

Newcastle Voice Customer Service Survey



August 2012

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Executive Summary

Consultation was conducted with the community to gather on the current customer service standards at Council. A survey was sent to 2761 Newcastle Voice members, as well as distributed to Council's Customer Enquiry Centre customers. A wide variety of constructive comments were received from the 847 respondents to the survey.

Results Overview

- Customers contact Council primarily to obtain information, request a service or maintenance and to lodge complaints.
- 62% of those who had contacted Council in last 12 months were satisfied or very satisfied with their customer service experience.
- 52% of all survey respondents had contacted Council via telephone in the last 12 months. Email was the next most used method at 24%.
- Taking into account the number of times respondents use each contact method, the internet accounts for the greatest proportion of enquiry volume (35%), followed by email (23%) and phone (21%).
- Performance ratings for in person and telephone customer service were notably higher than for email and mail based customer service.

Telephone customer service

- 60% rate telephone customer service as good or excellent overall.
- Results indicate good scores for professionalism and staff knowledge, while speed of service and follow up were identified as areas for improvement.
- Call waiting times are not meeting customer expectations and a small proportion of calls (7%) are going unanswered
- Half of queries are resolved on the first call to Council. For unresolved queries, customers are making several follow up calls.

Email customer service

- 48% rate email customer service as good or excellent overall.
- Less than half of respondents rated the degree of helpfulness, speed of service and follow up as good or excellent.
- Email response times are well below expectations. Almost 20% of email queries go unanswered.
- More customers are emailing staff directly compared to those using mail@ncc.nsw.gov.au.

In person customer service

- Majority of respondents visit the City Administration Centre (85%).
- 67% rate in person customer service as good or excellent.
- Good scores on helpfulness and professionalism.
- Waiting times are in line with customer expectations.

Website

- The majority of respondents rate the website as good or excellent (59%)
- Ratings on the website being visually appealing and having relevant information were good. Ease of navigation was weaker in comparison.

Mail customer service

- 42% rate mail customer service as good or excellent overall, which is weaker than ratings achieved by all other contact methods.
- Diagnostic evaluation revealed follow up, degree of helpfulness and speed of service as areas for focus.
- Response times to mail enquiries are underperforming relative to customer expectations and 15% of mail contact from customers goes unanswered.

1. Introduction

The City of Newcastle is committed to providing exceptional customer service to residents and ratepayers. Council staff provide information and assistance to thousands of people each year. This contact can be in person, over the phone, or via electronic or written means.

1.1 Background

The City of Newcastle has conducted a Customer Service and Communication survey in 2009 and 2010. The City Engagement group has been tasked with improving customer service as identified by the Sustainability Review stage 1 recommendations. The purpose of this survey was to gather feedback from the Newcastle local government area (LGA) community about their customer service and communications experiences with, and expectations of, Council. It has been the intention of Council to revisit this survey with respondents in 12 months time and benchmark future results with this report, after various initiatives to improve customer service and communications have been actioned.

The consultation follows the 2012 Community Survey which was conducted within the Newcastle LGA, through the Newcastle Voice community reference panel. The consultation has helped gain community insight regarding satisfaction with overall Council performance and assesses community attitudes towards the provision of services in the city.

Council is interested to gather community input about their customer service experiences when they have contacted Council to obtain information, make a request, submit an application, lodge a complaint or provide complimentary feedback, make a payment, register a pet or respond to Council requests for information. The current consultation is being conducted to complement and enhance understanding of the customer service results obtained in the 2012 Community Survey. While a customer service and communication survey has been administered twice before through Newcastle Voice (2009 and 2010), it is envisaged the survey will be amended to drill down on areas of interest.

1.2 Report Purpose

The purpose of the 2012 Customer Service survey was to gather feedback from the local government area (LGA) about their customer service experiences and expectations. One of the aims of the survey is to take a more in-depth approach following the results obtained from the 2012 Community Survey in March 2012. This consultation will help Council:

- Find out what is important to the community
- Plan customer service to meet community needs and expectations
- Enable measurement of change in our service delivery

Community input will influence the development of both the Customer Service Strategy and Communication/Marketing Strategy.

2. Methodology

2.1 Questionnaire

A structured questionnaire with a total of 46 questions was sent to all active Newcastle Voice members. The survey was developed using the following headings: Customer service, In-person customer service, Telephone customer service, Email customer service, Posted mail customer service, Internet and Suggestions for improvement.

All sections included open ended questions to record additional comments. Respondents answered the sections for contact methods that they had used in the last 12 months. A section was also included specifically for respondents who had not had recent contact with Council¹. To control order bias, the Sparq system automatically rotated the presentation of items within certain questions on a random basis. A copy of the survey is provided in Appendix I.

2.2 Data Collection

The survey was open from 5 July to 20 July 2012. Online Newcastle Voice members were sent the survey invitation on 5 July 2012. Reminders were emailed to those online members who had not yet completed the survey on 11 July and 18 July 2012.

The survey was duplicated, printed and distributed in hard copy to those Newcastle Voice members who requested printed surveys. The survey was mailed out on 6 July 2012. A pre-paid envelope was included to encourage their return.

Printed surveys were also distributed by Customer Enquiry Centre staff at the city administration centre.

2.3 Sampling and Response Rate

Residents and ratepayers of the LGA were consulted. A total of 2761 Newcastle Voice members were invited to complete the survey. This number represents all active on-line and off-line panel members. Surveys were also distributed at the Council's City Administration Centre. The survey had a 31% completion rate (847 out of 2761).

2.4 Data Handling and Analysis

The data handling and analysis was carried out using Sparq software. The data was weighted by Ward to be representative of the LGA (i.e. each of the four Wards was weighted to account for 25% of the data). Unweighted topline results are shown in Appendix II. Trend analysis was conducted from the open-ended question responses. All responses are treated in confidence to ensure the anonymity of respondents, and edited only for grammar and spelling if inserted as verbatim comments into the body of the report.

¹ Please refer to Appendix II for the results on this section of the questionnaire.

3. Survey Findings

3.1 Customer Service Overview

Of the respondents to the survey, 69% had made contact with Council in the last 12 months.

3.1.1 Why do people contact Council?

Respondents who indicated they had contacted Council in the last 12 months were asked to indicate their reasons for contacting Council. Overall, 38% of respondents indicated they contacted Council to obtain information and 37% requested a service or maintenance. Other key reasons for contacting Council were seeking assistance or advice (37%) and lodging complaints (23%).

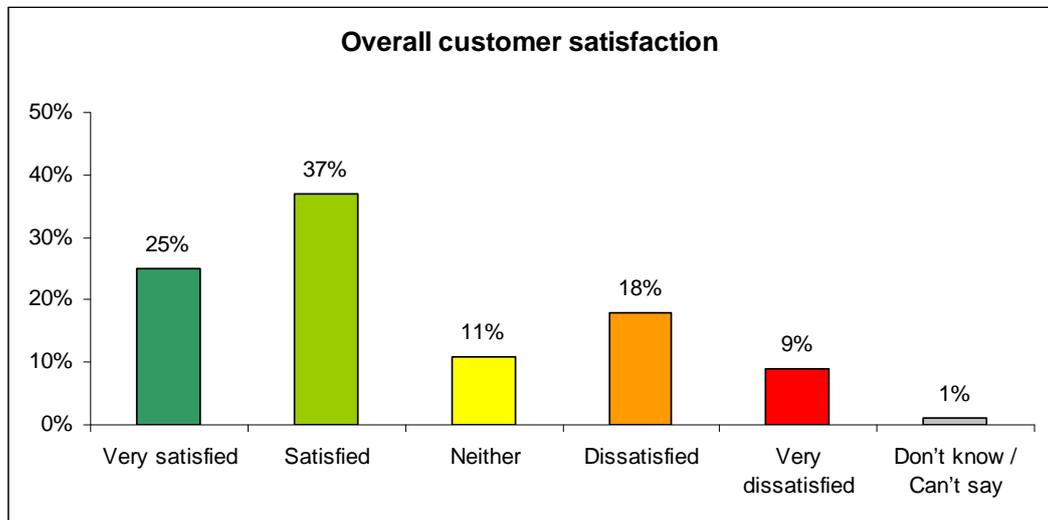
Table 1: Reasons for contacting Council

Based on those who have contacted Council in the last 12 months	n= 585
Obtain information	38%
Request a service or maintenance	37%
Seek assistance or advice	27%
Make a complaint	23%
To get information about or respond to a development application	14%
Pay an account	12%
Give comment during the period of public exhibition	11%
Lodge an application (i.e. development, parking, aged concessions)	8%
Give complimentary feedback	4%
Providing information requested by a Council officer	4%
I was contacted by a Council officer	4%
Register a cat or dog	3%
Other, please specify	10%
Don't know / Not sure	1%

3.1.2 Overall Satisfaction with Customer Service at Council

Overall the majority of respondents (62%) who had contacted Council in the last 12 months indicated they were satisfied or very satisfied with the standard of customer service at Council (see Graph 1). At the other end of the scale, 27% of respondents indicated they were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with Council's customer service.

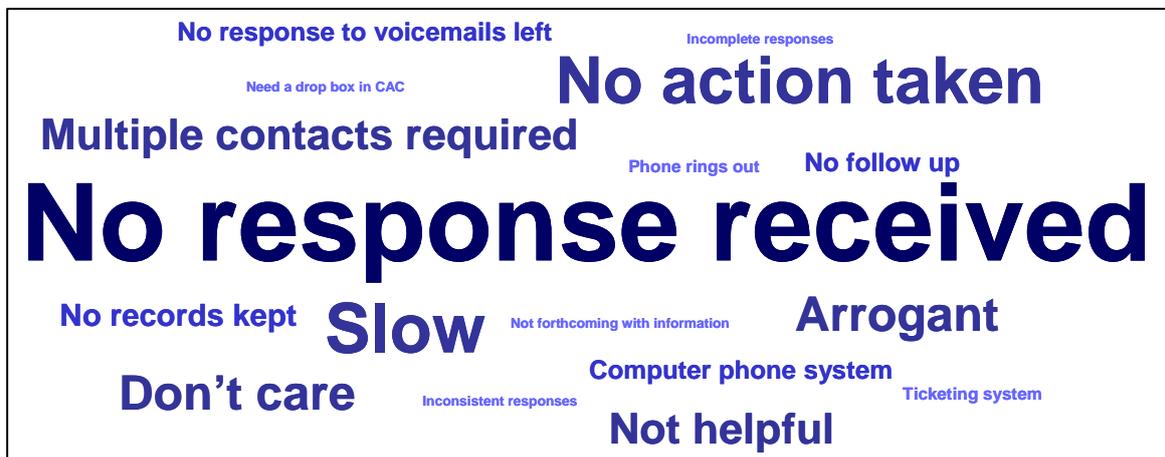
Graph 1: Overall satisfaction with customer service at Council.



3.1.2.1 Reasons for dissatisfaction

Respondents who indicated they were dissatisfied with customer service standards at Council (27%) were asked why they were dissatisfied in an open-ended question. The full list of verbatim responses is included in Appendix III. Figure 1 below shows a summary of the reasons given for dissatisfaction.

Figure 1: Reasons for dissatisfaction- key themes.



The reasons given for dissatisfaction with Council customer service standards were categorised into three main areas:

- Response from Council (40.2%)
- Systems & Processes (26.8%)
- Staff (26.2%)

Just over half (52.4%) of dissatisfied respondents specifically noted the departments to which their query or issue pertained, such as Waste Services, and Development Applications etc. These have been noted separately in Appendix III.

Response from Council

In total, 40.2% of dissatisfied respondents indicated a less than satisfactory response from Council to queries or issues. A key theme here was Council not responding to the customer enquiries, as noted by 15.2% of dissatisfied respondents. For example:

- *"After an initial discussion about the issue that we raised we have not had a response from Council."*
- *"I made a complaint via the contact section on the Council website and despite leaving my name, address, email & phone number I received no response at all."*
- *"Left several messages before someone got back to me regarding one matter and never received a response for another matter"*
- *"At first no response, then after repeated attempts at contact, someone eventually responded."*

Another theme identified was a perceived lack of action taken by Council in response to queries and issues. This was noted by 9.1% of dissatisfied respondents, as illustrated in the following comment:

- *"I was told that someone would be out to my house to investigate the complaint and no one ever showed up."*

A number of respondents (5.5%) noted that they had to contact Council multiple times to elicit any action in response to their query or issue:

- *"...I first sent an email via the website and had no response. I then followed this up with two phone calls, passed from area to area to finally speaking to someone to be told they were on their lunch break, so I had to call back speaking to someone completely different."*
- *"Took 8 weeks and 5 phone calls to resolve the issue"*

Other respondent comments falling into this category included lack of follow up (3.7%), slow or no responses to voicemail messages left (3.7%), and incomplete or irrelevant responses by Council being provided (3.0%). Please refer to Appendix III for full categorisation of responses and verbatims.

Systems and Process.

In total, 26.8% of dissatisfied respondents reported dissatisfaction with Council systems, processes or procedures. A large proportion of these made comments relating to Council (primarily Development and Building Services) being slow (9.8%):

- "Over the past 20 years I have been developing properties, and it used to be a six week turnaround on a DA but over the past few years it has gone to approx 6 + months and if you aren't chasing constantly I don't think you would get any response..."
- "In relation to DA - took over 8 months. When called relevant section to chase up, we were informed that the DA was good, they just needed one piece of information from us. The lady on the front counter told us that there were no notes associated with the DA since December last year. Understand that processing a DA takes some time, but this was relatively straight forward and the sense we get, is that if we hadn't called, it would be still sitting there. The lady at customer service was extremely helpful and efficient."

Council phone protocols also appear to be causing frustration among some customers. Issues with the automated phone systems and / or not being able to get through to the relevant Council officers were noted by 6.1% of dissatisfied respondents, as evidenced by:

- "I could not get onto anyone. I tried a number of different numbers, but no one was answering the phones, and I couldn't leave a message."
- "Rang Council and got an answering service which did offer me the option to hold on for a customer service operator. The phone just rang and rang and no one answered. On another occasion I rang an extension and the phone just rang and rang. I later got on to them and found out that they were on the phone when I rang and the call didn't go to message bank. There seems to be something very wrong with the phone system."
- "On the last two occasions I have contacted the council I was put through to a number which rang and rang just when I was about to give up, I was then transferred to voicemail that said leave a message and they would get back to us. ..."
- "To contact the right department and person through the switch board is impossible. The new automated switch is hard to navigate."

Enquiries not being logged or recorded was noted by 4.3% of respondents as a reason for dissatisfaction, for example:

- "...Council also should start a record system i.e. event number/incident report so ratepayers/residents can refer back to original report..."

- *"...The officer advised me that the call had been logged however after the 6th phone call I discovered that my complaint about the bin hadn't been registered ..."*

Staff

Just over a quarter (26.2%) of dissatisfied respondents left comments about Council staff. A number of these comments related to staff being dismissive (6.7%) or rude (6.7%):

- *"Council officer couldn't be bothered solving the problem"*
- *"I thought that the officer involved was arrogant and dismissive of my concerns."*
- *"Initial contact was great, but once transferred from customer service I found the employee was just not interested, like I was wasting their time by talking to them."*

A further 6.1% of dissatisfied respondents commented that Council staff were not helpful or proactive:

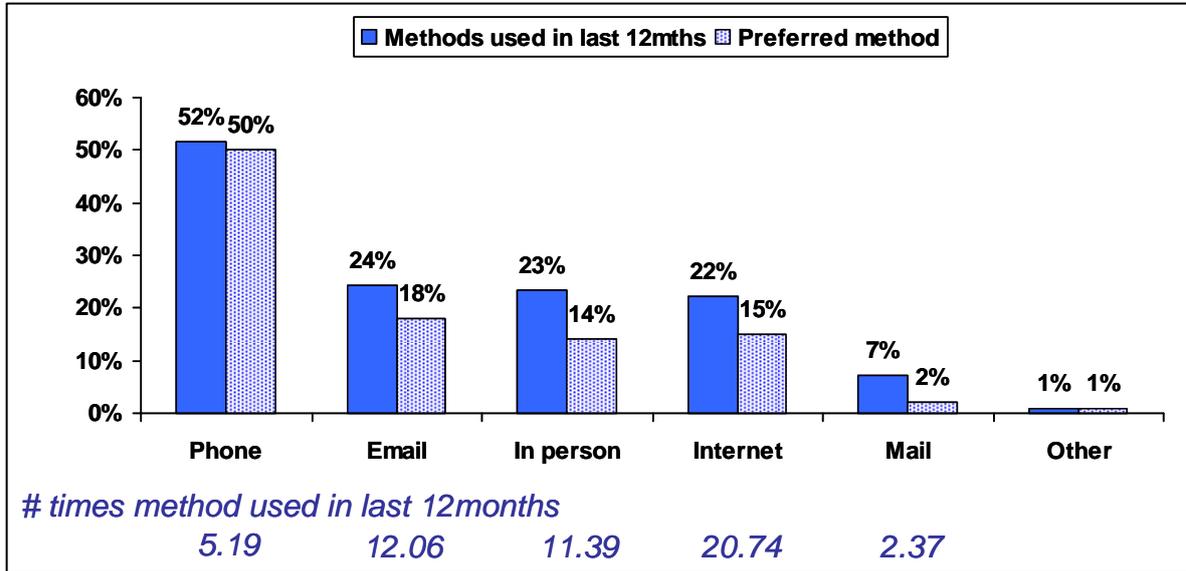
- *"...They told me what I could not do instead of what I could do and made impractical suggestions"*

Please refer to Appendix III for full categorisation of responses and verbatims.

3.1.3 Contact Methods Used

The phone was the most used contact method as indicated by 51.5% of all respondents to the survey (see Graph 2). Just under a quarter of all survey respondents indicated they had emailed (24.4%), visited Council in person (23.3%) or visited the website (22.1%) in the last 12 months. Mail is the least used contact method at 7.2%. When respondents who had contacted Council in the last 12 months were asked their preferred contact method, a similar pattern of results emerged (see Graph 2).

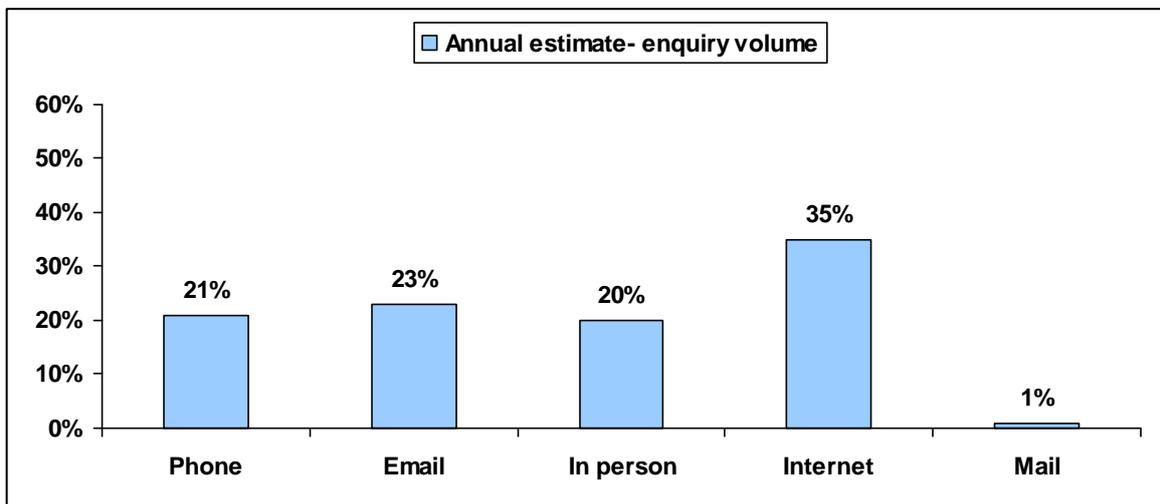
Graph 2: Methods used to contact Council in last 12 months (Base: all survey respondents, n= 847) and Preferred Method (Base: contacted Council in last 12 months).



Respondents were also asked to provide an estimate of the number of times they used each contact method in the last 12 months (annotated in Graph 2). In short, respondents reported visiting Council’s website on average 20 times per year. Enquiries via email and in person were similar, with approximately 12.06 and 11.39 contacts per annum.

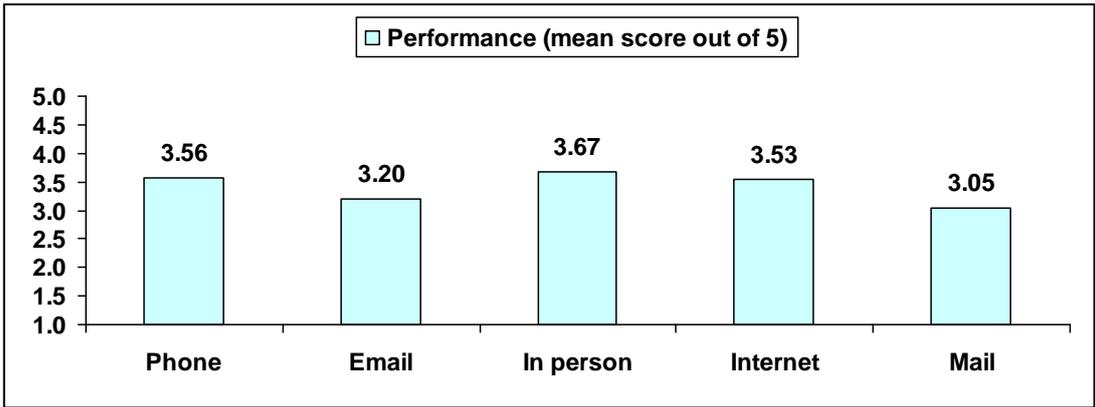
By combining data from the contact methods used and contact frequency questions, an annual estimate of enquiry volume by contact method is obtained, as shown in Graph 3. The volume estimate analysis reveals a different story than just looking at the proportion using each contact method. While telephone was the most used method overall, when contact frequency is taken into account, telephone accounts for 21% of overall enquiry volume. This is slightly lower than email, which accounts for 23% of volume, and in person visits, which accounts for 20% of enquiry volume. Internet accounts for 35% of contact volume, driven by the number of times respondents reported visiting the website in the past 12 months.

Graph 3: Annual enquiry volume estimate by contact method. (Base all survey respondents, n= 847).



Graph 4 shows the customer service rating for each contact method, with a score of 1 being very poor, 3 being average and 5 being excellent. In person and telephone received the highest customer service ratings (3.67 and 3.53 out of 5 respectively), with ratings of email and mail lower in comparison (3.20 and 3.05 out of 5 respectively). The following sections of the report focus on each contact method in more detail and have been ordered from the most used method through to the least used method.

Graph 4: Annual enquiry volume estimate by contact method (Base: contacted Council is last 12 months).



3.2 Telephone Customer Service

The telephone customer service data presented herein is based on the 436 survey respondents who contacted Council via the phone in the last 12 months.

Results Overview

- 60% rate telephone customer service as good or excellent overall.
- Results indicate good scores for professionalism and staff knowledge, while speed of service and follow up were identified as areas for improvement.
- Call waiting times are not meeting customer expectations and a small proportion of calls (7%) are going unanswered
- Half of queries are resolved on the first call to Council. For unresolved queries, customers are making several follow up calls.

Key themes: Suggestions for improvement

Not an automated service

Have a real person answer the phone

Make direct contacts available

Improve knowledge / More training

Issues with voicemail

General phone manners

Already good- no improvements suggested

Know who to transfer calls to

Have one point of contact- saves multiple calls

Answer promptly / Respond promptly

Follow up

Respond to voicemails & return calls

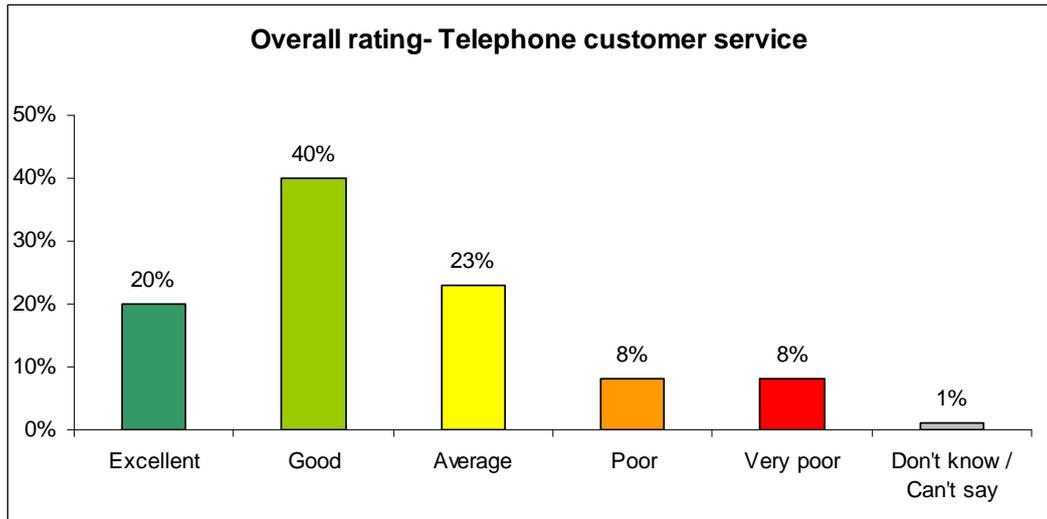
Planning Considerations

- Establish organisational protocols in regard to the use of voicemail and timeframes for returning calls as part of the Customer Enquiry project.

