

NARACOORTE LUCINDALE COUNCIL

COUNCIL POLICY

No. 24 – A1

COMPLAINTS & DISPUTE RESOLUTION PROCEDURE – SEWERAGE SERVICES

Version 1

RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:	Director of Corporate Services
RELEVANT DELEGATIONS:	-
LEGISLATION AND REFERENCES:	Water Industry Act 2012

DEFINITIONS

Acronym	Definition
business day	A day that is not a Saturday, a Sunday or a public holiday in the State of South Australia.
complaint	An expression of dissatisfaction made to an organisation, related to its products or services, or the complaints handling process itself, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected.
customer	The beneficiary of a product or service supplied by the Council. A Beneficiary can be an organisation or a person.
enquiry	A request for information (which requires further investigation) received from a customer or their representative via the nominated enquiry channels.
ESCOSA	Essential Services Commission of South Australia.
first point of contact	The employee who first received the customer complaint, compliment or suggestion.
investigation	An investigation is required if: a) A response cannot be provided to a customer based on information that is available to us at the time. b) An inspection of the property is required. c) A complaint is received about the behaviour of a staff member or a complaint about a contractor.

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regulatory service standards	Timeframes for response to complaints as determined by ESCOSA from time to time.
suggestion	Advice, recommendation or comment from a customer that proposes to lead to some improvement in Council's ability to deliver a higher level of customer service.

INTRODUCTION

The Naracoorte Lucindale Council was issued with a water retail licence for the supply of wastewater services on 10 January 2013. The Water Retail Code – Minor and Intermediate Retailers sets out requirements we must comply with in relation to the provision of our of water and/or wastewater services.

More information on these requirements can be found in our Customer Charter at www.naracoortelucindale.sa.gov.au

PURPOSE

This document outlines our customer enquiry, complaints and dispute resolution processes detailing the requirements for recording, managing and responding to enquiries and complaints received and the escalation process. This document should be read in conjunction with our Customer Charter and other policies where specified.

This process applies to all enquiries and complaints received from external customers and consumers via telephone, in writing, in person or electronically.

The process ensures that customers are fully aware of the channels available to them to raise queries or complaints about our services. It also ensures that accurate information is collected and can be used to analyse trends and areas for improvement.

This document is reviewed periodically and may be subject to change.

CUSTOMER ENQUIRIES

The Naracoorte Lucindale Council will:

1. Ensure enquiries, complaints and dispute resolution is available to our customers via:
 - a. telephone
 - b. e-mail
 - c. written correspondence
 - d. website
 - e. in person
2. Provide a source of customer-related information as directed by the Water Retail Code including our Customer Charter.

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3. Provide early resolution of customer enquiries and complaints and resolve matters at the first point of contact where possible.
4. Manage customer requirements by providing relevant information and meeting service standards related to enquiry and complaint responsiveness.
5. Ensure customer enquiries and complaints are dealt with in a fair reasonable and timely manner.
6. Assist customers who may require an interpreter service by referral to the relevant body

How Can I Contact Naracoorte Lucindale Council?

You can contact Council on the following phone number(s), between 8.30am and 5.30pm weekdays (excluding public holidays) to discuss various matters as listed below.

1. General Enquiries - 8760 1100
 - Accounts
 - Change of name and/or address
 - Payment arrangements and options available
 - Hardship and difficulties in paying bills
 - Complaints, compliments and suggestions
 - Registration of Special Needs Customers
 - Availability of any relevant Government concession, grant or rebate schemes
2. Service faults and emergencies (24 hours) - 8760 1100
 - Sewer blockage or overflow
3. Connection enquiries – 8760 1100
 - Applications for connections
 - Availability of services
 - The connection and supply to a supply address
4. Dial Before You Dig - 131366 (emergency)

You can also contact Council in a variety of other way:

Enquiries e-mail	council@nlc.sa.gov.au
Fax:	8760 1100
Mail:	PO Box 555, Naracoorte SA 5271
In person:	DeGaris Place, Naracoorte
Website:	www.naracoortelucindale.sa.gov.au

Commitment to Customer Enquiries

Council will ensure our staff are equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to provide quality service to customers.

Our staff will:

- Treat customers in a polite and courteous manner.
 - Obtain any details necessary to ensure the customer receives the service they require.
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- 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.
- Respond to all enquiries in a timely and efficient manner.

COMPLAINTS AND DISPUTE RESOLUTION

Council welcomes feedback including the lodgement of any complaints you may have as a customer (either property owner or tenant) with our service. It provides us with an opportunity to maintain your confidence and trust as well as improve our customer service.

