

POLICY:-	
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PROCEDURES/GUIDELINES:-	
Date procedure/guideline was developed:	N/A
Procedure/guideline reference number:	N/A

RESPONSIBILITY:-	
Policy developed by:	Senior Records Officer
Committee/s (if any) consulted in the development of this Policy:	N/A
Responsibility for implementation:	Director of Finance and Administration
Responsibility for review of Policy:	Director of Finance and Administration

OBJECTIVE

This policy provides Council with a framework for assessing a customer service request and identifying the appropriate responses to customers, managing the service request for the duration of the action required to completion and recording the service request in Council's Customer Request Management (CRM) System.

This policy is to be read with other relevant Council policies, especially in making the distinction between; a service request or a complaint on a Council service or decision, and the proper management of Council's public records i.e. Council's Service Delivery Policy, Complaints Policy and Procedure and Records Management Policy.

DEFINITIONS

Act: Means the Local Government Act 1993 (NSW)

Business Day: On a day where Council is normally open for business. I.e. Monday to Friday, excluding public holidays between 8.00am and 4.30pm each day.

Community: Means residents of, and all organisations within the Local Government Area of Upper Lachlan Shire Council.

Complaint: An expression of dissatisfaction or grievance with a Council service or asset including; policy, process, service or council officer.

Where Council has failed to meet the normal standards for service which has been, or should have been delivered, the Complaints Policy and associated procedures apply.

Council: The administration of Upper Lachlan Shire Council.

Council Officer: A current Council employee.

Customer: The people to whom a Council officer provides products and services, a customer can be internal or external to the Council. Internal parties include Councillors and Council staff. External persons/parties generally refers to ratepayers, residents, visitors, businesses and community groups.

Customer Request Management (CRM) System: is Council's management system for Customer Service Requests. Its purpose is to track workflow, record conversations with customers and the actions undertaken.

Operational Area: All Council departments and business units responsible for completing service requests.

Service Request: A request received by a Council officer to take some form of action to provide or improve a Council asset or service.

SCOPE

- This policy applies to all Council Officers, particularly those who are responsible for logging, receiving and responding to Customer Service Requests.
- It is the responsibility of all managers/supervisors to ensure that staff are aware of the procedure to follow upon receiving a customer service request.
- This policy does not apply to matters that do not fall within Council's jurisdiction. These types of requests will however be referred to the appropriate external contact.
- Complaints and compliments that may be an expression of dissatisfaction or satisfaction about issues or services provided by Council are not service requests.
- The term customer request encapsulates:-
 - a. A situation whereby any external person or entity has communicated with Council in a manner that warrants a response or action.
 - b. A situation where a hazard has been identified or a significant internal request that requires follow-up by another Council Department.
 - c. A request for action that cannot be dealt with at the time the request is made.

PURPOSE

- To address customer service requests in a consistent and structured manner which is transparent to customers.
- Provide guidance on what may constitute a reasonable service request or an improvement to service.
- Distinguish between service requests, complaints or complements to Council, and give direction of management of said requests.

BACKGROUND/SUPPORTING INFORMATION

The Customer Request Management (CRM) system is a management module within Civica Pty Ltd's Authority software that provides an environment that manages all forms of communication between an organisation and its customers. It can be defined as:-

- A system that provides facilities to enable the management of the full lifecycle of a customer request from initiation through to finalisation.
- A system that enables organisations to manage verbal, paper based, email and electronic web based communications via the same set of business rules and workflows.

- A system that provides performance monitoring facilities across all organisations operations. Key features include; ease of use, browser based screens, category based definition of business rules by type of user, integration to document management applications, comprehensive and flexible workflow facilities, ease of administration, ease of interface to mobile and other external application and extensive reporting options.
- A system designed to meet the specific requirements of local government.

POLICY STATEMENT

This policy prescribes the framework for the identification, creation, administration and management of customer service requests.

MANAGEMENT OF A CUSTOMER SERVICE REQUEST

Types of requests for service

The following types of requests are received by Council and should be processed through CRM:-

- Request for all services, internal or external;
- A request for Council to exercise it's regulatory or compliance functions.

PROCESSING A CUSTOMER SERVICE REQUEST

Specific Council Officers are responsible for the logging and processing of a customer service requests, particularly those who are responsible for receiving and responding to customer requests, e.g. Council Department's customer service personnel.

Timeframes for response

Council officers are provided with a level of authority to advise the customer of the likely timeframe to complete the action required. Where further evaluation is necessary before committing Council to undertake the work the customer will be informed accordingly. If a request cannot be fulfilled within the defined service standard, the customer will be advised, including an explanation of why this decision was taken.

In determining how to respond to a request for service Council will consider:

- Assessment of risk.
- Workplace Health and Safety factors.
- Statutory responsibilities.
- The content of Council's Operational Plan, Service Delivery Plan, Infrastructure Plan and Annual Works Program.
- Relevant Council policies and procedures.
- Service standards and response times for regular Council activities.
- If adequate operational resources are available to be diverted.

