



# NAMBUCCA VALLEY COUNCIL CUSTOMER SERVICE CHARTER POLICY NO: CS 02

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## *Our Vision*

Nambucca Valley ~ Living at its best

## *Our Mission Statement*

'The Nambucca Valley will value and protect its natural environment, maintain its assets and infrastructure and develop opportunities for its people.'

### **1.0 Purpose**

Nambucca Valley Council is committed to serving the community with integrity, efficiency, fairness, impartiality and the encouragement of mutual respect. In keeping with Council's values, Nambucca Valley Council is committed to addressing and resolving customer enquiries and complaints, improving service delivery and increasing satisfaction.

Our Customer Service Charter aims to provide a guideline for customers, staff and councillors regarding enquiries, service requests or complaints received by Council and how they should be resolved.

### **2.0 Responsibilities**

Council will treat all matters, whether an enquiry, service request or complaint, diligently and aim to provide a fair and reasonable outcome to both the customer and Council. Comments about Council's service or staff are welcomed and provide valuable feedback about our quality of service.

Council's operations are wide and varied but this Customer Service Charter applies to all staff. However, some processes for dealing with customer enquiries and complaints may differ. In some cases Council may not be able to action some requests because of the nature of the enquiry, service request or complaint, or because of Council's limited resources. Our response may also vary depending on the nature and complexity of the issue. Other avenues for resolution of the issue, where appropriate, should also be considered.

Council will only deal with Council related matters. Civil issues such as a fencing dispute between neighbours will not be addressed by Council. Other matters being addressed through the judicial system, for example in the Land and Environment Court, may not be able to be addressed by Council for legal reasons.

### **3.0 External Agencies**

Any issues in relation to corruption, serious or substantial waste, or pecuniary interests should be directed to the General Manager or Public Officer. The General Manager has reporting responsibilities to external agencies such as the NSW Office of Local Government (OLG) and the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC).

External recourse is always available to all members of the community and information can be provided on the most appropriate agency if required. External agencies that may be considered

include the NSW Office of Local Government (OLG), NSW Ombudsman and the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC).

#### 4.0 Access to information

The Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 (the GIPA Act) creates new rights to information that are designed to meet the community's expectations of more open and transparent government. It encourages the routine and proactive release of government information, including information held by providers of goods and services contracted by government agencies.

For information on GIPA or how to access information, visit:

Council's website [www.nambucca.nsw.gov.au](http://www.nambucca.nsw.gov.au) or the Information and Privacy Commission NSW website [www.ipc.nsw.gov.au](http://www.ipc.nsw.gov.au)

#### 5.0 Response Timeframes

All enquiries, service requests and complaints shall be acknowledged and finalised within timeframes as established in the Customer Service Charter. However, in some cases (eg. Development Applications), incoming correspondence such as objection letters may not be finalised within the time limits as it forms part of larger deliberations.

#### General guide for enquiries and complaints

Customer	Response Target
Mayor and Councillors	Response within 2 working days
Members of Parliament	Response in 10 working days  Send an acknowledgement advice within 5 working days where correspondence cannot be responded to within 10 working days. The acknowledgement will indicate when a reply can be expected and the name of the contact officer.
Incoming correspondence (includes letters & emails)	Response in 15 working days.  Send an acknowledgement advice within 5 working days where correspondence cannot be responded to within 15 working days. The acknowledgement will indicate when a reply can be expected and the name of the contact officer.
Direct phone calls with council staff	Verbal response for non-complex issues within two (2) working days
Voicemail messages	Return call by close of business the next working day
Public safety issues (general)	Within "five (5) hour inspection" rule
Public safety issues (life threatening)	Immediate - first available officer

#### 6.0 What is a complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with a decision, level or quality of service, or behaviour of a councillor, employee, agent or committee member which can be investigated and acted upon.

