LATROBE CITY COUNCIL

Customer Experience Strategy

2026 - 2029

Latrobe City Council acknowledges that it operates on the traditional land of the Brayakaulung people of the Gunaikurnai nation and pays respect to their Elders past and present.

Contents

Our vision

Latrobe City Council is committed to delivering outstanding customer experiences to all, including residents, businesses, investors, and visitors to our region.

Our vision is to make interactions easier and more meaningful by fostering a customer-first culture across the organisation. This culture meets the needs of both internal and external customers, ensuring services are accessible, consistent, and responsive. All staff will consistently demonstrate clear communication, active listening, and empathy in every customer interaction.

What is customer experience?

Customer experience is the sum of all interactions that a customer has with Council. It includes the services delivered, as well as the satisfaction, emotions, and perceptions shaping community views of Council.
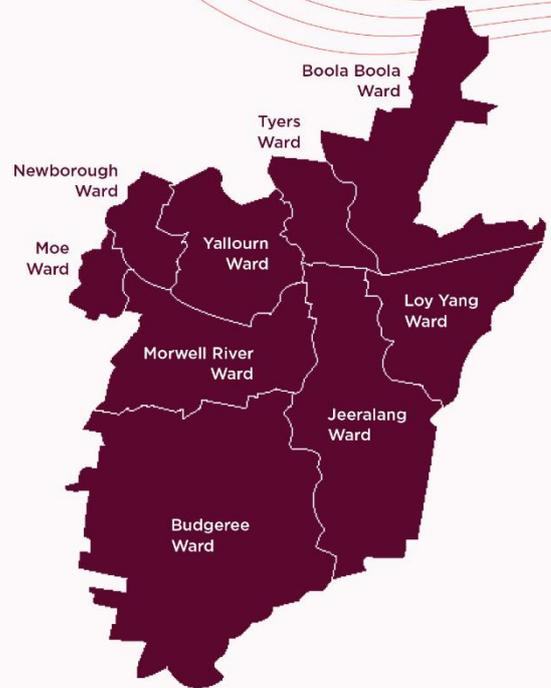
A positive experience ensures customers feel respected, informed, and valued at every touchpoint.

What informed this document

This Customer Experience Strategy has been informed by a combination of internal and external insights, including:

- **Customer feedback:** Results from Council-run Latrobe Listens Customer Insight sessions, Have Your Say survey, and annual Customer Satisfaction Survey results.
- **Internal feedback:** Insights from staff surveys and feedback highlighting challenges and opportunities.
- **Council Plan:** Ensuring alignment with, and support for, Council's strategic goals.
- **Industry trends:** Research into best practices and trends in customer experience within local government and the wider service sector.

OUR CUSTOMERS

Boola Boola
Ward

Tyers
Ward

Newborough
Ward

Moe
Ward

Yallourn
Ward

Loy Yang
Ward

Morwell River
Ward

Jeeralang
Ward

Budgeree
Ward

78,845
Population total
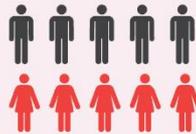
48.9%
Male

51.1%
Female

Population by age

17.8%
0-14yrs

61%
15-64yrs

21.2%
65+yrs

34,411 Employed labour force
(working in Latrobe)

108,813
Visits to libraries

21,957
Members

41,930
Calls answered by
customer focus

325,657
Aquatic facility visits

Occupied private dwelling

17.8%
0-14yrs

61%
15-64yrs

21.2%
65+yrs

Our commitment areas

Service Experience and Accessibility

We will deliver services that are simple, consistent, and inclusive. Whether customers connect online, by phone, or in person, Council services will be easy to navigate, efficient to use, and accessible to everyone in our community.

Transparency and Communication

We will maintain open, proactive, and transparent communication as a cornerstone of trust. We will keep residents informed, close the feedback loop, and create opportunities for genuine dialogue, ensuring community voices meaningfully shape decision-making.

Trust, Respect and Relationships

We will build strong relationships based on fairness and respect. We will listen to our community, respond with empathy when needed, ensure consistency in our approach, and value the contributions and knowledge of our staff, fostering trust and strengthening positive connections across the municipality.

Future Vision and Continuous Improvement

We will take a forward-looking approach that embraces innovation, accountability, and ongoing learning. We will pilot new ideas, measure impact, and invest in staff capability to continually adapt and meet the evolving needs of our community.

Customer Experience Initiatives

Service Experience and Accessibility

Goal: Deliver services that are simple, consistent, and inclusive, ensuring accessibility and ease of use across all channels.

Initiatives:

- **Expand Online Services:** Increase the number of services available digitally, including permits, payments, community requests, and bookings. Ensure these services are easy to complete and written in plain language. This also includes expanding the use of online forms and tools such as Snap Send Solve.