The circumstances of requests for service will vary greatly between customers. In the majority of cases requests will be processed promptly and the customer advised by the form of communication that they have requested.

Each operational area will have appropriate timeframes for communicating with customers. As a general guide;

- Responsible officers within the operational area will acknowledge customer service requests within five (5) working days.
- Each service request category will have its own completion target number of days.
- Responsible officers will provide the CRM reference number to the customer when lodging a service request. This can be done verbally and may be followed up in written correspondence (e-mail or letter) when requested by the customer.
- When a service request is lodged online the customer will receive a CRM reference number.
- Operational areas will complete the service request within the timeframe specified in the service request category.
- If the service request will not be completed within fifteen (15) working days the customer will be notified of the progress of their service request and the expected time frame.
- Proactive escalations will be enforced when service standards are not met.

Recording a service request

A customer can make a request for service in a number of ways including:-

- Council's website
- Telephone
- E-mail
- Letter
- In person
- Any other form of contact Council makes available for its customers

All requests will be recorded in such a way that the operational areas of Council can complete their workflow process efficiently. The information will also be analysed for service improvement opportunities and statistical purposes for Council reporting. Documentation and forms associated with the request will be housed in the CRM system.

No distinction will be made between the methods of requesting a service and each will be given the same regard whether they are made remotely or in person. Requests made through the identified sources will be accepted, but depending on the seriousness or complexity of the service request, the customer may be requested to provide further information in a defined format.

For the sake of clarity, service requests made through an indirect channel, such as "blogs" or through social media directed to a third party, cannot reasonably be monitored and therefore cannot be accepted as a service request.

Customer Service Requests that are submitted without sufficient identifying customer details (anonymous persons) will not be actioned under the CRM System.

Process

Each service activity in Council has been process-mapped and corresponding flowcharts developed with the following generic steps in mind;

1. Receipt and record the service request with the customer contact details into CRM.
2. Acknowledge the receipt of the service request.
3. Identify the appropriate council officer for the service request and distribute if necessary.
4. If the service request requires time to action, provide the customer with an explanation, approximate time of completion and the CRM reference number.
5. Record all responses and actions in CRM while the service request is unresolved.
6. At the completion of the service request, inform the customer, record the actions taken and close the CRM.
7. In the event that the service request is urgent i.e. tree over road, water main breakage, the customer service officer will contact the appropriate council officer or their supervisor immediately upon recording the request.

Customer Request Management System

Council must maintain a customer request management system that records:

- Contact details of the customer.
- Details and date of the service request.
- Details of actions relating to the service request.
- Details of responses provided to the customer.
- The date the service request was completed or resolved.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

General Manager

- To ensure the CRM system is available to capture these requests.
- To develop strategies for the improvement of service requests.
- To ensure compliance with this policy.

Directors and Managers

- Proactive escalations are enforced when service standards are not met.
- All supervisors are to ensure their staff are aware of this policy and the procedure to follow upon receiving and processing a customer service request.

Council Officers

- To read and understand the policies that address Customer Request Management.
- Delivery of predictable response times in accordance with defined services.
- Process customer request management as per the CRM procedure.

Examples of a valid customer service request includes:-

- Leaking water meter;
- Pot hole in a road;
- Dog barking;
- Supply of new garbage bin.

Examples of communications that are not a customer service request includes:-

- Rates enquiry where the information can be provided immediately or within a short time frame.
- Road closure information.
- Planning enquiry where information can be provided immediately or within a short time frame.
- Certificate applications (Section 603, Section 149, Section 64 Certificates).
- Permit applications (Section 138 Certificate, roadside grazing, and road closure).
- Government Information (Public) Access applications.

LEGISLATIVE PROVISIONS

Reference should be made to the following legislation, guidelines and policy documents when reading this policy:-

Local Government Act 1993;
Local Government (General) Regulations 2005;
Local Government Amendment (Governance and Planning) Act 2016;
Independent Commission against Corruption Act 1988 and ICAC Guidelines;
Work Health and Safety Act 2011 and Regulations;
Anti-Discrimination Act 1977;
Local Government (State) Award 2017;
Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009;
Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998;
Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979;
NSW State Records Act 1998;
Public Interest Disclosures Act 1994;
Ombudsman Better Service and Communication – Guidelines for Local Government;
Ombudsman Unreasonable Complainant Conduct;
Code of Conduct for Councillors, staff, contractors and delegates of Council;
Council Community Strategic Plan;
Council Delivery Program;

Council Operational Plan;
Council Code of Meeting Practice;
Council Code of Business Practice;
Council Business Continuity and Disaster Recovery Policy;
Council Interaction between Councillors and Staff Policy;
Council Records Management Policy;
Council Digital Information Security Policy;
Council Privacy Management Plan;
Council Internal Control and Procedures Manual;
Council Bribes, Gifts and Benefits Policy;
Council Complaints Management Policy;
Council Government Information (Public Access) Policy;
Council Grievance Policy; and
Council Disciplinary Policy.

VARIATION

Council reserves the right to review, vary or revoke this policy.