3.2.1 Overall telephone customer service rating

Respondents were asked to rate their customer service experience for their last phone contact with Council. The majority of respondents (60%) were satisfied or very satisfied with their experience, with 16% dissatisfied or very dissatisfied.

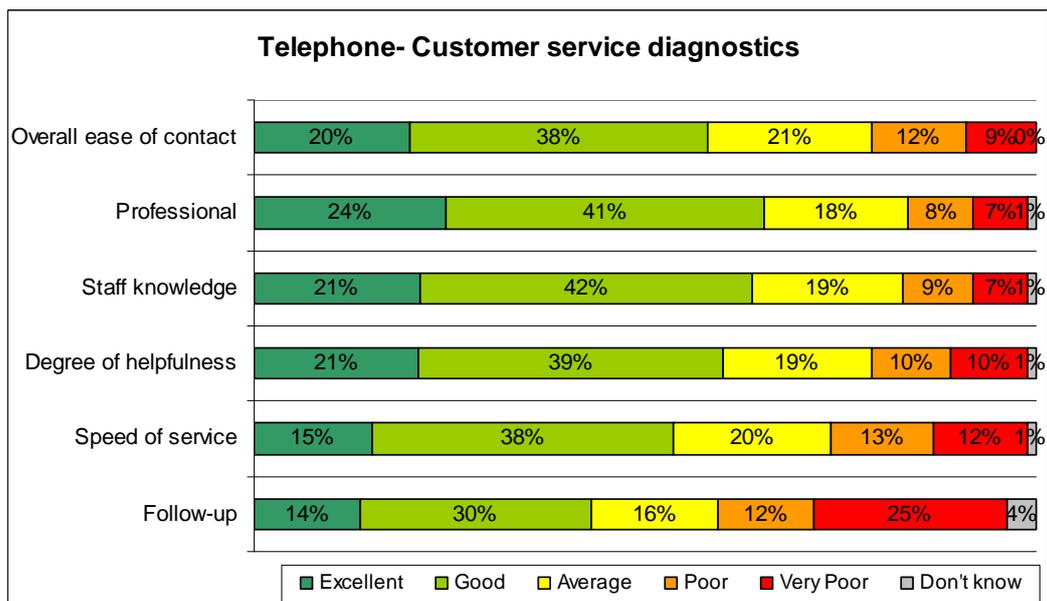
Graph 5: Overall customer service rating - phone contact



3.2.2 Telephone customer service diagnostics

Respondents were asked to rate their last telephone contact with Council on a number of customer service elements. These are shown in Graph 6. Please note these figures exclude ratings of 'Not applicable'.

Graph 6: Customer service diagnostics - Telephone



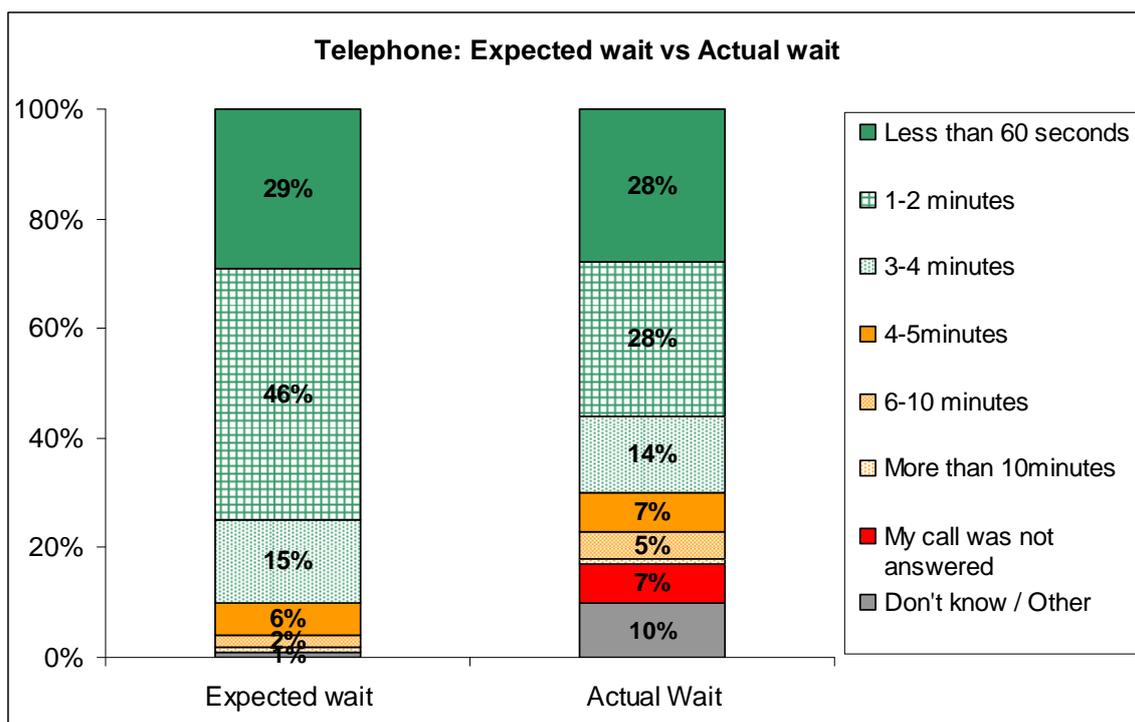
The majority of respondents who had telephone contact with Council in the last 12 months gave ratings of excellent or good on professional (65%), staff knowledge (63%) and degree of helpfulness (60%). Just on half of respondents (53%) rated speed of service as excellent or good. Reflecting these generally positive scores, 58% respondents rated overall ease of contact as excellent or good.

Follow-up was not applicable for 19% of those who had telephone contact with Council in the last 12 months. Of those who did rate provide a rating for follow-up, the ratings provided tended to be slightly more positive (44% excellent or good) than negative (37% poor or very poor), however this remains an area for focus.

3.2.3 Telephone waiting times

Over two separate questions, respondents were asked to indicate how long they expected to wait before speaking to someone and how long they actually waited for their last phone contact with Council. The results from these are shown in Graph 7.

Graph 7: Telephone customer service- Expected vs. actual wait

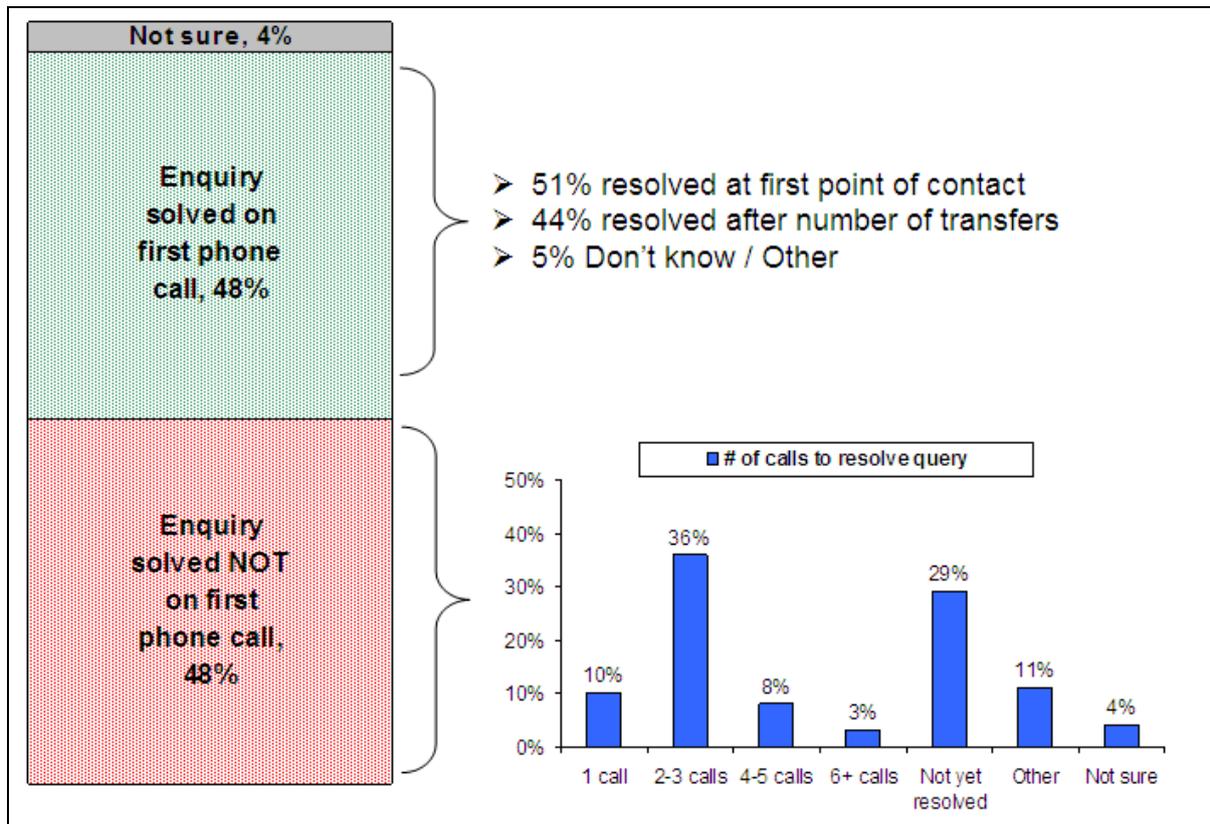


The majority of respondents (75%) expect their phone calls to be answered within 2 minutes. The results indicate that at present Council is under-delivering in this regard with only 56% of respondents reporting that their calls were answered within that timeframe. A point worth noting is that 7% of respondents indicated that their call to Council was not answered. Of the 10% of respondents who said 'don't know / other', most of these respondents had requested a call back from Council.

3.2.4. Resolution of phone enquiries

Respondents who had made telephone contact with Council in the last 12 months were asked to indicate whether their call was resolved on this first call to Council. If the query was resolved on the first call, respondents were subsequently asked to indicate whether the query was resolved at the first point of contact or via a number of transfers. Respondents whose queries were not resolved on the first call were asked to indicate the number of return calls required to resolve the query. These results are summarised below in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Telephone query resolution



Overall, approximately half (48%) of phone queries were resolved on the first call to Council. Of these, 51% were resolved at the first point of contact and 44% were resolved after a number of transfers within Council.

Of those calls where the enquiry was not resolved on the first call to Council (also 48%), results indicate that respondents had to make a number of calls to have their issue resolved. For example 47% of those whose query was not resolved on the first call had to call Council back two or more times. There were also a number of respondents (29%) whose query had not been resolved at the time of taking the customer service survey.

3.2.5 Suggestions for Improvement- Telephone customer service

Respondents who had telephone contact with Council in the last 12 months were given the opportunity to suggest improvements in an open ended question. Overall, 62.5% of respondents provided suggestions for improvement. The full list of verbatim responses is included in Appendix IV.

Where the suggestions were made, the key themes related to:

- Systems & Processes (27.1%)
- Staff (26.6%)

Systems and Processes

In regard to suggested improvements pertaining to systems and processes, comments about the computer or automated phone system and not having a real person answering the phone were prevalent, with 7.1% of respondents noting this as an area for improvement:

- *"I would suggest avoiding any move towards call automation or voice recognition. I want to speak to a local person with adequate knowledge of how to help me or who to transfer my call to without any extended waiting on hold listening to council self promotion recordings!"*
- *"It is far more satisfactory to speak with a human operator. That is I do NOT appreciate leaving a voicemail OR being caught up in a multi-level answering system that often falls over anyway."*
- *"Remove your 'new' phone system and allow customer service personal to direct your call to the appropriate person or take a message or explain the absence."*

A further 7.1% of respondents who had telephone contact with Council suggested improvements relating to voicemail and returning calls:

- *"...Return your phone calls, get staff to check their voicemails and clear and action their voicemails so that when you ring you can actually leave a message - a full voicemail box is obvious evidence that people aren't doing their job. Return calls when you say you are going to return them. Do your job!"*
- *"Have people return messages sooner, and/or leave more specific messages on their phones, e.g. I am on leave this week, please contact xxxx with your enquiry."*
- *"I've tried to contact the parks department and the calls go through to a voice mailbox that says they will return your call but they never do."*

- "I was transferred by the switchboard to the relevant person on two separate occasions- they never picked up their phone and there was no voicemail so I never got to speak to someone who could help me"
- "Make sure staff answer the phone rather than leave all calls transferred to voicemail or admin to leave a message. Otherwise, make sure the staff recording states if the staff member is on an RDO, leave or out of the office for an extended period."
- "When the person sought is away from their desk, have the call "roll on" to another person who knows when the call will be returned. When one leaves a message on a "message bank" it is not known whether the person will be available in a few minutes, the next day or at the end of a month's leave."

A small proportion of respondents suggested that having direct contact numbers available would alleviate the need to go through the automated system (2.2%). A further 2.2% of respondents suggested that having one point of contact, like a case manager, would negate the need for them to call multiple times about the one issue. Please refer to Appendix IV for full categorisation of responses and verbatims.

Staff

Of the respondent suggestions for improvement relating to Council staff, a number were about staff knowledge and training (6.4%):

- "Cross train more of the staff so that if the person with the particular expertise you are after is absent, there are others available that can answer people's questions."
- "Ensure that relieving Help Desk staff have reference material immediately at hand."
- "The customer service needs to be staffed by people who have the power to do something about problems. If they're just gatekeepers for the people who actually know how things work, then in my opinion, they're just window dressing."

Related to staff knowledge and training, 6.0% respondents called for an improvement in the ability of Council staff to put their calls through to the right department or area:

- "Each time I call I am transferred multiple times before I get through to the right department/person."
- "Ensure 1st point of contact knows which dept is responsible for what services provided by council. It is very frustrating being transferred to someone who promptly tells you that is not his/her dept."

- *“Ask relevant questions and be proactive in determining who best to deal with my issue rather than putting the blame back on me for not knowing exactly who I need to talk to or what help I need and then just transferring me through to someone to get rid of me.”*

Follow-up by staff was also noted by 5.1% of respondents as an area for improvement:

- *“Act on peoples requests and maybe follow to make sure people are happy”*
- *“Call back to keep me informed of the progress of the matter I required assistance with.”*
- *“Follow-up phone contact from Council even if there has been no progress in the action - just to let me know that the request is still active/ongoing and not discarded.”*

Other staff related suggestions to improve telephone customer service included improving general phone manners (2.4%) as well as responding and answering promptly. Full verbatim responses are shown in Appendix IV.

3.3 Email Customer Service

The email customer service data presented in this section is based on the 207 of respondents who contacted Council via email in the last 12 months.

Results Overview

- 48% rate email customer service as good or excellent overall.
- Less than half of respondents rated the degree of helpfulness, speed of service and follow up as good or excellent.
- Email response times are well below expectations. Almost 20% of email queries go unanswered.
- More customers are emailing staff directly compared to those using mail@ncc.nsw.gov.au.

Key themes: Suggestions for improvement

Didn't receive a response to my email

Make email addresses available

Advise of timeframes for responses Follow up

Respond to emails in a timely manner

Be professional, helpful etc Faster responses

Already good- no improvements suggested

Acknowledge my email has been received

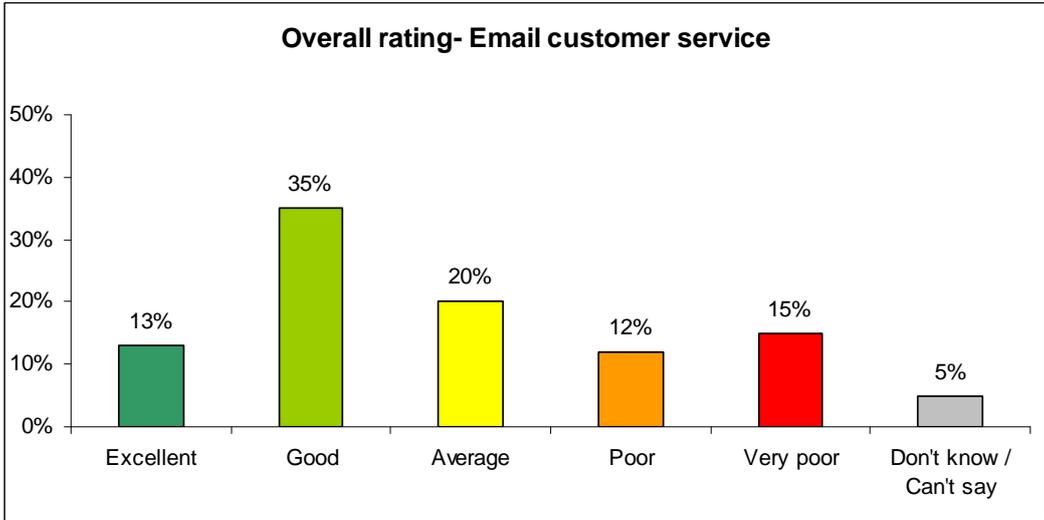
Planning Considerations

- Establish organisational protocols around responding to emails, including clear guidelines for response time.
- Allow out of office auto-replies to be sent outside of the organisation when staff are absent.

3.3.1 Overall email customer service rating

Respondents were asked to rate the customer service they received for their last contact with Council via email. Just under half of respondents (48%) rated the customer service received as good or excellent. This is notably lower than the 60% of respondents reporting good or excellent telephone customer service. Just over one-quarter (27%) of respondents who had email contact with Council in the last 12 months reported their last experience as poor or very poor.

Graph 8: Overall customer service rating- email contact

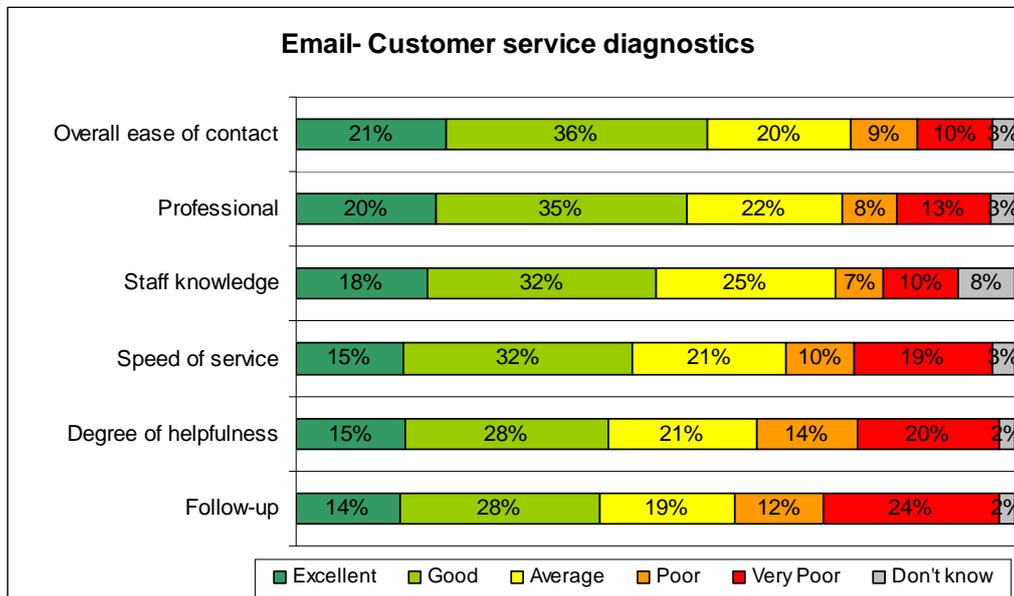


3.3.2 Email customer service diagnostics

Respondents were asked to rate their last email contact with Council on a number of customer service elements. These are shown in Graph 9. Please note these figures exclude ratings of 'Not applicable'.

The majority of respondents who had email contact with Council in the last 12 months provided ratings of good or excellent on professional (55%) and staff knowledge (50%). Approximately one third of respondents provided ratings of poor or very poor on degree of helpfulness (34%), speed of service (29%) and follow-up (36%).

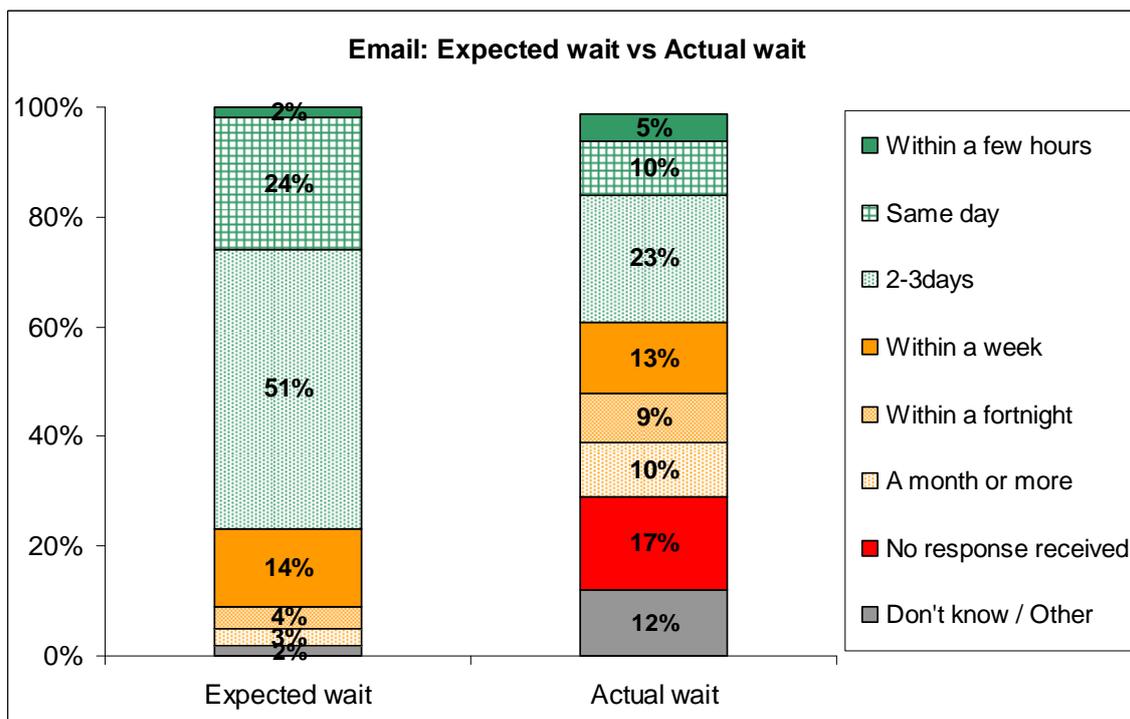
Graph 9: Customer service diagnostics- Email



3.3.3 Email response waiting times

Over two separate questions, respondents were asked to indicate how long they expected to wait to receive a response from Council on their email query and how long they actually waited to receive a response. The results from these questions are shown in Graph 10.

