



Customer

Enquiry Feedback

&

Dispute Resolution Procedure

December 2015

Administration

Responsible Department/Officer	Customer Service
Date of Adoption	21/12/2015
Date Prepared	21/12/2015
Council Review Dates	21/12/2017
Audit Committee Review Dates	-
ESCOSA Review Dates	-
Related Documents	-

1 Introduction

Local Government authorities deliver an extensive range of services and infrastructure to communities, and discharge obligations under various legislative schemes. The Roxby Council ("the Council") provides not only traditional municipal local government functions and services, but also operates electricity, water and sewerage services as a licenced electricity authority (Roxby Power) and intermediate water retailer (Roxby Water). As such, there are various specific legislative requirements that the Council is required to follow for its municipal, electricity and water operations.

The Council is committed to the provision of a quality service to all customers and regards feedback (which includes compliments, suggestions and complaints) as an opportunity to improve practices and procedures, as well as to resolve any issues that may arise. The aim of this procedure is to provide a fair, consistent and structured process for Council's customers if they wish to comment on, or are dissatisfied with, a Council action, decision or service. The information obtained from these contacts with the Council will be used to directly inform service improvements.

Emphasis will be placed on resolving issues as quickly as possible for customers. However, where the matter cannot be settled in the first instance, the Council will ensure that the issue is dealt with through an appropriate and transparent process by an employee who has the relevant level of delegated authority to make decisions.

This procedure has been developed in accordance with AS ISO 10002-2006 Customer satisfaction – Guidelines for complaint handling in organisations and includes, where applicable, the specific procedures that will apply to the Council's municipal services, or to Roxby Power or Roxby Water operations.

2 Purpose

This procedure should be read in conjunction with related Council policies and procedures regarding customer enquiry, feedback, and dispute resolution processes. These related policies and procedures set out the process for recording, managing and responding to requests for service, feedback, complaints, enquiries and escalations which are received by Council from customers via telephone, in writing, in person or by email. In some instances, as required by the statutory framework, separate processes will apply for Council's municipal services, Roxby Power or Roxby Water.

The procedure has been developed to ensure that customers are fully aware of the channels available to them to raise queries or complaints about Council's services. It also ensures that accurate information is collected by the Council, which can be used to analyse trends and identify areas for improvement.

3 Review

In order to ensure that the Council continues to provide the best possible complaint handling service for its customers, this policy will be subject to periodic evaluation and review, and is therefore subject to change.

4 Contact Details

The Council can be contacted direct as follows

Council Office	Business hours
	Mon- Fri 9:00am to 5:00pm excluding weekends and public holidays
	08 8671 0010
Fax	08 8671 0452
Mail	PO Box 124 Roxby Downs SA 5725
In Person	6 Richardson Place Roxby Downs SA 5725
Email	roxby@roxbycouncil.com.au
Website	www.roxbydowns.com

roxbylink Cultural & Leisure Precinct

Phone
 Fax
 Mail
 In Person
 Email
 Website

Business hours

Mon- Fri 9:00am to 5:00pm excluding weekends and public holidays
 08 8671 0500
 08 8671
 PO Box 300 Roxby Downs SA 5725
 1 Richardson Place Roxby Downs SA 5725
roxby@roxbycouncil.com.au
www.roxbydowns.com

After Hours (emergency only)

Phone 0418 892 870

5 Scope

5.1 What is covered

The Council is responsible for the delivery of a large array of operations and services. The following are some of the examples of enquiries, feedback and complaints that are covered by this procedure.

Item	Municipal	Roxby Power	Roxby Water
General Council Enquiries			
Accounts	√	√	√
Meter readings and water use		√	
Change of name and / or address	√	√	√
Hardship	√	√	√
Feedback complaints compliments and suggestions	√	√	√
Concessions Grants or rebates	√	√	√
Registration of Special Needs Customers		√	√
Water Restrictions or conservation measures			√
How to obtain technical efficient advice for your home or business		√	√
Service faults and emergencies (business hours)	√	√	√
Connection enquiries		√	√
Reconnection enquiries after having been disconnected			
Dial before you dig			
Other not stated	√	√	√
roxbylink cultural and leisure services enquiries			
Accounts	√		
Feedback complaints compliments and suggestions	√		
Services and session times	√		
Service faults and emergencies (after business hours)			
General Enquiries			
Service Faults			
Leaking or faulty water meter		√	√
Sewer blockage or overflow		√	
Reconnection enquiries after having been disconnected		√	
Dogs & cats wandering or impoundments	√		

