

Central Highlands Regional Council Customer Service Strategy and Action Plan ----- 2019 – 2021



Introduction

Customer service in local government has traditionally been provided reactively with little choice or innovation in processes and service delivery models, leaving a general feeling that local government is difficult and slow to deal with.

Central Highlands Regional Council is acutely aware of these perceptions and realises that in order to create a welcoming, responsive organisation, we need to work with our people and our customers to make it easier, friendlier and faster to do business with us.

This strategy for customer service details our commitment to be a customer-focused organisation and provides a framework for us to deliver services in a way that places the customer at the centre of everything we do. This will be achieved by innovating and investing in processes, technology and people.

There are key strategies and actions we will take over the next three calendar years to achieve council's vision to be: 'A progressive region creating opportunities for all'. They are based on insights gathered from research, surveys, observation, metrics and engagement with our employees and customers.

VISION AND VALUES

This strategy aligns with key priority six of the Central Highlands Regional Council Corporate Plan 2017-2022:

'Our Organisation – Living our Values – provide excellent customer service to ensure professional service delivery.'

It is further supported by the Operational Plan 2018-2019 activity *'to: develop and implement a strategy and action plan that supports a positive, proactive and responsive customer service culture.'*

OUR VALUES

Respect and Integrity

Building trust, teamwork, communication and a shared understanding.

Actively listening to our communities.

Accountability and Transparency

Equal opportunities, fair and open consultation and communication.

Accepting responsibility for our actions.

Providing Value

Best value for money outcomes for our community.

Collaboration, managing expectations and working towards common goals.

Deliver efficiency and effectiveness in all that we do.

Commitment and Teamwork

Continually improve on our achievements and drive innovative solutions.

Lead change and continuous improvement in delivering for our community.

Promote a positive health and safety culture.

OUR VISION

A progressive region creating opportunities for all.

OUR MISSION

We are a council committed to continuous improvement, a sustainable future and efficient investment in our communities.

KEY PRIORITIES

1. Strong vibrant communities.
2. Building and maintaining quality infrastructure.
3. Supporting our local economy.
4. Protecting our people and our environment.
5. Leadership and governance.
6. Our organisation

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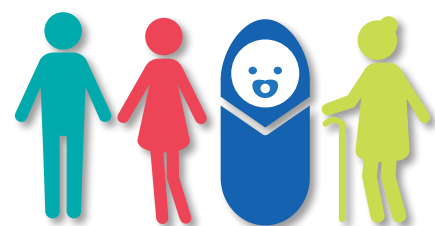
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Understanding our customers

Our customer service

Understanding the community of the Central Highlands is important to service their needs but, more broadly, the definition of a 'customer' includes ratepayers, community members, visitors, businesses, other organisations and levels of government working with council and council staff.



28,645

POPULATION
ACROSS 13
DISTINCT
COMMUNITIES



33

AVERAGE AGE
(COMPARED
TO NATIONAL
AVERAGE OF 37)



HIGHER PROPORTION
OF COUPLE FAMILIES
WITH CHILDREN THAN
THE QUEENSLAND
AVERAGE.



4045

NON-RESIDENT
(SHIFT) WORKERS

WE PROVIDE A DIVERSE RANGE OF SERVICES TO OUR CUSTOMERS, FROM ANIMAL MANAGEMENT TO WASTE COLLECTION AND KERBSIDE RECYCLING.

TOUCHPOINTS

We have the opportunity to 'touch' customers and have a personal one-on-one connection in a variety of ways.

Today, the region is defined by a diverse, prospering economy that supports our unique, vibrant communities.



Face-to-face at one of our customer service centres or rural transaction centres



By phone on the designated 1300 number



Email



Mail (snail mail)



Feedback forms via the council's website



Mobile application, such as Snap Send Solve

PAYMENT OPTIONS



A variety of payment options are offered including:

- Cash, credit card or cheque
- BPAY and direct deposit
- AustPost

Every year the number of electronic payments increases. This clearly indicates the need to expand the payment options to include an online secure payment portal.