Graph 10: Email customer service- Expected vs. actual wait



Results indicate that Council is underperforming on customer expectations for response times to emails. While 77% of respondents indicated they would expect to receive a response from Council within 2-3 days, only 38% of respondents received a response within this timeframe. The most notable data is that 17% respondents did not receive a response from Council to their email. This is illustrated in the following respondent comments:

- "Not yet responded to! 7 months and counting."
- "Never received a reply except the electronically produced receipt"

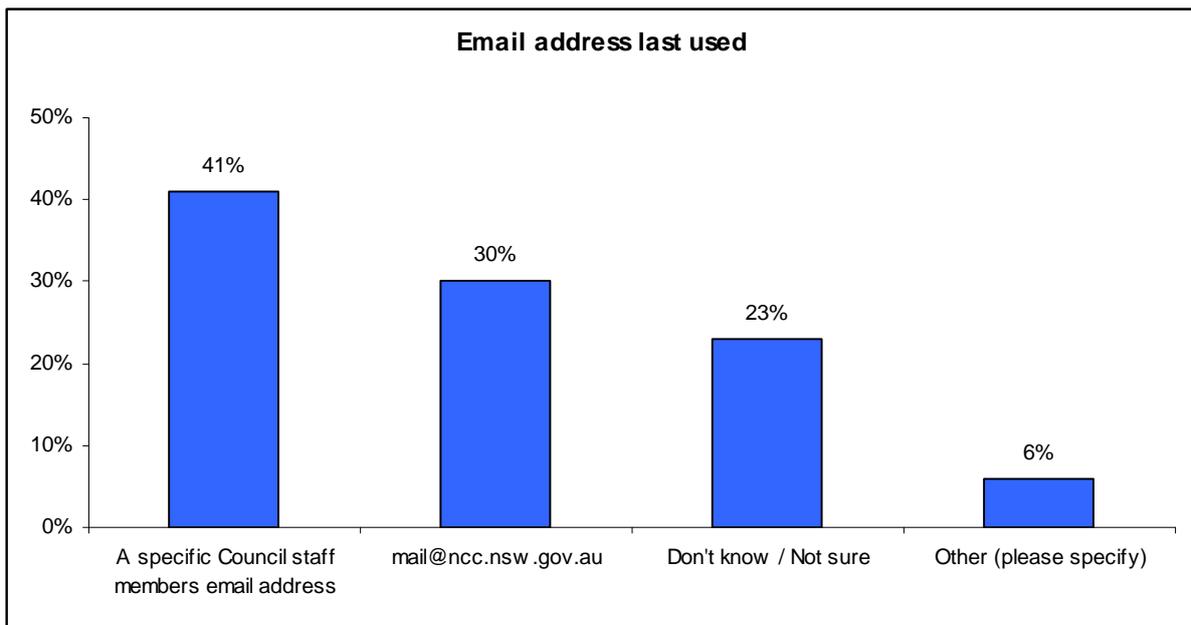
Comments left by respondents suggest that Council is actioning issues raised in customer emails, indicating that emails are being received by the relevant teams:

- "I'm still waiting. No acknowledgement was received however my email was referred to in a Council Report"
- "I never received a response but the issue I raised (mowing of very high grass at Hamilton Meals on Wheels) was taken care of the next day"

3.3.4 Email address last used

Respondents were asked to indicate what type of email address they used on their last email contact with Council, the generic *mail@ncc.nsw.gov.au* address or a staff members email address. While a large proportion of respondents could not recall (23% don't know), results indicate that more people are using a specific staff email addresses rather than mail@ncc.nsw.gov.au (see Graph 11).

Graph 11: Email customer service- Email address used.



3.3.5 Suggestions for improvement- Email customer service

Respondents who had contacted Council via email in the last 12 months were given the opportunity to suggest improvements in this area in an open ended question. Overall, 53.7% of respondents provided suggestions for improvement. The full list of verbatim responses is included in Appendix V.

Overall 7.4% of respondents who had contacted Council via email in the last 12 months reported a good experience and did not leave suggestions for improvement. Of the suggestions made, the key categories related to:

- Email Procedures (29.3%)
- Staff (7.9%)
- Response from Council (7.4%)

Email Procedures

A large proportion of respondents highlighted responding to emails as an area for improvement (9.6%), with a further 7.4% of respondents indicating they had not received responses to their previous emails:

- *"I was surprised to not receive any type of response to my email request."*
- *"Don't give email as an option for contact if you're not even going to bother to respond! And of course you have to have email as a form of contact, so ensuring a response to every email would be a good thing. I felt completely ignored and like Council did not give a stuff about the safety concerns I expressed."*
- *"Ensure that someone is available at all times who can respond to email requests in a timely manner."*
- *"The person was on leave and there was no message response. When the person did return a week later I still had not received a response. No sure how you have staff respond"*

6.1% of respondents who had emailed Council in the last 12 months commented that they would like to receive an acknowledgement of their email:

- *"Acknowledging email requests even if no action is to be taken"*
- *"At least respond within 2 working days acknowledging receipt of email and time frame for a response."*
- *"By acknowledging the receipt of each email and the giving of an estimated time for a reply. It's that simple"*

Other comments falling into this category related to advising of timeframes for responses (3.5%), adhering to timeframes (1.3%) and advising if a person is not there (1.3%).

Staff

7.9% of respondents left comments relating to staff, for example:

- *"Council officers give the impression that they think ratepayers are annoying"*
- *"Be honest and answer the questions asked in a full and frank manner"*
- *"Knowledge, a keenness to service the community and an interest in procedures"*

Response from Council

A small proportion of respondents left comments relating to the responses provided by Council. These included references to speed of response (3.9%), providing personalised responses (1.7%), and providing adequate/full responses (1.3%):

- *"The length of time to respond has deteriorated over the past 12 or so months."*
- *"Try to reply sooner. Sometimes we get a mailed letter and no email response. If a mailed letter is going to be sent, then Council should email it as soon as it is approved"*
- *"Have a personalised response to queries. For example, I am the Council member who will be dealing with your issue and will be in contact with you with 10 days about your query. etc."*

Please refer to Appendix V for full categorisation of responses and verbatim comments.

3.4 In person Customer Service

The following data is based on the 197 of respondents who had in-person contact with Council in the last 12 months.

Results Overview

- Majority of respondents visit the City Administration Centre (85%).
- 67% rate in person customer service as good or excellent.
- Good scores on helpfulness and professionalism.
- Waiting times are in line with customer expectations.

Key themes: Suggestions for improvement

Improve knowledge / More training

Ensure adequate staff numbers Ticketing system Follow-up

Already good- no improvements suggested

Be polite, respectful etc Shorter waiting times Faster service & responses

Staff must be friendly, professional

Seek accurate information if not known

Planning Considerations

- Investigate the option of a drop-box at the CAC.

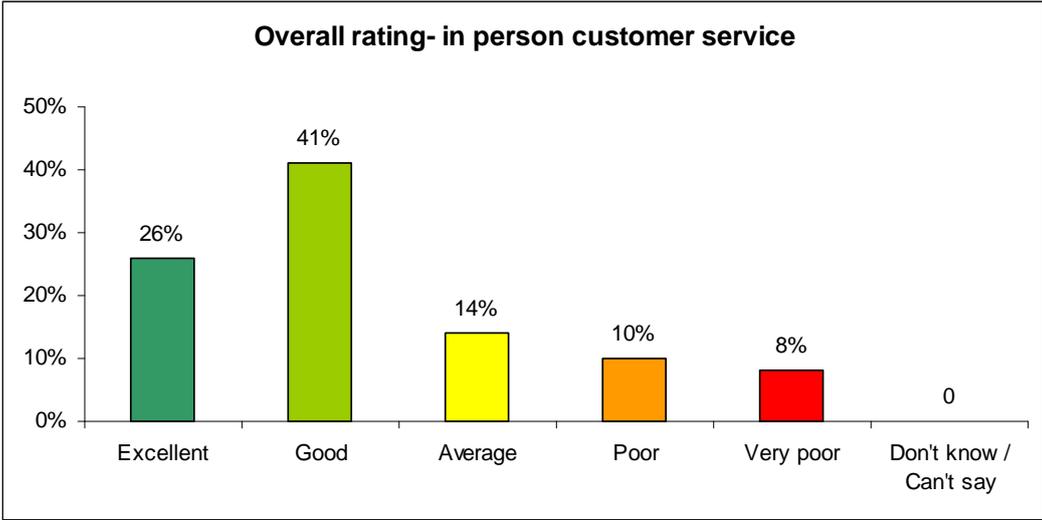
3.4.1 Location attended

The majority of respondents (85%) who had made in person contact with Council in the last 12 months did so at the City Administration Centre, with a much smaller number (10%) having attended the Depot. Just under a third (30%) of respondents also had contact with Library staff.

3.4.2 Overall in person customer service rating

Respondents were asked to rate the customer service they received for their last in person contact with Council. The majority of respondents (67%) rated their in person customer service experience as good or excellent, with 18% of respondents reporting the experience as poor or very poor.

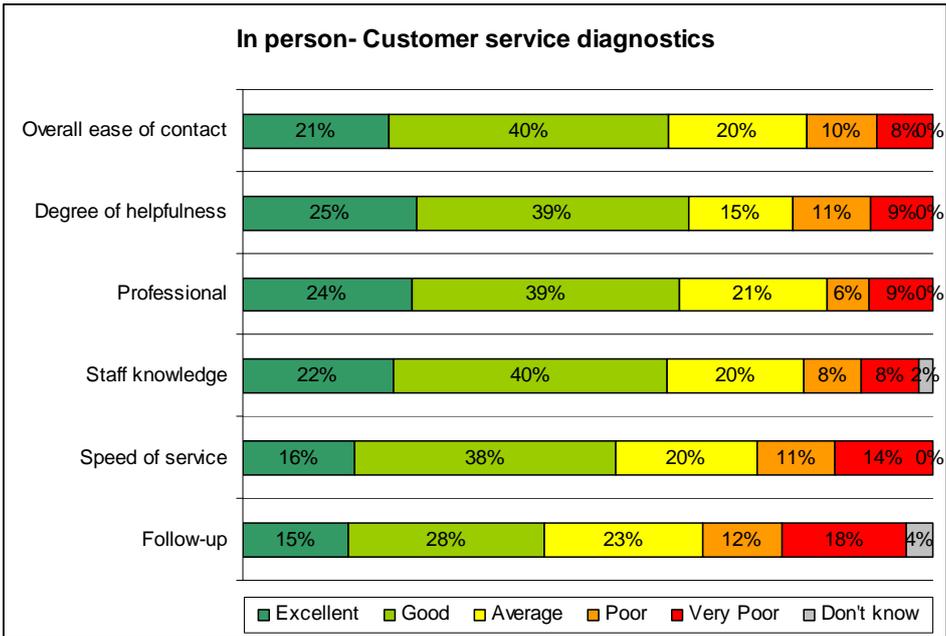
Graph 12: Overall customer service rating - in person contact



3.4.3 In person customer service diagnostics

Respondents were asked to rate their last in person customer service experience on a number of service elements. These are shown in Graph 13. Please note these figures exclude ratings of 'Not applicable'.

Graph 13: Customer service diagnostics - in person contact

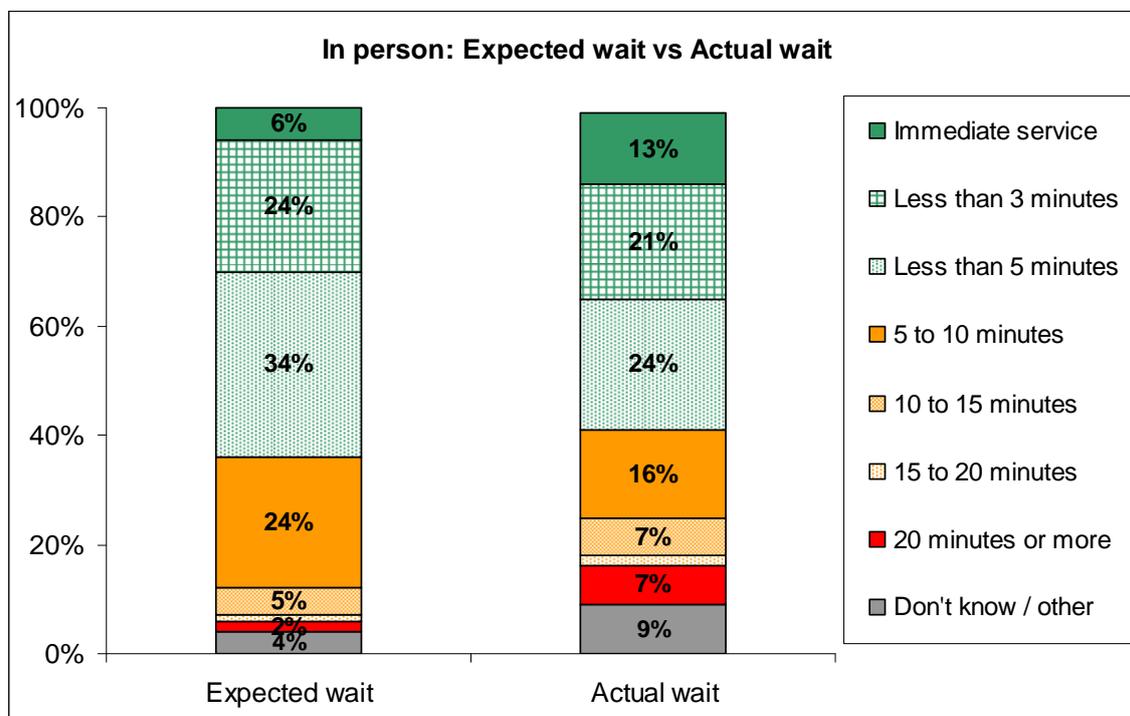


The majority of respondents who had in person contact with Council in the last 12 months gave ratings of excellent or good on degree of helpfulness (64%), professional (63%) and staff knowledge (62%). Just over half of respondents (54%) rated speed of service as excellent or good. Follow-up was not applicable for 22% of respondents. Of those who did provide a rating for follow-up, they tended to be more positive (43% excellent or good) than negative (30% poor or very poor). Reflecting these generally positive scores, 61% respondents rated the overall ease of contact as excellent or good.

3.4.4 In person waiting times

Over two separate questions, respondents were asked to indicate how long they expected to wait before being served and how long they actually waited to be served for their last in person contact with Council.

Graph 14: In person customer service- Expected vs. actual wait



In general, actual waiting times for in person customer service are in line with expectations. For example, 30% of respondents expected to be served within three minutes and 34% of respondents reported that this was the case for their last in person experience. The majority (64%) of respondents indicated that they would expect to wait five minutes or less for service, and this was the case for 58% of respondents.

3.4.5 Suggestions for improvement - In person customer service

Respondents who had in person contact with Council in the last 12 months were given the opportunity to suggest improvements in this area in an open ended question. Overall, 69.4% of respondents provided suggestions for improvement. The full list of verbatim responses is included in Appendix VI.

Overall, 24.8% of respondents who had in-person contact in the last 12 months reported a good experience and did not leave suggestions for improvement. Of the suggestions made, the key themes related to:

- Staff (32.0%)
- Systems & Processes (12.2%)
- Layout & Parking (4.1%)

Staff

Just on one-third (32.0%) of respondents who had in-person contact with Council in the last 12-months suggested improvements relating to Council staff. Most of the staff related suggestions (8.6%) related to improving staff knowledge through training and education:

- *"Better training (or a greater degree of empowerment) for customer service level staff so that they didn't need to refer to 'bosses' so often."*
- *"...Make sure the person either has the knowledge necessary or is aware of who you need to be put through to in order to solve the problem..."*

A further 6.3% of respondents suggested customer facing Council staff should possess general customer service skills, such as being friendly and professional:

- *"Friendly, knowledgeable, professional and PROMPT attention"*
- *"In King Street - I always feel as though I am pulling them away from their desk to come to the counter. Most of the time there is no 'real' friendly atmosphere there."*
- *"There are some Council employees which don't have a lot of manners or just don't seem to be interested in helping. This is a low percentage of Council that I have dealt with though."*

Ensuring adequate staff was also noted by respondents as an area for improvement, with 4.5% of respondents leaving suggestions like:

- *"...It is irritating to be given the "run-around", that is 'that person is not here today; therefore we can't help you'. It is useful to have another person who can take up the issue if the main person is sick, or on leave, or away on business. That way, you don't feel you have wasted your time coming in to see someone who isn't there, or can't help you"*

- *"Have adequate staff on counters during busy periods."*

Seeking accurate information was also suggested by 4.1% of respondents who had in-person contact with Council in the last 12 months:

- *"If you don't know an answer find out!"*
- *"Improvement could be made by redirecting people to more appropriate places to find the information..."*

Systems & Processes

Overall 12.2% of respondents who had in-person contact with Council left suggestions for improvements relating to system or processes. The majority of these were generic calls for faster service or shorter waiting times (6.8%):

- *"...Delays in speaking to that person should be reduced."*
- *"I was waiting to be served and there seemed to be help desk employees who were not otherwise engaged - a bit annoying"*
- *"Maintain speedy over the counter service"*

A small proportion of respondents commented on the ticketing system used at Customer Enquiry (1.8%) and the need for a drop box at this location (1.4%):

- *"Don't make people take a number and wait in line when all they want to do is drop off an envelope for a staff member. It's akin to making me line up behind multiple people with full trolleys at the supermarket, when I have a single item."*
- *"Provide a drop off box at the Admin Centre counter for hand delivered submissions."*

Please refer to Appendix VI for categorisation of responses and verbatim comments.

3.5 Council’s Website

The following data is based on 187 survey respondents who accessed Council’s website in the last 12 months.

Results Overview

- The majority of respondents rate the website as good or excellent (59%)
- Ratings on the website being visually appealing and having relevant information were good. Ease of navigation was weaker in comparison.

Key themes: Suggestions for improvement

Info re Waste services

Easier navigation List of direct contact details

More up to date

Council meeting info/agendas/minutes Online booking forms

Info on events, local fairs etc

Clearer layout / Less cluttered **Better search functionality**

Online payments **Already good- no** Register animals

improvements suggested

Online DA system (submit, search etc)

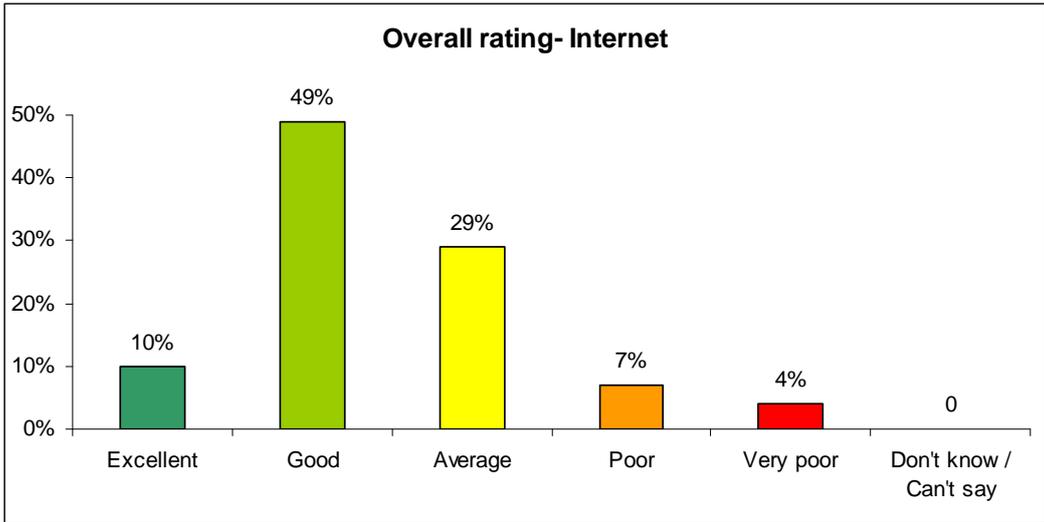
Planning Considerations

- Investigate improved search functionality for Council’s website.

3.5.1 Overall website rating

Respondents were asked to rate their experience with the Council website overall. The majority of respondents (59%) were satisfied or very satisfied with the website, with only a small proportion (11%) dissatisfied or very dissatisfied.

Graph 15: Overall rating- Council’s website

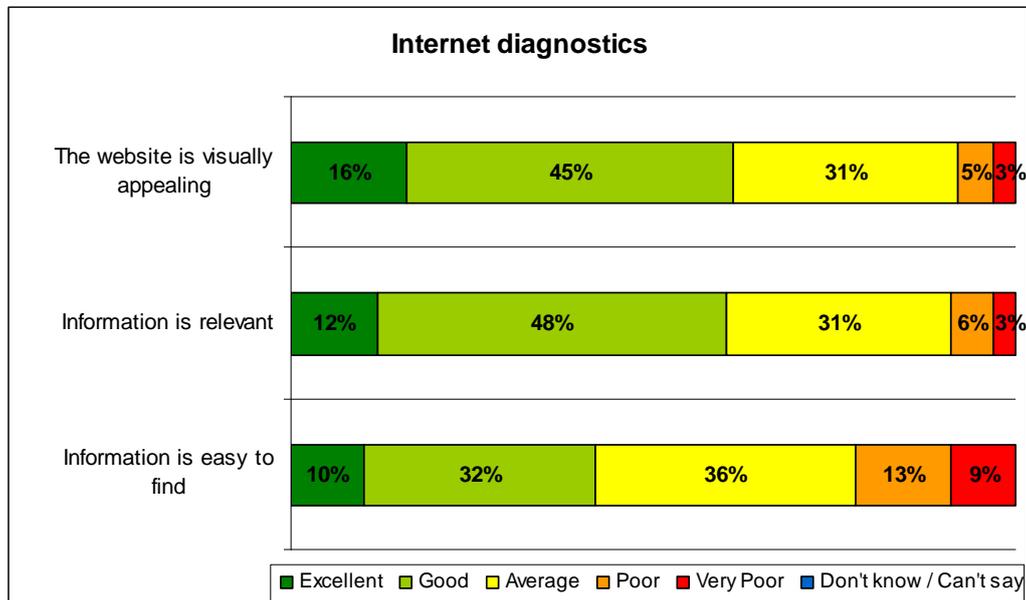


3.5.2 Website diagnostics

Respondents were asked to rate Council’s website on look, relevance of information and ease of navigation. These are shown in Graph 16. Please note these figures exclude ratings of ‘Not applicable’.

Overall, customers who had accessed Council’s website in the last 12 months were positive about their experiences. Almost two-thirds of respondents provided a rating of good or excellent for the website being visually appealing (61%) and having relevant information (60%). Navigation of the website was a little weaker in comparison, with 42% rating this aspect as good or excellent. A further 36% rated navigation as average.

Graph 16: Website diagnostics



3.5.3 Suggestions for improvement - Website

Respondents who had accessed Council's website in the last 12 months were given the opportunity to make suggestions for content and online services in an open ended question. Overall, 46.7% of respondents provided suggestions. The full list of verbatim responses is included in Appendix VII.

Overall 7.5% of respondents had a good experience with the website and did not leave suggestions for improvement. Where suggestions were made, the key themes broadly related to:

- General suggestions e.g. navigation, search functionality, layout etc (21.1%)
- About Newcastle e.g. maps, events (9.5%)
- Council e.g. meetings, committee information (6.5%)

The full categorisation of responses is shown in Appendix VII. It is worth noting that most of the respondent suggestions related to content and / or services that are already present on the website.

General suggestions

This category consists of varied respondent suggestions, the largest portion of which related to making navigation of the website easier (5.5%):

- *"I'd like it more clearly laid out, and easier to find information. If you keep drilling down, you eventually find what you need. It'd be better though to have a cleaner-looking opening web page with drop-down menus for the various departments and facilities and services."*

- "Often I experienced difficulty in identifying the appropriate page(s), departments before I could find what I was looking for."
- "...The headings/tabs on the homepage are difficult to navigate if you don't know which section your query relates to."

Related to navigation, respondents also suggested improvement was needed to the site's search functionality (4%):

- "...better intuitive searching (often can't find things by doing a "search" - searches return irrelevant information; end up having to manually search around. Can be very time consuming to find information that should be easier to search."
- "The services are all there. It is finding them that is the challenge. Please ensure that the search function works "just like Google"."

A small proportion of respondents (3%) suggested that the website could be updated more regularly:

- "Needs to be updated on a more regular basis with relevant local information for the city and surrounding areas."
- "Maintenance of information i.e. old documents need to be replaced with latest documents & policies promptly."

Other respondents included calls to have direct contact numbers or directories for Council staff available (1.5%), less clutter (2.0%), and online bookings (1.5%). Please refer to Appendix VII to see the types of comments that fell into this category.

About Newcastle

In regard to respondent suggestions broadly relating to the 'About Newcastle' tab of the website, the largest suggestion (8%) was for more information regarding events in the area. These suggestions related to community events, not necessarily Council run events, for example:

- "Events, organisations or groups in my neighbourhood that I might want to join e.g. sporting, mother's group etc...."
- "For paying rates etc, the site is fine. I have, however, found information about events out of date or absent. One instance is information about main street fairs."

- "...Also, tried to find out about carols by candlelight last year and ended up having to look on the KOFM website as nothing on NCC website until the last minute. Your "Calendar" of events is not great as it is out of date and only seems to have repeating events. I realise that you have a lot of information to provide but the website needs to be updated regularly which does not always seem to be the case."

Council

A small pocket of respondents (6.5%) gave suggestions relating to topics that fall under the current 'Council' tab of the website, including:

- "Meeting agendas are not there in a timely manner."
- "How about minutes of Council meetings a week after instead of over a month later? How about the agenda of the Council meeting being available more than a few days before? The agenda for the July 3 meeting was not available 5 days before."
- "Webcasts of council meetings (including an online archive of these)... Much better access to archival documentation (e.g., documents from previous council and committee meetings, which should be able to be much more easily accessed than they currently are)."

3.6 Mail Customer Service

The following data is based on the 61 respondents who have mailed Council in the last 12 months.

Results Overview

- 42% rate mail customer service as good or excellent overall, which is weaker than ratings achieved by all other contact methods.
- Diagnostic evaluation revealed follow up, degree of helpfulness and speed of service as areas for focus.
- Response times to mail enquiries are underperforming relative to customer expectations and 15% of mail contact from customers goes unanswered.