5.2 What is not covered

The following matters are outside of the scope of this procedure, are more appropriately dealt with under the Review of Council Decisions Policy & Procedure or by another relevant statutory authority):

- A request for a waiver or review of a penalty infringement notice, unless it is about the conduct of the employee issuing the notice;
- Decisions made by the Council under legislation other than the *Local Government Act 1999* or the *Roxby Downs (Indenture Ratification) Act 1982* relating to water and electricity operations ;
- A request for a review of a Council or Council Officer's decision;
- Complaints which are determined to be about matters that are not Council's responsibility. (for example, disputes between neighbours or other matters such as third party arrangements);
- *Freedom of Information Act 1991* applications;
- Insurance claims;
- Complaints of a personal nature against the Council Administrator;
- Formal complaints alleging corruption misconduct or maladministration in public administration (as those terms are defined under the *Independent Commissioner Against Corruption Act 2012*);
- Matters already before a court or tribunal, or under consideration by the South Australian Police, a Minister of the Crown, a South Australian or Federal Government department, the South Australian Ombudsman, the Office for Public Integrity or the Independent Commissioner Against Corruption.

6 Customer Enquiries

The Council employees will:

- Ensure the opportunity to make enquiries, provide feedback, make a complaint or access dispute resolution options are made available to all customers via telephone, email, written correspondence or in person;
- Provide a source of customer-related information as required by the relevant legislation or licensing obligations, such as the *Local Government Act 1999*, including access to the Customer Charters for Roxby Power and Roxby Water;
- Provide early resolution of customer enquiries and complaints, and resolve matters at the first point of contact where reasonably practicable;
- Manage customer expectations by providing relevant information, including information regarding timeframes, and meeting the service standards related to enquiry and complaint responsiveness;
- Ensure customer enquiries and complaints are dealt with in a fair and reasonable manner.

The Council will ensure that all Customer Service employees who receive enquiries are equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to provide a quality service, and to handle interactions professionally and efficiently and communicate effectively. All Customer Service employees have the delegated authority to handle complaints in the first instance and enquiries and complaints will be dealt with promptly at the first point of contact and at the appropriate officer level.

Council employees will;

- Acknowledge feedback and complaints promptly;
- Treat customers in a polite and courteous manner at all times;
- Ascertain all details necessary to ensure the customer receives the service they expect;
- Assess and investigate the enquiry or complaint and attempt to resolve the matter at the first point of contact;
- Make an accurate record of the contact so the matter can be tracked, monitored and reported;
- Endeavour to respond to all enquiries in a timely and efficient manner and provide the customer with a

- clear resolution;
- Follow up any customer concerns;
- Consider whether there are any systemic issues which need correction, and raise these with the Manager.

In assessing and processing requests for service, emphasis will be placed on:

- Addressing public safety and emergencies;
- An assessment of the risk posed by the matter subject of the contact;
- The context of the services and work provided in Council's Annual Business Plan and Budget;
- Using Council resources effectively;
- Any applicable guidelines and conditions of externally funded programs;
- Statutory responsibilities of the Council;
- Relevant Council policies, procedures and codes;
- Established service standards and response times for regular Council activities.

Where an applicant is not satisfied with the outcome of a response for service, he/she is able to provide feedback to the Council, or lodge a complaint in writing to be sent by post or email, or by completing the relevant form, appearing at the end of this procedure.

7 Complaints and Dispute Resolution

The Council welcomes customer complaints, and considers these an opportunity to maintain confidence and trust, as well as improve its customer service performance and efficiency.

The Council defines a complaint as an expression of dissatisfaction whereby a resolution or response is expected (either explicitly or implicitly). It may be related to its services, or the complaints handling process itself. If the customer is dissatisfied with any aspect of the Council's service, the customer is invited to contact the Council so it can resolve the concerns.

