

MURRAY RIVER COUNCIL  
COUNCIL POLICY

**CUSTOMER  
SERVICE  
POLICY**

POL-201.V#1



murray river  
council

## 1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy aims to establish a standard approach to managing contact and interaction with customers. This is to ensure that all customers are treated in a consistent, professional and ethical manner and receive courteous and efficient service.

## 2. OBJECTIVES

Council strives to deliver high standards of customer service and this is reflected in our Customer Service Framework. This Policy details how Council delivers on its commitment to customer service through performance targets and measures.

This Policy, in conjunction with the following Council documents, forms Council's Customer Service Framework.

- ▶ Customer Service Charter
- ▶ Customer Service Procedures
- ▶ Customer Feedback and Complaints Management Policy

Council's commitment to customer service includes an effective complaint handling system. It is recognised that this is one method of measuring customer satisfaction to provide a useful source of information and feedback for continual improvement of our services.

We acknowledge the diversity of our communities and understand that members of the public have individual needs and we aim to offer quality service by recognising this diversity and ensuring individual needs are met. We will provide clear and logical means to lodge requests or provide feedback.

Council recognises that our customers may wish to contact us in a variety of ways and we are committed to providing choice about how customers can access our services.

## 3. SCOPE

This Policy applies to all Council officials.

## 4. POLICY OBJECTIVES

### Understanding Customer Need And Expectation

Council is committed to better understanding the needs and expectations of our customers and will enhance this understanding by:

1. Conducting periodic community surveys to gather feedback regarding Council's services.
2. Providing opportunities for direct customer feedback and interacting with Council.
3. Involving the community in dialogue about providing services and planning for the future.
4. Maintaining a complaint handling system to identify, respond to and rectify service failures and unsatisfied expectations.
5. Establishing Customer Service Key Performance Indicators and targets to measure and monitor customer service performance.

## Standards Of Service

Council staff will uphold a professional and positive image of Council at all times through:

1. Demonstrating respect, courtesy, patience, attentiveness, consideration and sensitivity to our customers that is appropriate to their age, culture and linguistic background.
2. Responding to customer enquires promptly, efficiently and within allocated timeframes.
3. Identification of customer needs and expectations.
4. Providing the customer with advice and information that is clear and concise.
5. Making decisions using processes that are consultative, impartial and ethical.
6. Demonstrating professionalism when dealing with difficult customers.
7. Acting in accordance with the law and Council's Policies and procedures.

## Written Correspondence (Letters And Emails)

Council staff (with appropriate delegations) will respond to written correspondence (letters and emails) from customers within fifteen days of receipt. In situations where required investigation prevents this timeframe being met – a communication to the customer (within this time period) will be made, explaining the situation and providing an indicative timeframe of when an appropriate response will be provided.

## Customer Service Centre (In Person)

Council staff will serve customers attending our Customer Service Centre as quickly and effectively as possible, through:

- ▶ A wait time of less than 5 minutes
- ▶ Resolving at least 80% of customer requests/enquiries at the first point of contact

## Customer Centre (Telephone)

For calls made to Council's main telephone number **1300 087 004** during normal business hours, Council staff will:

- ▶ Answer at least 80% of calls within 5 rings.
- ▶ Resolving at least 80% of customer requests/enquiries at the first point of contact.

## Service Requests SE (Online, Telephone, In Person)

Service requests received from customers will be logged and allocated a priority level (with an associated response time) using the following table:

Priority Level	Response Time
1 – Extreme	Within 4 hours
2 – High	Within 2 working days
3 – Medium	Within 7 working days
4 – Low	Within 10 working days

Council staff will determine the priority level to be allocated (based on the details of the request received). Council officers will respond to service requests within the priority level allocated. In situations where

required investigation prevents this timeframe being met – a communication to the customer (within this time period) will be made, explaining the situation and providing an indicative timeframe of when an appropriate response will be provided.

## Customer Satisfaction

Council provides opportunities for direct customer feedback through customer surveys which can be accessed in person (at our customer service centre), online (via our website) and after telephone calls (made to the contact centre).

The surveys are used to measure the level of customer satisfaction in regards to:

- ▶ The level of “customer service” received; and
- ▶ The “outcome” of the interaction with Council

Customers can use a rating from 1 to 5 (see table below) to indicate their level of satisfaction when responding to survey questions.

