

Customer Experience Strategy 2026-2030



grow
invest
belong



Colac Otway
SHIRE

A message from our CEO



At Colac Otway Shire we strive for excellence in the delivery of the customer experience in everything we do.

Providing a great customer experience is a shared responsibility - we are all accountable.

Our Community Satisfaction Survey results indicate we have made improvement in our core measures, but we know we can do more.

I am confident that through delivering the commitments in this Customer Experience Strategy we will provide a streamlined and improved end-to-end customer experience no matter what service or channel you engage with at Council.

We will listen to feedback from our community and staff and continuously look for opportunities to shape our services to meet community needs.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Tenni'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Andrew Tenni
Chief Executive Officer

Acknowledgement of Traditional Custodians

Colac Otway Shire Council respectfully acknowledges the Gulidjan and Gadubanud peoples of the Maar Nation as the Traditional Custodians of the Colac Otway region, the land and waterways upon which the activities of the Colac Otway Shire Council are conducted.

We pay our respects to their ancestors and elders, past and present. We recognise and respect their unique cultural heritage, beliefs and uphold their continuing relationship to this land.

An aerial photograph of four kayakers paddling in a line on a body of teal water. The kayakers are wearing helmets and life jackets. The kayakers are positioned vertically on the left side of the frame, with the top kayaker at the top and the bottom kayaker at the bottom. The water is a vibrant teal color with some white foam from the kayakers' paddles.

Our Customer Experience Vision

Create a better everyday experience for customers engaging with Council

We know service expectations are changing, including how our customers view quality service. To meet or exceed those expectations, we must continually review, refine and adapt what we do and how we do it. We understand that every interaction shapes a customer's perception and feelings about Colac Otway Shire.

Who is our community?

We have a diverse community spread across a large geographical area, including many non-resident ratepayers.

This requires a Customer Experience Strategy that supports flexible service options and ensures equitable access for all customers, regardless of where they are or how they choose to engage with Council.

Colac Otway Shire has an estimated population of

22,312
people*

31%

of the population is over 60 years old*

The median age is

45[^]