AFTER-HOURS



We operate an after-hours service to respond to emergency situations outside of normal business hours.

Figures from Australian Bureau of Statistics Census data for 2016 and 2018, and Bowen Basin Population Report 2018.

Who is responsible?

EVERYONE IS RESPONSIBLE FOR CUSTOMER SERVICE.

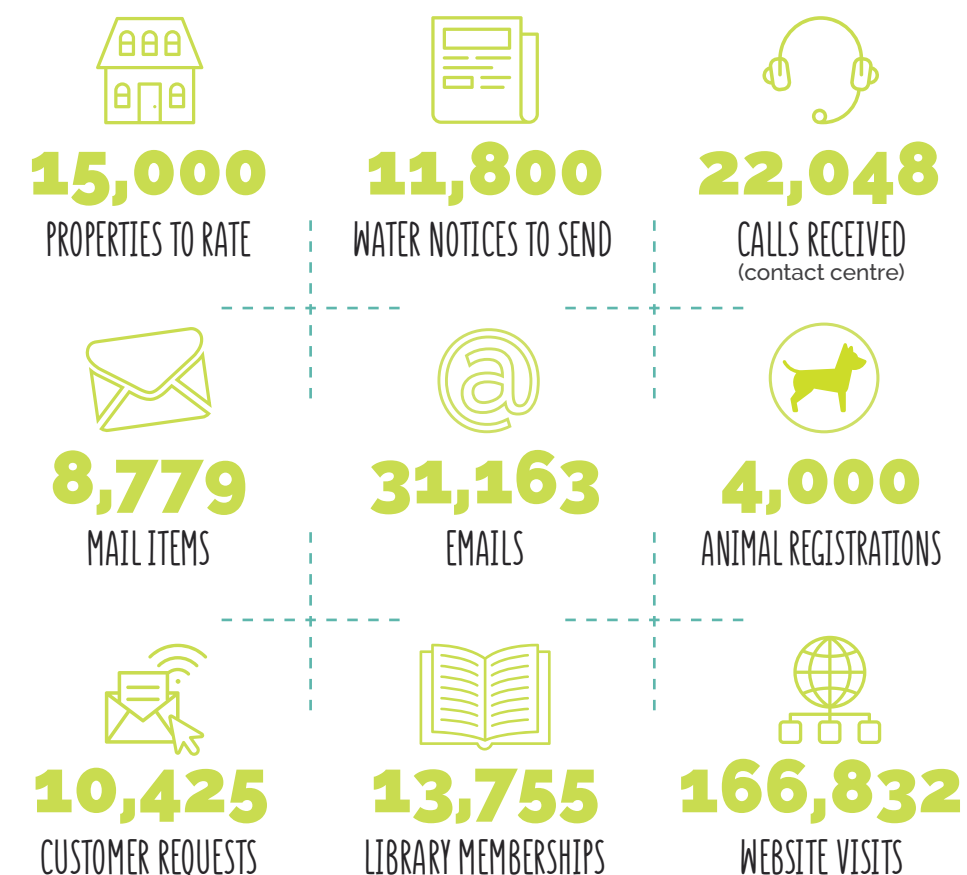
The customer service team itself is at the frontline to help people that telephone or visit in person. A multi-disciplinary team, they receipt payments, manage facility bookings, manage wheelie-bin delivery, and assist staff with tasks like record-keeping, printing and stationary orders.

Other frontline customer service staff include library services, community engagement, and rangers.

Then, there are people that provide services that are highly visible in the community but they may not have face-to-face contact with customers, such as roads maintenance, parks and gardens maintenance, and water and sewage provision.

Other essential services such as finance, human resources and information technology keep the organisation running behind the scenes.

Whoever we are and whatever we do, the goal is to serve our community.



