

Strategies

Customer Experience Strategy

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01 Introduction

Acknowledgment

Clarence City Council pays respect to all First Peoples, including the Mumirimina (mu mee ree mee nah) People of the Oyster Bay Nation whose unceded lands, skies, and waterways we are privileged to conduct our business on.

We pay respect to, and value the deep knowledge of Elders past and present, and we acknowledge the survival and deep spiritual connection of the Tasmanian Aboriginal People to their Country, a connection which has endured since the beginning of time. Our work reflects our ongoing commitment to truth-telling and respectful understanding.



Message from the Mayor and CEO





We are pleased to introduce Clarence City Council's Customer Experience Strategy, the cornerstone of our commitment to delivering exceptional service and enhancing the relationship between our community and council.

Council's function is to provide for the health, safety, and welfare of our community, to represent and promote the interests of the community, and to provide for the peace, order and good government of the municipality. As leaders of our community, we recognise that our communities – our residents, customers, businesses, and visitors – are at the centre of everything we do.

In today's fast-paced world, the needs and expectations of our customers are continually evolving. It is crucial that we meet our community's reasonable expectations, anticipate, and surpass them wherever possible.

This strategy represents our commitment to understanding our community's needs, improving our services, and fostering a culture of customer-focused excellence across our entire organisation.

Our vision is to create an environment where you feel valued and heard. We aim to be proactive in addressing your concerns, clear and transparent in our communication, and consistent in the quality of service we provide across all areas of council.

We understand a positive customer experience builds trust, strengthens relationships, and ultimately contributes to the wellbeing of our community.

We also recognise the importance of mutual respect in all interactions. Just as we are dedicated to serving our community with excellence, we ask that our staff are treated with the same level of respect and consideration.

Positive and respectful behaviour towards our staff ensures that we can work together effectively to meet the needs of everyone in our community. We look forward to working with you, our community and customer, towards achieving this strategy and creating a benchmark for excellence in customer experience.

Brendan Blomeley
Clarence City Council Mayor

Ian Nelson
Clarence City Council CEO

About this strategy

Providing an excellent customer experience underpins every service council provides to our community and requires a whole of organisation approach. This strategy guides council in its delivery of exceptional service across all community touchpoints and interactions with council. Customer experience is broader than customer service. It encompasses the customer's perception of the whole journey from their first thought about interacting with council through to the completion of that interaction.

Customer service in government has traditionally been reactive to customers' needs, and we know our customers do not have a choice but to use our services. Being sole service providers makes the customer experience even more critical. Every time a customer uses one of our services or interacts with our organisation, it shapes their experience with and perceptions of council.

Customers often interact with more than one person in the organisation, and across multiple 'service channels' such as online, phone and in-person. Regardless of a customer's preference for interacting with us, they expect a seamless and consistent level of service. Every customer touchpoint and mode of interaction is an opportunity to reflect council's brand to build a consistent position within our community.

Every employee is a guardian of council's brand and has a responsibility to represent this through each connection and interaction with residents, businesses, and visitors. Regardless of a customer's preference for interacting with us, they expect a seamless and consistent level of service. E

very customer touchpoint and mode of interaction is an opportunity to reflect council's brand to build a consistent position within our community. Every employee is a guardian of council's brand and has a responsibility to represent this through each connection and interaction with residents, businesses, and visitors.

What is customer experience (CX)

CX stands for customer experience. Customer experience is the sum of all interactions with council and the customer's satisfaction, emotions, and perceptions of council over the course of those interactions.

What has informed this strategy?

We developed this strategy drawing on the following resources:

- Living in Clarence Community Survey 2023
- Clarence Business Survey 2023

- Clarence City Council Staff Customer Experience Survey 2024
- ABS 2021 Census Data.



02 The Strategy

Our customer experience vision

To have a continuous focus on understanding, improving, and evolving our community's experience with council.

Our commitment to our customers

We aim to provide exemplary customer service that is seamless, authentic, and consistent across the organisation.

We are committed to:

✓	Being caring and empathetic when speaking to you.
✓	Understanding your needs.
✓	Helping you to quickly find the right information or person to talk to the first time.
✓	Being open and setting honest expectations.
✓	Keeping you up to date.
✓	Taking ownership of your enquiry and ensuring it is resolved.
✓	Being curious and willing to learn so we can unlock opportunities and better ways to help you.