10.3%*

of the population born overseas

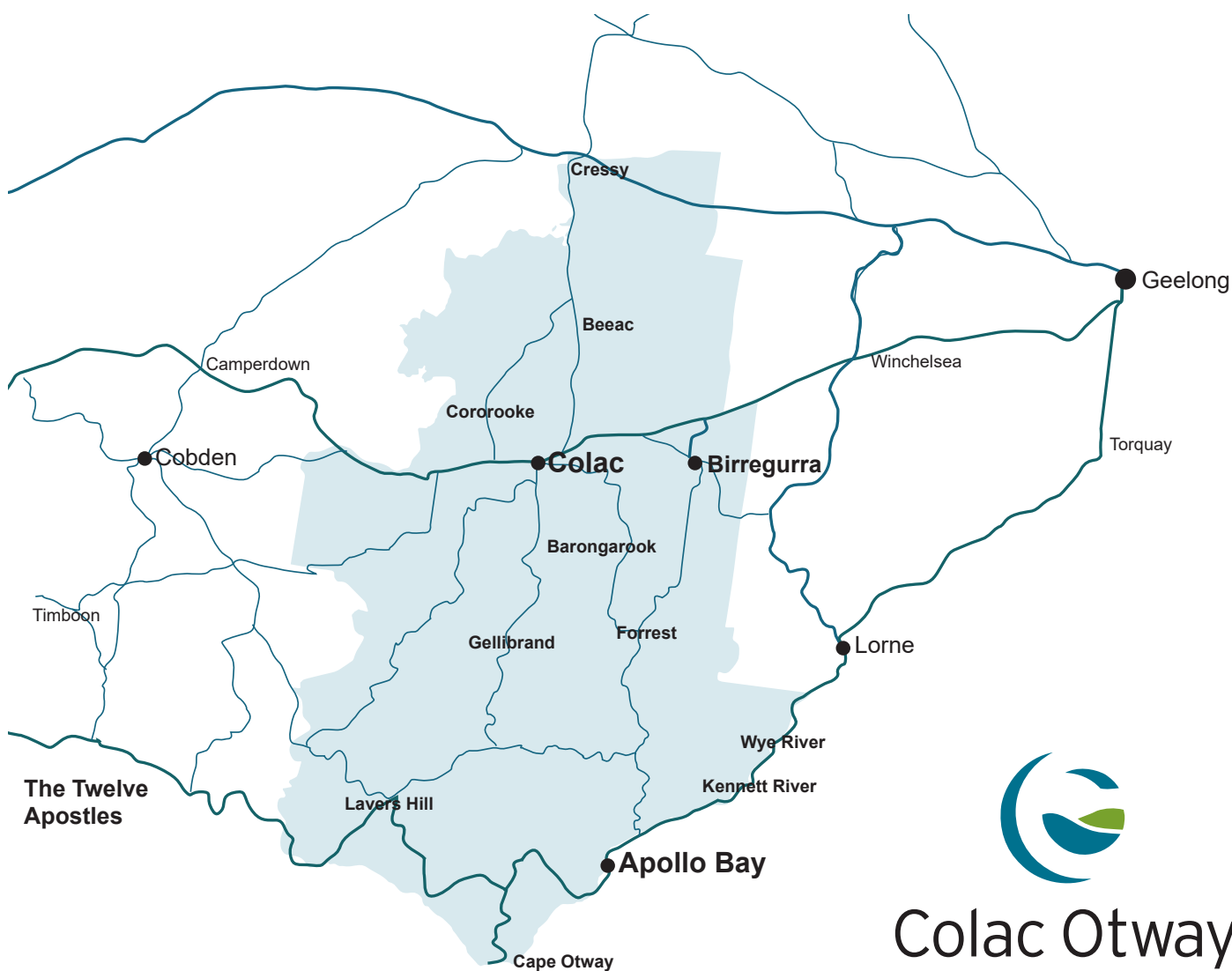
1.4%*

of the population identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander

More than

85%

of Colac Otway's workforce lives locally*



Colac Otway
SHIRE

*Sourced from the Colac Otway Shire (Profile ID)

*Sourced from the Australian Bureau of Statistics 2024 (Estimated Resident Population)

Who are our customers?

We have a diverse range of customers, sometimes with different expectations.

We reviewed the common expectations across different customer groups to develop our approach.

Our customers include residents, property owners, tenants, license and permit holders, animal owners, business owners, major industry employers, investors, developers, builders, private certifiers, planners, tradespeople, students, seniors, volunteers, community groups, families, service requestors, regulators, and tourists.

5 million

visitors to the Shire

11,600

ratepayers

340

businesses

162,201

visits to Bluewater
Leisure Centre

1 million

visits to our services

6,007

active library borrowers

Our services

Council services are vast and, in many cases, complex to deliver. Council has a wide range of services which we deliver across a large geographical area.

Direct Services

Planning
Works and maintenance
Leisure centre
Airfield
Saleyards
Sporting facilities
Recreation reserves
Arts Centre
Customer service centres
Parks and gardens
Assets
Library services
Youth services
Community development
Maternal and Child Health services
Early Years services
Aged services

Engineering
Infrastructure
Environmental sustainability
Rangers
Roads management
Emergency management
Fire prevention
Compliance
Waste management
Local laws
Events
Property management
Economic development

Enabling Services

Customer Experience
Compliance
Technology services
Corporate planning
Asset management
Governance
Information services
Human resources
Financial services

Our customer service channels[#]



4093 people attended a Council customer service centre in person (Colac or Apollo Bay)



1796 letters were received



25,304 calls were received



426 online requests for services were submitted



37,843 emails were received via Council's enquiry inbox



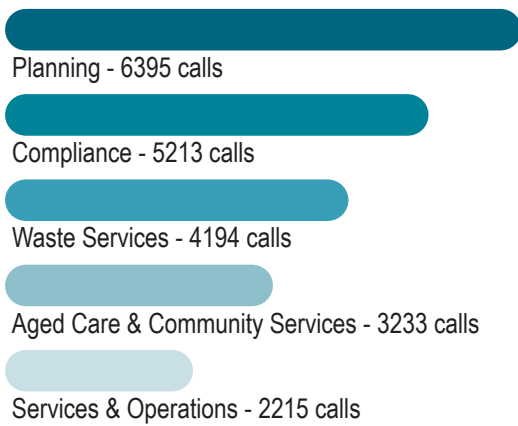
Over **35,000** monthly visits to Council's website



13,049 customer requests for services raised in 2024-25

Understanding channel choices

The top reasons customers contact Council by phone (2022-2025).



These categories represent the highest call volumes and highlight areas where customers most often seek assistance or clarification.

Across "Submit a request" categories, five topics consistently drive the highest volumes.

