

## **AGENDA**

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### **Community and Culture Committee**

**Monday, 12 May 2025**

**6:00 PM**

**Dragon Room**

**Georges River Civic Centre**

**Hurstville**



## **OATH OF OFFICE OR AFFIRMATION OF OFFICE**

All Georges River Councillors are reminded of their Oath of Office or Affirmation of Office made at the time of their swearing into the role of Councillor.

All Councillors are to undertake the duties of the office of Councillor in the best interests of the people of the Georges River Council area and are to act faithfully and impartially carry out the functions, powers, authorities and discretions vested in them under the *Local Government Act 1993* or any other Act to the best of their ability and judgement.

## **DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST**

All Georges River Councillors are reminded of their obligation to declare any conflict of interest (perceived or otherwise) in a matter being considered by Council or at any meeting of Council.

## **COMMUNITY AND CULTURE COMMITTEE MEETING**

### **ORDER OF BUSINESS**

#### **OPENING**

#### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY**

Council acknowledges the Bidjigal people of the Eora Nation, who are the Traditional Custodians of all lands, waters and sky in the Georges River area. I pay my respect to Elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who live, work and meet on these lands.

#### **APOLOGIES / LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

#### **REQUEST TO JOIN VIA AUDIO VISUAL LINK**

#### **NOTICE OF WEBCASTING**

#### **DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST**

#### **PUBLIC FORUM**

#### **CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS**

<b>COM013-25</b>	<b>Confirmation of the Minutes of the Community and Culture Committee Meeting held on 14 April 2025</b>	
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#### **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

<b>COM014-25</b>	<b>Community Grants 2024-2025 Round 2</b>	
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<b>COM015-25</b>	<b>Customer Experience Strategy Progress Update and Draft Customer Feedback and Complaints Management Policy Review</b>	
	(Report by Head of Customer Experience) .....	17



## CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

**Item:** COM013-25 Confirmation of the Minutes of the Community and Culture Committee Meeting held on 14 April 2025

**Author:** Executive Services Officer

**Directorate:** Office of the General Manager


**Matter Type:** Previous Minutes

COM013-25

### RECOMMENDATION:

That the Minutes of the Community and Culture Committee Meeting held on 14 April 2025, be confirmed.

### ATTACHMENTS

Attachment [1](#)  Minutes of the Community and Culture Committee Meeting held on 14 April 2025

## MINUTES

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### Community and Culture Committee

Monday, 14 April 2025

6:00 PM

Dragon Room

Georges River Civic Centre  
Hurstville



**GEORGES RIVER COUNCIL**

## **PRESENT**

### **COUNCIL MEMBERS**

Councillor Landsberry, (Chairperson), Councillor Allison, Councillor Anzellotti, Councillor Arthur, Councillor Dimoski, Councillor Gao, Councillor Mort and Councillor Wang.

### **COUNCIL STAFF**

General Manager – David Tuxford, Director Community and Culture - Kristie Dodd, Manager Sports, Community Facilities and Events - Margaret Le, Coordinator Community Property and Venues – Andrew Williams, Manager Office of the General Manager - Vicki McKinley, Technology Business Support Officer – Lee Fermor, and Executive Assistant to the Director Community and Culture – Billie Johnson (Minutes).

## **OPENING**

The Chairperson, Councillor Landsberry, opened the meeting at 6.00pm.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY**

The Chairperson, Councillor Landsberry acknowledged the Bidjigal people of the Eora Nation, who are the Traditional Custodians of all lands, waters and sky in the Georges River area. She paid her respect to Elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who live, work and meet on these lands.

## **APOLOGIES/LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

That an apology on behalf of Councillor Liu be accepted.

**MOTION:** Councillor Mort, Councillor Anzellotti

### **Record of Voting**

For the Motion: Councillor Landsberry, Councillor Allison, Councillor Anzellotti, Councillor Arthur, Councillor Dimoski, Councillor Gao, Councillor Mort, Councillor Wang

On being PUT to the meeting, voting on this Motion was UNANIMOUS. The Motion was CARRIED.

## **REQUEST TO ATTEND VIA AUDIO VISUAL LINK**

There were no requests to attend via Audio Visual Link.

## **NOTICE OF WEBCASTING**

The Chairperson, Councillor Landsberry advised staff and the public that the meeting is being recorded for minute-taking purposes and is also webcast live on Council's website, in accordance with section 5 of Council's Code of Meeting Practice. This recording will be made available on Council's Website.

## **CODE OF MEETING PRACTICE**

Council's Code of Meeting Practice prohibits the electronic recording of meetings without the express permission of Council.

## **DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST**

There were no disclosures of interest made.

## **PUBLIC FORUM**

There were no registered speakers.

## **CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS**

**COM010-25 Confirmation of the Minutes of the Community and Culture Committee Meeting held on 10 March 2025**  
(Report by Executive Services Officer)

**RECOMMENDATION:** Councillor Allison, Councillor Mort

That the Minutes of the Community and Culture Committee Meeting held on 10 March 2025, be confirmed.

### **Record of Voting**

For the Motion: Councillor Landsberry, Councillor Allison, Councillor Anzellotti, Councillor Arthur, Councillor Dimoski, Councillor Gao, Councillor Mort, Councillor Wang

On being PUT to the meeting, voting on this Motion was UNANIMOUS. The Motion was CARRIED.

## **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

**COM011-25 Quarterly Community Property Report - 1 January 2025 to 31 March 2025**  
(Report by Coordinator, Programming and Operations)

**RECOMMENDATION:** Councillor Dimoski, Councillor Allison

That Council receive and note the Quarterly Community Property Report for the period 1 January 2025 to 31 March 2025.

### **Record of Voting**

For the Motion: Councillor Landsberry, Councillor Allison, Councillor Anzellotti, Councillor Arthur, Councillor Dimoski, Councillor Gao, Councillor Mort, Councillor Wang

On being PUT to the meeting, voting on this Motion was UNANIMOUS. The Motion was CARRIED.

**COM012-25 Outgoing Sponsorship Request Georges River Local Business Awards**  
(Report by Coordinator Events and Sponsorship)

**RECOMMENDATION:** Councillor Mort, Councillor Gao

That Council approve the Outgoing Sponsorship request of \$10,000 to become a major sponsor of the 2025 Georges River Local Business Awards

### **Record of Voting**

For the Motion: Councillor Landsberry, Councillor Allison, Councillor Anzellotti, Councillor Arthur, Councillor Dimoski, Councillor Gao, Councillor Mort, Councillor Wang

On being PUT to the meeting, voting on this Motion was UNANIMOUS. The Motion was CARRIED.

## **CONCLUSION**

The Meeting was closed at 6.14pm

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Chairperson

UNCONFIRMED

## COMMITTEE REPORTS

**Item:** COM014-25 Community Grants 2024-2025 Round 2

**Author:** Grants and Project Officer

**Directorate:** Community and Culture

**Matter Type:** Committee Reports

COM014-25

### RECOMMENDATION:

That the funding recommendations resulting from Georges River Council Community Grants 2024-2025 Round 2, as detailed in Attachment 1 of this report, be adopted.

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Georges River Council holds an annual program of Community Grants funding to partner with community groups and help meet identified community needs, as outlined in the Georges River Council Community Strategic Plan 2022-2032.
2. The budget for Community Grants 2024-2025 Round 2 is \$125,000.
3. This report seeks approval for the allocation of community grant funding to not-for-profit community groups and community organisations to meet program objectives and address priority community needs in the Georges River Council local government area.
4. In Community Grants 2024-2025 Round 2, 29 eligible applications for funding were received, with request amounts totalling \$344,869.
5. Funding is recommended for either full or partial support for 16 applications with a total proposed allocation of \$125,000.
6. The funding recommendations are detailed in Attachment 1 of this report.

