



# Customer Service & Communication Policy

& Guarantees of Service

## Important

This document contains important information about Rockdale City Council. If you do not understand, please visit Council's Customer Service Centre at 2 Bryant Street Rockdale, Monday – Friday from 8.30am – 4.30pm. Council Staff will be happy to arrange interpreter services for you.

You may also contact Telephone Interpreter Services on 131 450 and ask them to ring Rockdale City Council on 9562 1666 on your behalf.

### Arabic

هام:

تحتوي هذه الوثيقة على معلومات هامة عن بلدية روكدايل. إذا لم تكن قادراً على فهمها، يرجى زيارة مركز خدمة زبائن البلدية على العنوان التالي: 2 Bryant Street في روكدايل من الإثنين إلى الجمعة بين الساعة ٨،٣٠ صباحاً و ٤،٣٠ مساءً، حيث سيقوم موظفو البلدية بتأمين مترجم لك بكل سرور.

كما يمكنك الاتصال بخدمة الترجمة الهاتفية على الرقم 131 450 والطلب منهم الاتصال ببلدية روكدايل على الرقم 9562 1666 نيابةً عنك.

### Italian

Importante:

Questo documento contiene importanti informazioni sul Comune di Rockdale City. Se avete difficoltà a comprenderne il contenuto, recatevi presso il Customer Service Centre del Comune a 2 Bryant Street, Rockdale dal lunedì al venerdì dalle ore 8.30 alle 16.30. Il personale del Comune sarà ben lieto di procurarvi un servizio interpreti.

Potete anche chiamare il Servizio telefonico interpreti (TIS) al numero 131 450 chiedendo che telefoni per vostro conto al Comune di Rockdale City al numero 9562 1666.

### Chinese

重要消息

本文件載有關於 Rockdale 市政府的重要資訊，如果您有不明之處，請於星期一至星期五，上午 8 時 30 分至下午 4 時 30 分，前來位於 2 Bryant Street, Rockdale，市政府的顧客服務中心。市政府的職員會很樂意為您安排傳譯員的服務。

您也可以聯絡電話傳譯服務處，電話 131 450，並請他們代您致電 9562 1666 給 Rockdale 市政府。

### Macedonian

Важно:

Ова документ содржи важни информации за Rockdale City Council (Градската општина на Rockdale). Ако не го разбирате, ве молиме, посетете го општинскиот Customer Service Centre (Центар за услуги на клиенти), кој се наоѓа на 2 Bryant Street, Rockdale, од понеделник до петок, од 8.30 наутро до 4.30 попладне. Вработените во општината со задоволство ќе ви организираат да користите преведувач.

Исто така, можете да телефонирате во Telephone Interpreter Services (Служба за преведување по телефон) на 131 450, и да ги замолиме во ваше име да се јават во Градската општина на Rockdale на 9562 1666.

### Greek

Σημαντικό:

Αυτό το έγγραφο περιέχει σημαντικές πληροφορίες για τη Δημαρχία Rockdale City Council. Αν δεν τις καταλαβαίνετε, παρακαλείσθε να επισκεφτείτε το Κέντρο Εξυπηρέτησης Πελατών [Customer Service Centre] του Δήμου στο 2 Bryant Street, Rockdale, Δευτέρα - Παρασκευή από 8.30πμ - 4.30μμ. Το Προσωπικό του Δήμου θα χαρεί να κανονίσει υπηρεσίες διερμηνέων για σας.

Μπορείτε επίσης να επικοινωνήσετε με τις Τηλεφωνικές Υπηρεσίες Διερμηνέων [Telephone Interpreter Services] στο 131 450 και να τους ζητήσετε να τηλεφωνήσουν στο Rockdale City Council στο 9562 1666 για λογαριασμό σας.

### Spanish

Importante:

Este documento contiene información importante sobre el Rockdale City Council (Municipio de Rockdale). Si no la entiende, le rogamos concurrir al Centro de Servicio al Cliente del Municipio, ubicado en 2 Bryant Street, Rockdale, atención de lunes a Viernes, de 8:30 am a 4:30 pm. El personal del municipio se complacerá en obtener los servicios de un intérprete para usted.

Puede asimismo llamar al Servicio Telefónico de Intérpretes al 131 450 y pedirles que llamen de su parte al Rockdale City Council, teléfono 9562 1666.

## Caring for the Environment

— In the interest of protecting and preserving our environment, Rockdale City Council uses Nordset paper for all of its pre-printed paper requirements.