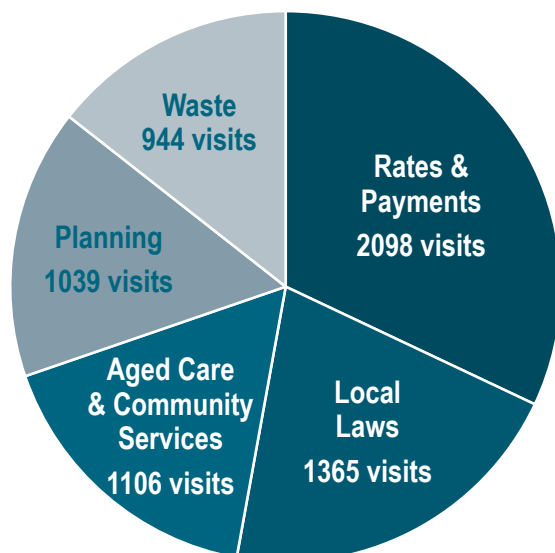
-  **Waste collection**
-  **Roads**
-  **Trees and vegetation**
-  **Street bins**
-  **Drainage and bridges**

Clear information, simple online forms and timely updates for these "everyday services" matter most to customers.

The top reasons customers visited our Customer Service Centres (2022-2025):

Our Customer Service Centres are a transactional anchor.

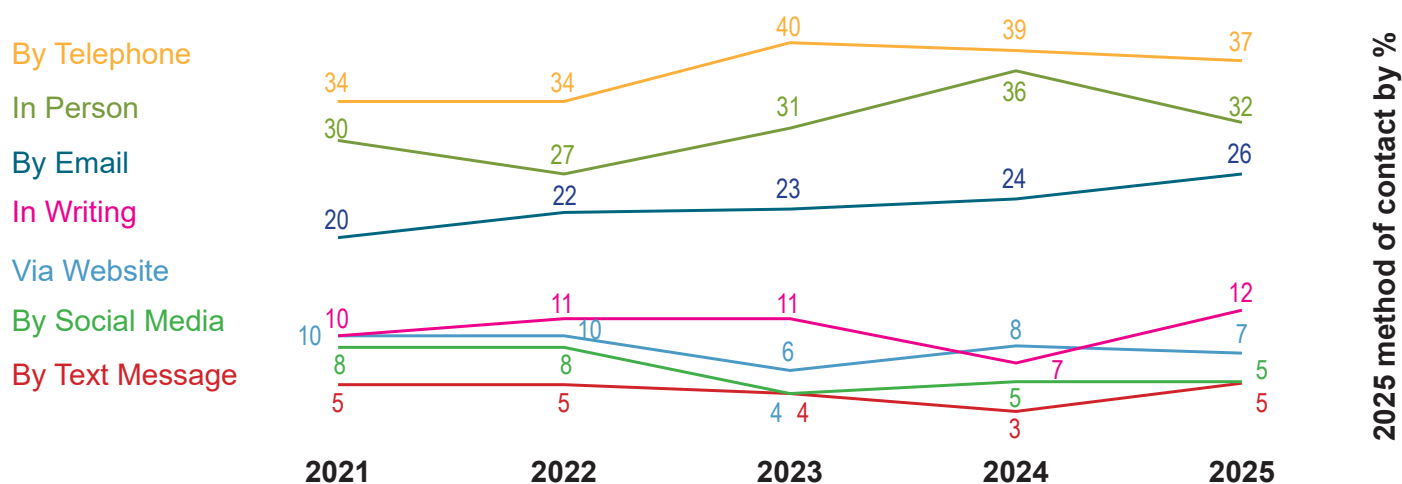
Rates and Payments as the most prominent category indicates many residents prefer to pay or resolve account issues in person, often needing receipts, immediate confirmation, or help with forms.



Source: #2024-2025 Financial Year.

How our community interacts with us[^]

Understanding the community's preferred channels of contact allows us to target our improvement efforts where they will deliver the greatest benefit to customers. Our annual survey asks "Have you or any member of your household had any recent contact with Colac-Otway Shire Council in any of the following ways?":



Data provided by results from our annual Community Satisfaction Survey.

What do our complaints tell us?

Reviewing the complaints feedback across years shows recurring themes:

- Responsiveness and follow up: customers often report delays (return calls, status updates) and want clearer next steps.
- Ease of processes: planning, drainage/road issues, and waste related matters feature regularly where processes are perceived as complex or slow.
- Customer experience at touchpoints: clarity of written communications, public notifications, and front-line interactions (phone/email tone, cleanliness of public facilities) drive satisfaction or frustration.