### BACKGROUND

7. The Georges River Community Grants Program allocates funds to meet program objectives and address priority community needs under Section 356 of the *Local Government Act (1993)* in an effective and equitable manner, based on the individual merits of each request.
8. The Georges River Council Grants and Donations Policy (2023) was adopted by Council on 23 October 2023 (COM031-23) and includes the program objectives, eligibility criteria and assessment process for the Community Grants Program.
9. The total allocated budget for outgoing grants and donations is \$300,000.
10. In addition to this, \$11,000 has been allocated to capacity building initiatives.
11. The total Community Grants 2024-2025 budget has been allocated as follows:

Grant/Donation Program	Budget Allocated	Recommended	Grants/Donations Paid
Community Grants 2024-2025 Round 1	\$145,000	\$145,000	\$145,000
Community Grants 2024-2025 Round 2	\$125,000	\$125,000	

Micro Grants 2024-2025 Round 1	\$8,000	\$5,000	\$5,000
Micro Grants 2024-2025 Round 2	\$6,000	\$3,592	
Quick Response Donations 2024-2025	\$5,000	\$3,360	\$3,360
Capacity Building Initiatives 2024-2025	\$11,000		

12. Community Grants 2024-2025 Round 2 opened on 3 February 2025 and closed on 14 March 2025. The round was open for six weeks.
13. Council received 29 eligible applications, with funding requests totalling \$344,869.
14. Applications for funding were considered across two categories: Major Projects (up to \$25,000) and Small Projects (up to \$10,000).
15. Applications were assessed against a range of criteria including:
  - (a) the demonstrated community need of each project;
  - (b) the social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits of each project;
  - (c) the organisation's capacity to manage funds; and
  - (d) the organisation's capacity to deliver and evaluate the project successfully.
16. Consideration was also given to projects that featured strategic alignment with the Community Strategic Plan and other Council plans and strategies, including the Social Justice Charter, Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2022-2026, Libraries 2030 - Georges River Library Strategy and Create Georges River Cultural Strategy.
17. An assessment panel of Council officers assessed the 29 eligible applications between 7 April 2025 and 15 April 2025.
18. The panel recommended either full or partial support for 16 applications with a total proposed funding allocation of \$125,000. This consisted of five (5) projects in the Major Projects category to the value of \$80,052, and eleven (11) projects in the Small Projects category to the value of \$44,948.
19. No recommended applicants have outstanding audited financial statements, as per the requirement for organisations receiving grants, donations, sponsorships and/or subsidies above \$15,000 from Council.

## FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

20. The total recommended funding allocation for Community Grants 2024-2025 Round 2 is \$125,000.
21. Recommended allocations are equal to the Georges River Council Community Grants Program Round 2 budget allocation of \$125,000.
22. Successful grant applicants will be reminded of the requirement for audited financial statements for organisations with documented grants, donations, sponsorships and/or subsidies above \$15,000.

## RISK IMPLICATIONS

23. Strategic Risk 6 – Reputation: *The risk of Council's identity, brand and standing being negatively impacted, reducing Council's ability to engage in sound decision-making and being able to take strategic action whilst maintaining essential services and support for the community.* Council faces a reputational risk if a project not aligned with Council's plans and strategies is awarded a grant. This is mitigated through a rigorous assessment process where all applications are assessed against the criteria outlined in Council's Grants and Donations Policy (2023) and Community Grants 2024-2025 Round 2 Guidelines.
24. Strategic Risk 8 – Social Cohesion: *Failure to identify and/or respond to the changing socio-economic needs of our community. Social cohesion erosion and growing socio-economic gap negatively impacting social stability, individual well-being, and economic productivity.* Georges River Council's Grants and Donations programs support initiatives and projects that build the social, cultural, environmental, and economic life of the area. Council recognises and respects the vital contribution of community and business in developing and delivering projects that contribute to a vibrant and sustainable community. Through these programs, Council provides financial and in-kind support for a diverse range of projects that mitigate the risk of the erosion of social cohesion.
25. If Council proposes to amend the officers' recommendations for Community Grants funding, Council should indicate a reason in accordance with the criteria in the Grants and Donations Policy (2023).

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

26. Forty (40) potential grant applicants engaged with Council through individual grant meetings or phone calls while the grant round was open, allowing applicants to speak with the Grants and Project Officer to discuss grant project ideas, the application process, and eligibility criteria. Meetings were scheduled for 30 minutes either in-person or online.
27. Additionally, six information sessions presented by Council's Grants and Project Officer, were held while the grant round was open to build grant skills, knowledge, and capacity. Four sessions were held in-person at Hurstville Library and Clive James Library Kogarah, including a session exclusively for seniors, as part of Seniors Week. Two sessions were held online via Zoom. Sessions were held at a variety of times, within and outside of business hours. Sixty-one (61) people registered to participate across all information sessions.
28. Council also offered a new Community Outcomes and Evaluation Workshop presented by the Grants and Project Officer, to mitigate identified areas for development. Two people registered to participate in the workshop.
29. Council continues to offer free grant writing training, provided in perpetuity on Council's website. The training is a practical step-by-step guide with tools and checklists to apply for grants. Participants strengthen grant application skills, building community capacity to apply for grants with any potential funder. The online training, provided by Win the Grant, can be completed any time within 45 minutes.
30. Community Grants 2024-2025 Round 2, and capacity building information sessions, workshops, and individual grant meetings were promoted via:
  - (a) Council's website - Community Grants, Micro Grants, Grants Help Hub and What's On pages;
  - (b) Council's social media platforms;
  - (c) Council's Community e-newsletter;
  - (d) advertisements in the St George & Sutherland Shire Leader newspaper;

- (e) advertisements in the St George and Sutherland Shire human services e-newsletter (SGS News), reflecting initial and extended grant round dates;
  - (f) one entry in the Councillor Information Bulletin;
  - (g) regular Grants Newsletters throughout the Round open period, distributed to opt-in subscribers;
  - (h) an email to Council's current Advisory Committee members; and
  - (i) an email to the professional networks of the Community Capacity Building team.
31. Unsuccessful grant applicants are provided with the option to request feedback from Council's Grants and Project Officer, to build grant writing capacity for future grant applications.
32. All successful grant recipients will be invited to further Council events to continue to build capacity of grant recipients, including an Orientation Workshop on receipt of funding and a Reflection and Storytelling event at the conclusion of the grant cycle.

**FILE REFERENCE**

D25/129803

**ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment [1](#) Community Grants 2024-2025 Round 2 - Summary of Applications



Ref	App ID	Organisation	Category	Project	Project Description	Comments	Total amount requested	Panel recommended funding amount
1	CG 24-25 R210	Shopfront Arts Co-op Ltd	Major Projects	Inaugural Annual Youth Conference Created and Curated by Young People	A non-partisan, youth-led Youth Conference connecting, upskilling and empowering 100 young people to amplify their voices and advocate as changemakers.	The panel recommends full funding	\$ 25,000.00	\$ 25,000.00
2	CG 24-25 R217	Stride Mental Health Ltd. trading as headspace Hurstville	Major Projects	Therapeutic Small Group: Healing & Growth with Dungeons and Dragons	Weekly therapeutic group sessions using the collaborative roleplaying game Dungeons & Dragons to teach social skills and provide wellbeing outcomes.	The panel does not recommend funding	\$ 20,000.00	\$ -
3	CG 24-25 R221	New South Wales Cricket Association	Major Projects	Breakfast Blast Program	A before-school cricket program for children, including breakfast and transport.	The panel does not recommend funding	\$ 21,000.00	\$ -
4	CG 24-25 R222	3Bridges Community Ltd	Major Projects	3Bridges Youth-Centred Live Music Venue	The establishment of a live music venue at Penshurst Park Youth Zone, starting New South Wales' first alcohol-free youth-centred live music venue, with performances exclusively by young people.	The panel recommends full funding	\$ 25,000.00	\$ 25,000.00
5	CG 24-25 R223	Variety - the Children's Charity (NSW/ACT)	Major Projects	Just Like You - Disability Awareness Workshops in Georges River	Interactive disability awareness workshops delivered to 1,200 primary school students across six schools in the Georges River LGA, led by professional facilitators with lived experience of disability.	The panel does not recommend funding	\$ 20,000.00	\$ -
6	CG 24-25 R224	NSW Court Chaplains Association Inc.	Major Projects	Print Self Help Books for Positive Living Program	A structured self help improvement program that encourages participants to value and care for themselves and achieve life changing goals.	The panel does not recommend funding.	\$ 25,000.00	\$ -
7	CG 24-25 R231	The Men's Table Ltd	Major Projects	Safe and Healthy Communities in Georges River	The establishment of another Men's Table within Georges River, attracting local male residents and workers, and helping them establish supportive communities of men. The project is a mental health and suicide prevention initiative.	The panel recommends partial funding	\$ 12,500.00	\$ 9,052.00
8	CG 24-25 R239	Sydney Dogs and Cats Home Inc.	Major Projects	Pet Care Education: Empowering CALD Communities - Responsible Pet Ownership	A Pet Care Education Pack tailored for CALD communities in Georges River Council.	The panel does not recommend funding	\$ 25,000.00	\$ -
9	CG 24-25 R241	CALD Ageing and Disability Support Association Inc.	Major Projects	CALDA Inclusive Community Activities Program	Weekly activity groups in Hurstville for seniors and people with disabilities, including social outings, indoor activities, and cultural programs, as well as large-scale community events for Mid-Autumn Festival and Chinese New Year.	The panel does not recommend funding	\$ 25,000.00	\$ -
10	CG 24-25 R242	Open Door Youth Housing Support Service Ltd	Major Projects	Next Door: Encouraging Real Estate to House Young People	An education program for real estate providers on the benefits of leasing to young people at risk of homelessness, involving facilitated sessions with young people with lived experience.	The panel recommends partial funding	\$ 22,500.00	\$ 17,250.00
12	CG 24-25 R245	Share Southern Metropolitan Region Inc.	Major Projects	Art as Therapy	A weekly 2-hour art therapy session that features a wellbeing support group and social lunch at the end of the year.	The panel recommends partial funding	\$ 25,000.00	\$ 3,750.00
							\$ 246,000.00	\$ 80,052.00

