a guarantee of service is a recommendation in the Better Practice Review (No. 17). That practice recommendation stresses that a guarantee is a powerful tool – both for marketing service quality and for achieving it, for five (5) basic reasons, namely;

- (a) a guarantee forces the organisation to focus on its customers
- (b) a guarantee sets clear standards
- (c) a guarantee generates feedback
- (d) a guarantee forces an organisation to demand to know why it fails
- (e) a guarantee builds image and confidence

The policy applies to all members of the public, all Councillors and council staff, delegates, volunteers and contractors.



POLICY STATEMENT

PART 1 POLICY GUIDELINES

1. GUARANTEE OF SERVICE STATEMENT

Hunter's Hill Council is committed to providing quality service and best value to its residents, ratepayers and customers.

The purpose of this statement is to outline Council's approach to customer service and establish a standard method of managing contact with customers.

In general Councillors and staff will endeavour to:

1. Treat customers with respect, courtesy, patience, sensitivity and attentiveness.
2. Listen to what customers have to say and determine the exact nature of the request.
3. Respond to customer enquiries promptly and efficiently.
4. Provide clear, concise and accurate advice and information.
5. Handle customer requests and enquiries with discretion.
6. Make impartial and ethical decisions.
7. Use information and Council resources responsibly and efficiently.
8. Advise the community of major policy and procedural changes and consult with the community on major decisions that may affect them.
9. Act in accordance with the law and Council's Code of Conduct.

In turn Council expects customers to:

1. Treat Councillors and staff with respect, courtesy and patience.
2. Clearly articulate enquiries, problems and complaints.
3. Provide sufficient information to enable a response.
4. Adhere to Council policies and procedures.
5. Recognise that Council does not have unlimited resources and will set priorities based on formal protocols.



6. Use Council assets and services responsibly, safely and within the guidelines set.
7. Act in accordance with State and Federal laws.

Types of Customer Service

Face-to-face

In serving members of the public who come to Council seeking information or to transact business we will:

1. Provide professional and courteous customer service.
2. Make staff available for interviews on request (making a mutually convenient appointment time if the staff member is not available), or by prior arrangement during Council business hours.
3. Where appropriate, make appointments to visit a customer external to Council's facilities.
4. Speak clearly and deal with visitors calmly, courteously and patiently, even when visitors are angry, aggressive or distressed.

Telephone Calls

Telephone calls are an important way in which customers communicate with the Council. We undertake to:

1. Advise all callers of the name of the person answering the call, or making the call where it is outgoing from Council.
2. Answer all calls promptly and efficiently, providing clear and concise information, and redirecting the call to the appropriate officer where necessary.
3. Speak clearly, deal with customers calmly, courteously and patiently, even when the callers are angry, aggressive or distressed.



4. Put calls on hold for the minimum amount of time possible.
5. Ensure all messages include details of the callers name, contact number and message as well as details of who took the message and when.
6. Respond to telephone messages within one business day, or if this is not possible give clear advice to the caller about when the caller can expect a response.
7. Record all significant calls in the form of a written file note in Council's official recordkeeping systems.

Written Correspondence

Council recognises the importance of written correspondence, including letters, facsimiles and email messages and will provide clear, concise and prompt responses. We will:

1. Respond to written correspondence by telephone where appropriate and record the response in Council's official recordkeeping systems.
2. Reply to correspondence within ten working days. Complex matters may take longer to finalise or may need to be referred to a Council meeting. Under these circumstances an interim response prior to completion may be required, either in writing or by telephone.
3. Ensure that all outward correspondence includes the name and contact details of the officer dealing with the matter and Council's file reference.

After Hours Emergencies

At certain times it is necessary to contact the Council outside of normal business hours. At these times we undertake to:

1. Respond to messages left on the answering machine within one business day.



2. Redirect after hours calls, through our message service to the Duty Officer.
3. Respond to calls based on the severity of the emergency, prevailing circumstances and public safety. Prioritisation will be based on written standards incorporated into Council's strategic business plans and standard operating procedures. Where necessary work will be carried out immediately or scheduled for completion during normal working hours.
4. Non-urgent enquiries will be referred to the appropriate staff member and dealt in accordance with Council's comment and complaint handling procedures.

Comments and Complaints

If you are pleased with our level of service, then please take a moment to let us know. We value your feedback, either in person, by mail, telephone, fax or email, as it gives us the opportunity to recognise and reward excellent service by our staff.

Complaints or suggestions are also welcome as they provide us with an opportunity to improve customer service levels. If you are aware of a problem or dissatisfied about a specific Council decision, policy, procedure, charge, staff member or quality of service please let us know in the following ways:

1. Contact us by telephone, mail, fax, email or visit the Council's Office.
2. Staff receiving your comment will register it and ensure that it is resolved as quickly as possible.
3. If the issue cannot be resolved by the person you first speak to, you may be referred to a manager or someone in a specialist area who will be responsible for resolving your complaint.
4. Upon completion of the investigation, and within ten working days, you will receive a reply outlining any action taken or what will be done to resolve the matter.



5. If you are not satisfied with the response you receive, you can appeal to the General Manager or Council's Public Officer who will review the decision and report back to you as soon as possible and within 28 days.
6. If you are still not satisfied with the response you may be able to take your complaint to the Department of Local Government, the Independent Commission Against Corruption or the NSW Ombudsman depending on the issue involved.