Nordset has been awarded the Nordic Swan label for environmentally friendly pulp and paper manufacturing. It is manufactured with fibre obtained from sustainable plantation forest, it is oxygen bleached, Totally Chlorine Free (TCF), dioxin and acid free. Nordset can be recycled and is biodegradable.

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## A Message from the General Manager

Rockdale City Council is committed to delivering quality customer service and to communicating effectively with our customers and the local community. To achieve these goals we are continuously evaluating and improving our services and the way we communicate. This policy is one of our improvement initiatives and forms part of a comprehensive Customer Service and Communication Strategy that is being implemented across the organisation.

The goal of our Customer Service and Communication Strategy is to deliver high quality customer service that is: appropriate given the diversity of our customers and the community; represents value for money; and meets community needs now and into the future.

Customer and community satisfaction are the key measures by which we will assess whether we have achieved this goal.

The Customer Service and Communication Strategy includes a number of initiatives designed to:

- enhance the way we communicate with our customers and community about:
  - the role of Council and our services and products
  - our Guarantees of Service
  - our customers' and community's expectations, rights and responsibilities.
- improve our understanding of the diverse needs and expectations of our customers and community - so that we can:
  - continuously improve services and products and better meet expectations
  - promote equitable access, social justice, community harmony and well-being for all members of the community.
- provide education, training, recognition, resources and support to our staff so that they are motivated and equipped to deliver quality customer services.

This policy is based on a model policy that has been published by the NSW Ombudsman: 'Better Service and Communication Guidelines for Local Government' (June 2000).



Chris Watson  
General Manager

## Policy Objectives

This policy is designed to:

- outline Rockdale City Council's commitment to quality service and effective communication
- specify our Guarantees of Service
- describe the responsibilities of members of the public in their dealings with Council and the actions that members of the public may take if Council does not meet its commitments as set out in this policy
- provide the basis for a program for improving service and communication between Council and the local community.

## Commitment to Service & Communication

Rockdale City Council is committed to providing quality service in order to meet the needs of the local community using the available resources. To demonstrate this commitment, Council will build and maintain a relationship based on open and effective communication with the local community.

Council is committed to better understanding the needs and expectations of the local community and will do this by:

- carrying out periodic community and business surveys to learn about what the local community thinks about the areas where Council is performing well, and the areas where Council needs to improve service
- establishing a Customer Council and/or Customer and Community Consultation Groups with representatives from Council and the local community to create an ongoing dialogue between Council and the local community and our customers about service performance and improvement
- providing opportunities for feedback by encouraging the public to complete feedback forms and participate in focus groups and consultative forums with Council recording and analysing such feedback
- maintaining a complaint handling system to respond to service failures and unsatisfied expectations and to enable Council to identify and rectify service failures
- publishing Guarantees of Service in a number of areas and regularly measuring and reporting on the performance of Council against these guarantees
- continuing to deliver information on the activities of Council through a variety of means including:
  - publishing regular community updates
  - publishing community information in local newspapers (including ethnic press) and on Council's web page
  - placing plans and other documents relating to Council activities on exhibition at Council's Customer Service Centre and Libraries
  - using public meetings and other open forms of consultation and dialogue where appropriate

- maintaining an open file policy whereby members of the public can inspect files by prior arrangement (subject to the fees and conditions detailed in the policy and to Council's duties of confidentiality and privacy)
- continuing to encourage input from the community on Council's activities through a variety of means including:
  - encouraging the local community to attend and speak at Council meetings
  - encouraging the local community to contact Councillors and Officers to discuss concerns
  - publicising Council's complaint handling and feedback systems
  - encouraging submissions on plans and other documents relating to Council activities.

## Guarantees of Service

Council has developed two types of Guarantees of Service - those we call 'Universal' because they apply to every service that we deliver and those that are 'Service Specific'. These guarantees identify what we need to achieve if we are to deliver quality customer service.

We have eleven Universal Guarantees of Service and eight Service Specific Guarantees of Service. Council regularly reviews its Guarantees of Service and monitors achievement of the guarantees including monitoring community and customer feedback on our performance.

The eleven Universal Guarantees of Service (see Appendix A) cover these topics:

- Communication
- Decision Making and Governance
- Answering Correspondence
- Telephone Calls
- Requests for Works and Service
- Issuing of Certificates, Notices and Permits
- Availability of Staff at Counter and for Interviews
- Meetings of Council
- Consultation and Notification
- Complaint Handling and Reviewing Decisions
- Using Alternative Dispute Resolution Methods.