13	CG 24-25 R212	Morris Children's Fund Inc.	Small Projects	Music and Art Therapy at St George Hospital School	A Music & Art Therapy program at the St George Hospital School, for children with moderate to severe illnesses.	The panel does not recommend funding	\$ 10,000.00	\$ -
14	CG 24-25 R214	Kogarah Concert Band Inc.	Small Projects	Better Storage, Better Organisation, Better Band	Improved storage options for sheet music library.	The panel recommends full funding	\$ 3,000.00	\$ 3,000.00
15	CG 24-25 R216	Kogarah Historical Society Inc.	Small Projects	A New Display Case for Museum Artefacts in Carrs Cottage	Replacement of a display case with a new cabinet designed to specifications with secure drawer space and a glass display area.	The panel recommends full funding	\$ 4,000.00	\$ 4,000.00
16	CG 24-25 R218	Indonesian Life Improvement Association of Australia Inc.	Small Projects	Thread of Harmony: Weaving Culture, Innovation & Sustainability in Fashion	A showcase highlighting sustainability in the fashion industry, promoting ethical fashion, cross-cultural collaboration and a greener future through creativity and innovation.	The panel does not recommend funding	\$ 3,800.00	\$ -
17	CG 24-25 R219	St George Art Society Inc.	Small Projects	Repair Existing Exhibition Screens	Repair of exhibition screens for a local art society.	The panel does not recommend funding	\$ 6,754.00	\$ -
18	CG 24-25 R22	NSW Justices Association Inc	Small Projects	Resources Acquisition for Volunteer JP Community Desks	Purchase of generic self-inking Justice of the Peace stamps, ink pads and storage boxes to meet increasing demand for a JP Association operating in Council libraries.	The panel recommends partial funding	\$ 1,920.00	\$ 960.00
19	CG 24-25 R220	The Kogarah Storehouse	Small Projects	Speed to Succeed	Upgrade of an internet system to ensure continued efficiency to meet the needs of a growing service and accurate recordkeeping.	The panel does not recommend funding	\$ 9,236.00	\$ -
20	CG 24-25 R225	Mortdale Scottish Country Dancing Club (assoc. with RSCDS Sydney Branch)	Small Projects	Replace Inadequate Existing Computer	Replacement of an existing computer for improved file storage and access to an internet database.	The panel recommends partial funding	\$ 1,618.00	\$ 809.00
21	CG 24-25 R226	Project Youth	Small Projects	Kogarah Youth Hub Fit Out	The establishment of a Kogarah Youth Hub to provide a safe, fully equipped space for young people, helping them connect with support for housing.	The panel recommends full funding	\$ 6,326.00	\$ 6,326.00
22	CG 24-25 R227	Learning Links	Small Projects	Learning Links' Opportunity Project – Unlocking Potential for Every Child	A specialist program to help socio-economically disadvantaged children in Georges River with learning difficulties access critical intervention services to learn, develop, and thrive.	The panel recommends full funding	\$ 10,000.00	\$ 10,000.00
23	CG 24-25 R229	Oatley Uniting Church	Small Projects	Hand Dryers	Purchase and installation of four electric hand dryers in toilet facilities at a local hall space.	The panel recommends partial funding	\$ 1,500.00	\$ 946.00
24	CG 24-25 R23	St George Family Support Services Inc.	Small Projects	Community Access and Aid	The removal of a letterbox post to widen the entrance to a driveway, and the installation and securing of shelving in a storage shed.	The panel recommends partial funding	\$ 3,639.00	\$ 1,384.00
25	CG 24-25 R230	Chinese Australian Services Society Ltd	Small Projects	Digital Inclusion in GRC	A community education and connection program to support residents in Georges River LGA with low digital literacy and language barriers to accessing community resources.	The panel does not recommend funding	\$ 5,100.00	\$ -
26	CG 24-25 R238	Janaranjani	Small Projects	Project JR202501	Training of youth and children to be ethical broadcasters and researchers, use broadcasting equipment and prepare programs of high value.	The panel does not recommend funding	\$ 3,000.00	\$ -
27	CG 24-25 R25	Narwee Baptist Community Broadcasters Ltd	Small Projects	Update Studio Accessories	Update of end of life studio accessories, including microphones and stands, windsocks, cables and a computer.	The panel recommends full funding	\$ 5,782.00	\$ 5,782.00
28	CG 24-25 R26	Forest Rangers Football Club Inc.	Small Projects	Kids with Goals	The acquisition of easy access football goals for 8- to 12-year-olds.	The panel recommends partial funding	\$ 9,000.00	\$ 5,241.00
29	CG 24-25 R28	Hurstville Croquet Club Inc.	Small Projects	Painting of Clubhouse and Player's Outdoor Shelter	The painting and restoration of a local croquet club's clubhouse and outdoor player's shelter.	The panel does not recommend funding	\$ 4,445.00	\$ -

30	CG 24-25 R29	Georges River Life Care	Small Projects	Food for Life	Creation and publication of Food for Life, a recipe book featuring cultural and family recipes to highlight the struggle of food insecurity while promoting food rescue initiatives.	The panel recommends partial funding	\$ 9,749.00	\$ 6,500.00
							\$ 98,869.00	\$ 44,948.00
TOTAL RECOMMENDED FOR FUNDING							\$	125,000.00

**Item:** COM015-25 Customer Experience Strategy Progress Update and Draft Customer Feedback and Complaints Management Policy Review

**Author:** Head of Customer Experience

**Directorate:** Community and Culture

**Matter Type:** Committee Reports

#### **RECOMMENDATION:**

- (a) That Council receive and note this update on the implementation of the Customer Experience Strategy 2022-2027 (CX Strategy).
- (b) That the draft Georges River Council Customer Feedback and Complaints Management Policy be placed on public exhibition for a period of no less than 28 days.
- (c) That a further report be submitted to Council on the feedback received during the exhibition period, together with any recommended changes for the draft policy prior to adoption.

#### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

1. In accordance with Council resolution (CCL085-22), this report provides a mid-term update on Council's five-year Customer Experience Strategy (CX Strategy) and its accompanying action plan. At the halfway point, the CX Strategy demonstrates improved service delivery, customer satisfaction, and organisational responsiveness. This report also seeks to detail the next phase of the implementation of the CX Strategy.
2. The Customer Feedback and Complaints Management Policy outlines Council's structured three-tier framework for managing feedback and complaints. It sets out clear procedures for handling unreasonable customer conduct and defines the roles and responsibilities of staff involved in these processes.
3. Following a review to ensure alignment with current best practice, an updated Policy (The Draft Policy) has been prepared and is proposed for public exhibition to encourage community input and support transparency in complaint management (Attachment 1).
4. The Draft Policy aligns with Council's CX Strategy by promoting a customer-focused approach that prioritises accessibility, transparency, and continuous improvement. This report seeks Council endorsement to publicly exhibit The Draft Policy for 28 days, providing the community with an opportunity to review and comment on the proposed changes.

#### **BACKGROUND**

5. The Customer Experience Strategy (CX Strategy) and accompanying Customer Experience Charter (CX Charter) was adopted by Council on 26 September 2022. The CX Strategy and CX Charter were developed to deliver excellence in customer experience for the Georges River Community.
6. The CX Strategy and CX Charter align with Council's Community Strategic Plan 2022-2032 (CSP) which identifies the following strategies in Pillar 5 - Our place in Sydney:
  - Goal 5.1 - Leadership focuses on innovation and improving the customer experience; and
  - Strategy 5.1.2 - Provides positive experience across all customer interactions for our community and visitors.