What internal data tell us*

Contact channels are shifting

Phone calls have gradually fallen about 8% per year since 2022 indicating more people are finding answers or completing tasks through self service or non-phone channels.

Digital adoption is rising

- Online Submit a Request form use is increasing between 20-30% each year
- Council's GoodSort waste app registrations grew strongly (3,511 → 4,974 → 6,773).
- eNotices (digital rates notices) registrations continued to grow each year between 12-15%

The volume of emails sent to Colac Otway Shire Council's enquiry inbox have reduced year on year, consistent with more people using online tools or targeted forms.

Face-to-face enquiries at the Colac Customer Service Centre have remained relatively consistent.

What this means

While community members are becoming increasingly comfortable using online channels, they still contact us via phone or in person when the process is unclear, or the topic is complex.

And while some traditional methods of contact have reduced, telephone contact, in person visits and email remain the dominant channels of communication for our customer base and need to be supported and refined to provide an improved customer experience.

Sources: [^]2025 Community Satisfaction Survey. *Data analysed includes telephone, counter enquiries, email, online forms and digital utility data from 2022-2025, along with corresponding complaint feedback.

Why Customer Experience matters

Customer experience is all about how customers feel about the interactions they have with an organisation and is directly linked to satisfaction, value and trust.

Every phone call, online form, request or visit shapes that experience - and we want it to be the best it can be.

This strategy aims to deliver the following for our customers and us :

Easier Access to Services

Working to simplify processes, enabling people to access what they need quickly and with minimal effort.

Greater Satisfaction

Positive experiences lead to happier residents, fewer complaints, and a more harmonious community.

Stronger Engagement and Trust

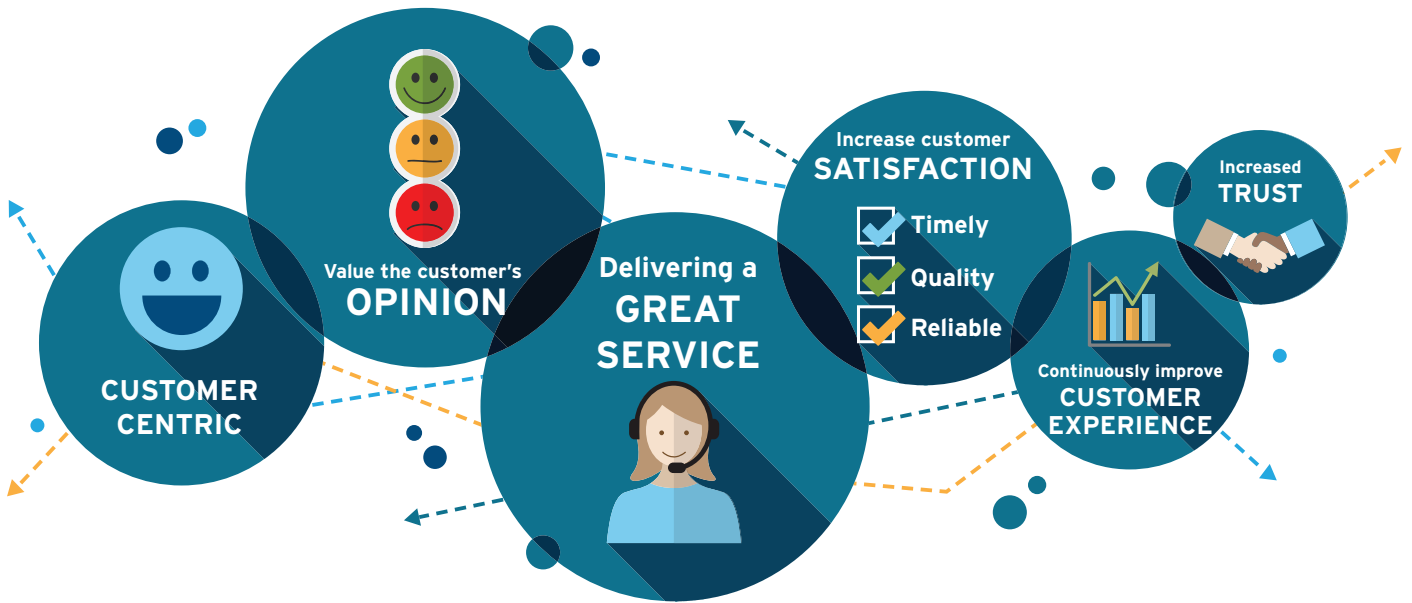
When interactions are smooth and respectful, residents feel confident in Council decisions and are more likely to have positive input.