The eight Service Specific Guarantees of Service (see Appendix B) cover these services:

- Development Applications
- Construction Certificates
- Creditor Payments
- Food Premises Inspections
- Liability Insurance Claims
- Library and Information Services

- Garbage and Recycled Materials Waste Collection
- Councillor Requests for Information.

Please note: The Universal Guarantees of Service also cover these specific services unless otherwise indicated in the specific guarantee.

### **Variations to Service Standards**

The General Manager may from time to time vary the standards of service described in these Guarantees of Service, for example when there has been an increase in demand for a service that cannot be met within available resources. When this does occur we will advise our customers of the changes.

## What are the responsibilities of the local community & customers?

Communication is a two-way process. Council acknowledges that sometimes customers and members of the community are not satisfied with the decisions made by Council and/or with the service that is provided and that this may cause frustration. So that we can better understand - and where possible meet - our customers expectations, we will strive to adopt a fair and reasonable approach to communicating with our customers and community.

To ensure that communications with Council are effective, members of the public should, as far as possible in the circumstances:

- focus their dissatisfaction on the conduct or performance of Council, Councillors and/or staff members rather than on personal criticism of Councillors or staff
- behave appropriately, avoiding abusive language or threatening behaviour
- provide Council with all relevant information in order that their opinion, concern or complaint can be readily understood
- accept that Council operates under resource constraints, noting that the allocation of resources is a matter for Council to determine
- if their complaint or dispute cannot be resolved to their satisfaction, pursue alternative means of resolving the complaint or dispute - for example, through Council's internal complaints procedures or via external agencies, publicity and or taking legal action.

## What if Council does not honour its commitments?

Council welcomes complaints and feedback because it assists us to continuously improve our services. Any member of the public who believes that Council has failed to honour its commitments set out in this policy, including the Guarantees of Service, should raise the matter with the officer who is dealing with the request in the first instance.

If the customer is still unsatisfied then they should discuss the problem with the relevant Director or Service Unit Manager.

If the complaint is still not resolved then the complainant can seek a review by lodging a formal complaint using the procedures outlined in Council's Complaints Policy. Copies of the Complaints Policy are available from the Customer Service Centre and at local libraries and on Council's web page [www.rockdale.nsw.gov.au](http://www.rockdale.nsw.gov.au)

Council will investigate the complaint and advise the complainant of the outcome within a reasonable time frame (as outlined in the Complaints Policy). If the complaint is justified, Council will try to explain the problem and outline what Council is doing to resolve the matter.

If the complainant remains dissatisfied, they can complain to the NSW Ombudsman, the ICAC or the Department of Local Government. Contact details for these agencies are provided at the end of this policy.

## What if members of the public do not meet their responsibilities?

While Council accepts and values complaints and criticism because it provides information that we can use to improve our performance, Council will consider placing limits on communication between certain members of the public and Council. This would apply where communication becomes abusive of people or resources. This is in the interests of responsible management of Council's limited resources and in order to fulfil Council's obligations as a responsible employer.

These limits will only be applied on the decision of Council, the General Manager or a member of staff with appropriate delegated authority in serious cases of inappropriate conduct and only if the person concerned has first been warned about the consequences of persisting with the identified inappropriate conduct. Council will set the limits out in writing and include a statement of reasons for their imposition. Council will not impose unconditional limits on communication between Council and any member of the public.

## Other Relevant Council Policies

Council's policies can be viewed at or obtained from Council's Customer Service Centre or Libraries.

The following policies are particularly relevant to this Customer Service and Communication Policy:

- Code of Conduct
- Code of Meeting Practice
- Code of Planning Practice
- Limits on Service and Communication Policy
- Customer Complaints Policy

## Comments Welcome

Comments and feedback on this policy and the Guarantees of Service are welcome and should be directed to Council's Manager - Communication & Community Relations. These can be emailed to [customerfeedback@rockdale.nsw.gov.au](mailto:customerfeedback@rockdale.nsw.gov.au) or sent via the contact details below.