7. The successful implementation of the CX Strategy and CX Charter was recognised with Georges River Council receiving the 2024 NSW Local Government Excellence Award in the Customer Experience category. The award acknowledged Council's delivery of outstanding, end-to-end customer service across all touchpoints, demonstrating the positive impact of key initiatives.
8. The CX Strategy was informed by extensive consultation with the community and staff, resulting in three key focus areas that form the basis of the CX Strategy Action Plan. The three key focus areas of the Action Plan included:
  - Focus Area 1- Improving processes with technology;
  - Focus Area 2 - Providing access with ease; and
  - Focus Area 3 - Embedding a customer-centric culture.
9. Each focus area includes a series of targeted actions, each aligned with a specific timeframe for implementation to support effective planning and progress tracking. These timeframes were defined as short term (1–2 years), medium term (2–4 years), and long term (4+ years), providing a structured approach to achieving the intended outcomes over time.
10. Council adopted the Georges River Complaints Policy on 3 July 2017 (CCL137-17), which aligned with the NSW Ombudsman's Effective Complaint Management Guidelines.
11. Following a review in 2022, the Policy was amended to reflect evolving customer feedback channels, including social media and to reflect the introduction of a new system for lodging and managing customer feedback reports. The revisions also formalised the expanded role of Customer Advocates and introduced additional mechanisms to improve feedback capture across Council.
12. These amendments were adopted by Council on 24 July 2023 (CCL061-23), with the next review scheduled for 2025.

### **CX Strategy Update**

13. The completed short, medium, and long-term actions are outlined below, aligned with the relevant focus area of the CX Strategy and are presented in Attachment 2.

### ***Focus Area 1 – Improving processes with technology***

14. The implementation of a state-of-the-art omni-channel contact centre solution—featuring call-back functionality and multiple communication channels—has enhanced accessibility, responsiveness, and operational efficiency, enabling customers to engage with Council through their preferred methods. The call-back functionality, offered at three-minute intervals, allows customers to request a return call rather than wait on hold, improving the overall customer experience by providing greater flexibility. The new system now supports the management of approximately 200 customer calls per day, ensuring timely responses and improved service delivery.
15. The introduction of the Stay on the Line Survey has expanded customer feedback opportunities, enabling real-time insights to improve services, measure first call resolution, and assess customer satisfaction and ease of interaction with Council. In the initial three months following the implementation of the Stay on the Line survey, Council achieved an overall customer satisfaction rating of 90%, a first call resolution rate of 91%, and an 85% rating for ease of interaction. These results reflect strong early outcomes in delivering responsive and customer-focused service.
16. The introduction of online booking systems for hireable venues and parks, featuring self-service functionality, keyless access integration, and a new BPAY payment option. This

has improved accessibility, streamlined the booking process, and enhanced convenience for customers accessing Council facilities. Since its launch in August 2024, Council has expanded the system to include parks, sports grounds, libraries, and community venues. With 3,047 bookings to date, the system has improved accessibility, streamlined processes, and enhanced the customer experience.

### ***Focus Area 2 – Providing access with ease***

17. Council has delivered community capacity-building sessions through the Capacity Building Program (CBP), a key program under the Community Impact Series. Sessions have focused on key topics such as understanding development and planning processes, applying for grants and financial assistance, and running community events. The CBP has improved community capability by demystifying complex processes, addressing common pain points, and supporting customers to be more informed and empowered to engage confidently with Council services.
18. Customer excellence mandatory training has been embedded across all levels of the organisation through face-to-face sessions and an online training module, helping to ensure consistent and professional customer service while reinforcing a shared commitment to service standards and continuous improvement.
19. An in-house interpretation framework was developed that leverages multilingual staff and translation technology, supported by the new Community Language Aid Policy. This initiative has enhanced language accessibility by enabling accredited staff to deliver services in languages other than English and provide signing support for individuals with hearing impairments, promoting more inclusive and accessible service delivery.
20. Translated key documents including the Community Strategic Plan, the New Residents Guide, and CX Charter into Easy Read and/or multiple community languages (Simplified Chinese, Traditional Chinese, Arabic, Nepali, and Greek), and commenced exploration of an accessibility website widget. These initiatives have promoted broader community engagement and support inclusive access, aligning with the Social Justice Charter Plan 2022–2026, particularly Action 5.1.5, which advocates for equitable access to Council information and services.
21. Conducted a comprehensive review of Council buildings frequently accessed by the public through the Accessible, Inclusive, and Liveable Communities Audit, covering libraries, early learning services, performance venues, and the Civic Centre. This has improved the inclusivity of community spaces, with a series of recommendations now set for implementation to ensure facilities are welcoming, functional, and accessible for all.

### ***Focus Area 3 – Embedding a customer-centric culture***

22. Quarterly Voice of the Customer reporting has been introduced to provide the Executive Team with clear insights into customer behaviours, trends, and emerging issues across contact channels, complaints, and service interactions. These reports support informed decision-making at the executive level and enable leaders to share key findings with their teams, ensuring staff are aware of customer priorities and can align their efforts to drive continuous service improvement.
23. Position descriptions were updated to embed service excellence as a core responsibility across all roles, reinforcing Council's organisation-wide commitment to a customer-focused culture. Additionally, a mandatory section was introduced in Performance Enhancement Plans requiring staff to demonstrate and assess their contribution to customer centricity as part of their performance reviews, strengthening accountability at all levels.

24. A review of service request customer messaging is underway, starting with the review and enhancement of information and messaging for the Tree Management and Environmental Health categories within the Log It/Fix It system. The objective is to enhance the customer experience by improving the clarity, timeliness, and accuracy of progress updates and completion notifications. Progress is being monitored throughout the implementation period, with the next phase of the review to focus on the Regulatory Services category, followed by additional service request areas.
25. Customer-centric KPIs have been introduced to strengthen service excellence and accountability across Council. These include a 48-hour response target for customer contact requests, measurement of first call resolution, and customer satisfaction tracking. Insights are captured through the new Customer Contact Request category, a dedicated first call resolution question in the Stay on the Line survey, and the implementation of the Digital Smiley Signature tool, providing valuable data to inform ongoing service improvements.
26. Installed LED screens in the contact centre to display real-time call queues, wait times, and key service information, increasing transparency and operational efficiency by enabling staff to manage enquiries more effectively and deliver prompt, informed, and responsive service to the community.

### **The Draft Policy**

27. A scheduled review was conducted in April 2025, to ensure The Draft Policy remains current, effective, and aligned with best practice in complaint management.
28. The review incorporated a benchmarking process, drawing on the complaint management frameworks of other local councils, Service NSW, and key regulatory guidance. This included the *NSW Ombudsman's 6 Principles for Effective Complaint Management* and Standards Australia's AS 10002:2022 – *Guidelines for Complaint Management in Organisations*, which sets a clear benchmark for how complaints should be managed and outlines what the public can expect when raising concerns with councils and community service providers. These references ensured alignment with best practice and sector-wide standards.
29. By ensuring customers can provide feedback through flexible channels, treating all feedback as an opportunity to enhance service, and equipping staff with the tools to respond effectively, The Draft Policy supports the CX Strategy's focus on delivering responsive, inclusive, and high-quality customer experiences.
30. The following updates have been made to The Draft Policy:
  - Minor wording changes have been made throughout the Draft Policy to improve clarity, enhance readability, and ensure the document is easily understood and applied by both staff and customers. These refinements support greater consistency in interpretation and aim to strengthen the overall accessibility and effectiveness.
  - References and Legislation - to reflect the most current versions of relevant reference materials. This includes the addition of Standards Australia's Guidelines for Complaint Management in Organisations (AS 10002:2022) and the NSW Ombudsman's 6 Principles for Effective Complaint Management as key reference documents. These updates ensure The Draft Policy remains aligned with contemporary best practice and regulatory guidance.
  - *Definition of Terms* - Additional minor edits within the revised Draft Policy included improved wording for customer ease and understanding.

- The internal review resolution timeframe has been extended from 10 to 15 business days to better reflect the complexity and significant work involved in conducting fair, thorough, and well-documented reviews. This adjustment recognises the increasing trend in internal review requests and provides a more realistic and achievable timeframe. In addition, the Internal Review section has been deleted and replaced with a revised Section 4.1(d), which introduces specific eligibility criteria that must be met for a complaint to proceed to review by the General Manager.
- The External Review paragraph has been renumbered as Section 4.2, with an additional sentence added to align with the NSW Ombudsman's guidance that local councils should be given a reasonable opportunity to address a complaint before external involvement. This amendment reinforces the principle that councils must be afforded the chance to resolve matters at a local level prior to escalation to external bodies.
- The Confidentiality and Privacy section (Section 8) has been updated to include a reference to Council's Privacy Management Plan.

### **Next Steps**

31. Council has successfully completed 23 actions under the five-year CX Strategy, with 7 initiatives currently underway and 6 scheduled to commence. The next phase will focus on driving the progression of actions in development and initiating those outstanding, ensuring momentum is maintained. Where strategic alignment is beneficial, initiatives will be integrated with broader organisational priorities, such as the Enterprise System Review, to enhance delivery outcomes.
32. CXExpert is one of the significant actions Council is progressing to support its strategic objective of building a culture of information sharing. This cloud-based knowledge management solution consolidates key information into a single, searchable platform, enabling CX agents to deliver faster, more accurate responses and improving service consistency. It also lays the foundation for future AI tools, such as intelligent search and chatbots, to further enhance the customer experience and operational efficiency.
33. Regular monitoring, performance reporting, and targeted stakeholder engagement will continue to underpin implementation efforts, supporting transparency, accountability, and the achievement of strategic objectives.
34. It is recommended that The Draft Policy be placed on public exhibition for a minimum of 28 days to allow community members and stakeholders the opportunity to review and provide feedback. This consultation process supports transparency and ensures the Draft Policy reflects community expectations. Following the exhibition period, any relevant feedback will be considered and incorporated as appropriate, and the final Draft Policy will be submitted to Council for approval.