Faster Problem Resolution

By listening early and often, we can address issues before they become bigger problems.

Building Community Value

Great experiences create a sense of connection and belonging, making our community stronger and more vibrant.



Our Customer Experience Pillars

We have developed four overarching pillars that will inform our approach and decision making. The pillars outline our principles as we work to improve our customers' future experiences.

Build a customer centric culture

Build a culture that has the customer at its centre, that encourages empathy and understanding, with values and behaviours that focus employees on delivering great customer service.

Listen to the voice of the customer

Increase customer understanding and use it to design services that improve our customers' interactions with us and inform decision-making.

Optimise processes, information and services

Ensure our processes, procedures and roles have the right capability in place to manage expectations and deliver what we promise.

Improve technology and systems

Use technology to share knowledge and to design interactions that are seamless and easy for customers and staff.

Objectives

Build a customer-centric culture

Measure of Success: Improvement in Community Satisfaction Survey Results for Customer Service

Employee alignment	Alignment of employee expectations with customer expectations, placing the customer at the heart of our culture.
Customer service standards	New Customer Service Standards, including internal and external response times, enshrined in a new Customer Service Charter that is promoted publicly.
Training and capability	Staff training, focusing on proactive and efficient service, enhanced capability and the creation of positive outcomes for our customers.
Customer success champions	A dedicated team of 'Customer Success Champions' who will support the development of a culture that keeps the customer at the heart of the way we deliver our services.
Shared vision and direction	Staff members understanding the connection between their roles and our customers and working collaboratively to uphold and promote a shared customer experience vision.

Optimise processes, information and services

Measure of Success: Reduction in non-value add steps in services and improvement in process times

Customer Experience Toolbox	Providing staff with the information and tools needed to best support our customers throughout their interactions with us.
Process improvement	Clear and streamlined processes in our Customer Request Management (CRM) system, providing improved customer experience.
Customer journey mapping	Documenting on a visual map our customers' experiences when interacting with us, in order to develop a greater understanding of our customer needs and touchpoints.
Knowledge management improvements	Centralisation of stored information for greater ease of access by all departments, reducing duplication and improving retention of information and corporate knowledge. (Better use of both website and intranet).
Customer communication plan	A communication strategy that is consistent and responsive to our diverse customers.
Reporting and baseline	Use of a reporting and baseline framework to help monitor progress, make informed decisions and identify improvements.

Objectives

Listen to the voice of the customer

Measure of Success: Implement surveys to capture real time feedback and inform improvement

Voice of the customer program	A measurement framework and tools that capture real time customer feedback and insights, including compliments and complaints.
Escalation and complaints handling	Further strengthening our complaints handling policy and associated processes, delivering greater efficiency in the handling and resolution of issues.
Customer needs analysis	An understanding of what drives our customers, their needs and resulting behaviours, to provide them with services that align with these and meet expectations.
Data and insights	Customer service feedback is gathered securely in real time and insights are developed and actioned appropriately to inform decision making.
Closed loop feedback	Customers are kept informed and up-to-date. When a request is raised or feedback provided, the customer is advised of how and when services will be delivered and of any changes that may occur as a result of their feedback.

Improve technology systems

Measure of Success: Increase availability and uptake of online services

Channel preference strategy	Identify the methods of contact, or channels, different groups of customers prefer to use for different purposes or interactions to improve efficiency and service delivery.
Digital automation	Automate systems and processes to improve efficiency and the ability for customers to interact with us.
Build self-serve capability	Develop and promote self serve options which save time for our customers and are convenient and easy to use.
Content strategy and review	Provide consistent information to our customers that is correct and easy to understand through all communications channels, including redesigned forms and documents on our website.
Review payment processes	Provide fast, efficient, secure and seamless payment options for our customers.
Explore AI improvements	Explore the opportunities that artificial intelligence may provide in helping to improve how we service and enable our customers.

How our customers can help us

Customer focused organisations not only understand what they need to do to become customer focused, they also ask their customers to help meet their commitment to quality customer service

We ask our customers to:

- Treat our staff and other customers with respect and courtesy.
- Provide us with accurate and timely information to assist us to action the matter.
- Provide us with contact details when required, so we can keep you informed of the result.
- Work with us to resolve the query.
- Keep us informed of relevant information or changes so we can provide support and advice.
- Understand we may need to refer to a specialist to assist with complex enquiries and requests.
- Provide honest and constructive feedback about what we are doing well and what we can do better.

www.colacotway.vic.gov.au

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