## Rockdale City Council's Contact Details

### Customer Service Centre

Telephone	02 9562 1666
Fax	02 9562 1777
Address	2 Bryant Street / PO Box 21 ROCKDALE NSW 2216
Email	<a href="mailto:rcc@rockdale.nsw.gov.au">rcc@rockdale.nsw.gov.au</a>
Web	<a href="http://www.rockdale.nsw.gov.au">www.rockdale.nsw.gov.au</a>
Office Hours	8.30am to 4.30pm
Telephone Hours	8.30am to 5pm
After Hours Emergencies	02 9562 1666

## External Agencies Contact Details

### NSW Ombudsman

Telephone	02 9286 1000
Fax	02 9283 2911
Toll free	1800 451 524
TTY	02 9264 8050
Email	<a href="mailto:nswombo@ombo.nsw.gov.au">nswombo@ombo.nsw.gov.au</a>
Web	<a href="http://www.ombo.nsw.gov.au">www.ombo.nsw.gov.au</a>

This Web site also has a series of 'Council Fact Sheets' addressing issues such as problems with development applications.

### Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC)

Telephone	02 8281 5999
Fax	02 9264 5364
Toll free	1800 463 909
Email	<a href="mailto:icac@icac.nsw.gov.au">icac@icac.nsw.gov.au</a>
Web	<a href="http://www.icac.nsw.gov.au">www.icac.nsw.gov.au</a>

## **NSW Department of Local Government**

Sydney office

Telephone 02 9289 4000

Fax 02 9289 4099

Toll free 1800 463 909

TTY 02 4428 4209

Email [dlg@dlg.nsw.gov.au](mailto:dlg@dlg.nsw.gov.au)

Web [www.dlg.nsw.gov.au](http://www.dlg.nsw.gov.au)

# Appendix A

## Guarantees of Service - Universal

Rockdale City Council is committed to delivering high quality customer service that is appropriate given the diversity of our customers and the community, represent value for money and meet community needs now and into the future.

Customer and community satisfaction are the key measures by which we will assess whether we have achieved this goal.

### Communication

Council guarantees to:

- take major decisions affecting the local community only after due consultation with the local community, wherever practicable (see also Consultation and Notification)
- use the most appropriate method of communication and consultation based on the nature of the information and the target audience in order to ensure equitable access to information and to facilitate the participation of all members of the community
- treat members of the local community and other customers with courtesy, patience, sensitivity and attentiveness
- provide the local community with advice and other information that is clear and concise
- be sensitive to any language or other communication difficulties experienced by members of the local community and other customers when providing advice and other information.

### Decision Making & Governance

Council guarantees to:

- adopt fair, lawful and appropriate procedures when making decisions, carrying out activities and performing services
- make decisions using processes that are impartial and otherwise ethical
- use information and Council resources responsibly and efficiently
- act in accordance with the law, Council's Code of Conduct, Code of Planning Practice and the Code of Meeting Practice
- maintain your right to privacy and not release details of your name and address without your permission, subject to any relevant provisions of the Freedom of Information Act and the Privacy & Personal Information Protection Act.

## Answering Correspondence

Council recognises the importance of all correspondence - including letters, facsimiles and email messages - and will aim to provide a clear and concise response promptly.

Council guarantees to:

- provide a substantive response to all written correspondence within one week of receipt, where practicable
- where this is not practicable, for example for more complex matters, we will provide an interim reply within one week of receipt, to indicate the reason for the delay and the time when a complete response will be provided. In these cases a substantive or complete response will be provided within three weeks of receipt
- respond by telephone to correspondence instead of in writing, where appropriate (such as for simple requests and requests for information only or urgent matters) and record the details and date of the response on file
- keep the writer informed if a final reply cannot be provided within the time allowed
- provide in all correspondence the full name and contact details of the officer dealing with the matter and Council's file reference
- use language that is clear and concise.

## Telephone Calls

Council recognises the importance of telephone calls and will try to answer them promptly, quickly refer calls to the appropriate officer and provide clear and concise information in response to caller inquiries.

Council guarantees to:

- answer calls within five rings either in person or by automatic telephone answering service
- advise the caller on answering of the name of the work area and the first or full name of the officer answering
- deal with the call, redirect the call to the responsible officer or take a clear message as appropriate
- ensure messages include the date and time of the call, details of the caller's name and number, the caller's message and details of who took the message
- be sensitive to callers from non-English speaking backgrounds who have language difficulties and seek the assistance of the Telephone Interpreter Service when required
- if the call cannot be fully responded to, give clear advice on what has to be done to respond to the call fully and how long that will take and let the caller know when a full response will be provided
- put calls on hold for no longer than one minute at a time and if the information sought takes longer to obtain then we will call you back within an agreed period

- speak clearly and deal with callers calmly, courteously and patiently even where callers are angry
- record all significant telephone calls in the form of a written file note
- answer unattended telephones in the absence of the responsible officer
- return telephone messages and voice mail messages within one business day when an officer is unavailable or if an officer will be absent for more than one day, we will advise you of the planned date of their return.