Who are our customers?

61,531
Population

(ABS Census 2021)

41
Median age

(ABS Census 2011)

17,067
Families

(ABS Census 2021)

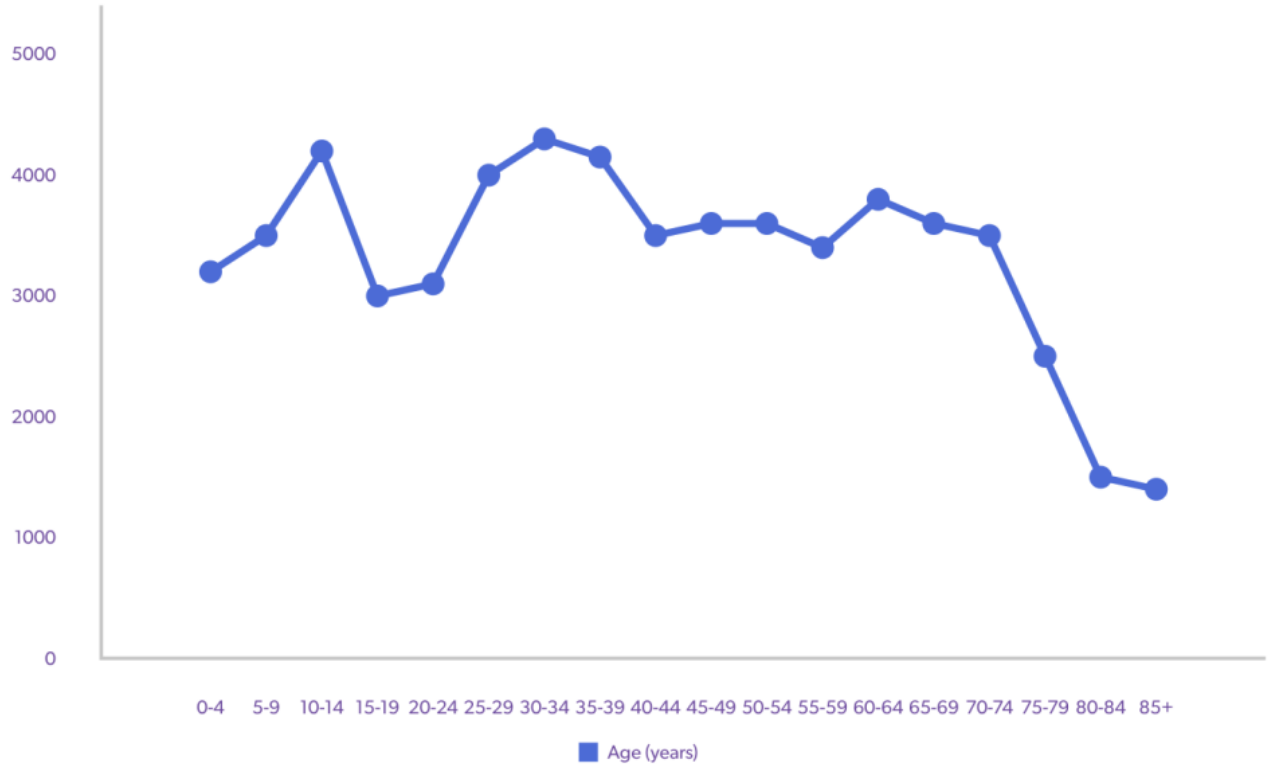
25,855
Private dwellings

(ABS Census 2011)