## **7.0 What is not a complaint?**

- A request for service (unless there was no response to a first request for service)
- A request for information or an explanation of legislation, policy or procedure
- Disagreement with a policy of council
- Reports of damaged or faulty infrastructure
- Reports about neighbours, noise, dogs, nuisances, unauthorised building works or similar issues that fall into the regulatory or compliance aspect of our service

## **8.0 Customer Service Requests**

Council responds to works or services requests relating to activities that are the responsibility of council such as road/bridge maintenance, tree clearance and town maintenance.

When handling customer works or services requests by phone, in person, written, email or online we will:

- Complete a Customer Service Request by entering the details into our computerised Customer Service Request System (MERIT) and allocate a Customer Service Request identification number that can be provided to the customer, on request, for future reference
- Refer the request to the appropriate officer for action
- Respond to the customer if a response is requested
- Ensure all requests are processed in accordance with the standard timeframes, policy and procedures
- Ensure that managers review outstanding requests monthly

## **9.0 Confidentiality**

We will respect and protect the privacy of our customers. Confidentiality of complaints, including the identity of the customer, will be maintained in accordance with appropriate legislation and Council policies.

Further information can be found in Council's GIPA Publication Guide, Requests and Complaints Policy CS 03 and Privacy Management Plan CS 06 on Council's website.

## **10.0 Customer Care**

All staff will strive to:

- Be approachable
- Have a helpful attitude
- Take responsibility for an enquiry – deal with it themselves or find the person who can
- Keep the customer informed and let them know how the enquiry will be dealt with
- Maintain a professional manner – formal, fair and courteous

## **11.0 Customer Requirements**

In order to provide effective customer service it is necessary that all customers:

- a) not make complaints which are frivolous, vexatious, not in good faith, or about a trivial matter;(refer to Council's Unreasonable Complainant Conduct Policy G 10)
- b) not make complaints which are aimed at escalating neighbourhood disputes or purposely disadvantaging a neighbour;
- c) where appropriate attempt to resolve the matter themselves before approaching Council;
- d) consider the appropriateness of mediation facilities such as the Community Justice Centre for resolving neighbour related matters, or raising the issue with the appropriate authorities, eg Police, Waterways Authority etc;
- e) make an appointment for a complex enquiry or need to see a specific officer;

- f) provide adequate and accurate details (dates, time, location, photos, Council staff names, other relevant documents and so on) to Council about the matter;
- g) keep records of correspondence received or sent, other important documents, and details of telephone calls;
- h) allow Council adequate time to address the enquiry or complaint depending upon its type;
- i) leave detailed messages on staff voicemail systems when staff are unavailable and allow staff adequate time to respond to messages;
- j) not make complaints regarding matters which are old, or where finding a practical solution to the grievance may be unrealistic (for instance, by requesting the demolition of a block of units).

### **12.0 Zero tolerance to abuse of staff**

Council takes a zero tolerance approach to abuse of its staff. Physical or verbal abuse of any staff member will not be tolerated.

Customers acting inappropriately will be asked to leave the premises and may result in a police report or legal proceedings.

Verbal abuse over the phone may result in the call being terminated. In the event a caller uses foul or abusive language during a telephone conversation with an employee, the caller will be informed once that, if the use of such language continues, the call will be terminated. If the caller continues to use such language, the employee will invite the caller to put the matter in writing and terminate the call.

Council's customer service centre is under CCTV surveillance.

### **13.0 Location**

Council's Administration Centre is located at 44 Princess Street, Macksville NSW 2447

### **14.0 Contact Information**

Postal Address: PO Box 177, Macksville NSW 2447

Phone: (02) 6568 2555

After Hours: 1800 262 728

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

Website: [www.nambucca.nsw.gov.au](http://www.nambucca.nsw.gov.au)

### **15.0 Accessibility**

Council's Customer Service Centre (face to face) is open from 8.30am to 4.00pm Monday to Friday. The cash receipting service operates 9.00am – 4.00pm.

Council's Call Centre (Telephone (02) 6568 2555) operates 8.00am – 4.30pm.