## Requests for Work & Services

Rockdale City Council is committed to promoting a healthy, safe and accessible lifestyle for the community and to ensuring the sustainability of its resources. To achieve this, Council must use its limited resources efficiently. To this end Council conducts regular inspections of, and maintenance programs on, the community's resources. Because our resources are limited we must prioritise all requests for work and services. As a result, requests for standard work and services are usually not actioned immediately on receipt but will be completed in accordance with planned inspection and maintenance programs. Council will, of course, respond immediately to urgent requests that relate to events that pose a risk to public health, safety or a risk to property etc.

Council guarantees to:

- respond immediately to urgent requests if possible and always without undue delay. Urgent requests would include reports about dangerous dogs, dog attacks, damaged trees posing a risk etc
- respond to other standard requests by:
  - assessing the request within five working days from date of receipt - this may mean making a site inspection
  - let you know, within 10 working days of the request:
    - of the name of your contact officer
    - when the requested work/service will occur, which may be as part of Council's regular maintenance program or explain why the request cannot be met, for example, where it is contrary to policy
    - where Council is not responsible for undertaking the work/service (eg removal or pruning of trees on private property) we will take what action we can, within the limits of Council's powers (eg issuing permits to remove / prune trees on private property) or refer you to the appropriate authority
- advise you when the requested work has been completed - or if delayed, provide reasons and a date for when it will be done
- record all actions taken (including details and date) on Council's Computerised Customer Request Management System (CRMS).

## Issuing of Certificates, Notices & Permits

Council guarantees to:

- ensure that our Customer Service Centre staff are available during Council's advertised business hours to respond to your inquiries about the processing of your certificate or permit
- for an urgent application:
  - to notify you within five hours of receipt if insufficient information has been provided with the application,
  - within 24 hours of receipt of a properly completed application and application fee (where applicable), we will either:
    - post the certificate to you, or
    - notify you by telephone if you have indicated that you wish to collect the certificate from the Customer Service Centre.
- for a standard application:
  - to notify you within two working days of receipt if insufficient information has been provided with the application or if Council needs to check data with an external body (such as the RTA)
  - within five working days of receipt of a properly completed application and application fee (where applicable), we will either:
    - post the certificate to you, or
    - notify you by telephone if you have indicated that you wish to collect the certificate.

For Health and Building Notices where a notice is outstanding and for requests about trees on private property:

- Council will contact the person designated to provide access for inspection to the subject property within five working days of receipt of the application
- issue the certificate/permit within twelve working days of receipt of the application, provided that access to the subject property has been given during Council business hours on a mutually convenient day and time.

Please note that this guarantee does not apply for:

- Section 735A Health and Building Certificates for some multi-occupancy and commercial buildings, where the issue of the certificate is dependent on the date of lodgement of the sub-division with the Land Titles office
- Linen Plans for subdivisions and strata subdivisions.

## Availability of Staff at Counter & for Interviews

Council recognises the need to promptly serve members of the public who come to Council to seek information and transact other business. Council will provide a Customer Service Centre help desk where the public can obtain information and transact business and will ensure that the Centre is accessible for people with mobility problems.

Council guarantees to:

- make staff available for interviews by prior arrangement - and otherwise wherever practicable, during Council's hours of business (which Council will widely publicise)

- attend to members of the public at the Customer Service Centre help desk within five minutes
- promptly advise staff if there is a member of the public in the reception area for an appointment
- if staff cannot attend interviews on request, attempt to arrange a mutually convenient appointment in the future
- speak clearly and deal with customers calmly, courteously and patiently even where visitors are angry
- be sensitive to customers from non-English speaking backgrounds who have language difficulties, and to others who have communication difficulties, and provide additional assistance where required such as using the telephone interpreter service or a Language Aide staff member, or by providing written information
- provide a full range of information for public inspection in the Customer Service Centre including:
  - all documents required to be publicly available
  - relevant Council policies and plans, including Council's Code of Conduct and the Statement of Ethics for Development Applications (contained in the Code of Planning Practice)
  - details of Council's Complaints Handling Policy and Procedures and Customer Feedback Scheme
  - community information brochures and newsletters
  - Council's business papers
  - development applications and other information on public exhibition
  - information on the NSW Ombudsman and the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC).