Rude, Abusive or Aggressive Customers

If in the opinion of any staff member, rude, abusive or aggressive comments or statements are made in telephone conversations or interviews, the staff member may:

1. Warn the customer that if the behaviour continues, the conversation or interview will be terminated.
2. Terminate the conversation or interview if the rude, abusive or aggressive behaviour continues after a warning has been given.
3. Rude abusive or aggressive behaviour may include rude or otherwise vulgar noises, expressions or gestures, verbal abuse of a personal or general nature, intimidating, threatening or offensive behaviour, physical violence against property, or physical violence against a person.
4. Where a conversation or interview is terminated, the staff member will inform their supervisor of the incident and make a diary note of the event. Where appropriate, the Supervisor will discuss the matter with the Director to determine what action should be taken with respect to the customer's behaviour.

Anonymous Customer Action Requests

Council will not normally investigate anonymous action requests, unless the issue places public safety at risk or raises a serious matter, and there is sufficient information in the complaint to make out a prima facie case or to carry out an investigation.



Keeping you informed

Council will publish details of how we performed against the service standards in this charter in Council's Annual Report. We will also, where appropriate, display results of customer research about our services in our service centre, in our quarterly newsletter and our website.

Business Hours

Monday to Friday (excluding Public Holidays) – 8:30 to 5:00pm

Contacts:

Street Address: 22 Alexandra Street, Hunters Hill NSW 2110
Postal Address: PO Box 21, Hunters Hill NSW 2110
Phone: (02) 9879 9400
Fax: (02) 9809 7338
Email: council@huntershill.nsw.gov.au
Web: www.huntershill.nsw.gov.au



Guarantee of Service Standards

Hunter's Hill Council is committed to providing quality service and best value to our customers.

1. We will provide professional and courteous counter service and will endeavour to keep waiting times below 10 minutes
2. We will respond to the majority of your telephone enquires within 30 seconds and attempt to resolve your inquiry during that call
3. We aim to reply to correspondence within ten working days although complex matters may take longer to finalise
4. A contact name and telephone number will be provided in correspondence
5. We will endeavour to provide accurate, consistent advice in a polite and courteous manner
6. We will consult on major proposals, plans and policies affecting the community
7. We will inform/educate our customers on any major policy or procedure changes

Your rights

In your dealings with us, you have the right to:

1. Fair and unbiased treatment
2. Expect us to respect your privacy and keep your information confidential unless disclosure is authorised by your or by the law
3. Be given an explanation about a decision we make that affects you
4. Lodge a complaint

If you are satisfied

If you are pleased with our level of service, then please take a moment to let us know. We value your feedback, either in person, by mail, telephone, fax or email, as it gives us the opportunity to recognise and reward excellent service by our staff.

If you are not satisfied

Council welcomes complaints as providing an opportunity to improve our service to our customers. If you are dissatisfied about a specific Council decision, policy, procedure, charge, staff member or quality of service please let us know in the following ways:

1. Contact us by telephone, mail, fax, email or go to any Council service outlet. Staff receiving your complaint will register it and ensure that it is resolved as quickly as possible. In the case of minor complaints staff have the authority to resolve the matter on the spot.
2. If the complaint cannot be resolved by the person you first speak to, you may be referred to a manager or someone in a specialist area, who will be responsible for resolving your complaint



3. If you are still not satisfied, you can appeal to a senior Council officer or Council's Public Officer who will review the decision and report back to you as soon as possible and within 28 days.

In all cases, if a complaint cannot be resolved within Council, you will be offered one of the following alternatives:

1. An alternative dispute resolution procedure such as mediation may be tried
2. The complaint may be referred to an external agency such as ICAC or the Office of the Ombudsman
3. You may be advised to seek legal remedy.

Privacy Management Plan and Code of Practice

The Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 required Council to abide by a "Privacy Code of Practice" for the protection of personal information, and for the protection of privacy of individuals generally.

Council is also required to have a Privacy Management Plan" that will complement the "Privacy Code of Practice". The Plan and Code can be viewed at Council or on our web site.

Questions or written communications concerning the application of the Code or Plan should be addressed to the General Manager.

Complaints in respect of the protection and obligations arising under the Act and code should be addressed to the General Manager of the Council.

Complaints may alternatively be directed to the Privacy Commissioner.



RELATED RESOURCES

Hunters Hill Code of Administrative Good Conduct – (CORP.S-Pol.06)

Hunters Hill Statement of Business Ethics – (CORP.S-Pol.07)

Hunters Hill privacy Code of Practice – (CORP.S-Pol.08)

Hunters Hill Access to Information and Access to Information held by Council Policy – (CORP.S-Pol.21)

Hunters Hill Complaints Handling Policy – (CORP.S-Pol.22)

POLICY OWNER

The policy authority is the General Manager.

AUTHORISATION AND REVIEW

Next Review Date

This policy is to be reviewed in 2013 with any changes in legislation or Council policies.

Version Control Table

Date	Version	Res. No.	Key Changes	Author
28.09.2009	1.0	307/09 OM 4275	Adoption of initial policy	B. Smith