What our customers have told us

SURVEY DATA ON CUSTOMER SATISFACTION REVEALS WHAT IS GOING WELL AND WHERE IMPROVEMENT IS NEEDED.

In addition to survey data, we receive anecdotal feedback from various sources such as:

- Councillors
- Community Reference Groups
- community consultations
- customer service team
- social media
- feedback forms

2019 CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SURVEY:

97.5%

PEOPLE SATISFIED OR
EXTREMELY SATISFIED WITH THE
LEVEL OF SERVICE PROVIDED BY
FRONTLINE STAFF

100%

CUSTOMER SERVICE
STAFF ACTED
PROFESSIONALLY

89%

QUERY RESOLVED
AT FIRST POINT OF
CONTACT

77%

EXPERIENCED NO
WAIT TIME

COMMUNITY SURVEY 2018:

71%

FACILITIES AND
SERVICES PROVIDED

75%

QUERY ADEQUATELY
ANSWERED OR
RESOLVED

>50%

HANDLING OF
QUERIES OR
COMPLAINTS AS GOOD
TO EXCELLENT

WHAT OUR CUSTOMERS EXPECT

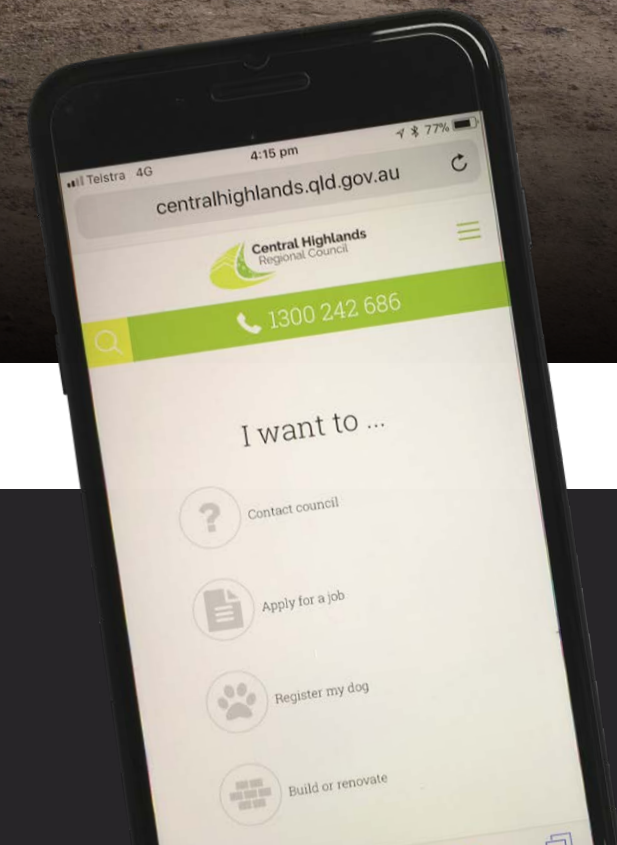
- To be heard and treated fairly.
- To be supported and helped by friendly people.
- Consistent and regular communication (closing the loop).
- An apology when we fail, and a commitment to improve.
- A consistent approach.

AREAS TO FOCUS ON

The most recent survey data tells us people are generally happy with the level of customer service we provide. However, there are a few improvements needed and most of them relate to online self-service options:

- Faster resolution of requests and application processing.
- Automated reminders, service request updates and closure notes via preferred contact method.
- Ability to lodge and track progress of service requests online.
- Ability to complete and submit forms online.
- Easy access to information online that is clear and easy to understand.
- Ability to interact and conduct business with us outside of standard business hours.

Research into other councils and industry best practice suggests consistent self-service information across channels has a dramatic effect on customer satisfaction. Councils that commit to improving communication and information delivery across more and new channels find they are finally loosening the grip on people's perception they have to fight through 'red tape' to get service.