## Meetings of Council

The Council Meeting is the peak decision-making forum of Council. Council values the input of members of the public in the consideration of issues determined by Council.

Council guarantees to:

- publicise the time and date of meetings of Council and Council Committees as per Council's obligations under the Local Government Act. This notice is in the St George Leader newspaper. Notices are also displayed in Council's Customer Service Centre and Libraries and on Council's web page
- make agendas and business papers available to meetings as per Council's obligations under the Local Government Act. Council agendas and business papers (excepting confidential items) are published and available free of charge on Council's web page by 6pm on the Friday preceding each meeting. Facilities are available after this time in the Customer Service Centre and Council libraries to inspect or print copies of these documents free of charge. A limited number of hard copies of the agenda and business papers will be available in the Council Chambers on the meeting night
- provide opportunities for members of the public to address meetings of Council and Council Committees. Information on how to arrange to address Council and Council Committee meetings is contained in Council's Code of Meeting Practice

- provide members of the public wanting to address meetings with information on the conduct of meetings. This information is contained in Council's Code of Meeting Practice
- take into account the relevant points of view expressed by members of the public on issues for decision
- provide the contact details including telephone number (and, if relevant, the contact hours) of each Councillor to members of the public wanting to present their views to Councillors directly
- endeavour to provide Councillors in a timely fashion with submissions and other information provided by members of the public for the consideration of Councillors
- publish Council decisions on Council's web page by 3.30pm on the Friday immediately following the Council or Committee Meeting.

## Consultation & Notification

Council recognises that a fundamental component of quality service and improved communication is early and effective engagement, notification and consultation with the local community. Council recognises that the local community is entitled to be notified of proposals that affect or might reasonably be seen as likely to affect their interests and to have their attitudes, concerns and needs acknowledged and taken into account.

Council also recognises that the community is diverse and that effective consultation will take account of the diversity of interests, attitudes, concerns and needs.

Council guarantees to:

- comply with all legal requirements in relation to notification (including, where relevant, its obligations under the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act or the Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act)
- comply with Development Control Plan No 50 and Council's Code of Planning Practice in relation to engagement and notification
- publish details of major development applications in Council's newspaper column (published in the St George and Sutherland Shire Leader each Thursday) and on our web site (subject to obligations under the Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act)
- provide persons notified with information on how to best frame submissions
- meet Council's obligations under the Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act, including informing persons notified that submissions may be obtained by members of the public under the Local Government Act or the Freedom of Information Act
- ensure letters of notification include the full name and the direct telephone number of the officer responsible for the application and information on how to obtain further information on the matter
- to undertake moderation or appropriate consultation, irrespective of any legal or policy requirement to do so, in accordance with Council's Code of Planning Practice, in relation to issues of significant community or public interest or where

the issue is likely to materially adversely affect the interests of a significant number of members of the community

- ensure that information is available for inspection and staff are available for consultation in relation to matters the subject of notification and consultation
- ensure that consultation is early and appropriate but does not unduly delay the decision making process
- provide access to Council files consistent with Council's legal obligations under the Local Government Act, the Freedom of Information Act and the Privacy and Personal Information Act.

## Complaint Handling & Reviewing of Decisions

Council values the opportunity complaints give us to identify areas of service that need improvement, to respond to individual dissatisfaction and to strengthen the relationship between Council and the local community.

Council guarantees to:

- Accept any criticism graciously, believing that there is always room for improvement
- deal with complaints in accordance with its Complaints Handling Policy and Procedures
- widely publicise the existence of Council's complaint handling system
- encourage members of the public dissatisfied with Council's conduct to lodge complaints and to facilitate such action by making complaint and feedback forms freely available in the Customer Service Centre and in Council's libraries
- ensure that complainants who are dissatisfied with the outcome of their complaint are offered a review by a more senior officer
- advise complainants of their right to complain to the Ombudsman (if the matter relates to pecuniary interest issues or alleges a serious breakdown in Council operations), the Department of Local Government or to the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) (if there are reasonable grounds to suspect corrupt conduct)
- regularly report publicly on the outcome of complaints, using this information to identify and rectify deficiencies in Council services.

## Using Alternative Dispute Resolution Methods

Council is committed to the efficient use of its resources. Development can have a significant impact on applicants, residents and the City's future. Council is committed to engage the community early in the development process and to provide equitable opportunities for all interested parties to identify and resolve issues as soon as possible (see also Consultation and Notification Guarantee of Service).