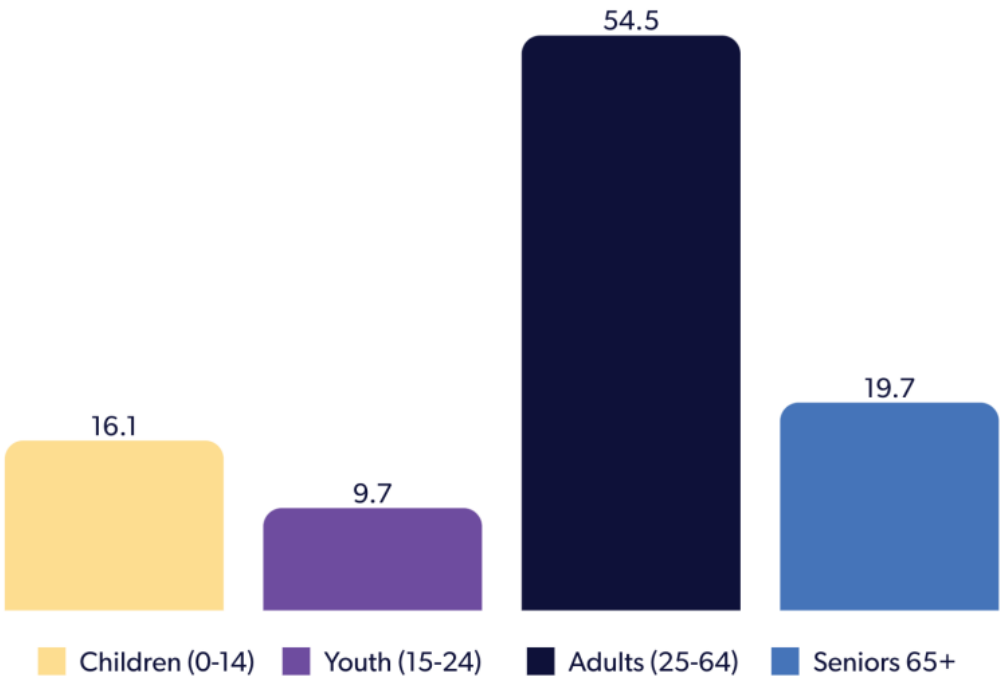
3,687
Businesses

(ABS Census 2021)

Customer age profile (ABS Census 2021)

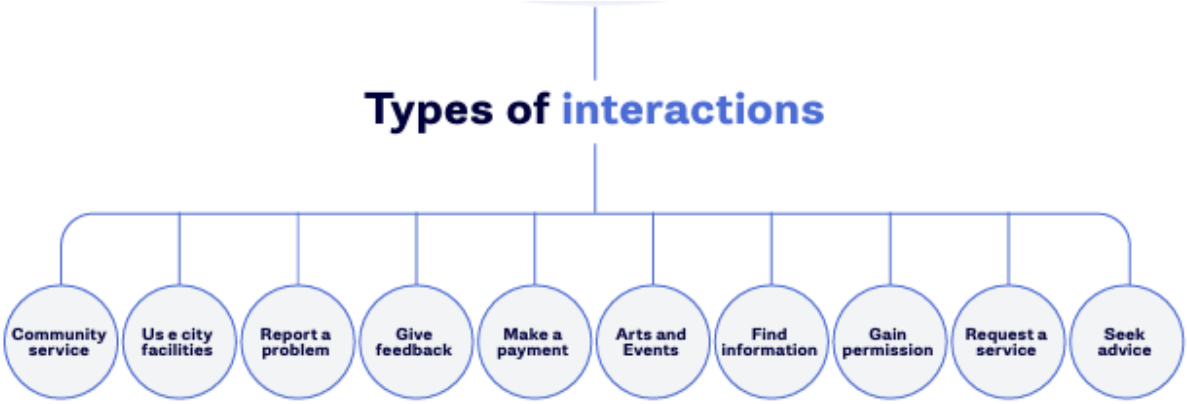


Age breakdown



Why do customers contact council?





Customer data snapshot over 12 months



More than **48,000** calls received



646,000 page views on the website



785 development applications lodged



60% of users viewed council' website from a mobile phone



725 building permits



450 young people participated in youth programs



31,538 visits to Your Say Clarence website



10,105 Pets were registered



470 plumbing permits



3,603 contributions to council's consultations



2,151 vaccines administered by council (2023)



35,881 social media engagements



48 food inspections



727 families access our childcare services



19,190 attended an arts festival or event



1,544 preliminary planning assessments (including requests)



88,036 Rates notices sent out

Findings

What have we learnt about our customers?

Through our research we discovered:

The top five ways our residents currently interact with council:

1. Website – 36%
2. Phone – 33%
3. In person – 29%
4. Email – 27%
5. Post/letter – 20%

Top five ways residents would like to interact with council in the future:

1. Email – 51%
2. Website – 44%
3. Phone – 44%
4. In Person – 43%
5. Social Media – 30%

Digital expectations are increasing with the top two future preferences being email and website.