7.1 Commitment to complaints and dispute resolution

The Council welcomes complaints as a way of improving its services and programs, as well as providing an opportunity to put things right. This procedure is widely accessible to ensure that customers are fully aware of their right to make a complaint. Information about how to lodge a complaint is also included in a prominent position on the Council's website.

The Council will address customer concerns in a timely and efficient manner, with a view to resolving issues in a non-confrontational, non-adversarial environment. The Council will also:

- Listen to customers concerns;
- Employees will identify themselves;
- Ensure that all correspondence includes a contact name and telephone number;
- Respect a customers right to privacy;
- Provide customers with high quality information and advice; and
- Provide information and guidelines in plain language.

When contacting the Council with an issue we ask our customers to:

- Treat all Council employees with courtesy;
- Be honest in all your dealings with the Council ; and
- Provide the Council with information when requested to help address the issue.

7.2 Guiding Principles

The Council is committed to the following complaints management guiding principles when handling feedback and complaints:

Accessibility - Complainants can easily access the complaints management process and the methods of making complaints will be flexible.

Accountability – the Council will ensure that systematic reporting of customer complaints against documented standards and reporting on lessons learnt is undertaken.

Charges - No fees will be charged to manage genuine customer complaints and enquiries.

Confidentiality - Personally identifiable complainant information should be available where needed, but only for the purposes of addressing the complaint within the Council. The complainant's information will be actively protected from disclosure, unless the customer expressly consents to its disclosure, or disclosure is required under another statutory regime.

Continual Improvement - Analysis of customer complaints will drive improvement in customer service and the complaints handling process.

Customer Focused Approach - A customer focused approach will be adopted and the rights of customers to disagree with the Council will be respected and supported by providing and promoting an accessible, timely, fair and friendly process for the lodgement and management of customer complaints.

Efficiency - complaints will be resolved as quickly as possible, while ensuring that they are dealt with by an employee of a level that reflects the level of complexity.

Fairness - treating complainants fairly requires impartiality, confidentiality and transparency at all stages of the process.

Integration – will be undertaken for different areas of the Council where the complaint overlaps functional responsibilities.

Objectivity - Each complaint will be addressed in an equitable, objective and unbiased manner.

Responsiveness - All complainants should receive timely acknowledgement that their complaint has been received, and best endeavours will be made to provide a response within the required response targets.

Visibility - Information about the 'how and where' to make a complaint is visible to customers, employees and other stakeholders.

8 How to make an enquiry, provide feedback or lodge a complaint

Requests for Service, Feedback and Complaints must be in writing and can be made in a number of ways:

- Downloading and completing the relevant form on Council's website;
- Telephone at 08 8671 0500
- Email to roxby@roxbycouncil.com.au;
- Letter addressed to the Manager Corporate Strategy and Governance, PO Box 124, Roxby Downs, 5725;
- Visit the Council office and complete the relevant Form (appearing at the end of this procedure).

All requests for service and complaints will be recorded in the Council's records management system in such a way that the information can also be analysed for service improvement opportunities.

Customers will be advised of the likely timeframe required to investigate and resolve a request for service or complaint, and will be regularly updated as to progress where required.

Employees will be trained to manage complaints efficiently and effectively, and provided with a level of delegated authority appropriate for the nature of complaints they are expected to resolve.

9 Method of response

The Council endeavours to resolve all complaints at the first point of contact. However, there are some instances where this will not be possible, and further investigation may be required. In these instances, the Council will acknowledge receipt of a complaint and aim to provide the complainant with a resolution within the Regulatory Service Standards.

As a general rule, the Council will respond via the same channel as the complaint is received, unless advised otherwise. Where a complaint cannot be resolved immediately the complainant will be advised of the process to be undertaken.

The Council will respond within [10] business days, acknowledging receipt of the complaint and, where possible, proposing a resolution at that time. If a resolution is not possible, the complainant will be kept regularly informed of progress, either by email, letter or personal contact.

The Council will try to ensure that, whenever possible, complaints will be handled independently of the original decision-maker or employee involved in the matter, subject of the complaint.