## **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

### ***Customer Experience Strategy (CX Strategy)***

35. Targeted community engagement was undertaken during the development of the CX Strategy including a Your Say survey, workshops with Council's references groups, local businesses, community organisations, and other metro council representatives. The previous iteration of the CX Strategy was placed on public exhibition for a period of no less than 28 days.

36. On 21 March 2017, Council resolved (CCL077-17) to place the Draft Complaints Policy on public exhibition for a period of no less than 28 days. Throughout the public exhibition, Council received no public submissions.
37. On 18 May 2022, an email was sent to community members who had lodged complaints with Council during the 2021 and 2022 period. Feedback received from customers confirmed that the process for managing customer complaints was satisfactory.
38. On 22 May 2023, Council resolved (CCL042-23) for the Georges River Council Customer Feedback and Complaints Management Policy to be placed on public exhibition for no less than 28 days. Throughout the public exhibition period Council received two submissions informing the development of the policy.
39. Should Council approve the Draft Policy, further community engagement will be undertaken throughout the exhibition period, and the outcome will be reported back to Council in the final version of this policy for Council's adoption.

## FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

40. No budget impact for this report.

## RISK IMPLICATIONS

41. Through implementation of the CX Strategy and revision of the Draft Policy, Council can mitigate the following strategic risks and ensure effective governance, maintain a positive reputation, and promote social cohesion:

### (a) Strategic Risk 6: Reputation

Reputational damage could occur if Council does not continue to implement the CX Strategy and iteratively revise the Draft Policy, leading to a loss of trust and credibility among the community. This could result in negative public perception and reduced engagement with stakeholders. Conversely, implementing the strategy and policies will enhance Council's reputation, build trust, and support effective and transparent decision-making.

### (b) Strategic Risk 7: Ineffective Governance

Without regular updates and reviews of the Draft Policy, Council risks falling short of best practice standards and operating inefficiently, undermining accountability and transparency to customers. By implementing the CX Strategy and the Draft Policy, Council can ensure regulatory compliance, improve operational efficiency, and maintain robust governance frameworks.

### (c) Strategic Risk 8: Social Cohesion

Failure to address community feedback and manage unreasonable customer conduct effectively could compromise the well-being of customers and safety of Council staff handling community complaints, leading to increased stress and potential burnout. Implementing the strategy and policies will help the Council identify and respond to community needs, manage unreasonable conduct, and ensure the safety of staff, thereby fostering social cohesion and promoting a customer-centric culture.

## FILE REFERENCE

D25/134045

## ATTACHMENTS

Attachment [1](#) Draft Customer Feedback and Complaints Management Policy



Attachment [2](#) CX Strategy Update





# Draft Customer Feedback and Complaints Management Policy

May 2025

## Policy administration

<b>Dates</b>	Policy approved [insert date of approval] (Version 6.0) Policy takes effect upon its approval. Policy is due for review in July XXX
<b>Approved by</b>	Council Meeting XXXX Council Resolution
<b>Policy Type</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Executive Policy <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Council Policy
<b>Exhibition Period</b>	XXXXXX
<b>Policy Owner</b>	Head of Customer Experience
<b>Related Documents</b>	Customer Experience Strategy 2022-2027 Customer Experience Charter Interactions with Children and Young People Policy
<b>Appendices</b>	Appendix A - Complaints covered by legislation or other Council policies
<b>References &amp; Legislation</b>	<p><i>Standards Australia, 'Guidelines for complaint management in organizations', AS 10002:2022</i></p> <p><i>NSW Ombudsman's Effective Complaint Handling Guidelines, November 2024</i></p> <p><i>NSW Ombudsman, 6 Principles for Effective Complaint Management Information</i></p> <p><i>NSW Ombudsman, Managing Unreasonable Conduct by a Complainant, NSW Ombudsman, July 2022</i></p> <p><i>Government Information Public Access (GIPA) Act 2009</i></p> <p><i>Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act (PPIPA) 1998</i></p> <p><i>NSW State Records Act 1998</i></p> <p><i>NSW Local Government Act 1993</i></p> <p><i>Children's Guardian Act 2019</i></p> <p><i>NSW Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998</i></p> <p><i>NSW Ombudsman's Effective Complaint Handling Guidelines, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, February 2017</i></p> <p><i>NSW Ombudsman 'Managing unreasonable conduct by complainants' Model policy – July 2022</i></p>
<b>Document Identifier</b>	Policy #: Pol-016.004 Doc #: D23/181353

<b>Breaches of Policy</b>	Breaches of any policy will be dealt with and responded to in accordance with adopted codes and/or relevant legislation.
<b>Record Keeping</b>	All documents and information obtained in relation to the implementation of this policy will be kept in accordance with the NSW State Records Act 1998, Georges River Council's Corporate Records Policy and adopted internal procedures.

## Purpose

The Customer Feedback and Complaints Management Policy (the Policy) establishes a framework to enable the handling of all forms of feedback in a consistent, fair, and professional manner whereby:

- Customers have choice and flexibility in how they wish to provide feedback;
- All feedback, including complaints are accepted courteously, and with a view to improving services and customer experiences;
- Feedback is managed in an objective, fair and transparent manner;
- Council officers are equipped with the knowledge, tools, techniques and skills to resolve complaints in a timely manner;
- Customers dissatisfied with the outcome of a complaint are provided with clear review options; and
- Council undertakes continuous improvement with regard to customer interaction.

## Scope

This Policy applies to all customer feedback including compliments, suggestions, comments, and complaints lodged with Council.

Legislative requirements relating to complaint management will take precedence over this Policy where a complaint involves matters governed by specific legislation. A complete list of complaints covered under legislation or other Council policies is attached in **Appendix A**.

## Definition of Terms

Term	Meaning
Complaint	<p>A complaint is a form of feedback that expresses dissatisfaction towards Council, its policies, procedures, fees and charges, Council officers, Councillors, agents, or quality of service affecting an individual or group of customers.</p> <p>A complaint is not:</p> <p>A Service Request</p> <p>A request for Council to exercise a regulatory function</p> <p>An appeal or objection regarding a statutory process, standard procedure, or policy (unless this is recorded as a complaint about the process of Council's decision making)</p> <p>A request for documentation, information or explanation of policies or procedures</p> <p>A response provided in relation to specific requests for feedback about the standard or quality of Council service provision</p> <p>An appeal against fines or penalties issued by Council</p> <p>Officers or agents</p> <p>A claim for compensation, or about legal matters (i.e., appeals)</p> <p>A report about a third party (e.g., a neighbour dispute).</p> <p><b>Note:</b> Service Requests will not be registered as a complaint unless Council has failed to respond appropriately the first time the service request was made, or if the customer specifically complains about the process, a Council officer or the quality of service provided.</p>
Customer Advocate	For the purpose of this Policy, the Customer Advocate is an appointed Council officer responsible for actioning, monitoring and coordinating customer feedback.
Complainant	Is the person or organisation that complains, including customers, clients, community members, local businesses consumer and service users or their chosen representative.
Feedback	<p>Opinions, comments or expressions of interest or concern, made directly or indirectly to Council about, our services, our staff, policies, or procedures where a response by Council is required.</p> <p>Feedback will be accepted through the following channels: in person, in writing, by phone, via Webchat, through social media platforms, Happy or Not kiosks, Digital Smiley email signatures and website.</p>

	Once feedback is received by Council, it will be assessed and registered by a Customer Experience Advocate. Feedback can be categorised as either positive feedback, a complaint (meeting our complaints criteria) or general feedback. Feedback may be in the form of a compliment, suggestion, comment, or complaint.
Public Interest Disclosure	The reporting of allegations of corrupt conduct, maladministration, serious and substantial waste of public money or government information contravention.
Receiving Officer	For the purpose of this Policy, the receiving officer is the Council officer who receives and lodges the customer feedback in the first instance.
Service Request	Service Requests include: Requests for approvals Requests for action Requests for investigation Routine inquiries about Council business Requests for the provision of services and assistance Requests for explanation of policies, procedures and decisions Reporting issues requiring maintenance
Unreasonable customer conduct	Any behaviour by a current or former customer which, because of its nature or frequency raises substantial health, safety, resource or equity issues for Council, its Officers, its service users, or customers, and includes the customer themselves.
Child	A person who is under the age of 16 years.
Young person	For the purpose of this policy a young person is a person who is over the age of 16 years but under the age of 18 years.