Preferred future channels by age groups

Preferred channels	Total	39 years old or less	40-59 years old	60+
Email	51%	36%	62%	57%
Website	44%	335%	54%	46%
Phone	44%	31%	44%	56%
In person	43%	22%	47%	60%
Social Media	30%	39%	35%	18%

Council app, online chat, and SMS were least favoured as future channels for interaction with council. Sixty per cent of residents prefer to contact our Customer Contact team within business hours. There was limited support for outside hours contact. Clarence residents are not averse to

trying new products or trends.

They were most likely to describe themselves as ‘generally in the middle when it comes to trying new things’ (52%), followed by ‘generally among the first’ (29%).

Engagement:

- 81% of Clarence residents are confident with digital technology
- Future Engagement preferences for sharing opinions include:
  - Survey – 70%
  - Email/letter (submissions) – 61%
  - Phone – 36%
  - Foyer displays – 31%



03 Solutions

What are our services?

We provide a wide range of services to our community, residents, businesses, and visitors. As our city continues to grow, the demand for these and new services will also increase.

- Waste and resource recovery services, including kerbside collection for waste, recycling, and green waste.
- City Planning – permits, subdivisions, strategic planning, heritage advisory services, preliminary planning advice.
- Parks, playgrounds, sportsgrounds, and natural areas.
- Road and footpath construction and maintenance.
- Health and wellbeing initiatives for all ages and abilities.
- Civil design and capital construction programs.
- Age-friendly programs and initiatives.
- Pet registration.
- Building and plumbing permits.
- Arts and events, culture, history, festivals, and community events.
- Rates.
- Stormwater management.
- Fire and bushland conservation.
- Tracks and trails, nature trails, bikeways, active travel.
- Publications – Clarence News, Dog News, Arts News, Arts eNews, council website.
- Graffiti reduction and educational programs.
- Community volunteer services.
- Community transport.
- Development engineering – approving subdivisions and developments.
- Community halls, sports pavilions, and facilities management.
- Customer contact for enquiries and requests.
- Community grants program.
- Project planning and management.
- Sponsorships.
- Multicultural and indigenous initiatives.
- Environmental and public health.
- Local law enforcement (by-laws).
- Children's services – early learning centre, family day care, outside school care and holiday care.
- Youth services and programs.
- Immunisation programs.
- Food and health business registrations, regulation, education, and training.

- Justice of the Peace service.
- Asset planning and management.
- Building and property maintenance.
- Economic development.
- City maintenance and cleaning.
- Event permits and licences.
- Procurement and tendering.
- Environmental management.
- Emergency management –disaster planning and readiness, disaster response, disaster recovery.
- Parking.
- Abandoned vehicles.
- Noise complaints.

Customer experience guiding principles

Accountable

We will be accountable to our customers, ensuring the highest level of service is provided at each interaction.

Collaborative

We acknowledge the importance of customer service both externally and internally. We will work collaboratively with all customers.

Authentic

We are committed to authenticity in our interactions with customers, fostering genuine connections built on trust and sincerity. Our communication is honest, transparent, and reflective of our values, ensuring that every interaction has an aim to help the customer.

Seamless

Provide simple and seamless experiences that



ensure a smooth and hassle-free experience with straight forward processes focused on good customer outcomes.

Consistent

Consistency is key to delivering exceptional customer experiences. We strive to maintain consistency in the quality and accessibility of our services, communication, and interactions across all touchpoints and channels

Initiatives

Accountable

We will be accountable to our customers ensuring the highest level of service is provided at each Interaction.

Initiatives	Examples of what this may look like
Launch updated Customer Service Charter.	Developing clear timeframes and guidance on how customers will hear back from council and detail how customers can provide feedback.
Undertake a review of customer service opening hours.	Review usage of in-person customer service attendance to determine if opening hours are appropriate.
Review of customer complaints and reporting on performance.	Use data and customer feedback to identify areas that can improve customer experiences. Review customer challenges and develop ways to improve the customer experience where possible.

Collaborative

We acknowledge the importance of customer service both externally and internally. We will work collaboratively with all customers.

