

## QUALITY CUSTOMER SERVICE

---

### 1. STATEMENT OF POLICY INTENT

The intent of this policy is to develop a framework for an organisational culture focussed on meeting the needs and expectations of the customer and continuously improving services for the customer.

### 2. DEFINITIONS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Not applicable

### 3. POLICY

Wentworth Shire Council is committed to demonstrating value for money for our range of customers by:

- Focussing on excellent customer service; and
- Responding to community needs;
- Delivering cost effective service;
- Continuously improving and providing best value in everything we do.

### Principles

- Each staff member is accountable for the quality of customer service delivered through their own work or the quality of output of any project or work team(s) of which they are a member
- Directors, Managers and Supervisors are responsible for developing a customer focussed work ethic in their teams and empowering staff to undertake more customer focused decision making
- Management will provide staff with the appropriate tools, information and training to provide quality customer service
- Team Leaders and Supervisors are responsible for working in consultation with their teams to develop and implement customer focussed systems and processes that respond to and satisfy internal and external customer needs and expectations.

### Guidelines

What is Quality Customer Service?

Quality Customer Service is focussed on achieving measurable improvements in outcomes for customers.

We will achieve this by:

- Knowing and responding to the needs and expectations of our customers

|                         |  |                          |            |
|-------------------------|--|--------------------------|------------|
| Maintained by:          | DSO (formerly DCS)                               | Date Adopted by Council: | 15/12/2010 |
| File Number:            | C9/7   | Version No:              | 2          |
| Previous Effective Date | 24 June 2009                                     | Date for Review          | 15/12/2011 |
| Other Reference:        | Nil  |                          |            |
| Application:            | All staff  |                          |            |
| Attachments:            | CP100a Customer Service Charter (publisher file) |                          |            |

- Measuring performance on a regular basis to make sure the needs and expectations of customers are being met efficiently, effectively and equitably
- Taking steps to continuously improve services as a result of customer feedback

- 

Who are our customers?

All staff have customers. They may be internal or external or both. Before customer service can be improved, we first need to know who our customers are.

Internal customers provide services which support staff who deal directly with external customers. External customers include residents and ratepayers, community groups, the business community, volunteers, other levels of government and government agencies.

There are four categories of external customers with different values, needs and expectations:

- direct customers who are people directly using a service
- indirect customers who are people who benefit from or are affected by the service although they do not directly interact with the service themselves
- voluntary customers who choose to use Council services
- involuntary customers who are required by legislation to deal with Council in areas such as approval processes

It is only by identifying what is important to each customer group using a particular service that resources can be directed efficiently, effectively and equitably to maximise satisfaction.

It may not always be possible to maximise satisfaction with an outcome in complex areas such as local approvals where the needs and expectations of an applicant and objector to a proposal are in conflict. The focus here is to maximise satisfaction with the process, and minimise, where possible, dissatisfaction with the outcome.

What criteria do customers use to judge the quality of customer service?

The following criteria is used by customer groups to judge the quality of customer service. They are considered by Council service units in the design and delivery of services and when measuring customer satisfaction levels with the service.

|             |  |
|-------------|--|
| Timeliness  | the degree to which a service is made available when it is needed.   |
| Consistency | the degree to which the service (including advice) is repeated in the same way by different parts of the organization. |
| Reliability | the degree to which the service can be depended upon to be regular and predictable.                                    |

|                         |  |                          |            |
|-------------------------|--|--------------------------|------------|
| Maintained by:          | DSO (formerly DCS)                               | Date Adopted by Council: | 15/12/2010 |
| File Number:            | C9/7   | Version No:              | 2          |
| Previous Effective Date | 24 June 2009                                     | Date for Review          | 15/12/2011 |
| Other Reference:        | Nil  |                          |            |
| Application:            | All staff  |                          |            |
| Attachments:            | CP100a Customer Service Charter (publisher file) |                          |            |

|                   |  |
|-------------------|--|
| Accuracy          | the degree to which the service is free from error.  |
| Courtesy          | the degree of politeness, respect, consideration and friendliness of staff.                                    |
| Value for Money   | the degree to which cost of service is seen as well spent.   |
| Responsiveness    | the degree of willingness to help and respond to individual customers and listen to their needs.               |
| Access            | the degree of ease experienced by the customer in obtaining the service required.                              |
| Security          | the degree of safety and freedom from danger for the customer while obtaining the service.                     |
| Probity           | the degree of integrity, trustworthiness and ethics of the service provider.                                   |
| Appropriateness   | the degree to which the service matches the needs of the customer.   |
| Confidentiality   | the degree to which information about a customer's situation is protected.                                     |
| Comprehensiveness | the degree to which the service completely meets customer's needs.   |
| Communication     | the degree to which the customers are provided with clear, relevant, timely information in a preferred format. |

Different customer groups place a higher value on different attributes. For example, a developer lodging an application with Council may value timeliness, consistency and access more highly than a ratepayer paying their rates enquiry where responsiveness, accuracy and appropriateness may be more highly valued.