## Policy Statement

### 1. Feedback Management Framework

- 1.1 This Policy outlines a framework for managing all feedback received by Council. All feedback lodged with Council will be managed consistently and in accordance with this framework.
- 1.2 The Feedback Management Framework outlines Council's approach to managing customer feedback with respect to:
- Customer feedback service standards;
  - Feedback channels and timeframes;
  - Complaint handling;
  - Handling all types of feedback;
  - Managing unreasonable customer conduct;
  - Records management;
  - Confidentiality and privacy; and
  - Continuous improvement.
- 1.3 Child protection related complaints and allegations are managed in accordance with Council's Interactions with Children and Young People Policy, Child Safe Code of Conduct - Council Officials, Child Safe Code of Conduct - Service Users and Community, and underlying procedures and relevant legislation outlined in **Appendix A**.

### 2. Customer Feedback Service Standards

- 2.1 Customer feedback will be managed in accordance with the timeframes outlined in this Policy. These timeframes form part of Council's corporate key performance indicators and are reported on in Council's Annual Report to ensure transparency and accountability.

Feedback type	Acknowledgement of Receipt	Resolution
<b>Positive Feedback</b>		
Compliment	Immediately (where lodged verbally) or within 2 business days (where lodged in writing, via email or online) via provision of 'customer request tracking number'.	10 business days

Suggestion/comment	Immediately (where lodged verbally) or within 2 business days ( when lodged via other channels.	10 business days
<b>Complaints</b>		
Early Resolution	Immediately (where lodged verbally) or within 2 business days (where lodged in writing, via email or online) via provision of 'customer request tracking number'.	Immediately or maximum of 5 business days
Further Investigation	2 business days in writing (via letter or email)	10 business days
Internal Review	2 business days in writing (via letter or email)	15 business days
External Review	Subject to reviewing body	Subject to reviewing body

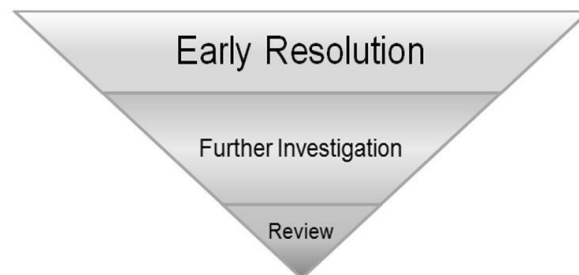
### 3. Feedback Channels and Timeframes

- 3.1 Council will accept feedback lodged by telephone, in person, in writing and electronically. This includes feedback provided by Council's social media channels.
- 3.2 All feedback lodged with Council will be acknowledged within 2 business days by the provision of a Customer Request Tracking number.
- 3.3 Anonymous feedback will be accepted; however, investigations into complaints will only be undertaken where there is sufficient information provided to conduct an investigation.

### 4. Complaint Handling

- 4.1 As stated under the NSW Ombudsman's '*Effective complaint handling guidelines*', complaints lodged with Council will be managed consistent with the NSW Ombudsman's '*Three level approach to complaint handling*' which has been adapted to reflect the role of Council's Customer Advocate staff in handling complaints as follows:

Diagram 1: Three tier approach to complaint handling for Georges River Council



- a) Early resolution (first tier) – Council staff will attempt to resolve complaints at the first point of contact in being empowered to resolve complaints quickly and without escalation whenever possible.
- b) Further investigation (second tier) – In instances where early resolution (first tier) is not possible e.g. due to the complexity of the complaint, or when a customer expresses dissatisfaction with the outcome from first tier resolution and wishes to escalate their complaint, the matter will be referred to an identified Customer Advocate staff member, who was not involved in the first tier resolution, for further investigation (second tier).
- c) Review (third tier) – Where a customer expresses dissatisfaction with the outcome or have evidence to suggest there has been an error from second tier, the customer may request an internal review, and/or lodge their complaint with an external agency.
- d) Internal review criteria – Before requesting an internal review of a decision, the complainant should first contact the Customer Experience Advocate who communicated the outcome to discuss the decision. If the internal review request is to proceed the customer is required to fill out the *Request for Internal Review* form and submit this to Council within 10 business days of the date of the original determination.

Requests for an internal review must explain the reasons why an internal review is being sought and may be requested where:

- (i) One or more elements of the original complaint were not fully considered or addressed in the outcome, and key details or aspects may have been overlooked or missed during the initial investigation.
- (ii) Further explanation or clarification is required from the General Manager based on the information provided in the outcome or decision. This is not a re-evaluation of the decision but a request for additional details that were not initially provided and that fall within the General Manager's authority to clarify.

- (iii) A specific decision or action is requested to be reviewed, amended, or changed. The internal review request must clearly identify the decision or action being contested and the reasons for seeking amendment.
  - (iv) New information, evidence, or material has become available that was not available at the time of the original investigation. The internal review request must explain why the new material is relevant and how it directly impacts the original decision or outcome.
- e) Requests for internal review must clearly demonstrate how one or more of the above criteria apply to the original complaint. General dissatisfaction or disagreement without specific and substantiated reasoning will not be accepted.
  - f) Requests for internal review will be assessed by Director Community & Culture or Director Business & Corporate Services whomever was not involved in the initial investigation or outcome of the complaint. The Director will ensure the internal review is consistent with the organisation's policies and any relevant precedents or previous decisions.
  - g) The customer will be notified in writing as to whether the request for internal review will progress to the General Manager or not. A decision made under 4.1(d) of the Policy will be final. The customer will not be permitted to request another internal review at Council.
  - h) Where a complaint proceeds to third tier, the General Manager investigates the matter and will notify the customer in writing of the outcome of the internal review within fifteen business days of receiving the request.
- 4.2 External review – if a customer remains dissatisfied after all three tiers of the review process, the customer may decide to lodge their complaint with an agency external to Council, such as the NSW Ombudsman, NSW Office of Local Government or the NSW Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC). NB: The NSW Ombudsman's policy is that a council should have a reasonable opportunity to deal with a complaint before they become involved.

## 5. Handling Other Feedback

- 5.1 Compliments received that relate to a Council officer will be forwarded by the Customer Advocate to the relevant Council officer and their manager for inclusion in the Council officer's next performance appraisal.
- 5.2 Compliments received that relate to a Council service or function will be forwarded by the Customer Advocate to the relevant manager at Council.
- 5.3 Comments and/or suggestions received about Council services will be forwarded by the Customer Advocate to the relevant manager at Council.

- 5.4 Customers will be contacted by the Customer Experience Advocate, in accordance with the customer's preferred method of contact, to acknowledge the receipt of their feedback and the outcome of their feedback to Council.

## 6. Unreasonable Customer Conduct

- 6.1 Council will manage unreasonable customer conduct in accordance with the NSW Ombudsman's *'Managing unreasonable conduct by complainants' model policy* including (but not limited to) unreasonable persistence, demands, lack of cooperation, arguments, and behaviours.
- 6.2 Where a customer's conduct is considered unreasonable, the Customer Advocate should first issue a warning letter to the customer requesting such behaviour to cease. If such behaviour continues, the Customer Advocate can request an 'Unreasonable Customer Conduct Declaration' to be issued by the General Manager.
- 6.3 Where there are extenuating circumstances, including (but not limited to), customer conduct giving rise to Council officer/s forming a reasonable apprehension for the immediate or ongoing safety of Council officer/s and/or others being endangered, the General Manager may issue an 'Unreasonable Customer Conduct Declaration' without a warning letter first being issued.
- 6.4 Following the issuing of an 'Unreasonable Customer Conduct Declaration', the General Manager may also authorise limitations or adaptations to how a customer may interact with Council where the conduct of that customer has adversely affected:
- The health and safety of an employee of Council;
  - The efficiency of service delivery; and/or
  - The equity and fairness in the allocation of Council resources.
- 6.5 Where the General Manager authorises limitations or adaptations to how a customer may interact with Council as a result of an 'Unreasonable Customer Conduct Declaration', the limitations or adaptations may include:
- Who the customer can contact within Council;
  - What issues they can raise with Council;
  - When the customer can contact Council; and/or
  - Where the customer is able to make contact with Council and/or how they make contact with Council.
- 6.6 An 'Unreasonable Customer Conduct Declaration' can only be authorised or revoked by the General Manager.

## 7. Records Management

7.1 The Customer Advocate is deemed to be the 'receiving officer' and is responsible for ensuring:

- Complaints are to be lodged in Council's Corporate systems.
- All feedback is logged in Council's CI Anywhere system.

