



# Customer Service Charter

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## CUSTOMER SERVICE CHARTER

### VISION:

Uralla Shire Council is focused on shaping our future by being connected, sustainable and creative. Through this vision, Council is committed to the provision of timely, efficient and consistent quality services provided by experienced, knowledgeable and helpful officers that meet our customer's expectations.

### MISSION:

Our mission is to provide excellent local government services to our community that contribute towards the achievement of Council's vision for the Uralla Shire. We expect that all staff, whether they are at the counter, working in an office, driving a truck or mowing a park, to be committed to pursuing excellence in their role and be proud and responsible representatives of the Council.

### Our customer service promise

Uralla Shire Council promises to provide a customer friendly organisation, committed to providing service excellence to our community. We are a solutions focused organisation, that projects a positive attitude and a committed, can do approach.

We will work to understand and respond to the needs of our customers both now and into the future and provide opportunities for community engagement. We will continuously strive to improve our service by proactively welcoming suggestions and seeking feedback from the community and actively measuring and communicating our performance against these commitments.

### What you can expect from council

Our Customer Service Charter is our firm statement of commitment to our customers.

Service Standards set out what our customer service promise means in practice and will be consistently applied across all contact points within Council.

## CUSTOMER SERVICE STANDARDS

### 1. In all dealings with customers, staff will:

- 1.1 Take personal ownership for customer satisfaction;
- 1.2 Treat customers courteously and with respect;
- 1.3 Act in a professional and helpful manner;
- 1.4 Provide accurate, relevant and timely information;
- 1.5 Seek to resolve requests/enquiries at the first point of contact; and,
- 1.6 Focus on solutions for customers with a 'can do' approach.

### 2. When customers telephone, we will:

- 2.1 Answer calls within three (3) rings or as quickly and efficiently as possible;
- 2.2 Greet customers politely with a smile in our voice;
- 2.3 Deal with the call, redirect the call (endeavouring not to transfer the call more than once) or take an accurate message as appropriate;
- 2.4 Provide customers with an opportunity to leave a voice message when transferred if calls cannot be answered personally; and,
- 2.5 Return phone calls immediately where possible but not exceeding one (1) business day.

### 3. When customers visit us, we will:

- 3.1 Attend the customer service counter(s) promptly;
- 3.2 Acknowledge customers if there is a queue and apologise if they have been kept waiting;
- 3.3 Give a courteous welcome and offer assistance;
- 3.4 Meet with customers within five (5) minutes of the appointed time (if a prior appointment has been made), or provide customers with an estimated wait time should they be seeking a meeting with a staff member that has not been prearranged;
- 3.5 Listen carefully to customer needs by asking pertinent questions, taking notes and confirming details;
- 3.6 Ensure all customer service officers are professionally attired and identified by name badges and/or personal introduction; and,
- 3.7 Ensure our customer service areas are clean, tidy and aesthetically pleasing whilst also being functional.

### 4. When customers write to us, we will:

- 4.1 Respond to letters, emails and faxes within nominated timeframes for each type of correspondence or within ten (10) working days of receipt if no previously nominated timeframe;
- 4.2 If a full response is not possible immediately, forward an acknowledgement which indicates the timeframe for when a reply can be expected and the name of the officer to contact with queries; and,
- 4.3 Deal with all correspondence as promptly as possible and write in clear, concise language that's easily understood.

## CUSTOMER SERVICE REQUESTS

Council responds to service requests relating to activities that are the responsibility of Council such as road maintenance, tree clearance and town maintenance. Service requests relating to public safety will be dealt with immediately.

All service requests will be investigated within ten (10) working days. Actions will be determined by the priority of the request, Council work schedules and available resources.

### **When handling requests for service lodged in person or by telephone, letter or email, we will:**

- Complete a Customer Service Request by entering the details into our computerised Customer Request System;
- Where possible relay the allocated reference number to the customer to enable them to follow up on their request if needed;
- Ensure the request is referred to the appropriate supervisor/department for action;
- Respond to the customer within ten (10) working days after investigative action has been completed, if the request indicates a response is required; and,
- Ensure all requests are processed in accordance within standard time frames and documented procedures.