Key themes: Suggestions for improvement

Adhere to timeframes

Response method

Respond to letters

Acknowledge receipt of letters

Provide adequate responses

Already good- no improvements suggested

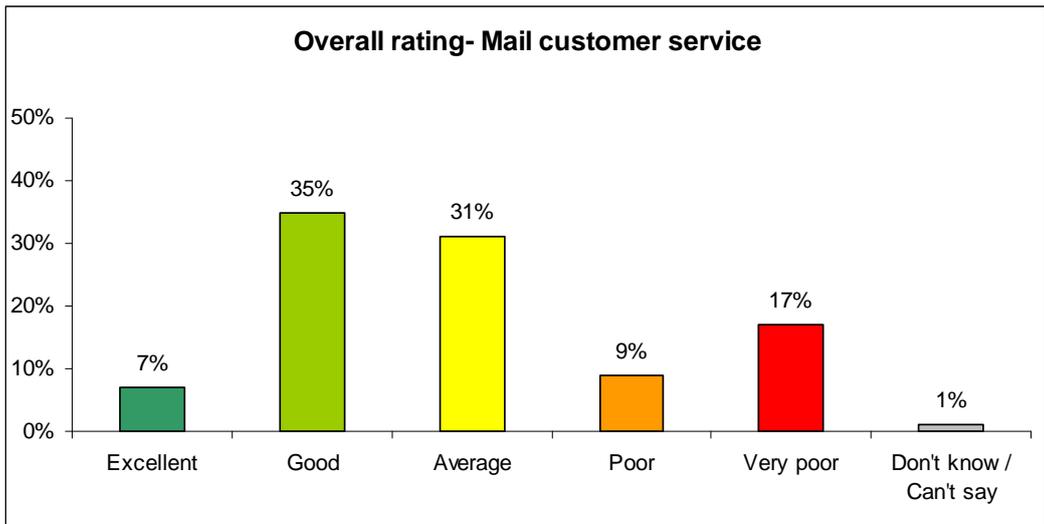
Planning Considerations

- Re-evaluate Council process and procedure for receiving and actioning mail enquiries.
- Update the Customer Service Charter to reflect achievable response times.

3.6.1 Overall mail customer service rating

Respondents were asked to rate the customer service they received for their last mail contact with Council. Less than half of respondents (42%) rated the customer service received as good or excellent. Just over one-quarter (26%) of respondents who had email contact with Council in the last 12 months reported their last experience as poor or very poor.

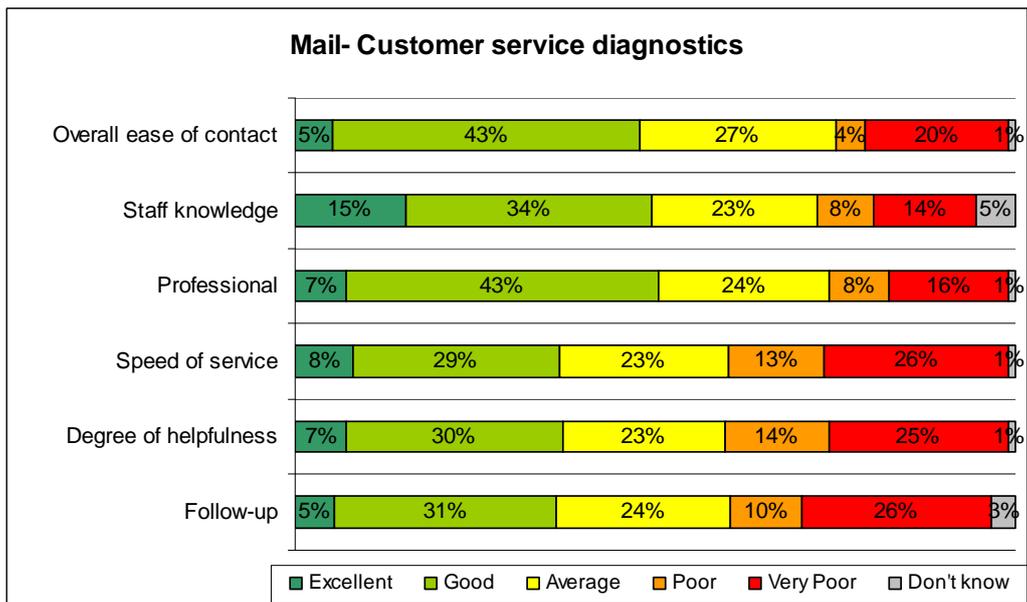
Graph 17: Overall customer service rating- mail contact



3.6.2 Mail customer service diagnostics

Respondents were asked to rate their last mail customer service experience on a number of service elements. These are shown in Graph 18. Please note these figures exclude ratings of 'Not applicable'.

Graph 18: Customer service diagnostics- Mail contact

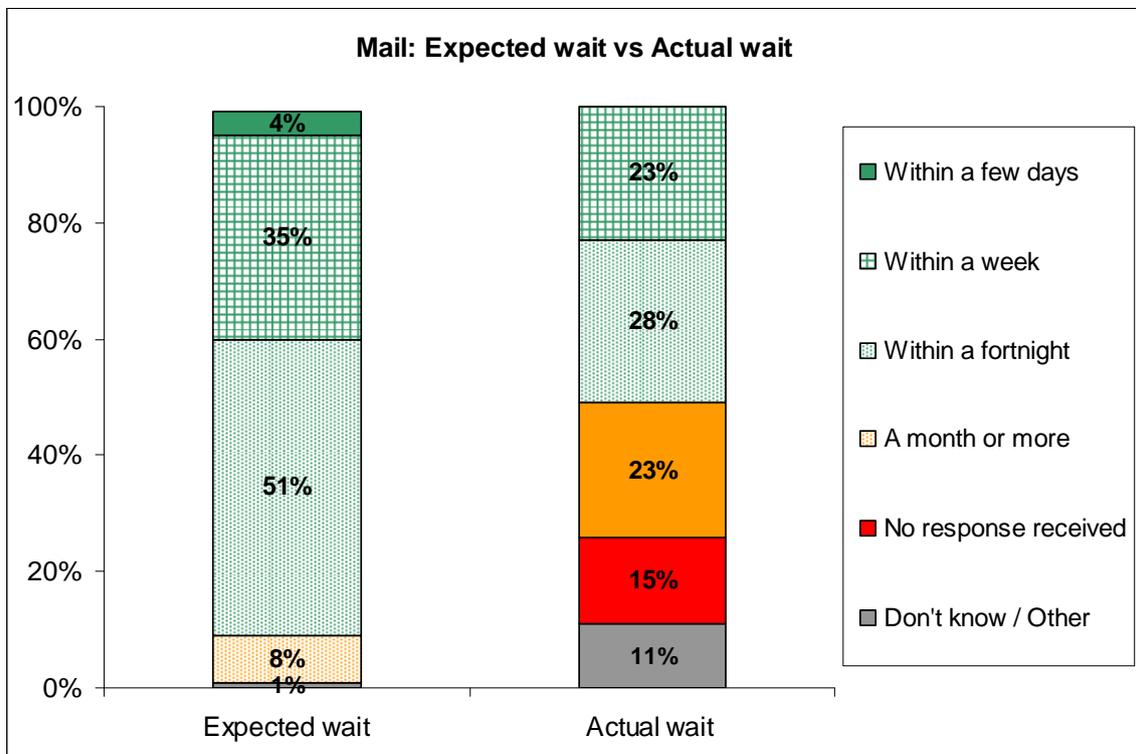


Just on half of respondents who had had mailed Council in the last 12 months gave ratings of excellent or good on degree of professional (50%) and staff knowledge (49%). Follow-up was not applicable for 8% of respondents. Of those who did provide a rating for follow-up, 36% indicated it was poor or very poor. Similarly, poor and very poor ratings were also high for speed of service (39%) and degree of helpfulness (39%).

3.6.3 Mail Waiting Times

Over two separate questions, respondents were asked to indicate how long they expected to wait before receiving a response after contacting Council via mail and how long they actually waited to receive a response. The results are shown below in Graph 19.

Graph 19: Mail customer service- Expected vs. actual wait



The vast majority of respondents (90%) indicated that they expected a response from Council on enquiries submitted via mail within 14 days. As only 51% of respondents received a response within this timeframe, it would appear Council is under delivering on customer expectations. For 23% of respondents, a response from Council was received after a month or more. As was the case with email enquiries, a number of respondents (15%) reported not receiving a response after contacting Council via mail.

3.6.4 Mail customer service- Suggested improvements.

Respondents who had contacted Council by mail in the last 12 months were given the opportunity to suggest improvements in this area in an open ended question. Overall, 46% of respondents provided suggestions for improvement. The full list of verbatim responses is included in Appendix VIII.

Overall, 9.5% of respondents who had contacted Council by mail in the last 12 months reported a good experience and did not leave suggestions for improvement. Of the suggestions made, the key themes related to:

- Mail procedures (15.9%)
- Response from Council (9.5%)

Mail Procedures

More than 15% of respondents (15.9%) who had contacted Council by mail in the last 12 months suggested improvements relating generally to mail procedures. The largest contributing theme was acknowledging the receipt of letters, as noted by 6.3% of respondents:

- *"...Perhaps an acknowledgement of receipt of mailed correspondence giving a contact and an expected formal response time would be appropriate."*
- *"Acknowledge receipt of the request by sending a card quoting reference number and expected time to respond. This procedure is followed by some government departments and it created a positive atmosphere to requests."*

Other comments falling into this category related to responding to letters (4.8%) and adhering to publicised response timeframes (i.e. 14days) (3.2%).

Response from Council

Approximately 10% of respondents provided suggestions for improvements relating to the responses Council provides. Most of these related to response method (4.8%), where opinion was mixed:

- *"They replied by phone, if I write a letter I expect a letter in return."*
- *"...a council officer could telephone or visit the writer to discuss the issue, but this may not be an effective use of an officer's time I realise."*

A further 3.2% of respondents left comments regarding the response from Council as not being adequate:

- *"I received a letter that spouted "propaganda" from a senior council officer that did not address the matter under discussion."*
- *"a proper response and not a holding pattern"*

3.7 Suggestions for Improvements

When asked for final suggestions on how customer service at Council could be improved, 45% of respondents to the survey who had contacted Council in the last 12 months provided a suggestion. The types of suggestions given by respondents were similar to those seen throughout the survey, with key themes relating to:

- Staff (20.8%)
- Systems & Processes (12.2%)
- Other e.g. comments about Councillors and Council staff, and specific departments (8.8%)

Please see Appendix IX for verbatim respondent suggestions for improvement, as well as the categorisation of responses.

Staff

There was a call by 5% of respondents who contacted Council in the past 12 months for a cultural shift across the organisation, with greater emphasis on the customer. For example:

- *"A focus on the customer rather than a focus on how to make it easier for the Council. The idea that Council is the working body of the community should be instilled in every manager and employee, that the wages and salaries are sourced from the community..."*
- *"Attitude is the key. What will it take to change the workplace culture of entitlement?"*
- *"Change the senior officers so that a genuine and progressive customer focus could be developed not one based on power with a winners and losers mentality."*
- *"To improve customer service I would suggest you go to the senior managers and change their attitude as the attitude flows down through the organisation and it has taken several years for this situation to occur, so it will take time to turn it around. Most importantly the senior managers need to start to listen to the community instead of constantly telling them what to do."*
- *"Staff and councillors need to understand that they are in the positions that they are, within council, to serve the residents and ratepayers of their city or town. Respect should be shown both ways."*

A small proportion of respondents 2.3% also suggested improvements in staff knowledge through education and training:

- *"Provide customer service training and start independently measuring standards of service and benchmark to other organisations"*

- *“Continued staff training is important, both within their own fields and in the areas of stress management and in dealing with the public who are increasingly obnoxious.”*
- *“By training personnel so they can offer options which are acceptable rather than telling ratepayers what they are not allowed to do.”*

Other staff related respondents comments included references to improved follow-up (1.7%), individuals in the organisation taking more responsibility (1.7%) and being more open, honest and transparent in responses (1.7%). Please refer to Appendix IX for the full categorisation of responses and verbatims.

Systems & Processes

As seen in other sections of the report, having Council respond to emails and phone calls was identified as an area for improvement by 2.8% of respondents:

- *“A response to queries would be a significant improvement. I have sent several queries and requests only to never hear from Council...”*
- *“Respond to customers, even if its just to say the information has been received, that use the Customer Request form online.”*
- *“When I have made contact with the Council via email, I get an automated response and that’s pretty much it. For instance, I complained about an abandoned, unregistered vehicle in my street. Other than the automated response, I didn’t hear anything back. About a month later, one of those green stickers was placed on the vehicle. I have no idea whether my complaint reached anyone, or whether there was another complaint, or if a Council person just saw the car one day.”*

Respondents (2.5%) also suggested speed of service or response as an area for improvement:

- *“Faster response with name of person who will be taking action”*
- *“Speed of service and ease of access to information are the two main areas where Newcastle Council fails miserably.”*
- *“Speedy solutions to problems reported, more pleasant professional personnel answering the phone. Staff should call back customers when messages left - this is almost non-existent...”*

Council's website was also identified as needing improvement by 2.0% of respondents:

- *"Better access to online services, particularly in relation to property development"*
- *"I have sent in a couple of web based comments/requests, but never received any feedback from Council that they were received. And therefore never received any advice either. The web forms appeared to fall into a black hole, and thus they seem to be not very useful at all."*
- *"I spent time explaining a couple of general issues I'd noticed (potential safety concerns) but it may have been a complete waste of time. It's hard getting the time to phone someone, so the web forms would be a great idea as I can offer information/comments after hours (after work). But my impression is that it's a complete waste of time to use the web based forms..."*
- *"...my online customer service experience has been poor. The internet should be a quick and easy way to find information and submit feedback..."*

In way of systems and processes, a small proportion of respondents (1%) left comments regarding the automated phone system and having direct contacts available (0.8%).

Other suggestions provided by respondents related to change being needed in the elected Council and administration staff, more and / or improved consultation with the community (2.7%) and communication (0.8%). A small proportion of respondents left comments for specific departments. Please refer to Appendix IX for full categorisation and verbatim responses.



APPENDIX I- Questionnaire

ID: _____

Customer Service at Council

The City of Newcastle is committed to providing exceptional customer service to residents and ratepayers. Council staff provide information and assistance to thousands of people each year.

This survey follows the Community Survey, sent to you in April, where we asked you how well you were treated during your most recent contact with Council. In this survey we would like to take a more in-depth approach. Council wants to hear about your customer service experiences when you have contacted Council to obtain information, make a request, submit an application, lodge a complaint or provide complimentary feedback, make a payment, register a pet or respond to Council requests for information

The information you provide will help us understand your needs and improve the quality of our service. Your input will also help to shape the future Council Enquiry Centre.

This survey should take you approximately 10-20 minutes to complete, as you may not need to complete all sections.

Rest assured all of your answers are confidential. Please return the completed survey back to The City of Newcastle in the postage-paid envelope provided (there is no need to put a stamp on the envelope) by **Friday 20 July 2012.**

Q1: Have you made contact with Council in the last 12 months either in person, over the phone, by mail, email, or Council's website? **Please select one response only**

- Yes ***Please proceed to Section 1 on the next page.***
 No ***Please answer ONLY the yellow page of this survey (Q41-46)***

Section 1- Customer Service

Q2: What have been your main reasons for contacting Council over the last 12 months? **Please select all that apply.**

<input type="checkbox"/>	Give comment during the period of public exhibition
<input type="checkbox"/>	Give complimentary feedback
<input type="checkbox"/>	I was contacted by a Council officer
<input type="checkbox"/>	Lodge an application (i.e. development, parking, aged concessions)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Make a complaint
<input type="checkbox"/>	Obtain information
<input type="checkbox"/>	Pay an account
<input type="checkbox"/>	Providing information requested by a Council officer
<input type="checkbox"/>	Register a cat or dog
<input type="checkbox"/>	Request a service or maintenance
<input type="checkbox"/>	Seek assistance or advice
<input type="checkbox"/>	To get information about or respond to a development application
<input type="checkbox"/>	Don't know / Not sure
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other, please specify _____

Q3: Overall how satisfied are you with the standard of customer service you have received from Council over the last 12 months? **Please select one response only**

Very dissatisfied <input type="checkbox"/> (Go To Q4)	Dissatisfied <input type="checkbox"/> (Go To Q4)	Neither <input type="checkbox"/> (Go To Q5)	Satisfied <input type="checkbox"/> (Go To Q5)	Very satisfied <input type="checkbox"/> (Go To Q5)	Don't know / Can't say <input type="checkbox"/> (Go To Q5)
--	---	--	--	---	---

Q4: Why are you dissatisfied with the level of customer service you have received from Council in the last 12 months? **Please be as specific as possible.**

Q5: Which methods have you used to contact Council in the last 12 months? **Please select all that apply**

<input type="checkbox"/>	Email
<input type="checkbox"/>	In-person at Council offices or other locations
<input type="checkbox"/>	Internet/Website
<input type="checkbox"/>	Mail
<input type="checkbox"/>	Telephone
<input type="checkbox"/>	Don't know / Not sure
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (please specify) _____

Q6: Which is your preferred method of contacting Council? **Please select one response only**

<input type="checkbox"/>	Email
<input type="checkbox"/>	In-person at Council offices or other locations
<input type="checkbox"/>	Internet/Website
<input type="checkbox"/>	Mail
<input type="checkbox"/>	Telephone
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (please specify) _____

Section 2: In-person Customer Service



Q7: Approximately how many times have you contacted Council **in-person** in the last 12 months?
Please write in the number below.

Q8: You indicated you have had **in-person** contact with Council in the last 12 months. Which location(s) did you visit? **Please select all that apply**

<input type="checkbox"/>	Council Depot (at Waratah)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Council offices (King Street)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Library
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (please specify) _____

Q9: Thinking about the last **in-person** contact you had with Council, how would you rate the overall customer service you received? **Please select one response only.**

Very poor <input type="checkbox"/>	Poor <input type="checkbox"/>	Average <input type="checkbox"/>	Good <input type="checkbox"/>	Excellent <input type="checkbox"/>	Don't know / Can't say <input type="checkbox"/>
--	---	--	---	--	---

Q10: How would you rate your last **in-person** contact with Council in the following areas? **Please select one response only for each area.**

	Very poor	Poor	Average	Good	Excellent	Don't know / Can't say	Not applicable
Degree of helpfulness	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Professional	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Speed of service	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Staff knowledge	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Follow-up	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Overall ease of contact	<input type="checkbox"/>						

Q11: When contacting Council **in-person**, how long do you expect to wait before being served?
Please select one response only

<input type="checkbox"/>	Immediately
<input type="checkbox"/>	Less than 3 minutes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Less than 5 minutes
<input type="checkbox"/>	5 to 10 minutes
<input type="checkbox"/>	10 to 15 minutes
<input type="checkbox"/>	15 to 20 minutes
<input type="checkbox"/>	20 minutes or more
<input type="checkbox"/>	Don't know / Not sure

Q12: Thinking about your last **in-person** contact with Council, how long did you wait to be served?

<input type="checkbox"/>	I was served immediately
<input type="checkbox"/>	Less than 3 minutes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Less than 5 minutes
<input type="checkbox"/>	5 to 10 minutes
<input type="checkbox"/>	10 to 15 minutes
<input type="checkbox"/>	15 to 20 minutes
<input type="checkbox"/>	20 minutes or more
<input type="checkbox"/>	Don't know / Not sure
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (please specify) _____

Q13: How could Council improve its **in-person** customer service? **Please be as specific as possible.**

Section 3: Telephone Customer Service



If you have not had telephone contact with Council in the last 12 months, please go to Section 4

Q14: Approximately how many times have you contacted Council by **telephone** in the last 12 months? **Please write in the number below.**

Q15: Thinking about the last **telephone** contact you had with Council, how would you rate the overall customer service you received? **Please select one response only**

Very poor <input type="checkbox"/>	Poor <input type="checkbox"/>	Average <input type="checkbox"/>	Good <input type="checkbox"/>	Excellent <input type="checkbox"/>	Don't know / Can't say <input type="checkbox"/>
--	---	--	---	--	---

Q16: How would you rate your last **telephone** contact with Council in the following areas? **Please select one response only for each area**

	Very poor	Poor	Average	Good	Excellent	Don't know / Can't say	Not applicable
Degree of helpfulness	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Professional	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Speed of service	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Staff knowledge	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Follow-up	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Overall ease of contact	<input type="checkbox"/>						

Q17: When contacting Council over the **phone**, how long do you expect to wait before speaking with a staff member? **Please select one response only**

<input type="checkbox"/>	Less than 60 seconds
<input type="checkbox"/>	1-2 minutes
<input type="checkbox"/>	3-4 minutes
<input type="checkbox"/>	4-5minutes
<input type="checkbox"/>	6-10 minutes
<input type="checkbox"/>	15 to 20 minutes
<input type="checkbox"/>	20 minutes or more
<input type="checkbox"/>	Don't know / Not sure

Q18: Thinking about your **telephone** contact with Council, how long did you wait to speak to someone? **Please select one response only**

<input type="checkbox"/>	Less than 60 seconds
<input type="checkbox"/>	1-2 minutes
<input type="checkbox"/>	3-4 minutes
<input type="checkbox"/>	4-5minutes
<input type="checkbox"/>	6-10 minutes
<input type="checkbox"/>	15 to 20 minutes
<input type="checkbox"/>	20 minutes or more
<input type="checkbox"/>	My call was not answered
<input type="checkbox"/>	Don't know / Not sure
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (please specify) _____

Q19: Thinking about the last time you contacted Council via the **telephone**, was your enquiry or issue resolved on your first call? **Please select one response only**

<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes (Go To Q20)
<input type="checkbox"/>	No (Go To Q21)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Don't know / Not sure (Go To Section 4)

Q20: Was your enquiry dealt with at the first point of contact or by a number of transfers within Council? **Please select one only**

<input type="checkbox"/>	First point of contact (Go To Q22)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Number of transfers (Go To Q22)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Don't know / Not sure (Go To Q22)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other, please specify _____ (Go To Q22)

Q21: How many return calls did you need to make to Council to have your query resolved? **Please select one only**

<input type="checkbox"/>	1 call
<input type="checkbox"/>	2-3 calls
<input type="checkbox"/>	4-5 calls
<input type="checkbox"/>	6 calls or more
<input type="checkbox"/>	Query not yet resolved
<input type="checkbox"/>	Don't know / Not sure
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other, please specify _____

Q22: How can Council improve its **telephone** customer service? **Please be as specific as possible.**

Section 4: Email Customer Service



If you have not had email contact with Council in the last 12 months, please go to Section 5

Q23: Approximately how many times have you contacted Council by **email** in the last 12 months? **Please write in the number below.**

Q24: Thinking about the last **email** correspondence you had with Council, how would you rate the overall customer service you received? **Please select one response only**

Very poor <input type="checkbox"/>	Poor <input type="checkbox"/>	Average <input type="checkbox"/>	Good <input type="checkbox"/>	Excellent <input type="checkbox"/>	Don't know / Can't say <input type="checkbox"/>
--	---	--	---	--	---

Q25: How would you rate your last **email** correspondence with Council in the following areas?

Please select one response only for each area

	Very poor	Poor	Average	Good	Excellent	Don't know / Can't say	Not applicable
Degree of helpfulness	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Professional	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Speed of response	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Staff knowledge	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Follow-up	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Overall ease of contact	<input type="checkbox"/>						

Q26: When contacting Council via **email**, how long do you expect to wait before receiving a response? **Please select one response only**

<input type="checkbox"/>	Within a few hours
<input type="checkbox"/>	Same day
<input type="checkbox"/>	2-3 days
<input type="checkbox"/>	Within a week
<input type="checkbox"/>	Within a fortnight
<input type="checkbox"/>	A month or more
<input type="checkbox"/>	Don't know / Not sure

Q27: Thinking about your last **email** correspondence with Council, how long did it take for you to receive a response addressing your enquiry (i.e. not an automated response)? **Please select one response only**

<input type="checkbox"/>	Within a few hours
<input type="checkbox"/>	Same day
<input type="checkbox"/>	2-3 days
<input type="checkbox"/>	Within a week
<input type="checkbox"/>	Within a fortnight
<input type="checkbox"/>	A month or more
<input type="checkbox"/>	I didn't receive a response
<input type="checkbox"/>	Don't know / Not sure
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other, please specify _____

Q28: Was the last email you sent to Council to ...?