Focus priority areas

THE RESEARCH
SUGGESTS THERE
ARE FOUR
PRIORITY AREAS
WE NEED TO WORK
ON: PEOPLE AND
CULTURE;
PROCESS;
TECHNOLOGY;
AND MEASURE.

1

PEOPLE AND CULTURE

Culture in the context of this strategy refers to the collective attitudes and behaviours of the council staff.

To improve the culture, we will:

- Ensure the recruitment process targets candidates with the right skills and attitude.
- Provide staff with the right tools and training.
- Reward and recognise people that go 'above and beyond'.
- Measure performance and hold people accountable.

Goal

1.1 Promote a customer-focused culture.

2

PROCESS

A process is a series of repeatable steps that people perform to accomplish a task.

Improving, or streamlining, our processes will improve customer satisfaction by ensuring the staff have a consistent approach to customer service.

To improve our processes, we will:

- Remove unnecessary steps that don't add value.
- Introduce automation that reduces effort and the likelihood of errors or delays.

Goal

2.1 Streamline processes so they make sense and are easy to follow.

2.2 Provide consistent, efficient, accessible services.

3

TECHNOLOGY

Technology is rapidly changing the way people access information and services.

Self-service was previously considered a 'nice to have' but is now the preferred option for people to get an answer, pay a bill, or solve a problem.

Investing in technology will satisfy the expectation to provide 'always on' customer service. It is also responsive to the needs of our young, shift-working demographic whilst also improving access to services for people in remote parts of the region.

Our investment in technology will improve:

- Accessibility, by ensuring our services are not constrained to normal business hours.
- Flexible and convenient options to suit people's individual needs and circumstances.

Goal

3.1 Deliver innovative technology solutions to improve our customers experience.

4

MEASURE

Measure, in terms of customer service, is the result between what people expect and what they experience and is often referred to as customer satisfaction.

It is important to continually measure customer satisfaction to determine whether the behaviour of staff and our customer service practice is having a positive effect on people's experience.

Where customer satisfaction ratings are low in a survey, the results will be used to improve efforts to meet the needs and expectations of customers.

To improve customer service, we will measure:

- Performance against the agreed service level standards.
- Customer feedback provided through targeted surveys.
- Complaint data.

Goal

4.1 Demonstrate accountability by implementing appropriate performance measures.

4.2 Establish ways to better understand organisational performance and responsiveness where our service has not been satisfactory.

People and culture action plan

Process action plan

GOAL	ACTIVITIES	PERFORMANCE MEASURE	TARGET	RESPONSIBILITY
Promote a customer-focused culture across the organisation.	Develop mandatory customer service induction training for all new employees.	100% of all new employees completed the training within three months of commencement.	June 2020	Manager Customer Service.
		100% of all existing employees complete the training within six months of implementation of the customer service strategy.		Human Resources – Training and Development Team.
	Establish agreed protocols and scope of authority levels to enable staff to improve outcomes at the first point of contact.	Review frontline positions to establish protocols and appropriate levels of authority.	June 2020	Manager Customer Service.
		Increase in enquiries resolved at first point of contact.	Annual increase >25%	
	Implement accountability via specific outcome-based performance indicators related to customer service within position descriptions that are measured during performance appraisals.	Update position descriptions throughout the organisation to include customer service as a requirement of the position.	December 2019	Manager Customer Service.
		Performance appraisal system updated to reflect requirement for all staff to demonstrate performance against service standards outlined in the Customer Service Charter.		Manager Human Resources. Coordinator Workforce Support.
	Reward and recognise staff who go 'above and beyond'.	Reward and Recognition Policy & Framework implemented.	June 2019	Manager Human Resources.
		Corporate award for Service Excellence presented at Whole of Organisation Day (WOO) introduced.	August 2019	
	Frontline staff have the training, tools and resources to get the best outcome for customers.	Knowledge management system implemented providing real-time data to support staff to deliver consistent responses.	June 2020	Manager Customer Service. Governance Team.
		On-boarding tools developed to ensure consistency of training and knowledge skill sets.	December 2019	
		Regular rotation of staff between offices to develop additional skills and strengthen internal relationships.	December 2019	
		Handling difficult customers training provided annually.	Annually	
		Complaints handling training provided annually.	Annually	