- **Customer View:** Improve our system so we have a complete view of our customer, allowing us to resolve issues faster, reduce repeated explanations, and provide a more consistent experience every time we are contacted.

- **Service Journey Mapping:** Map the most common service journeys to identify areas for improvement and redesign workflows for efficiency.

- **Website and Service Centre Accessibility:** Review website content, navigation, and accessibility, including multilingual options. Provide training for staff to update and manage content to ensure timely and accurate information. Ensure physical service centres are disability-friendly and provide appropriate assistance for all customers.

- **Channel Choice:** Maintain multiple service pathways (digital, phone, in-person) so customers can use their preferred method. Review service hours to ensure they meet community needs, and enhance digital services to improve speed, efficiency, and overall convenience.

Transparency and Communication

Goal: Enhance transparency with the community through clear, proactive, and responsive communication.

Initiatives:

- **Proactive Notifications:** Explore the most effective ways to use SMS and email alerts for common disruptions (e.g., bin delays, road closures, planning notices) to keep residents informed proactively, including maintaining up-to-date community contact details to ensure timely delivery of information.

- **Latrobe Listens Program:** Close the loop on customer feedback, including input from initiatives such as Have Your Say, by providing clear updates on how community feedback has informed Council decisions.

- **Staff Training:** Equip Council staff with skills in plain language, active listening, and managing difficult conversations with customers. Develop a framework that incorporates empathy to guide staff through challenging interactions, ensuring consistent, respectful, and effective resident engagement.

- **Participation in Customer Satisfaction Survey:** Participate in the annual State Government-led Customer Service Survey (CSS) and develop a 12-month engagement plan to address key findings, track improvements, and inform Council initiatives.

Trust, Respect and Relationships

Goal: Strengthen trust and connections by promoting fairness, expertise, and collaboration for consistent, high-quality service.

Initiatives:

- **Customer Service Excellence Awards:** Recognise staff quarterly for outstanding service, sharing success stories internally and externally to celebrate a positive customer-focused culture.

- **Subject Matter Experts Visibility:** Ensure key subject matter experts are present and engaged at community forums, drop-in sessions, and service centres, where possible, to provide informed guidance and support.

- **Launch Customer Champions:** Identify and empower staff across departments to act as customer experience champions. These staff will support colleagues, promote best practices, and provide a direct link between frontline staff and leadership to improve customer experience.

- **Cross-Department Collaboration Focus:** Encourage willingness to collaborate across departments, reducing silos, sharing accountability for customer outcomes, and ensuring coordinated service delivery.

Future Vision and Continuous Improvement

Goal: Embrace innovation, accountability, and ongoing learning to continually adapt services to meet evolving community needs.

Initiatives:

- **Customer Experience Strategy Page:** Develop a page on the Latrobe City Council website to track the progression of the Customer Experience Strategy initiatives. This page will also provide a link to the Annual Customer Experience Impact Report to communicate improvements, lessons learned, and upcoming goals.

- **Annual Customer Experience Impact Report:** Publish a yearly report for the community outlining improvements made, lessons learned, and goals for the coming year, highlighting measurable outcomes and success stories.

- **Digital Transformation Projects:** Explore options such as live chat and chatbots for simple enquiries, mobile apps for service tracking (e.g., waste, payments, reminders), and expanded online self-service.

- **Exploring Artificial Intelligence (AI):** Investigate appropriate and secure AI technologies to enhance service delivery, improve response times, and elevate the overall customer experience.

- **Continuous Training and Learning:** Deliver annual customer experience refresher training for all customer-facing staff, covering digital tools, empathy-based service, and innovation skills.

- **Net Promoter Score (NPS) for Calls:** Launch the Net Promoter Score (NPS) program to measure customer satisfaction for phone interactions. NPS asks customers how likely they are to recommend Council's services to others, providing valuable insights into overall sentiment. Results and feedback will be analysed to identify areas for improvement and to recognise high-performing staff who deliver exceptional service.

Implementation Roadmap

Year 1 (2026) – Foundation

Focus: Establish baseline metrics, initial tools, and staff capability.

- **Customer Experience Strategy Page:** Develop the website page to track Customer Experience Strategy initiatives and link to the Annual Customer Experience Impact Report.
- **Customer Review:** Begin review of enhancements to enable a single customer view.
- **Customer Champions Program:** Launch program to empower staff as customer experience ambassadors.
- **Customer Service Centre Hours Review:** Review the opening hours of customer service centres to ensure they meet community needs while remaining sustainable for Council operations.
- **Staff Training:** Conduct initial training on clear communication, active listening, and empathy-based customer service for customer-facing teams.
- **Accessibility Review:** Assess website and service centres for navigation, accessibility, and multilingual feasibility.
- **Investigate Artificial Intelligence (AI):** Explore AI solutions to enhance service delivery and customer experience.
- **Service Journey Improvements:** Map and optimise key journeys (waste, planning, payments, complaints, grants).