<input type="checkbox"/>	mail@ncc.nsw.gov.au
<input type="checkbox"/>	A specific Council staff member's email address
<input type="checkbox"/>	Don't know / Not sure
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (please specify) _____

Q29: How can Council improve its **email** based customer service? **Please be as specific as possible.**

Section 5: Posted Mail Customer Service



If you have not contacted Council by posted mail in the last 12 months, please go to Section 6

Q30: Approximately how many times have you contacted Council by **posted mail** in the last 12 months? **Please write in the number below.**

Q31: Thinking about the last **posted mail** correspondence you had with Council, how would you rate the overall customer service you received? **Please select one response only**

Very poor <input type="checkbox"/>	Poor <input type="checkbox"/>	Average <input type="checkbox"/>	Good <input type="checkbox"/>	Excellent <input type="checkbox"/>	Don't know / Can't say <input type="checkbox"/>
--	---	--	---	--	---

Q32: How would you rate your last **posted mail** correspondence with Council in the following areas? **Please select one response only for each area**

	Very poor	Poor	Average	Good	Excellent	Don't know / Can't say	Not applicable
Degree of helpfulness	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Professional	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Speed of service	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Staff knowledge	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Follow-up	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Overall ease of contact	<input type="checkbox"/>						

Q33: When contacting Council via **posted mail**, how long do you expect to wait before receiving a response from Council? **Please select one response only**

<input type="checkbox"/>	Within a few days
<input type="checkbox"/>	Within a week
<input type="checkbox"/>	Within a fortnight
<input type="checkbox"/>	A month or more
<input type="checkbox"/>	Don't know / Not sure

Q34: Thinking about your last **posted mail** correspondence with Council, how long did it take for you to receive a response? **Please select one response only**

<input type="checkbox"/>	Within a few days
<input type="checkbox"/>	Within a week
<input type="checkbox"/>	Within a fortnight
<input type="checkbox"/>	A month or more
<input type="checkbox"/>	I didn't receive a response
<input type="checkbox"/>	Don't know / Not sure
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other, please specify _____

Q35: How can Council improve its **posted mail** based customer service? **Please be as specific as possible.**

Section 6: Internet



If you have not accessed Council's website in the last 12 months, please go to Section 7

Q36: Approximately how many times have you accessed **Council's website** in the last 12 months? **Please write in the number below.**

Q37: Based on your experience with Council's website, how do you rate the website overall?
Please select one response only

Very poor <input type="checkbox"/>	Poor <input type="checkbox"/>	Average <input type="checkbox"/>	Good <input type="checkbox"/>	Excellent <input type="checkbox"/>	Don't know / Can't say <input type="checkbox"/>
--	---	--	---	--	---

Q38: How would you rate **Council's website** in the following areas? **Please select one response only for each area**

	Very poor	Poor	Average	Good	Excellent	Don't know / Can't say	Not applicable
Information is easy to find	<input type="checkbox"/>						
Information is relevant	<input type="checkbox"/>						
The website is visually appealing	<input type="checkbox"/>						

Q39: What information or services would you like to see on **Council's website**? **Please be as specific as possible.**

Section 7- Suggestions for improvement

Q40: Finally, do you have any suggestions for how Council could improve its overall customer service delivery? **Please be as specific as possible.**

Q41. Once the results of the survey are analysed, Council is considering holding focus group sessions to further discuss customer service and how it can be improved. These sessions would run for approximately an hour and a half, during both the day and evening. Would you be interested in attending a session like this? **Please select one response only**

<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes during the daytime- contact me when details are available to see if I am available
<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes during the evening- contact me when details are available to see if I am available
<input type="checkbox"/>	No

**Thank you for completing the survey.
You do not need to complete the yellow page (Q 41-46).**

 **Only complete this yellow page (Q41-46) if you have not contacted Council in the last 12 months in-person, over the phone, via posted mail or email, or via Council's website.**

Q41: Which methods have you used to contact Council in the past? **Please select all that apply**

<input type="checkbox"/>	Email
<input type="checkbox"/>	In-person at Council offices or other locations
<input type="checkbox"/>	Internet/Website
<input type="checkbox"/>	Mail
<input type="checkbox"/>	Telephone
<input type="checkbox"/>	None- I have never contacted Council
<input type="checkbox"/>	Don't know / Not sure
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (please specify) _____

Q42: If you had to contact Council in the future, what would be your preferred contact method?
Please one response only

<input type="checkbox"/>	Email
<input type="checkbox"/>	In-person at Council offices or other locations
<input type="checkbox"/>	Internet/Website
<input type="checkbox"/>	Mail
<input type="checkbox"/>	Telephone
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (please specify) _____
<input type="checkbox"/>	Don't know / Not sure

Q43: If contacting Council **in-person** in the future, how long would you expect to wait before being served? **Please select one response only**

<input type="checkbox"/>	Immediately
<input type="checkbox"/>	Less than 3 minutes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Less than 5 minutes
<input type="checkbox"/>	5 to 10 minutes
<input type="checkbox"/>	10 to 15 minutes
<input type="checkbox"/>	15 to 20 minutes
<input type="checkbox"/>	20 minutes or more
<input type="checkbox"/>	Don't know / Not sure

Q44: If contacting Council over the **phone** in the future, how long would you expect to wait before speaking with a staff member? **Please select one response only**

<input type="checkbox"/>	Less than 60 seconds
<input type="checkbox"/>	1-2 minutes
<input type="checkbox"/>	3-4 minutes
<input type="checkbox"/>	4-5minutes
<input type="checkbox"/>	6-10 minutes
<input type="checkbox"/>	15 to 20 minutes
<input type="checkbox"/>	20 minutes or more
<input type="checkbox"/>	Don't know / Not sure

Q45: If contacting Council via **email** in the future, how long would you expect to wait before receiving a response? **Please select one response only**

<input type="checkbox"/>	Within a few hours
<input type="checkbox"/>	Same day
<input type="checkbox"/>	2-3days
<input type="checkbox"/>	Within a week
<input type="checkbox"/>	Within a fortnight
<input type="checkbox"/>	A month or more
<input type="checkbox"/>	Don't know / Not sure

Q46: If contacting Council via **posted mail**, how long would you expect to wait before receiving a written response from Council? **Please select one response only**

<input type="checkbox"/>	Within a few days
<input type="checkbox"/>	Within a week
<input type="checkbox"/>	Within a fortnight
<input type="checkbox"/>	A month or more
<input type="checkbox"/>	Don't know / Not sure

Thank you for completing this survey, your participation is greatly appreciated.



APPENDIX II- Topline Results (unweighted)

Topline Results- Unweighted Data

Q1_contactlast12mths: Have you made contact with Council in the last 12 months either in person, over the phone, via mail, email, or Council's website?

QUESTION TOTAL: 850

NO RESPONSE: 0

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Yes	600	70.59 %
O2	No	250	29.41 %

Q2_reasonsforcontact: What have been your main reasons for contacting Council over the last 12 months?

QUESTION TOTAL: 600

NO RESPONSE: 0

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Give comment during the period of public exhibition	75	12.50 %
O2	Give complimentary feedback	27	4.50 %
O3	Providing information requested by a Council officer	25	4.17 %
O4	I was contacted by a Council officer	24	4.00 %
O5	Lodge an application (i.e. development, parking, aged concessions)	50	8.33 %
O6	To get information about or respond to a development application	92	15.33 %
O7	Make a complaint	140	23.33 %
O8	Obtain information	236	39.33 %
O9	Pay an account	73	12.17 %
O10	Register a cat or dog	18	3.00 %
O11	Request a service or maintenance	219	36.50 %
O12	Seek assistance or advice	171	28.50 %
O13	Don't know / Not sure	4	0.67 %
O14	Other, please specify	63	10.50 %

Q3_overallsatisfaction: Overall how satisfied are you with the standard of customer service you have received from Council over the last 12 months?

QUESTION TOTAL: 600

NO RESPONSE: 0

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Very dissatisfied	53	8.83 %
O2	Dissatisfied	110	18.33 %
O3	Neither	67	11.17 %
O4	Satisfied	217	36.17 %
O5	Very satisfied	148	24.67 %
O6	Don't know / Can't say	5	0.83 %

Q5_methodslast12mths: Which methods have you used to contact Council in the last 12 months?

QUESTION TOTAL: 600

NO RESPONSE: 0

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	In-person at Council offices or other locations	212	35.33 %
O2	Telephone	445	74.17 %
O3	Internet/Website	194	32.33 %
O4	Mail (post)	63	10.50 %
O5	Email	226	37.67 %
O6	Don't know / Not sure	1	0.17 %
O7	Other (please specify)	6	1.00 %

Q6_preferredmethod: Which is your preferred method of contacting Council?

QUESTION TOTAL: 600

NO RESPONSE: 0

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	In-person at Council offices or other locations	89	14.83 %
O2	Telephone	288	48.00 %
O3	Internet/Website	88	14.67 %
O4	Mail (post)	11	1.83 %
O5	Email	119	19.83 %
O6	[%GetOtherSpecify (Q5_methodslast12mths,"6")%]	4	0.67 %
O7	Don't know / Can't remember	1	0.17 %

Q7_facetofacefrequency: Approximately how many times have you contacted Council in-person in the last 12 months?

QUESTION TOTAL: 212

NO RESPONSE: 0

MEAN: 11.39

STD DEV: 69.05

Q8_facetofacelocation: You indicated you have had in-person contact with Council in the last 12 months. Which location(s) did you visit?

QUESTION TOTAL: 212

NO RESPONSE: 0

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Council offices (King Street)	183	86.32 %
O2	Council Depot (at Waratah)	22	10.38 %
O3	Library	65	30.66 %
O4	Other (please specify)	34	16.04 %

Q9_facetofaceperformance_0: The customer service I received in-person was:

QUESTION TOTAL: 212

NO RESPONSE: 0

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Very poor	17	8.02 %
O2	Poor	21	9.91 %
O3	Average	32	15.09 %
O4	Good	88	41.51 %
O5	Excellent	54	25.47 %
O6	Don't know / Can't say	0	0.00 %

Q10_facetofacediagnostics_0: Degree of helpfulness

QUESTION TOTAL: 212

NO RESPONSE: 0

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Very Poor	20	9.43 %
O2	Poor	25	11.79 %
O3	Average	33	15.57 %
O4	Good	80	37.74 %
O5	Excellent	53	25.00 %
O6	Don't know / Can't say	0	0.00 %
O7	Not applicable	1	0.47 %

Q10_facetofacediagnostics_1: Professional

QUESTION TOTAL: 212

NO RESPONSE: 0

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Very Poor	19	8.96 %
O2	Poor	14	6.60 %
O3	Average	44	20.75 %
O4	Good	80	37.74 %
O5	Excellent	51	24.06 %
O6	Don't know / Can't say	1	0.47 %
O7	Not applicable	3	1.42 %

Q10_facetofacediagnostics_2: Speed of service

QUESTION TOTAL: 212

NO RESPONSE: 0

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Very Poor	29	13.68 %
O2	Poor	25	11.79 %
O3	Average	43	20.28 %
O4	Good	77	36.32 %
O5	Excellent	33	15.57 %
O6	Don't know / Can't say	1	0.47 %
O7	Not applicable	4	1.89 %

Q10_facetofacediagnostics_3: Staff knowledge

QUESTION TOTAL: 212

NO RESPONSE: 0

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Very Poor	18	8.49 %
O2	Poor	18	8.49 %
O3	Average	41	19.34 %
O4	Good	82	38.68 %
O5	Excellent	43	20.28 %
O6	Don't know / Can't say	5	2.36 %
O7	Not applicable	5	2.36 %

Q10_facetofacediagnostics_4: Follow-up

QUESTION TOTAL: 212

NO RESPONSE: 0

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Very Poor	31	14.62 %
O2	Poor	17	8.02 %
O3	Average	40	18.87 %
O4	Good	47	22.17 %
O5	Excellent	25	11.79 %
O6	Don't know / Can't say	6	2.83 %
O7	Not applicable	46	21.70 %

Q10_facetofacediagnostics_5: Overall ease of contact

QUESTION TOTAL: 212

NO RESPONSE: 0

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Very Poor	18	8.49 %
O2	Poor	20	9.43 %
O3	Average	43	20.28 %
O4	Good	85	40.09 %
O5	Excellent	45	21.23 %
O6	Don't know / Can't say	0	0.00 %
O7	Not applicable	1	0.47 %

Q11_facetofaceexpectedwait: When contacting Council in-person, how long do you expect to wait before being served?

QUESTION TOTAL: 212

NO RESPONSE: 0

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Immediately	13	6.13 %
O2	Less than 3 minutes	49	23.11 %
O3	Less than 5 minutes	76	35.85 %
O4	5 to 10 minutes	51	24.06 %
O5	10 to 15 minutes	10	4.72 %
O6	15 to 20 minutes	3	1.42 %
O7	20 minutes or more	3	1.42 %
O8	Don't know / Not sure	7	3.30 %

Q12_facetofaceactualwait: Thinking about your last in-person contact with Council, how long did you wait to be served?

QUESTION TOTAL: 212

NO RESPONSE: 0

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	I was served immediately	26	12.26 %
O2	Less than 3 minutes	45	21.23 %
O3	Less than 5 minutes	52	24.53 %
O4	5 to 10 minutes	36	16.98 %
O5	10 to 15 minutes	15	7.08 %
O6	15 to 20 minutes	4	1.89 %
O7	20 minutes or more	15	7.08 %
O8	Don't know / Not sure	5	2.36 %
O9	Other (please specify)	14	6.60 %

Q14_telephonefrequency: Approximately how many times have you contacted Council by telephone in the last 12 months?

QUESTION TOTAL: 445

NO RESPONSE: 0

MEAN: 5.19

STD DEV: 15.48

Q15_telephoneperformance_0: The telephone customer service I received was:

QUESTION TOTAL: 445

NO RESPONSE: 0

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Very poor	38	8.54 %
O2	Poor	40	8.99 %
O3	Average	101	22.70 %
O4	Good	172	38.65 %
O5	Excellent	92	20.67 %
O6	Don't know / Can't say	2	0.45 %

Q16_telephonediagnostics_0: Degree of helpfulness

QUESTION TOTAL: 445

NO RESPONSE: 0

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Very Poor	49	11.01 %
O2	Poor	46	10.34 %
O3	Average	81	18.20 %
O4	Good	168	37.75 %
O5	Excellent	95	21.35 %
O6	Don't know / Can't say	2	0.45 %
O7	Not applicable	4	0.90 %

Q16_telephonediagnostics_1: Professional

QUESTION TOTAL: 445

NO RESPONSE: 0

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Very Poor	31	6.97 %
O2	Poor	37	8.31 %
O3	Average	81	18.20 %
O4	Good	181	40.67 %
O5	Excellent	105	23.60 %
O6	Don't know / Can't say	5	1.12 %
O7	Not applicable	5	1.12 %

Q16_telephonediagnostics_2: Speed of service

QUESTION TOTAL: 445

NO RESPONSE: 0

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Very Poor	53	11.91 %
O2	Poor	56	12.58 %
O3	Average	88	19.78 %
O4	Good	165	37.08 %
O5	Excellent	71	15.96 %
O6	Don't know / Can't say	6	1.35 %
O7	Not applicable	6	1.35 %

Q16_telephonediagnostics_3: Staff knowledge

QUESTION TOTAL: 445

NO RESPONSE: 0

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Very Poor	29	6.52 %
O2	Poor	42	9.44 %
O3	Average	86	19.33 %
O4	Good	183	41.12 %
O5	Excellent	94	21.12 %
O6	Don't know / Can't say	7	1.57 %
O7	Not applicable	4	0.90 %

Q16_telephonediagnostics_4: Follow-up

QUESTION TOTAL: 445

NO RESPONSE: 0

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Very Poor	92	20.67 %
O2	Poor	46	10.34 %
O3	Average	60	13.48 %
O4	Good	108	24.27 %
O5	Excellent	51	11.46 %
O6	Don't know / Can't say	11	2.47 %
O7	Not applicable	77	17.30 %

Q16_telephonediagnostics_5: Overall ease of contact

QUESTION TOTAL: 445

NO RESPONSE: 0

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Very Poor	42	9.44 %
O2	Poor	51	11.46 %
O3	Average	93	20.90 %
O4	Good	168	37.75 %
O5	Excellent	88	19.78 %
O6	Don't know / Can't say	1	0.22 %
O7	Not applicable	2	0.45 %

Q17_telephoneexpectedwait: When contacting Council over the phone, how long do you expect to wait before speaking with a staff member?

QUESTION TOTAL: 445

NO RESPONSE: 0

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Less than 60 seconds	125	28.09 %
O2	1-2 minutes	203	45.62 %
O3	3-4 minutes	69	15.51 %
O4	4-5minutes	29	6.52 %
O5	6-10 minutes	10	2.25 %
O6	15 to 20 minutes	2	0.45 %
O7	20 minutes or more	2	0.45 %
O8	Don't know / Not sure	5	1.12 %

Q18_telephoneactualwait: Thinking about your last telephone contact with Council, how long did you wait to speak to someone?

QUESTION TOTAL: 445

NO RESPONSE: 0

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Less than 60 seconds	121	27.19 %
O2	1-2 minutes	126	28.31 %
O3	3-4 minutes	65	14.61 %
O4	4-5minutes	32	7.19 %
O5	6-10 minutes	20	4.49 %
O6	15 to 20 minutes	2	0.45 %
O7	20 minutes or more	4	0.90 %
O8	My call was not answered	30	6.74 %
O9	Don't know / Not sure	23	5.17 %
O10	Other (please specify)	22	4.94 %

Q19_telephoneoneormulticalls: Thinking about the last time you contacted Council via the telephone, was your enquiry or issue resolved on your first call?

QUESTION TOTAL: 445

NO RESPONSE: 0

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Yes	213	47.87 %
O2	No	216	48.54 %
O3	Don't know / Not sure	16	3.60 %

Q20_firstcall: Was your enquiry dealt with at the first point of contact or by a number of transfers within Council?

QUESTION TOTAL: 213

NO RESPONSE: 0

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	First point of contact	106	49.77 %
O2	Number of transfers	96	45.07 %
O3	Don't know / Not sure	7	3.29 %
O4	Other (please specify)	4	1.88 %

Q21_returncalls: How many return calls did you need to make to Council to have your query resolved?

QUESTION TOTAL: 216

NO RESPONSE: 0

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	1 call	20	9.26 %
O2	2-3 calls	78	36.11 %
O3	4-5 calls	17	7.87 %
O4	6 calls or more	7	3.24 %
O5	My query is not yet resolved	62	28.70 %
O6	Don't know / Not sure	7	3.24 %
O7	Other, please specify	25	11.57 %

Q23_emailfrequency: Approximately how many times have you had contacted Council by email in the last 12 months?

QUESTION TOTAL: 226

NO RESPONSE: 0

MEAN: 12.06

STD DEV: 69.95

Q24_Emailperformance_0: The customer service I received via email was:

QUESTION TOTAL: 226

NO RESPONSE: 0

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Very poor	32	14.16 %
O2	Poor	27	11.95 %
O3	Average	45	19.91 %
O4	Good	81	35.84 %
O5	Excellent	29	12.83 %
O6	Don't know / Can't say	12	5.31 %

Q25_Emaildiagnostics_0: Degree of helpfulness

QUESTION TOTAL: 226

NO RESPONSE: 0

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Very Poor	40	17.70 %
O2	Poor	32	14.16 %
O3	Average	42	18.58 %
O4	Good	58	25.66 %
O5	Excellent	32	14.16 %
O6	Don't know / Can't say	6	2.65 %
O7	Not applicable	16	7.08 %

Q25_Emaildiagnostics_1: Professional

QUESTION TOTAL: 226

NO RESPONSE: 0

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Very Poor	28	12.39 %
O2	Poor	16	7.08 %
O3	Average	44	19.47 %
O4	Good	74	32.74 %
O5	Excellent	40	17.70 %
O6	Don't know / Can't say	9	3.98 %
O7	Not applicable	15	6.64 %

Q25_Emaildiagnostics_2: Speed of response

QUESTION TOTAL: 226

NO RESPONSE: 0

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Very Poor	39	17.26 %
O2	Poor	19	8.41 %
O3	Average	46	20.35 %
O4	Good	70	30.97 %
O5	Excellent	31	13.72 %
O6	Don't know / Can't say	8	3.54 %
O7	Not applicable	13	5.75 %

Q25_Emaildiagnostics_3: Staff knowledge

QUESTION TOTAL: 226

NO RESPONSE: 0

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Very Poor	20	8.85 %
O2	Poor	16	7.08 %
O3	Average	49	21.68 %
O4	Good	64	28.32 %
O5	Excellent	34	15.04 %
O6	Don't know / Can't say	16	7.08 %
O7	Not applicable	27	11.95 %

Q25_Emaildiagnostics_4: Follow-up

QUESTION TOTAL: 226

NO RESPONSE: 0

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Very Poor	49	21.68 %
O2	Poor	25	11.06 %
O3	Average	38	16.81 %
O4	Good	57	25.22 %
O5	Excellent	28	12.39 %
O6	Don't know / Can't say	6	2.65 %
O7	Not applicable	23	10.18 %

Q25_Emaildiagnostics_5: Overall ease of contact

QUESTION TOTAL: 226

NO RESPONSE: 0

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Very Poor	21	9.29 %
O2	Poor	21	9.29 %
O3	Average	43	19.03 %
O4	Good	80	35.40 %
O5	Excellent	42	18.58 %
O6	Don't know / Can't say	8	3.54 %
O7	Not applicable	11	4.87 %

Q26_emailexpectedwait: When contacting Council via email, how long do you expect to wait before receiving a response?

QUESTION TOTAL: 226

NO RESPONSE: 0

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Within a few hours	5	2.21 %
O2	Same day	54	23.89 %
O3	2-3days	117	51.77 %
O4	Within a week	31	13.72 %
O5	Within a fortnight	9	3.98 %
O6	A month or more	6	2.65 %
O7	Don't know / Not sure	4	1.77 %

Q27_emailactualwait: Thinking about your last email correspondence with Council, how long did it take for you to receive a response addressing your enquiry (i.e. not an automated response)?

QUESTION TOTAL: 226

NO RESPONSE: 0

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Within a few hours	10	4.42 %
O2	Same day	22	9.73 %
O3	2-3days	56	24.78 %
O4	Within a week	28	12.39 %
O5	Within a fortnight	22	9.73 %
O6	A month or more	21	9.29 %
O7	Don't know / Not sure	18	7.96 %
O8	Other, please specify	49	21.68 %

Q28_emailaddressusedCopy1: Was the last email you sent to Council to ...?

QUESTION TOTAL: 226

NO RESPONSE: 0

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	mail@ncc.nsw.gov.au	69	30.53 %
O2	A specific Council staff members email address	94	41.59 %
O3	Don't know / Not sure	51	22.57 %
O4	Other (please specify)	12	5.31 %

Q30_Mailfrequency: Approximately how many times have you contacted Council by posted mail in the last 12 months?

QUESTION TOTAL: 63

NO RESPONSE: 0

MEAN: 2.37

STD DEV: 1.61

Q31_Mailperformance_0: The customer service I received via mail was:

QUESTION TOTAL: 63

NO RESPONSE: 0

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Very poor	10	15.87 %
O2	Poor	5	7.94 %
O3	Average	19	30.16 %
O4	Good	22	34.92 %
O5	Excellent	6	9.52 %
O6	Don't know / Can't say	1	1.59 %

Q32_Maildiagnostics_0: Degree of helpfulness

QUESTION TOTAL: 63

NO RESPONSE: 0

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Very Poor	14	22.22 %
O2	Poor	8	12.70 %
O3	Average	14	22.22 %
O4	Good	17	26.98 %
O5	Excellent	6	9.52 %
O6	Don't know / Can't say	2	3.17 %
O7	Not applicable	2	3.17 %

Q32_Maildiagnostics_1: Professional

QUESTION TOTAL: 63

NO RESPONSE: 0

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Very Poor	9	14.29 %
O2	Poor	5	7.94 %
O3	Average	15	23.81 %
O4	Good	24	38.10 %
O5	Excellent	6	9.52 %
O6	Don't know / Can't say	2	3.17 %
O7	Not applicable	2	3.17 %

Q32_Maildiagnostics_2: Speed of response

QUESTION TOTAL: 63

NO RESPONSE: 0

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Very Poor	14	22.22 %
O2	Poor	7	11.11 %
O3	Average	17	26.98 %
O4	Good	17	26.98 %
O5	Excellent	5	7.94 %
O6	Don't know / Can't say	2	3.17 %
O7	Not applicable	1	1.59 %

Q32_Maildiagnostics_3: Staff knowledge

QUESTION TOTAL: 63

NO RESPONSE: 0

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Very Poor	8	12.70 %
O2	Poor	5	7.94 %
O3	Average	13	20.63 %
O4	Good	18	28.57 %
O5	Excellent	9	14.29 %
O6	Don't know / Can't say	4	6.35 %
O7	Not applicable	6	9.52 %

Q32_Maildiagnostics_4: Follow-up

QUESTION TOTAL: 63

NO RESPONSE: 0

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Very Poor	14	22.22 %
O2	Poor	5	7.94 %
O3	Average	15	23.81 %
O4	Good	16	25.40 %
O5	Excellent	4	6.35 %
O6	Don't know / Can't say	3	4.76 %
O7	Not applicable	6	9.52 %

Q32_Maildiagnostics_5: Overall ease of contact

QUESTION TOTAL: 63

NO RESPONSE: 0

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Very Poor	10	15.87 %
O2	Poor	3	4.76 %
O3	Average	17	26.98 %
O4	Good	24	38.10 %
O5	Excellent	4	6.35 %
O6	Don't know / Can't say	2	3.17 %
O7	Not applicable	3	4.76 %

Q33_Mailexpectedwait: When contacting Council via posted mail, how long do you expect to wait before receiving a response from Council?