We consider complaints as an opportunity to better understand dissatisfaction with our service, and provide you with a response in order to arrive at a resolution. It may be related to our products, services, or the complaints handling process itself. If you are dissatisfied with any aspect of our services or products, please contact us so that we can resolve your concerns.

Naracoorte Lucindale Council's Commitment to Complaints and Dispute Resolution

We will address customer concerns with a view to resolving issues in a friendly, timely and efficient manner. We will:

- Listen to your concerns.
- Identify ourselves.
- Ensure that our correspondence has a contact name and telephone number.
- Respect your right to privacy.
- Provide you with high quality information and advice.
- Provide information and guidelines in plain language.

When contacting us with a complaint we ask our customers to:

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

Complaints Management Guiding Principles

We are committed to following the complaints management guiding principles when handling your complaints:

1. **Visibility** - Information about the 'how and where' to make a complaint is visible to customers, staff and other stakeholders.
2. **Accessibility** - Complainants can easily access the complaints management process and the methods of making complaints will be flexible.
3. **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.
4. **Objectivity** - Each complaint will be addressed in an equitable, objective and unbiased manner.
5. **Charges** - No fees will be charged to manage legitimate customer complaints and enquiries.

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6. Confidentiality - Personally identifiable complainant information should be available where needed, but only for the purposes of addressing the complaint within Council. The complainant's information will be actively protected from disclosure, unless the customer expressly consents to its disclosure.
7. Customer-focused Approach - A customer-focused approach will be adopted and the right for customers to disagree with us will be respected and supported by providing and promoting an accessible, timely, fair and friendly process for the lodgement and management of customer complaints.
8. Accountability – Council will ensure that systematic reporting of customer complaints against documented standards and lessons learned is undertaken.
9. Continual Improvement - Analysis of customer complaints will drive improvement in customer service and the complaints handling process.

How to Make a Complaint

There are two ways to contact and lodge a complaint with us:

1. *Speak to our Customer Service staff*

If you are dissatisfied with any of our products or services, please contact us on 8760 1100 and discuss your concern with our Customer Service staff. Alternatively, you can speak to us in person at DeGaris Place, Naracoorte.

Our Customer Service Centre staff are able to resolve most of your concerns over the telephone at the first point of contact. If you remain dissatisfied with the outcome, you may request to have your complaint reviewed by the Director Corporate Services who will further investigate this matter.

2. *Write to us*

If you prefer, write to us at the following address with the details of your complaint:

PO Box 555, Naracoorte SA 5271

Alternatively you can send an email to council@nlc.sa.gov.au

Upon receipt of your letter or email, we will provide you with a written acknowledgement of your complaint as well as the contact details of the staff member who will be managing your complaint.

Method of Response

We endeavour to resolve all complaints at the first point of contact. However, there are some instances where this is not possible and further investigation may be required. In these instances, we will acknowledge receipt of your complaint within five business days and aim to provide you with a resolution within twenty business days.

Should we be unable to meet the timeframes, we will advise you of our suggested course of action and timeframe, as well as the name of a contact person for any further queries regarding this matter.

As a general rule, we will respond via the same channel as the complaint is received unless advised otherwise.

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Complaint Escalation

If you have attempted to resolve your concerns through the above process without resolution, you may escalate your complaint to the Chief Executive Officer for further review.

If the matter still cannot be resolved, you will be advised of your option to escalate your grievances to an external dispute resolution body - an independent, free service available to residential and business customers.

Ombudsman SA can assist with concerns regarding Council's processes used to make decisions and determine if they are fair, reasonable and lawful.

Contact details are:

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

Complaint Recording

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 our customers.

NARACOORTE LUCINDALE COUNCIL'S CUSTOMER CHARTER

Customers requiring more information on the following should refer to our Customer Charter, available on our website:

- How to register life support equipment (Special Needs Customers if applicable)
- Financial hardship information
- Translation and interpreting Services
- Large print requirements

PRIVACY

All personal information that is supplied by a customer will be treated in confidence. Personal information shall only be collected from a customer where it is necessary to assist Council with the investigation and resolution of a complaint and/or enquiry.

REFERENCES

- Australian Standard AS ISO10002 - 2006

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- District Council of Robe Customer Charter
 - Water Industry Act 2012
 - Water Industry Guideline No. 2 (WG2/01)
 - Water Industry Regulations 2012
 - Water Retail Code – Minor and Intermediate Retailers

ADOPTION AND AMENDMENT HISTORY

<i>Date</i>	<i>Authorised by</i>	<i>Minute Reference</i>
28 July 2015	Council	377/15 – New Policy