Year 2 (2027) – Development

Focus: Build engagement, expand digital and staff capability, and improve service consistency.

- **Customer View Enhancements:** Implement features identified in Year 1 review.
- **Net Promoter Score (NPS) for Calls:** Implement and monitor NPS to track phone satisfaction and improve service.
- **Proactive Notifications Planning:** Identify channels and initial approach for SMS/email alerts.
- **Customer Recognition:** Launch Customer Service Excellence Awards and promote Customer Champions program.
- **Staff Training:** Expand training on clear communication, active listening, and empathy-based customer service across the organisation.
- **Digital Transformation Projects:** Begin pilot options such as live chat and chatbots.

Year 3 (2028) – Growth

Focus: Continue digital transformation, measure impact, embed innovation, and celebrate successes.

- **Expand Online Services:** Launch key digital services (permits, payments, bookings, community requests).
- **Cross-Department Focus:** Review and strengthen ways to promote cross-department collaboration, communication, and shared goals to ensure consistent, coordinated service delivery for customers.
- **Subject Matter Experts:** Ensuring arrangements for the presence of subject matter experts at relevant events is part of event planning processes.
- **Staff Training:** Continue delivering organisation-wide training on clear communication, active listening, and empathy-based customer service.
- **Latrobe Listens Program:** Close the loop on customer feedback program.

Year 4 (2029) – Review

Focus: Finalise initiatives, evaluate outcomes, and prepare for the next strategy.

- **Review Initiatives:** Finalise and assess all Customer Experience Strategy initiatives.
- **Next Customer Experience Strategy:** Begin development of the subsequent Customer Experience Strategy.

Ongoing / Continuous Activities

- **Customer Experience Strategy Page Updates:** Regularly update initiative progress and link to the latest Annual Customer Experience Impact Report.
- **Annual Customer Experience Impact Report:** Publish yearly report highlighting improvements, lessons, and upcoming goals.
- **Participation in State CSS:** Complete survey participation and develop 12-month engagement plan each year.

Measuring success

Success will be assessed using a combination of quantitative metrics and qualitative feedback, linked directly to the initiatives. This ensures Council can track improvements in service delivery, communication, digital adoption, and overall customer satisfaction.

Service Experience and Accessibility

- **Digital Uptake:** Increased use and completion rates of online services, with a target increase of 10%.
- **Customer View Effectiveness:** Reduction in repeat enquiries and faster resolution times due to enhanced single customer view and improved staff workflows.
- **Service Journey Improvements:** Reduce bottlenecks, decrease customer touchpoints with Council, and achieve faster resolution across mapped service journeys.
- **Accessibility Compliance:** Increased engagement with online services due to improved navigation and accessibility. Positive resident feedback on ease of access and availability of assistance at physical service centres.
- **Channel Satisfaction:** Positive resident feedback on multiple service pathways (digital, phone, in-person), and service hours meet community needs efficiently.

Transparency and Communication

- **Proactive Notifications:** Reduced inbound enquiries due to SMS/email alerts; improved resident satisfaction with timely updates.
- **Latrobe Listens Impact:** Residents recognise that their feedback influences Council decisions, as measured through Customer Satisfaction Survey results.
- **Customer Satisfaction Survey Results:** Positive trends in survey results, reflecting improved satisfaction with Council.

Trust, Respect and Relationships

- **Customer Recognition:** Increased recognition of staff through Customer Service Excellence Awards and Customer Champions program.
- **Subject Matter Experts:** Residents report improved access to knowledgeable staff and specialists in service areas.
- **Cross-Department Collaboration Focus:** Evidence of improved coordination and reduced silos in service delivery, demonstrated by increased first-point outcomes with internal teams through effective use of communication tools and positive results in staff surveys.

Future Vision and Continuous Improvement

- **Customer Experience Strategy Page Engagement:** Metrics on page visits and usage of linked Annual Customer Experience Impact Reports.
- **Digital Transformation and AI:** Adoption rates and measurable impact of digital tools, live chat, chatbots, apps, and AI technologies.
- **Staff Capability:** Percentage of customer-facing staff completing annual training and demonstrating skills application.

- **Annual Customer Experience Impact Report:** Positive community feedback on awareness of improvements, lessons learned, and next steps. Progress and outcomes will also be reported to Councillors, the Executive Team, and the Senior Leadership Team.

- **Net Promoter Score (NPS) for Calls:** Positive trends and actionable insights to improve phone interactions.