Initiatives	Examples of what this may look like
Embed customer focus culture into our organisation.	Develop and implement a 'customer driven experience' training module for all staff in the organisation. Develop and implement an induction program promoting customer focus culture. Council to be a single entity when delivering customer service.
Regular customer engagement and analysis of feedback.	Undertake the annual Living in Clarence survey of our residents to understand what is most important to them and their needs. Undertake the annual business survey to understand what is most important to them and the opportunities and challenges they are facing. Ensure any learnings and knowledge is easily accessible for use across the organisation for successful implementation of any future frameworks.

Authentic

We are committed to authenticity in our interactions with customers, fostering genuine connections built on trust and sincerity.

Our communication is honest, transparent, and reflective of our values, ensuring that every interaction has an aim to help the customer.

Initiatives	Examples of what this may look like
Develop a deeper understanding of our customer.	Better understand who our customers are and what services they utilise to provide a more tailored and proactive customer experience.

Initiatives	Examples of what this may look like
Training all staff on how to handle complaints.	There will always be times when something goes wrong for a customer. Ensuring all staff are trained in how to handle these situations, not just our Customer Contact team, will provide an authentic, consistent experience.
Build and emphasise the council brand for all employees to provide a positive experience.	Through the Communications Media and Marketing Strategy, develop a strong brand that employees can champion through each interaction.
Encourage curiosity and learning.	Promote a mindset of exploration and questioning. Encourage collaboration and knowledge sharing among team members and across departments to improve our services.

Seamless

Provide simple and seamless experiences that ensure a smooth and hassle-free experience with straight forward processes focused on good customer outcomes.

Initiatives	Examples of what this may look like
Straight-forward processes.	Each department to review their relevant processes to see where steps can be streamlined to create an easier pathway for our customers. Where appropriate create frequently asked question sheets or guideline documents to help step through required process for the customer.
Clear forms.	Each department to review their relevant forms to ensure their wording is clear and easy to understand.

Initiatives	Examples of what this may look like
Limited wait times and quick responses.	Review our Customer Service Charter to ensure these times are realistic and achievable.
Clear points of contact.	Each department to review their forms and ensure there is a clear point of contact for the customer to gain fast and accurate responses to their enquiries.
Proactive service.	Look at how we can proactively make experiences with council seamless and easy. Review council chambers customer service areas with a focus on streamlining the customer service experience.
Ability to connect with council via customers' preferred channels.	Continue to work on multiple channels of connectivity to council with a focus on digital first, to meet the needs of all customers and to stay up to date with technological advances where appropriate.

Consistent

Consistency is key to delivering exceptional customer experiences. We strive to maintain consistency in
the quality of our services, communication, and interactions across all touchpoints and channels.

Initiatives	Examples of what this may look like
Provide consistent, friendly service and processes across council.	Training of staff in both customer service and complaint handling. Working to our Customer Service Charter.

Initiatives	Examples of what this may look like
Use every interaction as an opportunity to create a positive image of council.	Maintaining a customer focus workplace. Work with individual teams to understand what customer interactions look like for them. Develop customer journey maps for each team. Ensure the quality of public information is on brand to provide a consistent message to our community.
Provide customer service training to all staff.	Increase awareness and expectations of everyone's role in supporting our customers. Include in the training modules active listening and putting yourself in the customers shoes to help understand their enquiry.
Investigate ways to provide a single source of truth for information.	Having internal systems that talk to each other so customers can update their information once and it is recorded across all relevant internal systems/platforms.

04 Evaluating the strategy

Council understands that actions speak louder than words, which is why we are committed to regularly reviewing the progress and outcomes of this strategy. Monitoring and evaluating the strategy will ensure staff and the organisation stay on track to achieve our customer experience goals and deliver on our customer promise. The strategy is a living document and will be adjusted to ensure it remains contemporary and achieves council's ongoing vision for customer experience.

Examples of how council will review the success of the strategy include:

- Quarterly Council Reporting
- Annual living in Clarence community survey
- Annual business survey
- Internal data collection
- Staff surveys

Next Steps

The customer experience strategy will be supported by a detailed implementation plan.

The Customer Service Charter will focus council's responsiveness to customers, improve accountability and embed customer experience principles in our daily culture.

Customers will be able to stay informed of our progress through regular reports and will be able to provide ongoing feedback through future consultations.

Thank you for helping us shape services into the future.