## 8. Confidentiality and Privacy

8.1 Georges River Council will respect and protect the identity of people making complaints and persons subject of a complaint in accordance with Council's Privacy Management Plan.

8.2 It should be noted that members of the public can make an application to Council to access documents (including complaints) in accordance with the *Government Information Public Access (GIPA) Act 2009* and the *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act (PPIPA) 1998*. Council may also be legally required to disclose information about complaints, for example, in response to a Court Order or Subpoena.

8.3 [Georges River Council Privacy Management Plan](#) outlines how Council manages personal information.

## 9. Continuous Improvement

9.1 Council Officers will analyse complaint data, monitor trends and quality of customer experience in relation to managing customer feedback. Information from these reports will be used to inform improvement in Council services and customer experience.

9.2 Customers will be actively encouraged to provide feedback about their overall experience and specific interactions with Council.

## Responsibilities

Position	Responsibility
<b>Mayor and Councillors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support a culture that values feedback including the recognition of compliments and the effective resolution of complaints.</li> <li>The Mayor and Councillors can assist individuals who approach them with feedback about Council by referring them to Council's Customer Advocates so that their feedback can be logged and actioned.</li> <li>The Mayor and Councillors are prohibited from getting involved in the day-to-day operations and management of feedback in accordance with this Policy and Feedback Procedures (unless the feedback relates specifically to the General Manager).</li> <li>Encourage customers to discuss or lodge their complaint with Council in the first instance.</li> </ul>
<b>General Manager</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote and support a culture that values feedback including the recognition of compliments and the effective resolution of complaints.</li> <li>Recognise occasions where Council officers have exceeded both the customer and Council's expectations.</li> <li>Investigate complaints about the Mayor, Councillors and Directors as appropriate.</li> <li>Actively resolve complaints at first contact whenever possible.</li> <li>Publicly report on complaints.</li> <li>Consider, authorise and/or revoke Declarations for Unreasonable Customer Conduct.</li> </ul>
<b>Executive Team</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote and support a culture that values feedback including the recognition of compliments and the effective resolution of complaints.</li> <li>Recognise Council officers who have received compliments for exceeding both customer and Council expectations.</li> <li>Review data on feedback provided by the Customer Advocate and endorse suggested organisational improvements to avoid reoccurrence of complaints in the future.</li> <li>Refer results of feedback data to appropriate Council officers</li> </ul>

<b>Executive Assistants, Administration Officers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explain Council's customer feedback framework to customers who enquire about lodging customer feedback.</li> <li>• Register complaints received in Council's Corporate systems and Record Management System.</li> <li>• Resolve complaints at the first point of contact or where this is not possible; refer to the complaint to the Customer Advocate for review.</li> </ul>
<b>Managers, Coordinators &amp; Team Leaders</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investigate feedback referred by the Customer Advocates within agreed service standard timeframes.</li> <li>• Provide Council officers with positive feedback where relevant.</li> <li>• Work with Customer Advocates to resolve complaints as quickly as possible.</li> <li>• Implement suggested organisational improvement projects to avoid reoccurrence of complaints in the future.</li> </ul>
<b>Customer Advocate/s</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish, manage, coordinate and report on customer feedback.</li> <li>• Register customer complaints and feedback into Council's Corporate systems, Record Management System and CI Anywhere System.</li> <li>• Refer compliments to relevant Council officers and their Coordinators and Managers.</li> <li>• Issue acknowledgment and notification of outcome correspondence to customers.</li> <li>• Actively resolve complaints at first contact whenever possible.</li> <li>• Make decisions about complaints within the service standard timeframes.</li> </ul>
<b>All Council Officers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Actively resolve complaints at first contact whenever possible or if not possible, refer to the Customer Advocate for review.</li> <li>• Log and register feedback in Council's Corporate systems, Record Management System and CI Anywhere System.</li> <li>• Implement the Customer Feedback and Complaints Management Procedures.</li> </ul>

## Version Control and Change History

Version	Amendment Details	Policy Owner	Period Active
<b>KCC</b>	Former Kogarah Council Complaint Policy discontinued	Kogarah Governance	23/05/2016- 02/07/2017
<b>HCC</b>	Former Hurstville Council Complaint Policy discontinued	Hurstville Governance	01/11/2013- 02/07/2017
<b>1.0</b>	Complete new Georges River Council Complaints Policy (Council Resolution CCL137-17)	Manager Communications and Customer Service	03/07/2017 – 18/12/2017
<b>2.0</b>	Customer Feedback Management Policy – includes a change to the Policy title and content to enable a comprehensive approach to ensuring the efficient and consistent handling of all customer feedback, not just complaints.	Manager Communications and Customer Service	19/12/2017 – 11/03/2018
<b>3.0</b>	Minor administrative change following on from ET resolution on 19/12/17 - Additions of the word “Complaints” to the Policy Title and elsewhere in the policy to enable consistency with the amended title - to ensure customers can locate the policy on Council’s website.	Manager Communications, Customer Service and Events	12/03/2018 – 19/7/2019
<b>4.0</b>	Minor change to clause 4.1.4, allowing two options when dealing with difficult customers. Endorsed as per email	Manager City Life	19/7/2019 – 19/7/2022
<b>5.0</b>	Administrative amendments to the Policy as outlined in the Executive Team report on 19 July 2022	Manager City Life	19/07/22 – [insert date Council adopted version 6.0]

6.0	Administrative amendments under version 5.0 adopted by Council. Minor amendments following review for congruence with National Principles for Child Safe Organisations (as required under Council's ongoing Child Protection Action Plan).	Head of Customer Experience	[insert date Council adopted version 6.0] -
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**APPENDIX A: COMPLAINTS COVERED BY COUNCIL POLICIES OR LEGISLATION**

Complaint/issue	Responsibly for investigation	Relevant Policy or Legislation
Councillor conduct/misconduct	The General Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Georges River Council Model Code of Conduct 2022</li> <li>Georges River Council's Councillor and Staff Interactions Policy 2024.</li> </ul>
Staff conduct/misconduct	The General Manager Manager of People & Culture The Mayor (if complaint is about the General Manager)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Code of Conduct 2022</li> <li>Georges River Council's Councillor and Staff Interactions Policy 2022</li> </ul>
Public Interest Disclosures	Internal Auditor The General Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public Interest Disclosures act 1994</li> <li>Georges River Council Public Interest Disclosure Reporting Policy 2023.</li> </ul>
Privacy breaches	Manager Corporate Governance & Risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Privacy Management Plan 2023.</li> </ul>
Alleged child abuse or breaches of child protection legislation	The General Manager Manager of People and Culture and Manager Community and Early Learning Services The Child Protection Triage Team.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>NSW Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 and associated legislation.</li> <li>Children's Guardian Act 2019.</li> <li>Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011.</li> <li>Interactions with Children and Young People Policy.</li> <li>Child Safe Code of Conduct - Council Officials.</li> <li>Child Safe Code of Conduct - Service Users and Community.</li> </ul>
Competitive neutrality	Chief Financial Officer and Manager Corporate Governance and Risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Various legislation and regulations.</li> </ul>

Staff grievances	Manager of People and Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Grievance and Complaint. Resolution Administration Policy 2017.</li></ul>
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# Customer Experience Action Plan 2025/26



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- Improving processes with technology
- Providing access with ease
- Embedding a customer centric culture

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## The Action Plan

Details the actions Council will take to achieve the strategic objectives in practice over the five-year term of the Customer Experience Strategy 2022-27.

# About the Customer Experience Strategy 2022-27

**On 3 July 2017, Georges River Council adopted its first customer experience strategy. Since coming into effect five years ago, it has been timely to re-evaluate Council's customer experience by developing a new strategy that ensures customers' evolving needs are being met.**

The Customer Experience Strategy 2022-27 has been developed through a combination of activities including stakeholder engagement with our customers including residents, community organisations and local business.



The Customer Experience  
Strategy 2022-27 has been  
designed around three  
**‘focus areas’**.

## Focus Area 1

### Improving processes with technology

- 1.1 Provide customers with fast, accurate and reliable online services.
- 1.2 Review and integrate technology systems.
- 1.3 Enhance ways that customers can provide feedback to Council.

## Focus Area 2

### Providing access with ease

- 2.1 Information and services are accessible to all.
- 2.2 Customer operational areas are welcoming, functional and accessible.

## Focus Area 3

### Embedding a customer centric culture

- 3.1 Cultivate a culture of exceptional customer experience, both internally (i.e. among staff) and externally (i.e. for all customers of Council).
- 3.2 Shape the services provided by Council through data and customer feedback.
- 3.3 Build a culture of information sharing.
- 3.4 Empower and train all staff to deliver exceptional customer experience.
- 3.5 Build capacity of Council contractors.