QUESTION TOTAL: 63

NO RESPONSE: 0

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Within a few days	3	4.76 %
O2	Within a week	23	36.51 %
O3	Within a fortnight	30	47.62 %
O4	Within a month	6	9.52 %
O5	Don't know / Not sure	1	1.59 %

Q34_Mailactualwait: Thinking about your last posted mail correspondence with Council, how long did it take for you to receive a response?

QUESTION TOTAL: 63

NO RESPONSE: 0

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Within a few days	0	0.00 %
O2	Within a week	14	22.22 %
O3	Within a fortnight	19	30.16 %
O4	A month or more	14	22.22 %
O5	I didn't receive a response	9	14.29 %
O6	Don't know / Not sure	5	7.94 %
O7	Other, please specify	2	3.17 %

Q36_Internetfrequency: Approximately how many times have you accessed Council's website in the last 12 months?

QUESTION TOTAL: 194

NO RESPONSE: 0

MEAN: 20.74

STD DEV: 74.78

Q37_Internetperformance_0: Council's website is:

QUESTION TOTAL: 194

NO RESPONSE: 0

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Very poor	9	4.64 %
O2	Poor	16	8.25 %
O3	Average	56	28.87 %
O4	Good	93	47.94 %
O5	Excellent	20	10.31 %
O6	Don't know / Can't say	0	0.00 %

Q38_Internetdiagnostics_0: Information is easy to find

QUESTION TOTAL: 194

NO RESPONSE: 0

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Very Poor	19	9.79 %
O2	Poor	27	13.92 %
O3	Average	66	34.02 %
O4	Good	63	32.47 %
O5	Excellent	19	9.79 %
O6	Don't know / Can't say	0	0.00 %
O7	Not applicable	0	0.00 %

Q38_Internetdiagnostics_1: Information is relevant

QUESTION TOTAL: 194

NO RESPONSE: 0

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Very Poor	7	3.61 %
O2	Poor	12	6.19 %
O3	Average	57	29.38 %
O4	Good	94	48.45 %
O5	Excellent	24	12.37 %
O6	Don't know / Can't say	0	0.00 %
O7	Not applicable	0	0.00 %

Q38_Internetdiagnostics_2: The website is visually appealing

QUESTION TOTAL: 194

NO RESPONSE: 0

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Very Poor	7	3.61 %
O2	Poor	11	5.67 %
O3	Average	57	29.38 %
O4	Good	89	45.88 %
O5	Excellent	29	14.95 %
O6	Don't know / Can't say	1	0.52 %
O7	Not applicable	0	0.00 %

Q40a: Once the results of the survey are analysed, Council is considering holding focus group sessions to further discuss customer service and how it can be improved. These sessions would run for approximately an hour and a half, during both the day and evening. Would you be interested in attending a session like this?

QUESTION TOTAL: 600
NO RESPONSE: 0

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Yes during the daytime - contact me when details are available to see if I am available	157	26.17 %
O2	Yes during the evening - contact me when details are available to see if I am available	109	18.17 %
O3	No	334	55.67 %

Q41_methodseverused: Which methods have you ever used to contact Council in the past?

QUESTION TOTAL: 250
NO RESPONSE: 0

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	In-person at Council offices or other locations	108	43.20 %
O2	Telephone	159	63.60 %
O3	Internet/Website	53	21.20 %
O4	Mail (post)	27	10.80 %
O5	Email	34	13.60 %
O6	None- I have never contacted Council	35	14.00 %
O7	Don't know / Not sure	5	2.00 %
O8	Other (please specify)	3	1.20 %

Q42_methodinfuture: If you had to contact Council in the future, what would be your preferred contact method?

QUESTION TOTAL: 250

NO RESPONSE: 0

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	In-person at Council offices or other locations	41	16.40 %
O2	Telephone	109	43.60 %
O3	Internet/Website	18	7.20 %
O4	Mail	5	2.00 %
O5	Email	61	24.40 %
O6	Other (please specify)	5	2.00 %
O7	Don't know/not sure	11	4.40 %

Q43_facetofaceexpectedwaitCopy1: Q43: If contacting Council in-person in the future, how long would you expect to wait before being served?

QUESTION TOTAL: 250

NO RESPONSE: 0

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Immediately	9	3.60 %
O2	Less than 3 minutes	55	22.00 %
O3	Less than 5 minutes	79	31.60 %
O4	5 to 10 minutes	78	31.20 %
O5	10 to 15 minutes	18	7.20 %
O6	15 to 20 minutes	1	0.40 %
O7	20 minutes or more	2	0.80 %
O8	Don't know / Not sure	8	3.20 %

Q44_telephoneexpectedwaitCopy1: Q44: If contacting Council over the phone in future, how long would you expect to wait before speaking with a staff member?

QUESTION TOTAL: 250

NO RESPONSE: 0

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Less than 60 seconds	70	28.00 %
O2	1-2 minutes	102	40.80 %
O3	3-4 minutes	38	15.20 %
O4	4-5minutes	29	11.60 %
O5	6-10 minutes	4	1.60 %
O6	15 to 20 minutes	0	0.00 %
O7	20 minutes or more	1	0.40 %
O8	Don't know / Not sure	6	2.40 %

Q45_emailexpectedwaitCopy1: Q45: If contacting Council via email in the future, how long would you expect to wait before receiving a response?

QUESTION TOTAL: 250

NO RESPONSE: 0

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Within a few hours	28	11.20 %
O2	Same day	96	38.40 %
O3	2-3days	89	35.60 %
O4	Within a week	7	2.80 %
O5	Within a fortnight	1	0.40 %
O6	A month or more	0	0.00 %
O7	Don't know / Not sure	29	11.60 %

Q46_MailexpectedwaitCopy1: Q46: If contacting Council via posted mail in the future, how long would you expect to wait before receiving a response from Council?

QUESTION TOTAL: 250

NO RESPONSE: 0

	OPTIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
O1	Within a few days	33	13.20 %
O2	Within a week	125	50.00 %
O3	Within a fortnight	72	28.80 %
O4	Within a month	3	1.20 %
O5	Don't know / Not sure	17	6.80 %

APPENDIX III: Verbatim responses- Reasons for dissatisfaction

Categorisation of reasons for overall dissatisfaction (Q4)		
<i>Base: dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with customer service overall (Q3)</i>	COUNT	PERCENT
	n=	%
Response from Council		40.2
no response received	25	15.2
no action taken	15	9.1
multiple contacts required	9	5.5
no follow up	6	3.7
slow or no response to voicemail messages	6	3.7
incomplete responses	3	1.8
response did not address my query	2	1.2
Systems & Process		26.8
slow	16	9.8
no records made / nothing logged	7	4.3
computer phone system	6	3.7
can't get through / phones ring out (once past switch)	4	2.4
ticketing system	4	2.4
need a drop box in CAC	3	1.8
on hold for long time	2	1.2
phone dropped out	1	0.6
need to extend contact hours	1	0.6
Staff		26.2
don't care / dismissive	11	6.7
arrogant / rude	11	6.7
not helpful	10	6.1
inconsistency in responses	3	1.8
not forthcoming with info	3	1.8
"can't do anything about it"	2	1.2
lack of knowledge / need training or education	1	0.6
bad attitude	1	0.6
don't listen	1	0.6
Department		52.4
Waste / bins	29	17.7
DA's	16	9.8
Footpaths and Roads /traffic	11	6.7
Trees	9	5.5
Grass cutting / gardens / parks	8	4.9
Dogs and Cats	7	4.3
Parking	6	3.7
Positive comments		3.0
Front desk staff are good / good in-person experience	4	2.4
Switch staff are good / good phone experience	1	0.6
Other	16	9.8
No answer	5	3.0

Q4_ Reasons Dissatisfied
<p>* Substantive responses are rarely provided within the commitment period specified in the Council's Customer Service Charter.</p> <p>* Responses are often not complete - they often answer only a part of a query, meaning a follow-up letter is often (unnecessarily) required.</p> <p>* Processes (e.g., inspecting and getting copies of pecuniary interest material and documents tabled at council meetings) are often inefficient, imposing unnecessary inconvenience on users and expense to council.</p> <p>* Often, enquiries for information could and should be handled informally (under section 8 of the Government Information (Public Access) Act, rather than by a formal GIPA application (under section 9).</p> <p>* The approach of many officers (especially at more senior levels) appears to reflect an organisational culture of secrecy and confidentiality, rather than a genuine commitment to public right-to-know principles and to the spirit of the new FOI (GIPA) legislation.</p> <p>* Communication "walls" (both physical and organisational) between council officers and the community discourage (rather than invite) communication.</p> <p>NOTE: My "dissatisfaction" rating reflects a general experience, to which there have been significant exceptions. The customer service staff at the front counter, for example, are generally very good at what they do. On the other hand, staff in council's legal section tend to be more obstructive, and to have a culture of antagonism and resistance to community requests for information.</p>
<p>1 The officer involved, cited a regulation, gave no leeway for exceptions (and I knew there were) and was basically unhelpful. In fact, it took many letters etc to get the information that could have been provided in the first place</p>
<p>1. Council did not follow through on promise to 'send someone tomorrow' and had no record of this the next week when I phoned again (bins not collected)</p> <p>2. Council were unaware of need to fix fence from road accident despite being contacted previously</p>
<p>A safety simple request to overcome a possible problem has achieved nothing although it was recognised as such.</p>
<p>A brothel has begun operations very close by to where I live. The council officer simply said that there was insufficient money in council coffers to allow the council to prove that the premises are being used as a brothel and so end of story.</p>
<p>A failure to interact fairly and transparently with the community in relation to Laman Street. There are also signs of endemic gross mismanagement.</p>
<p>Action on services requires multiple contacts with no follow up from staff and no records kept of previous conversations or emails.</p>
<p>Administration called me "mam" and didn't suggest any advice</p>
<p>After an initial discussion about the issue that we raised we have not had a response from Council.</p>
<p>after taking the time to gather accurate and timely information before being grilled by the council officer who took the details no action was taken by NCC. the problems persist. NCC workers do not go to work to serve our community they turn up to get paid. they shamelessly do not care about community safety, public assets or ratepayers' money. the waste is shocking.</p>

As part of a voluntary organisation, i.e. a local publishing group, the cost of hiring the Art Gallery for a book launch is now excessive.

The rep I spoke to said, and I quote "we are now a business".

Seems like many community groups have now to pay through the nose for providing a worthwhile community service. Previous books by the Press have been, in the main, a series of people's histories of Newcastle and the Valley. It would be in the Council's best interests to encourage groups such as ours by not imposing onerous hiring fees on council properties we help promote the city and the region through our books.

At first no response, then after repeated attempts at contact, someone eventually responded.

Because they didnt come out and look at the problem, just viewed previous work on the computer and assumed all was OK despite photos provided

Complained about the very poor state of the bus shelter on the corner of Darby & Brooke Sts. the person was polite and said they would pass the complaint on but nothing ever happened so can only presume the complaint was never passed on

Complaint lodged about the Fat as Butter concert noise levels. No feedback given. Message left on council phone, Ward 1 representatives and email contact on Fat as Butter website.

Corrective action was never carried to conclusion.

Council have ignored customers (ratepayers) requirements and ignorantly proceeded with flawed plans without adequate consultation on matters.

Council Officer couldn't be bothered solving the problem

Council officers have answering machines and do not respond or when a message is left with another officer for contact the query is never responded to!

Council staff ignored the overwhelming public support for my request and complaints and proceeded to do what they had no right to do - serve their own personal and financial interests instead of the interests of the public they are paid to serve.

Delays with Council planning staff.
Inconsistency with customer service staff providing fee quotes for development applications.
time taken to issue flood certificates

Did not have the courtesy to even answer email despite acknowledging receipt. Culture of arrogance and entitlement amongst non elected senior staff.

Did not receive a response to my email enquiry

Dont ring back as promised

Failure by staff to get back to me after leaving a message.

Firstly.

Newcastle City Council is not a conventional business. Any idea that it is, is absolutely backwards. Newcastle City Council is an administrative service and I am not a customer.

Secondly when I contacted the council to complain about the laman street fig fiasco I recieved almost no reply from the councillors or the administrative people invovled.

have been making the same complaint about every three months for at least 6 years and had to resort to legal services to get some results.

I August 2011 I emailed council notifying your office of a slip hazard and that I had had a fall in Church Walk due to the hazard sustaining tendon damage to my shoulder.

I was extremely disappointed that council made not effort to respond to my email. I received Physio on my shoulder for several months.

I wish to acknowledge that within a week the hazard was removed by clearing the paths of SA olive tree seed pods.

<p>i called to object to the plan to remove the trees from laman st. the first response was pompous, poorly educated and dismissive.</p> <p>the final response from the council was to look into why i did not understand and how they can make information more clear.</p> <p>no suggestion that they might be WRONG which they WERE.</p> <p>if i could vote out every council member right now i would.</p> <p>they are an embarrassment.</p>
<p>I could not get onto anyone. i tried a number of different numbers, but noone was answering the phones, and i couldn't leave a message.</p>
<p>I feel that council workers have lost all pride in their jobs and are not finishing jobs promptly and with pride.</p>
<p>I have been complaining regarding conditions and affects after a tide also John Tate wants people to use public transport then give it to us. Council is spending large amounts of money on stupid things instead of looking at what is needed (clean up Newcastle).</p>
<p>I have contacted council regarding Harris street maryville on three occasions two email and a phone conversion with duty officer! NOT had a response! Council have little or no knowledge of the challenging nature of D.C.P.</p>
<p>I made a complaint via the contact section on the Council website and despite leaving my name, address, email & phone number I received no response at all.</p>
<p>I phoned to find out who to address advice about our AGM date as required by Council and after listening to the menu options, chose option 7 and waited on the phone for ten minutes to no reply. I gave up and chose to send the information to one of the Council employees we address about problems with Council building we occupy. NOT GOOD ENOUGH. MY TIME IS VALUABLE AND YOU SHOULD MAN YOUR PHONES DURING BUSINESS HOURS.</p>
<p>I received no response to 1 of 4 separate contact occasions.</p>
<p>I thought that the officer involved was arrogant and dismissive of my concerns.</p>
<p>I was looking for information for my research and I was not given the information I requested.It was not some thing confidential it was about impact assessment of a development and social plan.</p>
<p>I was pretty much "hauled over the coals" for daring to drop off an application sealed in a envelope. There were no other people at the time either at the counter or waiting. Because council has no box inside to drop mail off it has to be given to someone at the counter which strikes me as pretty inefficient. The woman at the counter was really annoyed that I didn't take a ticket so I could then wait for how long I don't know, so that I could hand her an envelope. Next time I'll be posting something like this. My experience fits with numerous other instances from people I know and what has been in the press. I have in past years needed to get advice over the counter and have found it helpful and provided with politeness. My last two recent visits there - one of them the above - however, suggest that there have been some attitude changes to the detriment of ratepayers.</p>
<p>I was told that someone would be out to my house to investigate the complaint and no one ever showed up.</p>
<p>I was unable to obtain basic information by making a phone call. An email sent later told me I needed to put my request in writing. I did this, then waited 4 days for a reply. In the meantime, I rang a non-Council person who told me everything I needed to know over the phone.</p>
<p>If you go into NCC foyer, you have to take a number applicable to the "enquiry" or "application" that you have. There should be no need to line up and wait behind others who may have lengthy enquiries, if you simply need to drop off an envelope for a staff member.</p> <p>There should be a simple drop-off box or shute that allows for plans, certificates, letters, etc to be left. It's a basic service that is severely lacking.</p>

Initial contact via phone is often very frustrating and so if I want to achieve a result I have to contact the general manager's office to get any sort of response. It seems most of the people I have spoken to outside of the general manager's office will give as least help as they can. As well I have an ongoing request for the cost comparison of the proposed estimated cost of the re-furbish-meant of Burke Place Birmingham Gardens and the cost of the actual repairs to date. I have been sent the purchase cost of the ashfelt only. My beef is that the foundation repairs were done very poorly and this is evidenced by the number of times that they have been repaired since the initial work was done some years ago. By the way there is a section that is still very unstable. I did give advice to the the staff in regard to the job but my local expert information was totally disregarded, though the suggestions I put forward as options were followed after several attempts of doing the work a different way. I am concerned that unprofessional is being done by some of the council and it is costing me a rate payer more than is necessary to do what should amount to simple road repairs, if only pride would step aside and listen to experience and local information. I am totally disappointed with the way the work at Burke Place has been carried out and will have to continue in the faulty section that has not been repaired correctly.

Initial contact was great, but once transferred from customer service I found the employee was just not interested, like I was wasting their time by talking to them.

It was hard to answer the last question with a single grading because it did not correspond with the first question multiple answer.

I was very dissatisfied because I rarely got a reasonable response to the questions raised.

My last letter from the GM was a shocker. I returned it and asked him to resubmit. No answer to date.

Lack of accountability by a council officer/s who misled Councilors. Diverted funds to his friends and associates that should have been used for a community event by the event committee. Made many untrue statements regarding the event and tried to undermine the event and those who organize it.

I don't like the present answering system that is in place. It is time wasting.

The majority of council officers are helpful.

left several messages before someone got back to me regarding one matter and never received a response for another matter

Left voice mail messages on 9 July and 12 July - as yet no reply.

letter to manager was not even acknowleger

Mr Tate's secretary has already conceded defeat on Save our Figs long before final decision

My contact was in relation to abusive comments made about me by a Councillor.No one returned my call and when I filled a complaint I got a very lame response. The councillor had previously been told he was on notice for other offenses and was not punished at all....The wholesituation was so badly handled . If I were tio speak to people that was in my employment I would be dismissed. He was Councelled!!!!!!

There was a well documented history by the councillor of previous offenses and other people came forward with new stories of abusive foul languaged emails etc...They got the same lame email response I did!!

Disgraceful

My main contact has been with council officers who are not interested in the public views. I am opposed to the privatisation of our parkland whereas the future cities is all about privatisation and virtually "gifting" developers public land.

no care wouldnt tell me who made complaint

no follow up calls as requested

no response at all

on the last two occasions I have contacted the council I was put through to a number which rang and rang just when I was about to give up, I was then transferred to voicemail, in they said leave a message and they would get back to us.

I left my message on the first occasion, it was about three(3) days before they got back to me, on the second occasion it was late the next day.

On both occasions the request was general in nature and not specific to my location.

On the first occasion I had all but given up thinking I would have a reply. On both occasions I was lucky to be home and answered the telephone.

I believe faster communications could be carried out

Once transferred, my call was never answered

Planning officer failed to follow-up info/complaint. Council officer/ Manager of department was unhelpful re discarded household goods cluttering streets/lanes

Query was made in email form and was not responded to.

Rang Council and got an answering service which did offer me the option to hold on for a customer service operator. The phone just rang and rang and no one answered.

On another occasion I rang an extention and the phone just rang and rang. I later got on to them and found out that they were on the phone when I rang and the call didn't go to message bank. There seems to be something very wrong with the phone system.

Rang after hours re road work, got a call centre that didn't even know where Newcastle East was. Very unhelpful, only wanted to send off an email and not get an answer. Appaling customer service.

Response rate was very slow. I first sent an email via the website and had no response. I then followed this up with two phone calls, passed from area to area to finally speaking to someone to be told they were on their lunch break, so I had to call back speaking to someone completely different.

Rude, aggressive, threatening phone behaviour. AN unwillingness to assist in any way despite repeated requests for assistance

Some areas are very good, others are very bad. It ranges from the very helpful and informative to being deliberately lied to, insulted and mislead

Staff were job sharing,neither seemed to know what was going on.Inconvenience of no car plus spending a morning getting quotes.Lack of concern for injured persons, more concern for truck driver.

staff were rude and officious at new lambton library

Talking to different parts of council get different answers to same questions, attitude of some council staff, and stealing of ideas

The amount of time waiting for a response (still waiting)

The Council officer did not listen to my complaint properly and didn't investigate my complaint

The council officer Frank Cordingly did not return my call on several occasions. I was enquiring about future cities information.

The council officers had an agenda of their own, and railroaded both the elected councillors (who they are meant to serve) and the committee. Disgraceful.

The front desk staff are pleasant and courteous. However, requests have not been responded to in adequate timeframes. Only partial information has been provided on occasions and I have found some council officers aggressive and unhelpful.

The length of time it takes the council to actually contact, excluding the initial automatic response, regarding any matter raised. For example I raised the matter of the Wallarah Oval Parking dropoff on 15/5/12, but didnt received a callback until late June, to say that action would be taken in due course. The automatic response indicated attached is not achieved, and is not helpful to you or me, producing double or triple contact. "If you do not receive a response OR do not observe the completed action within 14 days, please do not hesitate to contact the Customer Enquiry Centre on (02) 4974 2030 or email mail@ncc.nsw.gov.au."

<p>The matter has actually taken a few years for me to get any satisfaction from council. In the last 12 months I demanded something get done or I would need to contact the local member about the situation.</p>
<p>The new ticketing system in the CAC is time consuming and ineffecient</p>
<p>The procedure of taking a number - waiting - then referral to information office is cumbersome. Waiting occurs when no one is in the queue or on telephone. Why?</p>
<p>The read receipt was not accepted. I had to call to confirm that my email had been received.</p> <p>I have also not heard anything else since - there has been no reply and I have not been notified on any further developments in relation to the development.</p>
<p>The wait was extremely long - 3 people chatting around a computer and 2 of us waiting to be served. Advice given was not conclusive. Left feeling uninformed.</p>
<p>They contradict themselves. They say they are for Safe, ethical, equitable, socially just, non-discriminatory Happy, Healthy Sustainable active transport network. But they keep giving into the evil car culture lobby, which is killing people by disease , death, and danger. They say they will get rid of all pictures of bikes on roads causing road rage, crashes confusion on the roads NOW!</p> <p>But they put in even more dangerous "bike lanes" in CHin CHen St. THEY lie, and don't act for objective world's best practice for safety</p>
<p>To contact the right department and person through the switch board is impossible. The new automated switch is to hard to nagavate.</p> <p>I am left to contact a staff member who i have direct phone contact with then be re-routed to "possibly" the correct person only to find that they have been replaced by "somebody" but not sure who. Very frustrating. Also wastes the time of the staffer who is endeavouring to help. Once finding the correct person i have been happy with service.</p>
<p>Took 8 weeks & 5 phone calls to resolve the issue</p>
<p>Took multiple contacts to get a response</p>
<p>Was fobbed off with the issue raised.</p>
<p>When chasing information or an explanation for a decision, it appears that one is passed along or given little feedback. The attitude of disinterest is not conducive to "feeling heard".</p> <p>I currently live in Stockton - and it appears to me that a few individuals here that are very "loud" in their opinions and intimidating to others, get treated with more respect, than the quieter majority.</p> <p>Another issue. The meeting with the community over the Foreshore Plan at Stockton was so unprofessional. The Council hired the Consultants, and a Council Rep should have presented their plan, and controlled the meeting, not left the Consultants to be attacked by individuals.. The Council allowed the meeting to be sidetracked by a few very loud raucous individuals. It was not the Consultants roll to control the meeting. Training in this area of dealing with crowd would have given a more professional impression to the community of leadership.</p>

WASTE COMMENTS
<p>After ringing the same officer 8 times in 6 months regarding the same issue, there was no perceived effort by the officer to have the issue resolved. My garbage bin has been missed around 10 times in 7 months. At ones stage I had to ring 5 days in a row to have the bin picked up before the next collection occurred. The officer advised me that the call had been logged however after on the 6th phone call I discovered that my complaint about the bin hadnt been registered therefore no truck driver was not aware of the situation. Senior manager advised he would look into why the bin has been missed so many times and would get back to me. This hasnt occurred and my bin regularly keeps getting missed. Manager keeps blaming a new route plan - this occurred 6 months ago however they keep accusing this as the cause.</p>
<p>Continually phone to complain about problems weekly servicing our red and yellow bins These bins are regualrly missed along with other ratepayers in our laneway. The council always say they will action and also get manager to call me. We still have continual problems and no real action by council officers. It seems that the outdoor staff driving the trucks are running the council and the management are incapable of actioning or getting the staff to do their job. Double and triple handling results.</p>
<p>Council did not address my problem with new bin arrangements given that I have no need for red top size now provided, which is never more than half full. I needed to have my custom made bench reconfigured, within months of having the bench made, so that one of the two bins could be stored under the bench top. In my tiny Newcastle East yard every bit of space is needed, given that it is also used for car parking and a clothesline.</p>
<p>During the 3 Bin System rollout I provided information to Lisa Scully about the contractor not complying with their requirement to remove the rubbish they were generating during the bin modifications. Basically, her response was disbelief in my information and that she would contact the contractor to ensure the contractor met the council's requirement. After I provided her with photos as evidence of the refuse that they were leaving she ignored my emails. Subsequently to this, there were a number of letters also stating that the contractors were leaving their refuse after modifying the bins.</p>
<p>I contacted the council about a bulk waste pick up voucher.</p>
<p>I contacted the council on three occasions before i received a waste management vocher in the mail.</p>
<p>I emailed a complaint about the way in which the bin lids were changed (in Mayfield, by a dodgy looking teenager in board shorts with a hammer in the middle of the night). I did not receive a response at all.</p>
<p>I enquired by email about the bulk collection service. My question was: "If I put out a TV for bulk waste collection, does the TV get recycled for its parts, or does it simply go into landfill?" I received two automatic responses on 22/6/2012. Now, after 13 days there is no response from the appropriate department. I only required a simple 'yes' or 'no' answer. However, I would have been happy with an interim email saying, "Your request is in a queue and we will respond to you shortly." You actual automated response tells me to wait 14 days and if I haven't heard anything, I am to ask a second time. :-)</p>
<p>i i asked for some help to get my mother's bin in and out of her yard as she was disabled. this was done on and off, thus we ended up asking the next door neighbour to do it</p>
<p>I pay over \$4000 a year in rates but after ringing over a month ago I still don't have a yellow bin for my new home. When I rang to ask why, I was told I had to ring the sub-contractor. When I did that I was told the NCC had not submitted a request to them. So I rang the NCC back and asked why not and was told they had, but would now need to escalate it. A week later I still don't have a Yellow bin (so it will be week 6 this week) and yet I have 4 adults and a baby at home struggling to cope with our rubbish issues using a small red bin (I've also ordered a larger one, but who knows when it will arrive). You can do all the surveys and build all the skate parks in the world, but if you can't get the basics right, people like me feel rightly that the Council isn't up to the task.</p>

I was seeking help with our green bin when the new system was set up. I had been issued a note to say my bin was not fit for use and to contact council for another bin. When I called for assistance the response I received to my issue was very curt, I was simply advised there would be no new bins provided and I was to continue to use the bin I had. I tried to explain again that I had received the note from the bin issuing company to call to receive a new bin but was again curtly told there are no new bins and no further help or assistance was offered. My call was ended.