A Planning, Health and Building Duty Roster operates between 11.00am – 1.00pm daily however appointments can be made out of these hours.

Council endeavours to provide a broad range of services during business hours and have skilled Customer Service Officers to handle the bulk of customer enquiries at the first point of call, customers with more technical queries are encouraged to make an appointment with the relevant officer as this will result in a better outcome for their enquiry.

The Administration Centre at Macksville is closed between Christmas and New Year's Day. An after-hours service is provided for emergency purposes:

### **16.0 After Hours and Emergency**

An after hour's service is provided for emergency purposes:

- Telephone 1800 26 27 28

For emergency help in floods and storms call the SES on 132 500.

## 18.0 Councillors

Councillors can be contacted by telephone, email or post.

## 19.0 Website

Council's website provides a wide range of information about Council's strategies, policies, programs and services, including the Nambucca Valley Community Strategic Plan, Delivery Program, Operational Plan and Annual Report.

Customers can also:

- View Council Business Papers
- Lodgement of Development Applications via a portal
- Track Development Applications through the Online DA Tracking Tool
- Make a Payment
- Log a Request
- Track a Request
- Positions Vacant
- Tenders
- Councillors Contacts
- Libraries
- Road Conditions

## 20.0 Payments

Customers can make payments by a number of options:

All payments	<b>In person</b> at Council's Administration Centre, 44 Princess Street Macksville by cash, cheque and EFTPOS (Debit/Credit Cards accepted)
	<b>By Mail</b> - Cheque only
	<b>In person</b> at Council's Waste Management Facility. There are no cash transactions taken - only by EFTPOS (Debit/Credit accepted)
Rates, Water and Debtors only	<b>Phone</b> - Credit Card – Designated NVC 1800 782 482
	<b>BPay</b> - via bank website and telephone banking
	<b>Online</b> - Credit Card – NVC Website
	<b>Centrelink</b> - Direct Deduction
Rates and Water only	<p><b>BCU (Bananacoast Community Credit Union Ltd)</b></p> <p><i>Macksville:</i> Monday - Friday 9.00am – 5.00pm and Saturdays 9.00am – 11.00am</p> <p><i>Nambucca Heads:</i> Monday - Friday 9.00am – 5.00pm</p> <p><i>Bowraville:</i> Monday - Friday 9.30am – 1.00pm</p>

## 21.0 Waste

Residents who receive a wheely-bin service from Coffs Coast Waste Services can use the **MyBin** app to find out when garbage, recyclables and organics bins are next due for collection.

Simply input your street address and press submit, or you can use the “Current Location” feature to save time. Download the free app at:

[www.handybinwaste.com.au](http://www.handybinwaste.com.au) or via the iTunes App Store and for Android via Google Play.

## 22.0 Customer Assistance

Council will provide assistance, where available, to customers wishing to lodge a complaint, but who have difficulty in adequately communicating the information.

Justices of the Peace (JP) are available.

The Council Chambers has a Hearing Induction Loop for the benefit of customers with hearing aids fitted with a ‘T’ switch.

## 23.0 Monitoring and Reporting

Customer service standards and success will be measured through:

- Your direct feedback
- Customer satisfaction surveys
- Quality monitoring and coaching
- Training and development programs
- Telephone and customer request system reports
- Corporate customer service key performance indicators (KPIs)

## History

New Policy

<b>Department:</b>	Corporate Services	<b>Last Reviewed</b>	<b>Resolution Number</b>
<b>Policy Category</b>	Council	August 2020	By AGMCS
<b>Endorsed By:</b>	General Manager	11 Oct 2022	By AGMCS
<b>Approval Authority</b>	Council		
<b>Policy Owner</b>	AGMCS		
<b>Contact Officer</b>	AGMCS		
<b>Document No.</b>	30943/2018		
<b>First Adopted</b>	13 September 2018		
<b>Resolution No:</b>	422/18		
<b>Review Date:</b>	October 2024		