Where circumstances indicate that the complaint would be appropriately handled by a more senior employee, a complaint will be directed to a more senior officer in the Council. This may occur, for example, where an officer has been involved in the matter that is the subject of the complaint, where the complaint is about an issue that requires a decision to be made at a more senior level, or where a complaint concerns a matter that ranges across more than one Council work area.

10 Complaint resolution

Where complaints are found to be justified, the Council will, where practicable, remedy the situation in a manner consistent and fair for both the Council and complainant. The proposed solution will be proportionate and appropriate to the circumstances.

As a general principle the complainant should, so far as reasonably possible, be put in the position he or she would have been in, had things not gone wrong. This may mean providing the desired service or changing a decision. Sometimes, however, depending on the circumstances, it may only be possible to offer an apology.

Compensation will only be offered in cases where the loss or suffering is considered substantial, or where it is reasonable in the circumstances. The Council Administrator is the only employee authorised to offer financial compensation, and may consult with the Local Government Association Mutual Liability Scheme before taking any such action.

The Council may seek to use alternative dispute resolution methods, such as mediation, to resolve a complaint in circumstances where the Council Administrator or his/her delegate deems such a course of action appropriate, and the complainant is amenable to that process.

In some instances, it may be appropriate to consider mediation, conciliation or neutral evaluation as authorised by section 271 of the Local Government Act 1999. Costs and expenses of the appointment of a mediator, conciliator or evaluator will be shared equally between the Council and the complainant.

When advising a complainant of the outcome of an investigation of a complaint, the Council will provide information

about alternative remedies, including any rights of appeal and/or the right to make a complaint to an external agency such as the SA Ombudsman where required.

11 Complaint escalation

If a customer has attempted to resolve concerns through the above procedure, the customer may escalate the complaint to the Council Administrator via an internal review pursuant to section 270 of the *Local Government Act 1999*.

11.1 Internal review of a Council decision by statutory process

An internal review of a Council decision is available under section 270 of the *Local Government Act 1999*. This is a process established by legislation that enables a Council to reconsider all the evidence relied on to make a decision, including new evidence if relevant. This process is generally a last resort in the complaint handling process, but may also be used in situations which are unable to be resolved by other means.

For further information refer to the Council's "Review of Council Decisions Policy & Procedure."

11.2 Ombudsman

While the Council prefers to work with its customers direct to resolve complaints quickly and effectively, a complainant of course will always retain the right to seek other forms of resolution, such as contacting the relevant Ombudsman, or taking legal action at any time. Please note however that as a general rule, the relevant Ombudsman prefer that a complaint be addressed by Council in the first instance, unless this is not appropriate in the circumstances.

If the matter still cannot be resolved, you will be advised of your option to escalate your complaint to the relevant Ombudsman - independent, free services available to residential and business customers.

Municipal and other local government complaints

Ombudsman SA

Street address: Level 5 East Wing, 50 Grenfell Street, ADELAIDE SA 5000
Postal address: PO Box 3651, RUNDLE MALL SA 5000
Telephone: 08 8226 8699
Toll free: 1800 182 150 (outside metro SA only)
Facsimile: 08 226 8602
Email: ombudsman@ombudsman.sa.gov.au

12 Complaint recording and evaluation

The Council will record and monitor all complaints received from customers for the purposes of monitoring compliance with Regulatory Service Standards, but also to assist in improving the experience of its customers and the quality of its service. Learning from complaints is a powerful way of helping to develop Council services and to increase confidence of the customers who use Council services.

In addition to making changes to procedures and practices where appropriate, the Council will review and evaluate the information gained through its complaints handling system on an annual basis to identify systemic issues and potential improvements to service. The Council will receive a report on the number and nature of complaints received, including the percentage of unresolved complaints, at least once a year to the relevant authority.

Where appropriate, complainants will be provided with an explanation of general changes proposed or made as a result of the investigation of their complaint.

13 Unreasonable Complainant Conduct

All complaints received by the Council will be treated seriously and complainants will be treated courteously. However, occasionally, the conduct of a complainant can be unreasonable. This may take the form of unreasonable persistence or demands, lack of cooperation, or argumentative or threatening behaviour.