I was very unhappy about the changes to the bulk waste collection service and reduction of green waste dropoff collections when the green bins were introduced. In regard to the reasons for the bulk waste changes I quoted from the Council FAQ page, and re the green waste I made it very clear that I was aware of the dates and dropoff points. The response back from the Council was like a standard 'we will not enter into discussion' type of response, just repeating things from the FAQ page that I had made specific comment on (particularly the inconsistencies and unsupported claims) and re the green waste gave me the dates and dropoff points. The response did not address any the points in my letter, apart from saying the Council's decision would not change.

I wish I had kept the exact details of my request for bulk rubbish removal as I did have it written down but have thrown it away but it basically went like this. I booked with a polite girl to have the bulk furniture taken from my house 76 Fletcher Street Adamstown. It was to be out by the following Tuesday morning and I put it out very early around 6.45am. It was still there on Thursday so I phoned and spoke to a not so polite girl who told me there was no record of my booking and implied I had not booked. I said words to the effect there must be someone very lax working there and her reply was a classic "Oh I don't think so we are doing a fabulous job here!" That same girl told me it would be collected on the next day which was Friday. It was still there over the weekend and picked up Monday. I had in fact tried to lodge an application over the website for quite a while before it was accepted. However I decided to phone as well, so probably there would have been two applications put in. I was going to write to the General Manager simply as the second girl needed training but why bother I have trained enough people in my working life and now concentrate on my own grandchildren. In no way are the actual garbage collectors responsible for this and the first girl was most polite. I only wish I had kept their names to be more specific.

Inconsistent and contradictory information given out by council officers regarding the change to 3 bins

Lack of interest in hearing complaint, by waste services receptionist and tone with which information was provided.

No Answer about Garbage Bins not been emptied and then you have the nerve to looking at a penalty fee when you are delayed paying your rate bill you guys want your bloody cake as well as the icing and then I hear you are increasing the payed parking in more street of Newcastle this is bloody bullshit !

we live in a small gated estate. We have be allocated an area, inside the driveway, that we have to place garbages. It means that the driver of the garbage truck needs to reverse in. Normal garbage generally is ok, although oftern we have to call the council and advise our garbages have been missed, its the green waste however that is never picked up. If we place the garbages on the street, we receive complaints from the neighbours in that street, but if we leave where we are told we have to, they constantly miss picking up our rubbish. I'm sick of calling every other week to ask them to come back, and so are all the other neighbours. our green waste has now been out at the entrance to the drive for nearly 2 weeks!

when i last called i was put on hold for 20min then got disconnected, when i rang back i was hung up on and when called the third time i was put straight through to the message service.

when i want to ask questions about the 3 bins being directed to a queensland based call center was very disappointing

DEVELOPMENT APPLICATION COMMENTS
15 weeks and counting for a residential development application to be approved. There were no complaints from neighbours nor anything exceptional about the block or the building.
Council inspector for DA advised their department was under resourced and was unable to advise when they would look at it. It took months for a simple DA.
DAs were easy to access when they were hung up. Now most are behind the counter and require an officer to obtain
did not respond to information request regarding development application
In relation to DA - took over 8 months. When called relevant section to chase up, we were informed that the DA was good, they just needed one piece of information from us. The lady on the front counter told us that there were no notes associated with the DA since December last year. Understand that processing a DA takes some time, but this was relatively straight forward and the sense we get, is that if we hadn't called, it would be still sitting there. The lady at customer service was extremely helpful and efficient.
Lodged DA June 2011, heard nothing until Sept12 - had to lodge more info which was our fault but after we lodged it then took ages to get approved. Council officer was uncontactable - even when trying to leave a message his voicemail was full. He did not return my calls. Finally got on to manager who initially also didn't return calls but then when I chased up told me the person doing my DA was 'busy on other council matters' (I don't care- shouldn't delay my DA) - and finally I got action when I asked the manager what I had to do to formally escalate the issue and his response was "don't do that, it will only give us more work, we'll get it done" and I finally got the DA issued within 24 hours of having that conversation.
Most development applications are no longer available hanging on the wall in the reception area but are behind the counter. WHY? I am then required to take a queue number and waste my time and council officer's time when I could previously access information easily. The same goes with hand delivering submissions. Now I have to take a queue number and waste my time and council officer's time when I could previously hand in anything at the reception which was previously continuously attended Why not make a drop off mail box available? The service is poorer.
Over the past 20 years I have been developing properties, and it used to be a six week turnaround on a DA but over the past few years it has gone to approx 6 + months and if you are chasing constantly I dont think you would get any response. There seems to be not enough staff for the work load. So I would be very concerned if the slow amport of building goes on changes. But I do have to comment when I have spoken to the Officers they have all been pleasant and helpful.
Regarding a development application - neighbours were not notified of much even though council customer service stated their perople paid for this service. They were ripped off and we only found out through newspapers and had to make our own enquiries, to discover how we will be affected.
The development application process is averaging 5-6 months for simple alterations and additions projects. I even submitted a CDC which Council are required to deal with in 10 working days but it took 6 weeks!
Verbal approval given for additional driveway. When digging and formwork completed, verbal approval was withdrawn prior to concrete pour. Was allowed. 1 metre widening of original and very old driveway. No written documentation given of both visits.
We submitted a DA mid march and only got approval 4 months later (and only because we rang to find out what was going on). Also asked for a park drain to be made more safe and nothing has happened since

While several face-to-face customer service staff are courteous and try to be helpful, many appear to not know basic information - especially about 'Public Exhibition' issues. Others appear to 'just not care' - as if they suffer from morale issues or don't realise their duty is to be helpful.

In the DA/building area, there's no flexibility (common sense) displayed, and no inkling that anybody believes in anything but the dictated dogma of management.

At Director level, what one seems to receive is rebuff and bullying. Suggesting that some of Council's policies & practices may need revision or update results in derision - or a failure to respond at all.

TREE COMMENTS
<p>around 5 years ago I contacted Council about a tree on council land overhanging our building and the condition of a council garden outside the building. Initially I was told that someone would contact me within 2 YEARS.</p> <p>Council workers have looked at the garden & tree a few times, but as yet Nothing has been done & the tree still overhangs the building. This not only fills the gutters with leaves, but is dangerous if a limb were to fall.</p>
<p>Asked about removing limbs from tree on Council property because it was shaing our solar water heater and was told it was not Council policy to remove trees from solar systems. Also the tree shades the street light in the night. Was told light in wrong position.</p>
<p>contacted Council regarding large dead tree outside my tree outside my property - spoke to "Ralph" twice who said there was no record of my first two calls. Arborist visited twice to confirm 1- tree needed pruning 2- needed to be removed.</p> <p>Tree obviously dead and its a waste of council resources to send an arborist twice. Young neighbourhood- children climb this tree and there is a risk of serious injury or death. I am extremely concerned.</p>
<p>Council managers don't respond to emails - Judy Jaeger has always failed to respond to any email I have sent her.</p> <p>When I phone the tree team to ask questions they fail to reply or ring me back.</p> <p>I am aware that when a friend of mine contacted Ms Jaeger about the fire exits in the art gallery - ie there are none - she failed to respond in writing and only wanted to talk by phone. That's weird.</p> <p>The computer answering system is a retrograde step - no one likes computer answering systems.</p>
<p>I had Council officers inspect my driveway which is lifted up by tree roots. They told me what I could not do instead of what I could do and made impractical suggestions</p>
<p>My problem is in relation to a council tree which has damaged my property on a number of occasions and the council are unwilling to take remedial action to prevent this from occuring on an ongoing basis</p>
<p>Re the tree lopping - I was happy to send an email (which I did approximately 2 weeks ago) but I have had no reply</p>
<p>Requested a tree be trimmed in a council car park in James street Hamilton as it has grown up in front of the night time light. After 3 months the wrong tree was trimmed, so the car park is still in total darkness of a night. It is more then obvious that the tree has grown up in front of the light.</p>
<p>The grassed area, around the wetlands off Naraghi Cct although mowed very recently, has not been maintained as it was just a few years ago. And recently when a crew came out to cut up & remove some fallen tree branches with a big mulcher, I asked them to cut 2 or 3 more braches off the trees they were working on, so as to make it possible for the mower crew to do a decent job, they declined. Maybe they didn't have they authority to make the decision to do it. But a man with a mud arse could see then benefit of doing as I asked. So perhaps an adjustment to the beauratic system in place would increase efficiency & morale. The 5 man crew was there for 1/2 day (to do about 1 & 1/2 hours work) because the mulcher wasn't working correctly & there was reluctance in the crew to be the one to contact the mechanic, so there was ample time for a non desk bound supervisor to get involved.</p>

ROAD, FOOTPATH AND TRAFFIC COMMENTS
<p>My call was to alert council of a dangerous situation where stormwater was flooding an intersection in the city. The request was that someone from council look at the problem and at least put up some warning sign of danger. It was approx 3.30pm and the manager told me staff had finished for the day, therefore noone could come out. My suggestion was perhaps she could look but it was obviously a very unreasonable request. The manager was so unhelpful that I felt quite angry as I did not need to take the time to assist council by alerting them only to be treated as though I was expecting too much and was being a nuisance. It was an increasingly dangerous situation. A director was contacted by a friend and the matter was then dealt with. As a ratepayer I should not have had to work so hard at reporting a matter especially as I thought I was assisting council. On another occasion I had sent an email to the same manager to ask could they advise what the street cleaning arrangements were in certain streets around our premises as the vegetation and dirt in the gutters had built up to an extent it would restrict the flow of stormwater. The manager apparently was on holidays so approx 3 weeks went by and I had not heard so phoned. The response from the manager was, "Is that the broom and pan person or is that they vehicle sweeper" and "No that's footpaths", "No that's roads". You may have been trying to understand what area of council looks after the issue but it definitely came across as "not my problem". A possible response could have been "Thank you for taking the time to let me know and I just need to ask a few questions to make sure we can get the right people involved".</p> <p>To be honest you just wouldn't bother caring about NCC it is not worth the effort.</p>
<p>One issue I was following up related to a kerb extension of an intersection in New Lambton first discussed with council 9 years ago and council sent me the proposed engineers drawings for the extension. On discussing this again with the relevant council officer I was told such plans don't exist. I promptly sent her me copy and then was again fobbed off with the council officer saying she would pass it on to another person. I replied about the likelihood of the job going ahead soon (after 9 years on a priority list) before a child is killed and of course NO reply.</p>
<p>Planning dept not in sync with public opinion - Bimet and King Edward Pk.</p>
<p>Footpath in front of house more dangerous than figs but no action, not even note to say they hah had a look.</p>
<p>Suggestions about traffic improvements ignored. Listing of road potholes acted on slowly.</p>
<p>The road has not been fix</p>
<p>There has been no feedback to residents about the increasing amount of traffic in and around Marketown Hamilton East. The Hamilton South Traffic Study was completed months ago and still there has been no notice to residents of any intended actions by council. Obviously this traffic matter is too hard for Council Staff and perhaps should be outsourced. Meanwhile the flow of traffic travelling along National Park Street has increased way beyond that which a local road should carry.</p>
<p>Tried to get gutter and kerb repaired, Due to tree roots breaking up concrete, resulting im pooling and uneven surfaces. Also Street signs replacement- it takes so long, have rung several times always same answers. Council also should start a record system ie event number/incident report so ratepayers/residents can refer back to original report.- A system like the P A L (Police Line)</p>
<p>We were promised things and it did not happen especially for traffic control in our Hamilton South area. Report was going to be ready in March, but heard nothing. Council also put off changes to Smith St extended for no real reason. The local Councillors are helpfull but council officers go missing except for talk.</p>

GRASS CUTTING, GARDEN AND PARK COMMENTS
I complained about a local park, being neglected - noxious weeds rampant, the park not being mowed.
I requested the council clear out the weed in the street garden outside my home and put new soil in as they had done further up the street. Nothing happened
In making a park booking I was given incorrect information and there were errors in the paperwork. Attempts to follow up with staff were not successful initially, and it took some time before the issues were resolved.
Requested that council officer mow nature strip and make safe for ongoing maintenance by myself. This wasn't attended until intervention from our local Councillor. He became involved after emails were sent and onsite inspection with the supervisor was carried out. Generally find that dealing with council staff unhelpful and some times done right rude. "This is the last time that this will be done" Dictatorial. The matter has been resolved.
We live next to a Newcastle City Council maintained reserve in Adamstown Heights. up until about 12 months ago it was maintained to a minium standard-random grass cutting after several reminder emails from neighbours who live adjacent to the reserve. now only the grass on either side of the walking path (that runs through the reserve) is cut about every 2 months. the reserve is overgrown & full of weeds. The new guy in charge of parks & gardens-Roger Ward, has been contacted several times about the long grass, weeds, bush rats, snakes, fallen trees... His repeated response is that the reserve is not a park it is zoned as a road!

ANIMAL COMMENTS
Contacted Council rangers due to being attacked by two dogs which were loose on the street. Informed they could not do much about it. Not sure if they even attended the location to look for the dogs
For the maintenance the person I spoke to on the phone was very helpful but I had to wait for 3 months for someone to come out and fix the problem during which time it could have become a massive problem if we had a storm luckily we didn't. The dog registration took me so long to get around to doing because I had to go into council to do this which is difficult when ur working. I kept thinking surely I can just send away a form or go online but no I had to go in. No wonder people don't register their pets!
I have called the council on numerous occasions to notify them of dogs being let free (off-leash) in Newcastle parks, outside of off-leash areas and/or times. I am dissatisfied for the following reasons: 1) The ranger council number only operates during business hours so on weekends there is no way of contacting the ranger. 2) The response time of the ranger is either too slow or does not happen at all. 3) On the only occasion that I have seen the ranger come on request he did not issue any fines and it did nothing to resolve the disregard by a large proportion of dog owners in Newcastle for council regulations. For example I see several dogs off-leash in Gregson Park every day and I never see the ranger on patrol. These owners often disregard their dogs faeces as well creating an unclean park environment. No amount of complaining to the council seems to change this.
My cat was killed 26/05/12 and I am still waiting for a response from 'dangerous dog' management as what they are going to do about the dangerous dog – nothing or fine them
They thought I didn't have a valid complaint regarding a barking dog.
Wrote a letter complaining about dogs loose in Federal Park. The letter back basically said nothing could be done as council had limited funding and manpower. I wanted new signs to replace the small grafitted old signs saying no dogs in park. The letter said there were no such signs in parks and the next week these were removed to prove the point. The tone of the letter was one of frustration and I felt I had added to it.

PARKING / PARKING OFFICER COMMENTS
<p>Complaint in regards to a faulty parking Meter in Steele st.newcastle west</p> <p>we had arrived at 8.55am & tried placing money in the meter but would not accept as we had an appointment in the Diabetic centre opposite at 9.0am on arrival back to the car we found a parking fine we rang immediately the number on the meter to newcastle council & was advised we had to contact Infringement Bureau as Council was not able to do anything</p> <p>end result was the \$2 parking fee cost over \$180 plus loss of licence we were later advised that this could have been handled on the day by newcastle council.</p>
<p>I had a consortium to redevelop the tennis courts at waratah park . The person from that department was useless,did not return telephone calls and the information given by him was a complete waste of time.The tennis courts are now not used and an eyesore.I am a member of the Kotara resident parking committee.What again proved a waste of time. The council staff had their own agenda.The final outcome will be a complete failure.Why have Voice meetings if the council staff dont take any notice.Who caused the parking problems around Westfield? Not the ratepayers or local government voters. I am completely unhappy with both of these experiences with the council staff.</p>
<p>I had an issue re: parking illegally and even though the council finally agreed to mark yellow lines I have had no end of hassles trying to get council officers to fine the people for parking over them. Countless phone calls, visits from officers who failed to issue fines even though cars were entirely over the yellow lines and finally when I got to speak to a head of department about my concerns he had the nerve to say something along the lines of "we take your matter seriously enough to send our officers at great expense all the way out to Wallsend" which I thought was a disgraceful attitude.</p>
<p>I rang to complain about parking in Newcastle West. I live in National Park Street. Since the meters were introduced, no one parks in the metered zone and everyone parks in my street. I asked if I could have a residential permit to park in Parry Street (my block is on the corner) as there were many free parks but I was not willing to pay to park near my home. I was told rudely that the council did not have a permit scheme and there was nothing they could or would do. And that rangers would not use any discretion when fining cars.</p>
<p>merewether car park.</p> <p>parking meters wet end saturday and also sunday.</p> <p>Overall Council waste money. Sack Newcastle Council- what is the overall cost of fig trees?</p>

COMMENTS RELATING TO A NUMBER OF DEPARTMENTS
<p>A. My initial development application was greater than 28 days before I received a response; when I had to reply I was given only 28 days to respond. (This application and process is nearing 8 months)</p> <p>B. When I contacted NCC for assistance I was informed the Officer is on a training course.</p> <p>C. A person did rspnd although pleasant could not assist.</p> <p>D. I reported a cement truck washing commercial waste in a residential and although provised by NCC I would receive a response - never did. (Rego etc was supplied)</p> <p>E. During the introduction of the green waste bin, I needed a bin to be replaced. However, I was told to leave the bin outside as NCC could not come onto the property to exchange bins, when you leave a bin outside it provides the opportunity for some to put rubbish in it. Odd, I was told if there is any rubbish in it, the bin will not be exchanged. I had to empty the bin every day until I turned it upside down with a sign.</p> <p>F. I cannot say enough how unhelpful your building department is; they fail to offer assistance or advice. I will detail for this particular issue to a later time and I have many issues and complaints regarding my Building Application. In my view NCC Building Services is not serving this community or encouraging private development.</p>
<p>Had difficulty with rubbish collection issues getting throuhg to speak with someone.</p> <p>The Life services manager sent emails in exceptionally large fnt multi coloured. Seemed rather rude. I also experienced delay when trying to organise a community project.</p> <p>In relation to respect to other services and people outside of cuncil across the board staff are defensive.</p> <p>I have experienced delay many times from life services and rubbish collection section</p>
<p>I am sick of complaining about the same things</p> <p>Bin not been picked up park grass needing cut</p>
<p>I complained about trees blocking the view at an intersection and asked if the lower branches could be trimmed. they eventually were, but six months later, so I doubt it was done on my request/suggestion.</p> <p>On another occasion, I rang to complain about motocycled postpeople using council land as a short cut between Warabrook and Mayfield West, as I believe it is dangerous to the public and especially children, I was told that there were future plans that would more than likely stop that, but it was not going to happen for 18/24 months</p>
<p>I haven't receive an apology for the truck crashing into our praked car and it took time to have the car repaired with all the approvals and my personal time to get quotes and inability to drive the car in the meantime.</p> <p>I have had damage to our fence previousl;y by waste truck drivers and in general dissatisfied with the problems they have caused us over a number of years.</p>
<p>I was reporting dumping of rubbish, that was getting worse in a park. The main switch referred me to compiance who were quite rude in asking details and the fact that I only had the street and park name not the property number and then advised me in the same manner that I was speaking to the wrong section. I was then transferred to what I think was the parks section who took my infomation.</p>
<p>Reports to parking and disability breaches go unattended. Emptying garbage outside noise limit hours (5.30am). Potholes in streets take months to fix.</p>

The council "compliance" officers are very ordinary. One, in particular, who is very well known and simply a poorly trained bully. He does not have a knowledge of the law and attempts to intimidate anyone who questions him by recording them. It's not surprising he ended up on youtube. In contrast, the garbage collection section are fantastic.

The garbage truck people responded quickly to my concern but I haven't heard anything from roads and guttering.

Time taken to rectify such things as illigal rubbish dumping. Over 3 years to have dead tree removed in Jubilee Park at Carrington - complete indifference by dept head after many phone calls to him

We lodged a DA for a new house that took 5 months for the council to finalise. It was a project home with nothing special, but the council still took way to long. To make matters worse the officer looking after the DA went on annual leave for 3 weeks towards the end of this and no other council officers would even return our calls and emails during this period to let us know what was going on. Pathetic service.

Another time I requested information about the DA requirements for demolishing a house and no one could tell me exactly what I had to do. In the end I had to ask a demolition company what to do as the council were hopeless.

The third time I had contact with the council was regarding a residential parking permit. It was refused and when I requested the council officer to come out and view why we needed the permit I was told to put this in writing and then they would consider the visit. I don't have time to put this in writing when a simple phone call does the same thing.

So 3 contacts with council in 12 months in 3 different areas, and they were all hopeless.

When making a complaint about a dog attack on Stockton Beach I was referred to the Police whom stated that unless an ambulance was required it was Councils responsibility, as a result nothing has happened!

It took several months for a simple DA for extensions to a dwelling to be approved even when there were no complaints and the DA complied with all requirements.

I made a lengthy submission to the South Stockton Reserves Plan however, received no acknowledgement that Council had received it and was not afforded an opportunity to attend the Council meeting where it was discussed.