## Focus Area 1

Improving processes with technology

# Focus Area 1

## Improving processes with technology

2025			
Number	Action	Timeframe	Outcome
1.1(i)	Through the Digital Experience Steering Committee prioritise and deliver enhancements to Council's website – including:	Medium	Not yet commenced
	a. Reviewing keyword search function on Council's digital platforms; and		Complete
	b. Ensuring Council's digital platforms are mobile-enabled;		Underway
	c. Introducing online booking systems for hireable Council venues and parks;		
1.1(ii)	Use data to better understand our customers and personalise and tailor online access for customers through 'My Council' website (will become the My Council app);	Long	Not yet commenced
1.1(iii)	Expand availability and range of self-service options for customers, including introducing self-service capability for a community member to physically access hireable Council venues	Medium	Underway
1.1(iv)	Review current payment framework and implement modernised payment options.	Short	Underway
1.2(i)	Review current software applications and systems to ensure they are fit-for-purpose;	Short	Underway

2025			
Number	Action	Timeframe	Outcome
1.2(ii)	Review the suitability of communication channels, including notifications and alerts, across different Council services.	Medium	Complete
1.2(iii)	Introduce the ability for customers to opt-in to receive communications from Council via instant messaging, such as SMS messages	Medium	Complete
1.2(iv)	Investigate processes to reduce volume of incoming customer enquiries being categorised as “general enquiries”;	Short	Complete
1.2(v)	Implement a fully integrated Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system;	Long	Not yet commenced
1.2(vi)	Investigate telephony systems that will provide call back options and omni-channel functionality.	Short	Complete
1.3(i)	Introduce additional avenues for customers to provide feedback to Council;	Short	Complete
1.3(ii)	ii. Review the operation of current ‘Happy or Not’ kiosks across Council facilities	Short	Complete





## Focus Area 2

Providing access with ease

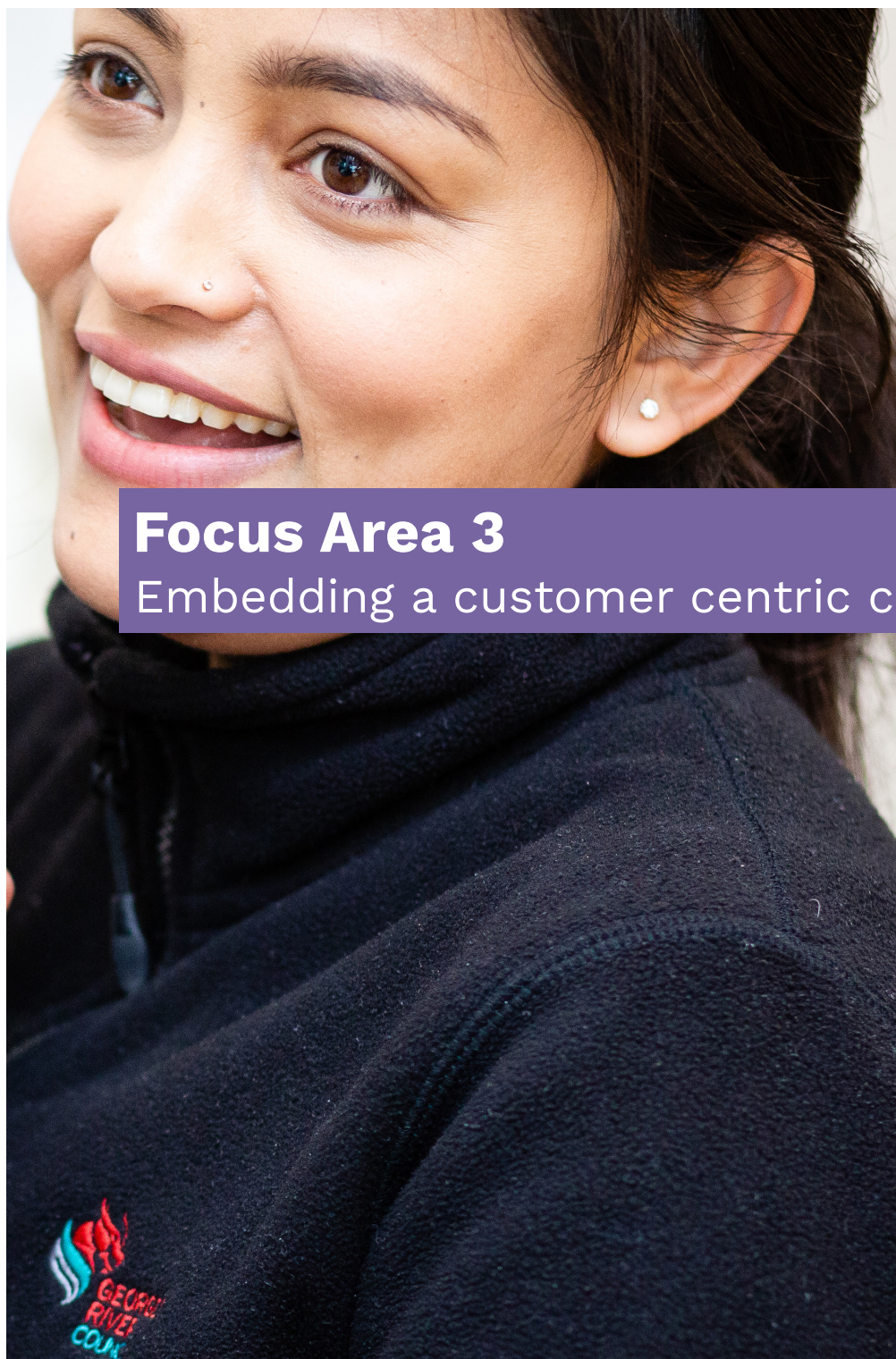
## Focus Area 2

### Providing access with ease

2025			
Number	Action	Timeframe	Outcome
2.1 (i)	Provide community capacity building sessions for Council customers to assist with applications, permits, approvals and other frequently accessed Council services.	Short	Complete
2.1(ii)	Undertake “customer journey mapping” of high use Council services.	Long	Not yet commenced
2.1(iii)	Introduce a streamlined process for in-house interpretation services for customers, such as a pool of accredited Council staff that speak community languages and language translation applications.	Medium	Underway
2.1(iv)	Improve accessibility of communications by providing information, such as Council's documents and forms published online, into community languages and easy-read English.	Medium	Complete
2.1(v)	Develop and implement key performance indicators relating to first contact resolution.	Medium	Complete

<b>2025</b>			
<b>Number</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Outcome</b>
<b>2.2(i)</b>	Review hours of operations and location/s for the Customer Service Centres;	Short	<b>Complete</b>
<b>2.2(ii)</b>	Review effectiveness of Council's after-hours and call overflow telephony service.	Short	<b>Complete</b>
<b>2.2(iii)</b>	Review the design of Council buildings frequented by customers to ensure they are welcoming, functional and accessible.	Long	<b>Complete</b>
<b>2.2(iv)</b>	Ensure consistency and professionalism are maintained across Council's customer experience environments.	Short	<b>Complete</b>





## Focus Area 3

Embedding a customer centric culture

## Focus Area 3

### Providing a customer centric culture

2025			
Number	Action	Timeframe	Outcome
3.1(i)	Introduce a Council-wide recognition scheme for staff who have demonstrated exceptional customer service either internally or externally	Medium	Complete
3.1(ii)	Implement a practice of quarterly reporting to Council's Executive Team about customer experience trends.	Short	Complete
3.1(iii)	Consistent and regular promotion of customer-focused metrics, such as customer experience standards, by Council leaders to all staff.	Medium	Complete
3.2(i)	Develop customer-centric KPIs which aim to improve the customer experience.	Long	Complete
3.2(ii)	Undertake biennial independent assessments of customer service performance and implement improvements.	Medium	Not yet commenced
3.2(iii)	Develop a process which captures and manages all feedback, such as complaints and accolades, received by Council in a centralised way	Medium	Complete

2025			
Number	Action	Timeframe	Outcome
3.3(i)	Activate an organisation wide knowledge sharing program to encourage the flow of information and collaboration between departments.	Medium	Underway
3.3(ii)	Review service request responses to customers ensuring updates and completion notifications are clear and reflect accurate information.	Medium	Underway
3.3(iii)	Adopt additional methods, such as on-site LED screens, for sharing key information to all Council staff, including frontline staff.	Long	Complete
3.4(i)	Include customer experience criteria and standards in staff position descriptions, during recruitment process.	Short	Complete
3.4(ii)	Customer experience measures are evaluated within Council's performance review process for all staff.	Short	Complete
3.4(iii)	Develop and deliver compulsory customer experience excellence training and mentoring that is tailored to staff roles across Council.	Short	Complete
3.5(i)	Include customer experience standards within service level agreements in the procurement of all Council contracts and tenders.	Medium	Not yet commenced