The Council may determine that a complaint is malicious, trivial, frivolous, unreasonable, persistent or vexatious by taking into account:

- Any previous complaints of a similar nature submitted by the complainant;
- The response and outcome to the previous complaints and investigation of those complaints;
- The resources required to address the complaint (in order to ensure that it is not an unreasonable diversion of public resources).

Where a complainant's behaviour consumes an unwarranted amount of the Council resources, or impedes the investigation of the complaint, a decision may be made to apply restrictions on contact with the complainant. However, before any decision is made to restrict contact, the complainant will be warned that, if the specified behaviour(s) or actions continue, restrictions may be applied.

Any decision to suspend action on a complaint will be made by the Council Administrator or his/her delegate and communicated in writing to the complainant.

The complainant maintains a right to make application for a review of this decision under section 270 of the *Local Government Act 1999*, or alternatively, make a complaint to the relevant Ombudsman.

14 Privacy and Confidentiality

Complainants have a right to expect that their complaint will be investigated confidentially, to the extent possible. The identity of complainants will be made known only to those who require this information in the process of investigating and resolving the complaint. The complaint will not be revealed or made public by the Council, except where required by law.

In addition, all complaints lodged with the Council are subject to the *Freedom of Information Act 1991* and confidentiality cannot be guaranteed under the provisions of that legislation.

15 References

Australian Standard AS ISO10002 – 2006
Customer Charter
Water Industry Act 2012
Water Industry Guideline No. 2 (WG2/01)
Water Industry Regulations 2012
Water Retail Code – Minor and Intermediate Retailers

16 Further information

This procedure will be available for inspection at the Council offices located at 6 Richardson Place, Roxby Downs during ordinary business hours and available to be downloaded, free of charge, from Council's internet site: www.roxydowns.com.

Enc Request for Service Form
Customer Feedback Form

APPENDIX

Definitions and interpretation

1 In this procedure:

business day means a day when the Council is normally open for business i.e. Monday to Friday, excluding public holidays.

complaint means an expression of dissatisfaction with:

- The Council's actions, policies, procedures, processes, charges, employees, agents or services;
- The quality of services provided, or works carried out;
- The lack of action on a request for service;
- Delays associated with the provision of a service;
- The conduct of the Council's employees or nominated agents/representatives.

compliment means praise or support for the services/products provided, policies and values demonstrated, or satisfaction with interaction with a Council employee, contractor or agent.

Council refers to the Roxby Council or its respective divisions namely, Roxby Power, Roxby Water or roxbylink.

customer means a ratepayer, a consumer of a Council service, resident, visitor or business.

enquiry means a customer interaction with the Council to request information through the nominated enquiry channels.

ESCOSA means the Essential Services Commission of South Australia.

feedback can take the form of comments both positive and negative about services provided by the Council without necessarily requiring a corrective action, change of services or formal review of decision. Feedback includes a **complaint**, **compliment**, or **suggestion** and may, influence future service reviews and delivery methods.

frivolous means a complaint that lacks substance or merit or is clearly unfounded.

malicious means someone who is motivated by wrongful, vicious or mischievous purposes.

our, us, we means the Council, Roxby Power, Roxby Water or roxbylink.

persistent means someone who is unreasonably refusing to give up or let go and/or is obstinate and/or insistently repetitive or continuous in their demands.

request of service is an application to have Council or its representatives take some form of action to address a problem or request a change in the way the Council delivers a service.

residential customer means a **customer** or **consumer** who is supplied with **retail services** for use at residential premises (as defined in the *Water Industry Act 2012*).

review of a council decision means when a customer seeks a review of a decision made by the Council, an employee of the Council, or person acting on behalf of the Council. These reviews are dealt with under the Internal Review of Council Decisions Policy & Procedure.

suggestion means advice, recommendation or comment from a customer that proposes to lead to some

improvement in the Council's ability to deliver a higher level of customer service.

trivial means a complaint that is so inconsequential as to be of little worth or importance.

unreasonable complainant conduct is unreasonable conduct by complainants which go beyond normal situational stress associated with complainant behaviour.

vexatious is when a complaint is lodged to deliberately harass, annoy, delay or cause detriment or trouble to the Council and its employees, or the provision of services by the Council and its employees.