It is important to respond to these differences between customer groups in the planning and delivery of services in order to maximise customer satisfaction.

How do we identify our Customer's needs and expectations and measure satisfaction?

If Council is to provide the right services in the right way it has to identify the needs and expectations of its key customer groups and encourage and respond to regular feedback from them.

*Customer needs* are the requirements a customer is wanting to fulfill when they interact with Council.

*Customer expectations* are the assumptions they make about what will happen as part of the service delivery process.

Systematic, deliberate and detailed research and consultation is necessary if Council is to understand its customers and successfully deliver and manage quality customer service.

|                         |  |                          |            |
|-------------------------|--|--------------------------|------------|
| Maintained by:          | DSO (formerly DCS)                               | Date Adopted by Council: | 15/12/2010 |
| File Number:            | C9/7   | Version No:              | 2          |
| Previous Effective Date | 24 June 2009                                     | Date for Review          | 15/12/2011 |
| Other Reference:        | Nil  |                          |            |
| Application:            | All staff  |                          |            |
| Attachments:            | CP100a Customer Service Charter (publisher file) |                          |            |

Another important aspect is having a customer suggestions and complaint handling strategy in place that:

- records all written and verbal suggestions, complaints and compliments
- has a process in place to respond to suggestions and complaints
- regularly analyses complaints and suggestions at the service unit and corporate level to identify opportunities for improvement and stopping recurring problems
- enables staff to develop skills in negotiation, conflict resolution, complaints management, mediation and conciliation
- informs customers of their options and what to do if they have a problem
- informs customers of the outcome of their complaint or suggestion

Suggestions and complaints are an important source of customer feedback and are valued by our organization as an opportunity to improve services.

What are Service Standards?

Internal and external customers need to know what level of service they can expect. By identifying and communicating standards for each Service area, customer expectations can be effectively managed and performance of service areas can be monitored. These standards will be identified in service level agreements.

How do we sustain a Customer Focused Culture?

A customer service culture is sustained if customer focused behaviours and practices are constantly reinforced by managers and work teams. All staff have an important role to play in sustaining the culture and will be held accountable within the delegated responsibilities of their position for customer focused outcomes.

Quality Customer Service is an important criteria that will be identified in all position descriptions and will be considered in performance assessments, salary reviews and associated systems for reward and recognition. The induction program will also provide mechanisms to promote council's commitment to and develop staff skills in quality customer service.

How will we measure our success in providing Quality Customer Service?

Managers and Supervisors are responsible for identifying as part of the annual business planning process, areas that will be targeted during the 12 month period for delivering measurable improvements in outcomes for customers. They will also be responsible for reporting on the improvement outcomes.

Operating Principles for all Staff

Attached to this policy is the Customer Service Charter principles for all staff of Wentworth Shire Council. These principles are consistent with Council's values of

|                         |  |                          |            |
|-------------------------|--|--------------------------|------------|
| Maintained by:          | DSO (formerly DCS)                               | Date Adopted by Council: | 15/12/2010 |
| File Number:            | C9/7   | Version No:              | 2          |
| Previous Effective Date | 24 June 2009                                     | Date for Review          | 15/12/2011 |
| Other Reference:        | Nil  |                          |            |
| Application:            | All staff  |                          |            |
| Attachments:            | CP100a Customer Service Charter (publisher file) |                          |            |

Honesty, Integrity, Effective Communication, Leadership, High Performance, Recognition, Respect, Consistency, Teamwork and Strategic Planning.

**4. RESPONSIBILITY/ACCOUNTABILITY**

All staff, whether on the customer or provider side of the organisation are responsible for the success of the Quality Customer Service Policy.

**5. RELATED DOCUMENTS**

**5.1 ASSOCIATED COUNCIL DOCUMENTS**

Customer Service Charter

**6. POLICY STATUS**

This policy was formally adopted by Council on 15 December 2010 and commenced operation on 15 December 2010. This policy replaces the previous version adopted on 24 June 2009 with no significant changes being made to the policy.

**7. POLICY REVIEW**

This policy may be amended at any time and must be reviewed at least twelve months since its adoption (or latest amendment).

**8. AUTHORISATION**

.....

Position:        General Manager

Date:            ...../...../.....

|                         |  |                          |            |
|-------------------------|--|--------------------------|------------|
| Maintained by:          | DSO (formerly DCS)                               | Date Adopted by Council: | 15/12/2010 |
| File Number:            | C9/7   | Version No:              | 2          |
| Previous Effective Date | 24 June 2009                                     | Date for Review          | 15/12/2011 |
| Other Reference:        | Nil  |                          |            |
| Application:            | All staff  |                          |            |
| Attachments:            | CP100a Customer Service Charter (publisher file) |                          |            |