Rating	Response Time
1	Very Dissatisfied
2	Dissatisfied
3	Neutral
4	Satisfied
5	Very Satisfied

Council has a target of achieving a level of “Satisfied” (Rating 4) or higher at least 90% of the time in regards to the level of “customer service” received and a target of achieving a level of “Satisfied” (Rating 4) or higher at least 70% of the time in regards to the “outcome” of the interaction with Council.

## Call Recording

Calls received at Council’s contact centre are recorded for quality and training purposes.

Customers are informed at the commencement of their call that the call will be recorded. Customers can request to not have their call recorded by informing the Council Officer answering their call – at which time the recording function can be disabled by the Council Officer for that particular call.

Call recordings will only be used for:

- ▶ Staff Training – to ensure an effective and consistent approach to customer requests.
- ▶ Quality Assurance – to ensure customer requests are logged and actioned as requested by the customer.

## Dealing With Difficult Customers

Council staff will treat customers with courtesy and respect at all times and to make every reasonable effort to address the customer’s request/enquiry even when this proves difficult due to the customers’ response.

## Customers Who Are Rude, Abusive Or Aggressive

Rude, abusive or aggressive behaviour may include rude or otherwise vulgar noises, expressions or gestures, verbal abuse of a personal or general nature, threatening or offensive behaviour, physical violence against property or physical violence against a person.

If, in the opinion of any Council officer, rude, abusive or aggressive comments or statements are made by a customer, the officer will:

- ▶ Inform the customer if the behaviour continues the communication/interaction with them will be terminated.
- ▶ Terminate the communication/interaction if the rude, abusive or aggressive behaviour continues after a warning has been given.

Where a communication/interaction has been terminated with a customer the Council Officer must notify their relevant supervisor of the details as soon as possible.

## 5. RESPONSIBILITIES

Position	Responsibility
Mayor	To lead Councillors in their understanding of, and compliance.
General Manager	To lead staff (either directly or through delegated authority) in their understanding of, and compliance with, this policy and related Procedures.
Directors, Managers and Supervisors	To communicate, implement and comply with this policy and related Procedures.
All Council Employees	To be aware of and ensure compliance with this Policy.
Council Committees	To be aware of and adhere to this Policy.

## 6. EVALUATION AND REVIEW

It is the responsibility of the Manager Customer Service, to monitor the adequacy of this Policy and recommend appropriate changes.

This Policy will be formally reviewed every four (4) years or as needed, whichever comes first.

## 7. LEGISLATION, ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS AND DEFINITIONS

### Legislation

- ▶ Government information (Public Access) Act 2009; and
- ▶ Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 (NSW);
- ▶ Local Government Act 1993 (NSW);

### Associated Documents

- ▶ NSW Ombudsman - Better Service and Communication – Guidelines for Local Government
- ▶ NSW Ombudsman - Good Conduct and Administrative Practice Guidelines (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition)
- ▶ NSW Ombudsman - Unreasonable Complainant Conduct
- ▶ MRC Policy - Customer Feedback and Complaints Management
- ▶ MRC Charter - Customer Service Charter
- ▶ MRC Strategy – Customer Service Strategy

Definitions:

Term	Definition
Customers	Individuals and organisations to which Council provides service. Customers include ratepayers, residents, asset users, consultants, developers, government departments and visitors to the Murray River Council local government area. Internal customers include other Council departments and Council employees.
Customers Service	Interactions between a customer and a provider at the time of a sale or provision of a service and thereafter. Customer service adds value to a product or service and builds an enduring relationship.
Council Officer	An officer is defined as being one of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ An employee, or</li> <li>▶ A contractor or subcontractor, or</li> <li>▶ An employee of a contractor or subcontractor, or</li> <li>▶ An employee of a labour hire company who has been assigned to work in the person's business or undertaking, or</li> <li>▶ An outworker, or</li> <li>▶ An apprentice or trainee, or</li> <li>▶ A student gaining work experience, or</li> <li>▶ A volunteer</li> </ul>

## 8. DOCUMENT CONTROL

Version No.	Details	Dates	CM9 Reference	Resolution No.
1	Initial Issue	26 Nov 2019	DOC/19/28706	201119

Council reserves the right to review, vary or revoke this policy at any time  
This Policy is scheduled for review in before November 2023

**Disclaimer:**

This document was formulated to be consistent with Murray River Council's legislative obligations and with the scope of Council's powers. This document should be read in conjunction with relevant legislation, guidelines and codes of practice. In the case of any discrepancies, the most recent legislation should prevail. This document does not constitute legal advice. Legal advice should be sought in relation to particular circumstances and liability will not be accepted for losses incurred as a result of reliance on this document.