GOAL	ACTIVITIES	PERFORMANCE MEASURE	TARGET	RESPONSIBILITY
Streamline customer processes so they are easy to understand, efficient and customer focused.	Develop and implement 'customer journey mapping' to identify and remove pain points within the services we deliver.	Mystery shopper program implemented and results used to drive process improvements.	June 2020	Manager Customer Service.
	Simplify internal business processes linked to common request types and, where appropriate, provide access online 24/7.	Number of internal business processes reviewed. Number of service requests available online.	December 2019	
Provide consistent, efficient and accessible services.	Promote knowledge base to support staff to deliver consistent responses.	Increased staff usage of knowledge base over 12 month period.	June 2021	Manager Customer Service. Customer Service & Area Support Team.
	Update the Customer Service Charter to reflect changes when required or biennially as a minimum. Conduct a biennial review of the Central Highlands Regional Council Customer Service Charter.	Improvement in 'staff's knowledge' and increased customer satisfaction results 12 months following implementation. Revised charter adopted by council.	As required. Biennially (minimum)	

Technology action plan

Measure action plan

GOAL	ACTIVITIES	PERFORMANCE MEASURE	TARGET	RESPONSIBILITY
Deliver innovative technology solutions to improve the customers experience with us.	Develop and implement a customer web portal for people to self-serve anywhere from any device.	Increase in registered users of web portal.	June 2020	Manager Customer Service.
		Reduction in contact centre contacts throughout the duration of strategy.	2019-2021	Coordinator Business Systems.
	Explore TechnologyOne system capabilities to automate reminders, request updates and closure notes to our customers.	Improvement in 'responsiveness' and increased customer satisfaction results 12mths following implementation.	June 2021	Manager Customer Service.
	Expand payment options to include an overarching secure payment portal.	Reduction in phone, mail and counter payments.	June 2020	Information Services Team. Manager Customer Service.
	Conduct an annual review of Central Highlands Regional Council website to ensure information is relevant, up to date and easy to find.	Annual review undertaken and recommendations reported to Executive Leadership Team.	Annually	Coordinator Corporate Communications.
	Develop and implement interactive 'smart' online forms.	Number of smart forms developed.	December 2020	Coordinator Corporate Communications.
	Expand our contact channels to include webchat during standard business hours.	Webchat service available.	December 2020	Manager Customer Service.
	Explore feasibility of Artificial Intelligence software to support self-service.	Feasibility study completed to inform future direction.	June 2021	

GOAL	ACTIVITIES	PERFORMANCE MEASURE	TARGET	RESPONSIBILITY
Demonstrate accountability by implementing appropriate performance measures.	Develop service standards for each service type provided and implement reporting tools to measure and monitor performance against those standards.	Reporting framework developed and implemented identifying adherence to set service level standards across the organisation.	June 2020	Manager Customer Service.
Establish mechanisms to better understand organisational performance and responsiveness where our service has not been satisfactory.	Conduct targeted surveys to examine the effectiveness and efficiency of our services across the organisation to identify opportunities for improvement.	Customer Satisfaction Survey undertaken annually, and feedback data used to drive improvements.	Annually	
	Develop the Central Highlands Regional Council Customer Complaint Handling Procedure.	Central Highlands Regional Council Customer Complaint Handling Procedure endorsed by council.	December 2019	
	Develop training program for key staff in complaint handling.	All Managers and Coordinators trained in Complaints Procedure.	June 2020	
	Regular reporting and root cause analysis of complaint data to the Executive Leadership Team.	Quarterly reporting to Executive Leadership Committee.	December 2020	



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