Issue management and disputes involving Council are capable of draining substantial amounts of Council's - and the community's - human and financial resources. Council recognises the capacity of appropriate alternative dispute resolution methods to assist parties to identify their interests and resolve their issues/disputes quickly and at a fraction of the cost of formal legal action.

Council guarantees to:

- endeavour to resolve quickly and fairly disputes in which it is involved using appropriate alternative dispute resolution methods including various forms of moderation (also see Council's Moderation Policy)
- ensure that staff members who are assigned to act as a moderator are trained in alternative dispute resolution methods and are independent of the specific issue the subject of the moderation
- provide Council representatives at moderation sessions with adequate authority to assist in identifying solutions to disputes which are the subject of mediation
- ensure that external independent mediators are assigned for issues or disputes of great significance, or controversy or where greater planning expertise is required
- use alternative dispute resolution methods to assist members of the community in dispute over zoning and development applications to understand and resolve their issues/disputes.

# Appendix B

## Guarantees of Service - Service Specific

Rockdale City Council is committed to delivering high quality customer services that are appropriate given the diversity of our customers and the community, represent value for money and meet community needs now and into the future.

Customer and community satisfaction are the key measures by which we will assess whether we have achieved this goal.

The following Guarantees are Service Specific. Council's Universal Guarantees of Service also apply in all these circumstances.

### Development Applications (DA)

Council seeks to encourage the balanced development of our City, taking into account the need for environmental protection. Quality development is important to Council and the community.

Council guarantees to:

- provide a professional service aimed at creating certainty for all stakeholders
- promote quality development that meets the applicant's and the community's expectation of development that is appropriate for the area
- continually strive to improve our policies, systems and processes in order to achieve greater customer satisfaction
- commit to early and effective engagement, notification and consultation with the community
- ensure that once a development application is received the following actions are completed within four working days of receipt of the application:
  - acknowledge to the applicant that we have received the application and advise the DA number and contact person
  - notify adjoining owners in accordance with our DCP 50 - Community Engagement in Development Decisions.
- where necessary, request additional information from the applicant within 21 days of receipt of the application
- process applications in accordance with our Code of Planning Practice and Statement of Ethics for development applications
- keep the applicant informed on a regular basis of progress with their application where the processing time exceeds the average processing time for a particular class of development
- where an application is referred to a Council or a Committee meeting, we will send a notice of the meeting by post to the applicant (and objectors, if

applicable) on the Thursday before the meeting date. Meeting details will also be available on Council's web site by 6pm on the Friday preceding the meeting.

To meet this Guarantee, Council will rely on applicants to provide comprehensive applications addressing legislative requirements, our Codes and full submission requirements.

## Construction Certificates

Council seeks to encourage the balanced development of our City, taking into account the need for environmental protection. Quality development is important to Council and the community.

Construction Certificates can be issued by either Council or an accredited certifier. We actively promote Council as your first choice. Council is well established and reliable in this field providing a high level of integrity, a broad range of expertise and a competitive fee for service charge.

Council guarantees to:

- provide a professional service aimed at creating certainty for all stakeholders
- promote quality development that meets the applicant's and the community's expectation of development that is appropriate for the area
- continually strive to improve our policies, systems and processes in order to achieve greater customer satisfaction
- commit to early and effective engagement and consultation with the applicant and their consultants
- ensure that once a development application is approved and a Construction Certificate application has been received, within 10 working days of receipt of the application we will contact the applicant where necessary to request additional information
- process applications in accordance with the conditions of development consent, relevant Australian Standards and the Building Code of Australia
- charge fees which are competitive in the private certification market
- to meet this Guarantee, Council will rely on applicants to provide comprehensive applications addressing legislative requirements, our Codes, the Building Code of Australia and full submission requirements, including consistency with the development consent
- fast track your construction certificate application where it is lodged in conjunction with a development application.

Where an accredited certifier is issuing the Certificate, Council will store and manage all records relating to the issuing of the certificate.

## Creditor Payments

Council guarantees to:

- make payments in accordance with creditors stated time frame or other negotiated conditions
- make staff available at all times during Council's business hours to receive and satisfy customer enquiries
- respond promptly to all creditor payments
- process all invoices accurately.