## INTERNAL CUSTOMER SERVICE

Regardless of where a staff member works in Council, everyone has a customer and everyone is a customer. Whether the service is delivered internally to an immediate team member, other business unit, or Councillor or externally to the Community, we all provide a customer service.

As such we recognise and value the importance of all our customers and will endeavour to deliver excellent service to both our external and internal customers. We acknowledge that the same principles of quality customer service for our external customers apply to every member of staff as internal customers and we will continually monitor and strive to improve staff customer service delivery provided to each other.

All employees will work in partnership with each other to fulfil customer service obligations within the same Service Standards, regardless of whether the customer is a colleague or external customer. Each has a responsibility to ensure that a positive and effective internal customer service culture exists.

When staff announce incoming telephone calls, the expectation exists that if the individual staff member is able to answer the telephone at that time, they are also able to talk to the customer and should not expect a message to be taken on their behalf by the staff member announcing the call.

## Quality internal customer service should be managed using the following core set of assumptions:

- Courtesy:** Can be demonstrated through a helpful and pleasant manner and listening carefully to requests and clarifying our understanding.
- Respect:** Valuing the feelings, opinions and views of all staff and respecting constructive feedback;
- Maturity:** Demonstrating a mature and professional approach to our work in a genuine and friendly manner;
- Confidence:** Being informed. Doing our job thoroughly and organising our work and systems so that they, and we, are reliable;
- Accuracy:** Developed by implementing and adhering to checking and monitoring processes.

## HELPING US TO HELP YOU – OUR EXPECTATIONS

To help us to meet these commitments, we ask our customers to:

- Treat Council officers with respect and courtesy;
- Not answer or conduct conversations on mobile phones whilst dealing with our staff;
- Respect the privacy, safety and needs of other customers;
- Provide accurate and complete details at the time of the initial contact;
- Telephone to make an appointment for a complex enquiry or if there is a need to see a specific officer;
- Telephone the officer nominated in any correspondence sent to the customer and quote the reference details noted on the letter;
- Provide your current contact details and advise us if they change;
- Work with us to solve problems; and
- Provide us with feedback so we know how we are performing and where necessary, can continue to improve our service.

## HANDLING DIFFICULT SITUATIONS OR ABUSIVE CUSTOMERS

**Abusive behaviour is displayed when customers shout, display bullying behaviour, use abusive or obscene language or make threats to Council personnel.**

- Staff are not expected to tolerate abusive behaviour;
- Communication may be terminated immediately by staff if abusive behaviour occurs. If face to face, the officer may walk away. If by telephone, the officer may terminate the call. If by email, the address may be quarantined or flagged as 'do not respond';
- The Director or Executive Manager may decide to limit or decline to provide responses to any person who is deemed abusive and/or derogative in their communication with Council or who fails to accept that Council has done all that it can to assist. A decision of this nature will be formally communicated in writing to the person; and,
- If an officer feels threatened by the language or behaviour of the customer, the Police may be notified.

## LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

- Uralla Shire Council Delivery Program and Operational Plan
- Customer Complaints Handling Procedure 2015
- Effective Complaint Handling Guidelines-NSW Ombudsman Booklet
- Understanding Complaint Management- NSW Ombudsman
- AS/NZS Australian Standard, 10002:2014- Guidelines for Complaint Management in Organisations
- Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 (GIPA)

## Contact us

If you would like to suggest ways in which we can serve you better, you can:

1. Contact our Customer Service Team on (02) 6778 6300
2. Email [council@uralla.nsw.gov.au](mailto:council@uralla.nsw.gov.au); or,
3. Write to the:

General Manager  
Uralla Shire Council  
PO Box 106  
URALLA NSW 2358