## Food Premises Inspections

Council guarantees to:

- inspect food premises at least once per year and more often, if required by a hazard assessment
- ensure that the construction of the premises complies with Council guidelines and current legislation
- inspect installations, fixtures, fittings and equipment to ensure they are maintained satisfactorily
- ensure that proper washing facilities are maintained, especially hand washing and toilet facilities
- assess food handling and hygiene practices for the protection of perishable foods, the prevention of food contamination and the proper storage, processing and handling of food
- ensure that the intention of the Food Act 2003 is complied with
- seek the co-operation of food premises proprietors by offering advice and technical expertise in a fair and equitable manner. Where co-operation is not received, enforcement proceedings will be undertaken to compel compliance with the minimum standards necessary to protect anyone purchasing food.

## Liability Insurance Claims

Council guarantees to:

- provide a response to a claim within five working days of it being received by Council. This may include:
  - agreement to pay the claim or
  - a request for additional information or
  - a description of the process that will be followed to investigate the claim including an estimated time frame.
- contact you on a monthly basis to advise you of progress, where your claim requires an extended period to investigate or resolve
- use mediation where appropriate to avoid the unnecessary cost of court action (refer Alternative Dispute Resolution Guarantee of Service)
- provide reasons where liability for the claim is denied.

## Library & Information Services

Council guarantees to:

- provide all library services, as defined in the Library Act, free of charge
- advertise all fees and charges for other services
- answer your inquiries on the same day or give an indication of the time it will take to provide the information or material you require
- have all new reserved material available for you to collect within one week of receipt from our supplier
- have all new material on the shelves within two weeks of receipt from our suppliers
- deliver any book you request, that is on the shelf at any library within Rockdale City, to any other library within the City within two working days (except where a Branch Library is closed at the time of request) without charging a reservation fee
- inform you immediately if access to special collections or equipment is not instantly available and tell you when the service will be provided.

## Garbage & Recycling Collections

In relation to domestic waste collection, Council guarantees to:

- empty bins on a regular basis, specifically:
  - garbage bins
    - single households - collections once each week
    - multiple unit dwellings - collections twice each week
  - recycling bins
    - single households - collections once every two weeks
    - multiple unit dwellings - collections once each week
- schedule collection of garbage and recyclable waste (street by street details are available on request):
  - from Monday to Friday including all public holidays
  - from bins on Main Roads between 5 am - 10 pm
  - from bins on Minor Roads from 6 am - 10 pm
  - from Residential Streets from 6.30 am - 10 pm
- leave bins where the resident had placed the bin prior to the collection service
  - single households - bins are allocated to each property and Council will collect bins that have been placed on the kerb the night before the scheduled collection day
  - multiple unit dwellings - where bins are shared by residents, Council will take the bins from the storage area on the property to the truck to empty and then return them to the storage location
- provide new bins or make repairs to bins within three working days of receipt of the request
- where Council has failed to make a collection as scheduled, the service will be provided within two working days of being notified of the failure

- provide written advice or information within two working days where the resident has difficulty using the waste and recycling service
- provide information on the items accepted in the recycling service and the weeks that the recycling service is provided, each year to residents via a letterbox drop.

## Councillor Requests for Information

Councillors are elected to represent the community's interests when making decisions about matters affecting the sustainability of Rockdale City and to advocate on the community's behalf. Council officers are committed to assisting the elected representatives perform their role. This commitment means that Council Officers will respond promptly and effectively to Councillors' requests for information.

Council Officers guarantee that:

- Councillor requests will be logged into the computerised Customer Request Management System (CRMS) immediately they are received or, if received after business hours, immediately at the start of business on the next day
- For requests for standard or easily accessible information (eg copies of existing policies, plans, operational procedures etc), we will provide the requested information or seek further information or clarification by email within two working days of receipt of the request
- For requests for more complex or less accessible information (eg which may only be obtained from several or external sources or is about a complicated matter) we will:
  - provide the requested information or seek further information or clarification by email within three working days of receipt of the request
  - if a delay is anticipated we will provide an interim reply within three working days of receipt including reasons for the delay and advise of the date when the information will be provided.
- all action taken including dates and times will be recorded onto the CRMS as they occur so that the Councillor can check progress at any time
- when the information request has been finalised (ie the requested information has been provided) this too will be noted on the CRMS
- where provision of the requested information is delayed over an extended period, we will provide an explanation and progress reports at agreed intervals to ensure the Councillor is kept informed of progress
- in all replies we will provide the name of the responsible officer (in accordance with the 'Access to Council Information...' policy) and their direct dial telephone number.

Note: Councillors' requests for works or services will be dealt with in accordance with the Relevant universal Guarantee of Service.

This policy was prepared by Council's  
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