APPENDIX IV: Verbatim responses- telephone customer service improvements

Categorisation of respondent suggestions phone customer service improvements (Q22)		
	COUNT	PERCENT
	n=	%
Systems & Processes		27.1
Computer or Automated service comments	18	4.0
Respond to voicemail / return calls	17	3.8
Voicemail comments	15	3.3
Have a real person answering	14	3.1
Have direct contacts available / Easier to get direct contacts	10	2.2
Have one point of contact / Not having to make multiple contacts	10	2.2
Answer the phone / rings out / call not answered	11	2.4
have staff available to take calls	6	1.3
Log calls / have records / Give reference numbers	6	1.3
investigate issues / Seek correct information	5	1.1
Longer hours	5	1.1
Advise of waiting times / Hold	4	0.9
Staff		26.6
Improve knowledge / more education & training	29	6.4
Should know who to transfer call to / not multiple transfers	27	6.0
Follow up	23	5.1
general phone manners, be polite	11	2.4
Respond promptly / Answer promptly	10	2.2
Have more people answering / Adequate staff	7	1.6
Be firendly, listen, be empathetic	7	1.6
Take ownership / responsibility	5	1.1
Put people on the phones who can answer queries	1	0.2
Satisfied	65	14.4
Other	32	7.1
No answer / Not sure	169	37.5

Q22_telephone suggested improvements
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Train people to refer calls to appropriate people. * Increase telephone manners. * Increase training to reduce lip service...for EG. When a staff member takes my number and tells me "someone will call you back" and never calls back, or "here is an after hours number to ring when the problem is bad" and that number is never answered. * Males have been the worst to deal with. They are rude and disrespectful. Manners training please.
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. More numbers listed in phone book for direct contact with relevant sections of the Council. 2. Staff available to take calls. On one occasion I was put through to an extension and it went to voicemail - the message said the number was unattended and it did not have a voicemail box at which point it automatically ended the call.
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Have a person answer the phone. 2. Make sure the person knows the answers or who to put you through to so your query can be resolved. 3. Improve your phone system so the phones work and you can at least leave a message if the appropriate person is on the phone.
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. have mobile handsets -and make a commitment to answer all calls. 2. have a message service
A few specialised customer service staff
Act on peoples requests and maybe follow to make people are happy
Actually answer the published phone number for waste services, do what you promise to do, take ownership of issues handled by sub-contractors (I pay my rates to the NCC so it should be NCC officers following up non-delivery of yellow bins, not me)
Actually investigate complaints.
Add more people to answer the phones
Advise more clearly of direct lines for particular problems
Again the call should be given across to people who can properly answer the questions and give you advise about what you need to do.
Although resolved, not resolved to my satisfaction. The phone service is quite good, the thousands of laws and red tape over simple matters is the problem.
always have real person answering phone
Always have someone answer the phone in the specific departments. Frequently rang out or went to voice mail
Answer phones promptly, be polite to callers, connect callers to persons callers wish to speak to, follow up calls in a timely manner when requested person is not available.
answer the phone - I had to leave message and wait for callback
Answer the phone and have a more direct way to speak to someone arranging emptying of bins.
Answer the phone quickly
Answering general NCC is generally fast but it is when the call is transferred to another section that issues arise
Don't let people wait for unanswered call be specific "If this call in unanswered in 30(?)sec you will be transferred to voicemail"
Give people an alternative to voicemail. eg "You may contact XXXXX by email with your query on XXXX@NCC.nsw.etc.etc
As I said the first female who answered could not have been better.
On my second call the female who answered needed staff training I am sorry I discarded my notes
AS long as I am transferred to a knowledgeable person, it's fine.
as my experience was very good & my request was resolved I cannot add fault it in anyway
As renters we had to go through our property agent to contact Council which is an anomaly that needs to be fixed. Renters are voters and also pay rates via their rent and deserve to be treated the same.

Automated voicemail is a horrible service. I never hear back from the person. I would rather speak to someone else in the department who can tell me when the correct person will be back or if someone else can at least partially help me. I hate being fobbed off
Based on my experience I can recommend nothing to change.
Be able to speak to someone who knows about the area of the enquiry
Be friendly to customers
Respond to customers queries in a timely fashion
If the council staff member states they will email the information, then they need to follow this up and complete the process
be more prompt, no the information required
By being able to speak to someone just once and not having to repeat yourself 3 or 4 times.
By calling back when issue addressed or not addressed and how/why
By having more knowledgeable people attending t incoming calls.
By inducting customer service staff.
By providing feedback on actions being taken after receiving a service request and a more accurate timeframe for completion
By responding to messages that are left promptly.
By sounding knowledgeable about the service I was after. The lass didn't know that the people I was calling would refer me to email
By taking calls seriously
By taking ownership of the call and speaking more friendlier
By taking responsibility for a problem not putting it back on the caller.
Call back to keep me in formed of the progress of the matter I required assistance with.
Call waiting service, or leave your phone number to wait in a queue instead of holding on for ages and getting nowhere. Expecting them to call me back within an hour or so.
Calls should be answered within a small number of rings. If the contact cannot answer the enquiry or the problem it should be transferred to the right department for attention ASAP
Change the culture of arrogance. Reduce salaries of senior staff to attract people with less of a sense of entitlement and more of an understanding of the role of a public servant and use the money saved to employ more front line staff.
clear easy numbers direct to to common depts,e.g. waste services,etc
Council's telephone customer service is as good, if not better, than any other council I've contacted
Create call centre within council, log calls, emails, faxes etc in electronic database such as EDMS, provide caller with tracking number relating to issue, enter specific details, ensure replies and resolutions within acceptable timeframes, ensuring ownership by respective officers, ensuring actions within acceptable timeframes, and integrity of information.
Cross train more of the staff so that if the person with the particular expertise you are after is absent, there are others available that can answer people's questions.
Customer service was fine, the follow up to the call was terrible
Cut the crap at the beginning and go straight to an operator
Different staff
Dispense with the automated answering system. It is time wasting and impersonal and invariably ends up with being referred to the operator who then has to put me through to the person required.
Dispose of auto answering service and voice activated transfers - I could not speak to the relevant person. I had call waiting activated on my phone when a transfer did not work and my phone actually rang after i had hung up and a council officer was answering???
Does not need to in my opinion.
dont know
dont know
Each time I call I am transferred multiple times before I get through to the right department/person.

employ good people and hang on to them! Am completely over dealing with people who do not know about "stuff" and do not have any understanding of history. Always reinventing the wheel...
EMPLOY MORE PROFESSIONAL STAFF
Employ people that believe it is the job to provide customer service to rate payers. Council employees don't seem to get the fact that rate payers pay their salary and treat rate payers as an inconvenience
Employ somebody on the switchboard at all times, especially option 7
Ensure 1st point of contact knows which dept is responsible for what services provided by council.
It is very frustrating being transfered to someone who promptly tells you that is not his/her dept.
Ensure speediness of response. Take a phone number, for later response, if enquiry lines are busy.
Ensure that customer is transferred to the correct person / department - in the first instance
Ensure that relieving Help Desk Staff have reference material immediately at hand.
Ensure that there are staff to answer, avoiding the infuriating "leave a message".
Ensure they have a designated time when they are in their offices to field calls and return messages. To ring at 9.30am only to get a return call at 4.40pm explaining that the person you need to contact is "such and such" but you are unable to speak with them as they leave at 4.30, is a bit frustrating.
Everything was fine, call handled efficiently
First Contact person to be accurate in their knowledge of which officer is responsible for the request. Otherwise, service is performing well.
Follow up calls to inform about progress or finalising/outcomes of enquiry
follow up customer concerns with the person who can fix the problem!
Follow up query with email or letter re solving problem.
Follow up with an e-mail so it is on record.
Following up and doing the things they say they are going to do.
follow-up phone contact from Council even if there has been no progress in the action - just to let me know thatthe request is still active/ongoing and not discarded.
For Frank Cordingly to return the phone call please. It is unprofessional for a director to not engage with the community.
For my enquiry the service was good, so can't complain.
Found Council staff helped as much as possible within Council's policies. Perhaps they need to be changed to accomodate.
Get rid of rude persons on phone, change focus from what's good for council to what's good for community
Get rid of the computer answering system and get the tree team to stop being so wimpy and call me back.
Get rid of the recorded nonsense and state call area numbers and give connection
Get the garbage collection service to show everyone else how to do it. They even managed to maintain their friendliness and professionalism during the bin chang overs.
Give some indication of how long it will take for the call to be answered.
Ask relevant questions and be proactive in determining who best to deal with my issue rather than putting the blame back on me for not knowing exactly who I need to talk to or what help I need and then just transfereing me through to someone to get rid of me.
Given my experience I find this question laughable. Return your phone calls, get staff to check their voicemails and clear and action their voicemails so that when you ring you can actually leave a message - a full voicemail box is obvious evidence that people aren't doing their job. Return calls when you say you are going to return them. do your job!
go back to a person on the switch and regular updated department list. This should include holidays,extended leave or "Lost in Action". Having their replacements would be good as well.
Good training
greater knowledge of issues
hace not had any problems dealing with the staff so far

<p>Have council staff be honest and not try to hide the truth or intentionally read emails with the narrow-ist of all responses as possible and then behind the freedom of information to obtain a certain document but not help in how that may have called the relevant document so that any search would be a total waste of time as I as a rate payer would not know the indentifier of the document and so I will never find it or it will cost me so much I will go broke trying to get the information. That is a stuffed form of administration</p>
<p>Have longer hours for those community members who work and can't phone til later.</p>
<p>I would use email/website more but I found I had to wait a month until my website query was answered.</p>
<p>have more people available to take calls, most of the waiting time is after the switchboard has put the call through to the department you ask for, the phone often rings for some time before being answered</p>
<p>Have more telephone operators and train them better so that they know where and how to transfer calls to the correct people.</p>
<p>have no ideas on this one</p>
<p>Have people return messages sooner, and/or leave more specific messages on their phones, eg I am on leave this week, please contact xxx with your enquiry.</p>
<p>have people to cover sickness and lunch breaks</p>
<p>Have queuing rather than answering machine messages</p>
<p>have someone on the switch longer hours</p>
<p>have someone on the the phone who is not completely uneducated and ignorant.</p>
<p>Have staff action service problems and get back to ratepayer to advise actions taken. If the problem is to be escalated, the manager invloved must contact the ratepayer. Also phones should be answered during business hours and not be a recorded message.</p>
<p>Have the right answer</p>
<p>Hire the appropriate level of skilled personnel to manage DA's. This would improve your staff morale and keep your ratepayers and customers satisfied.</p>
<p>Honesty,if your not sure share with the customer,offer to return call when u have the info required.</p>
<p>i am happy with the staff response</p>
<p>I am satisfied with Council's telephone customer service.</p>
<p>I applied for 1) a new red bin which was stolen</p> <p>I applied for 2) my red lid to be changed to green.</p> <p>Customer service lady was terrific, the service for new bin was great but the service for lid change a bit slow (nothing to do with the phone service)</p>
<p>I applied for a memorial seat for my daughter, this took 8 months to complete</p>
<p>I called general enquiries cause I didn't know what department would handle my enquiry and was transferred to the person I needed very promptly</p>
<p>I called re the removal of rubbish from a public space at the end of the street which residents has undertaken to clean up because of Council inability to clean up. It took 3 calls to get someone to answer then transferred twice then left a message and had to call a third time. Promises were made to remove rubbish. Never done and no call back so we took it to the dump ourselves after a week or two.</p>
<p>I called the graffiti hot line and it worked perfectly.</p>
<p>I did not really have a problem, as I was speaking to the maintenance department, and was put through to who I needed to speak to fairly quickly</p>
<p>I don't believe the problems lies with the operator on the line its the constraints they have to work under thanks to the council</p>
<p>I don't have enough experience of using the Council's telephone customer service to make a sensible specific suggestion. However, I would suggest avoiding any move towards call automation or voice recognition. I want to speak to a local person with adequate knowledge of how to help me or who to transfer my call to without any extended waiting on hold listening to council self promotion recordings!</p>

<p>I don't know that the council needs to improve its customer service as I found that good. What it needs to do is streamline the things it does. I wanted to book a kerbside cleanup and as I rent was required to contact the real estate for them to book it. That is frustrating both for me and the real estate. I don't know why if there are 2 bulk pick ups allowed per year - why can't one be allowed from Jan-June and the other one from July-Dec which stops tenants from using both in a short period of time. I also do not understand it when the council was happy to pick it up as part of the old pick up service and now it needs to go through the owner.</p>
<p>Another streamlining issue: Why can't dog/cat registrations be done online? Given our closest RSPCA is at Rutherford and the only other place you can register them is the council - wouldn't it be easier to be able to pay online? You get the details from the vet anyway or allow it to be paid at the vet when organising desexing and microchipping.</p>
<p>I don't know. I was completely satisfied with my one and only call to council.</p>
<p>I had no problem with the service</p>
<p>I had specific enquiries and dealt with officers from Engineering section.</p>
<p>I had to make contact because my first request resulted in Council sending me a voucher for the tip when I needed a pick up from my home. This was remedied by the phone call</p>
<p>I have been happy with my telephone contact</p>
<p>I have been lost in the system previously.</p>
<p>I have had a reasonable experience as my call was answered promptly and the person I spoke to had the information to answer my queries. But on speaking to family and friends this seems to be not the norm. The council needs to have people answering the phone and directing questions and not recorded messages and the people answering the calls need to be well informed so the customer is not passed around and ends up with no final outcome.</p>
<p>I have never encountered any problems contacting the Council by phone.</p>
<p>i have no complaints about the service i received</p>
<p>i have no suggestions, sorry.</p>
<p>I have worked with council on various events for several years - the people I have dealt with have always been more than helpful, professional and hard working</p>
<p>I left a message. No one answered my call. I left a detailed message for waste services and they said that they called the garbage pick up to rectify the problem. I'm still waiting to have my bin picked up so can not say if the problem has been solved as yet.</p>
<p>I like the idea of speaking to a real person when I ring the council. A person who can answer my questions and has the information at their fingertip to look up if it is outside their expertise.</p>
<p>I recall a bit of a run-around... transferred to x... nope not me I'll transfer you to y... no sorry y's on holidays and I don't too much about it...</p>
<p>I think departments need to be in more contact with each other regarding issues.</p>
<p>I think its alright as is</p>
<p>I think my earlier responses should indicate the level of service provided and it is your problem to sort it out. i.e. support your own employees, make them accountable, knowledgeable, training, improve customer service, remove employment security.</p>
<p>I think that the telephone service is quite good in comparison with other services. Improvement for me could be made only by being able to directly contact the person who is supervising teh job and this is not always appropriate.</p>
<p>I think the people manning the phones are great - it's the policies of the council they have to 'sell' that are unfortunate.</p>
<p>I thought the staff I spoke to were helpful - maybe giving the direct number out following the conversation so that if a follow up call is required you can ring the direct number.</p>

I tried to phone council to ask for information on community groups a couple of weeks ago. My call was not answered and the phone timed out.

I emailed the council and staff employee Michelle Nunn got back to me. I was able to phone her and get onto her straight away on the number that she gave me and I thought the service that she gave me was excellent.

I do not expect Councils phones not to be answered at all.

I have emailed 3 councillors in the past 12 months asking for information. Only one got back to me via email. I won't be voting for the other 2 come election time. I understand that under thje Local Goivernment Act that should a councillor receive an enquiry that they Must respond within about 6 weeks. Still waiting for their response.

I prefer to ring the council and get the information that I require from staff straight away rather than wait for my replies to emails to come back.

I almost forgot. A couple of months ago there was a dead stray cat on the footpath outside my home that had been mauled by another animal- by the looks. I phoned the council and they sent someone out to remove the animal. They responded withing about 1/2 a day.

i understand that a ratepayer may not immediately get through to the person who has agreed to take up your enquiry. However I had mixed results when I phoned. The answer machine messages were not responded to. The direct line to senior management was always answered efficiently and satisfactorily if that was possible (a person was off sick on one occasion)

I was asked to call back once a particular person would be back in the office... when I couldn't reach that person again later I was told they would call me back , but I didn't receive a call back. Might have just been an internal miscommunication passing the message on, or the person might have just been very busy, however a call back would have been nice.

I was happy with service

I was happy with the level of customer service I received

I was on hold for 15 mins before even speaking to the switchboard staff - this happened 3 times and is not good enough

I was satisfied

I was satisfied with my contact.

I was transferred by the switchboard to the relevant person on two separate occasions- they never picked up their phone and there was no voicemail so I never got to speak to someone who could help me

I was transferred to the correct department but had to leave a message. When my call was returned I was not offered the direct number to contact them again.

If Council officer does not have the information, they need to get it and phone back. I seem to remember that it was a case of "don't know, can't help you". May even have been a call centre arrangement for matters concerning bin rollout.

I'm satisfied with the service I have receive!

Improve ability of Council to call back in circumstances when the appropriate Council person is not available

Improve knowledge about dealing with burnt out cars in Council Parks

We were given confl;icting advice

Improve knowledge and listen to your voters

improved knowledge of council customer service operators

In my case I had difficulty in identying the specific phone number for waste pick up arrangements - the 1st call was helpful in directing me to the correct number

<p>In the past I felt like I had to fight to speak to the Planning Dept re a D.A. I found the length of time for this process and those I dealt at the time were unreasonable and most difficult. I felt the process was dragged out and could be done far better on all accounts. If council workers are on holidays surely they can complete their work before they go on leave or have someone appointed to take over with an adequate handover given this another employee so that they can carry on with the workload in their absence - work should never stop or be put on hold for sick leave or holidays!</p>
<p>Last year I had contact with Council re the tree planting process, end result was good but most of the time you end up leaving messages on answering machines or wait days for an email response.</p>
<p>More recently I complained to Council about Energy Australia's radical & unsafe method of chopping back the street trees in our area, those I spoke to were in agreement with my opinions but there was nothing Council could do to stop Energy Australia severely cutting our town's street trees. Perhaps we could implement a new street tree planting protocol that only allows for small trees (<3m) to be planted under power lines?</p>
<p>Generally it is the opinion of others that Council workers are paid 10% more than the rest of us and work 50% less. Given the delays in phone calls or email responses & applications time frames it would appear that Council workers do not work that hard or as efficiently as they could. Definitely room for improvement all round.</p>
<p>Initial contact was very good, once I left the customer service area, everything went down hill very fast. You shouldn't have to make three phone calls over one matter, if a staff member bothered to give you a courtesy call and let you know what was happening it would save so much time and would improve my image of council greatly.</p>
<p>Initial customer service was excellent. Problem arises when you are put through/ given the phone number of the person you need to speak with and it goes through to an answering machine each time. I think i would feel less frustrated speaking with a person - even if it is just to tell me that the officer is not currently available, but that they are in fact the person i need to speak with and they will come back to me.</p>
<p>It could put people on the telephone who actually care about serving whoever is ringing, not the idiots they have now who don't give a stuff about who is ringing.</p>
<p>It is far more satisfactory to speak with a human operator. That is I do NOT appreciate leaving a voicemail OR being caught up in a multi-level answering system that often falls over anyway.</p>
<p>It is ongoing as I am still waiting for dangerous dog management to let me know what they are doing about the dog. Have a Newcastle Council worker to answer and relay messages afterhours. The afterhours service was not up to standard as they did not know much and did not give the ranger the message about the dangerous dog.</p>
<p>It wasn't the Phone service but the maintenance crew that meant I had to recon tact council</p>
<p>It works well enough as it is.</p>
<p>It would help if you could SMS the ranger to notify them of parks were their are off leash dogs rather than have to call the council on a land line only during business hours.</p>
<p>It seems unreasonable to have to spend a long time each call giving contact details when there never is any follow up anyway.</p>
<p>Its fine</p>
<p>It's good</p>
<p>It's insulting. Never dealt with . Still unresolved. Still waiting</p>
<p>It's pretty good!</p>
<p>I've tried to contact the parks department and the calls go through to a voice mailbox that says they will return your call but they never do.</p>
<p>just improve the waiting period</p>
<p>Keep better records, provide information to customers when you have it. Eg if repairs are scheduled, inform residents</p>
<p>Keep records of ratepayers phone requests - I have spoken to the same person (Ralph) twice (out of 4 calls in total)- the second time he had no record of our first conversation!</p>
<p>keep up the good work of answering within 60 secs</p>

Know your job, say I don't know if you don't know please do not make up answers or parrot a convent response. Show all equal concern.
Know who looks after what so you are directed to teh correct person.
Knowledge and awareness of staff at the switchboard as to who you need to be put through to. Soemtimes it happens that you get put through a number of times before you get the right person.
Longer hours. 0845-1520 are ridiculously short hours, and obviously more agents are needed as the message I received was that the wait time was so long I should leave my details and be called back
Longer hours. Call me back when I leave a message.
make it easier to contact specific sections
Make sure complaints are followed through and completed
Make sure staff answer the phone rather than leave all calls transferred to voicemail or admin to leave a message.
Otherwise, make sure the staff recording states if the staff member is on an RDO, leave or out of the office for an extended period.
Staff should be accessible at all times during the day - 8-5pm
Make sure that the customer receives a response to the issue raised. After the initial contact there has been no information provided about the issue raised.
Making people aware at the outset that a request in writing for information is required.
Making sure the enquiry goes to the correct person
manage issues of waste truck damages more effectively and streamline
Message transmitted must be accurate and as requested by customer
more infomation
More knowledage staff. After hours message service was not transferred like the person said it would be
More knowledgable staff with an ability to take action.
My contact with the council was O.K in the first instance. Even if it did take three (3) months to remove the bricks from the footpath along side the drain. I did not bother to keep ringing, because I knew it would be useless. Average service is all we can expect.
My enquiry was a simple request for a document to explains the rules of rain water containment on a slopping block.I was informed by the council officer that he was to busy with other issues and it could be months before he could find such a document if in fact one existed at all. I do not expect to ever see the document I requested.
My experience I hope was a one off but if not then being friendlier and have more knowledge or understanding would have been better.
My experience was excellent.
My experience was good. The on hold music should be messages about things that affect ratepayers.
My experience with Council Depot was excellent
My last telephone contact was good.
My only call was fine.
N/A - I have found councils telephone service to be exemplary
No comment
No comment as was satisfied. But in general, it is always better if one does not have to hold for more than1-2mins.
no complaint
No complaints at all.
No I think the phone service was correct and I was happy with the contact
No issues from my experience, so nothing to add.
No need for improvement
no need to change
No one returned my call...I had to call again and then was given a rote response

No problem with switchboard operators. Dis-interest by specific departmental staff
No problems encountered when making initial call. Direction to appropriate department is prompt and effective. Follow up is made if required or requested.
No significant suggestions to make in this area.
No so much an issue with the person answering the phone, as with no one knowing or being willing to resolve the problem.
No suggestions, very happy
No suggestions. The recently implemented 'select an option' seems to work well.
No sure
Not a huge issue but maybe offer to send an email and or SMS to confirm that contact/request to the council.
Not having to keep pressing selections of buttons - I find this confusing and frustrating. Staff to sound helpful rather than bored, sometimes they make you feel as if you are interrupting their day. All staff to improve knowledge of council operations.
Offer professional resolution to rate payers problems & concerns. Be committed to helping NCC rate payers. Have a desire to improve Newcastle suburbs
once you get through reception & directed to the department one finds the call either hangs up & disconnect or transferred back to reception
One good way would be to monitor the connection. It's the same old story, you are switched through to the connection and then you are lost. In this day and age, this should not happen. Some times you get the relevant officer and by the time he sorts himself out, you've just about finished the book you started to read. There needs to be more professionalism amongst the staff.
One time the switch person put me through to the Customer Service counter instead of logging it onto Dataworks or putting me through to the correct department - then i had to listen to the Customer Service person tell me that it shouldn't have been put through to them several times. But when you're on the customer end of the phone you don't need to/want to hear about the internal machinations.
Part of the answer to this question is to ask, what is customer service?
Is it a general phone manner and receptiveness to the caller's concerns or something more tangible such as answering the call promptly and resolving the problem or concern? If the former, then most council officers are respectful, polite and receptive, although in the last 12 months I did speak to a very superior and unhelpful person with regard to last year's Fat as Butter Music Festival. If the latter, then probably not, since council tends to do what council wants, rather than what the community and ratepayers want - witness the Laman Street figs, and recently I called about the figs in the park at Adamstown which have also been removed.
people do not like answering machines especially from mobiles , then trying to nogate with answering machoines is a pain
People should speak slower, be more polite and not patronising on the phone
perhaps a return phone call when applicable
Perhaps be a little friendlier. I am yet to strike a pleasant voice at first contact
Perhaps publishing a list of internal numbers would assist as does operator training and familiarity with staff departments
Phone contact with council is fine - typically anytime I've phoned I've received the information I require either on that call, or I've been phoned back in reasonable timeframe. However, response the the web forms on council's website has not been too great.
Phone service was fine.
Please advise staff not to be sarcastic as the callers/inquirers aren't all stupid--some of them could just be really upset when they phone and staff sarcasm does not help.
Possibly more people to answer, not being involved in day to day office running very hard to make any other comment
Prevent transferred calls going to voice mail
Previously discussed
Provide a "contact receipt" or "reference number" to refer back to should you need to contact them again.

provide knowledgeable customer service in the rates department
quicker response
Remove automated voice stuff at the beginning of the call and employ a few staff members to direct the calls correctly instead.
Remove computer operator. Have humans answer the phone.
Remove your "new" phone system and allow customer service personal to direct your call to the appropriate person or take a message or explain the absence.
Repeatedly our bins are not picked up on collection day. I must ring and remind them. Usually the pickup service, once reminded is prompt.
Green waste and Yellow ar the usual ones but also occas red bins. Does it get them overtime or is there just not a proper map to follow? How hard can it be?
Resolve the issue first time; provide details on what to do if the issue wasn't resolved; council to call back and follow up.
return calls
Return voicemail calls or if the person is on leave have their voicemail reviewed.
returning phone calls more promptly when mesages left.
Ring back with a time when items will be fixed
Then ring after if has been fixed
sack the current workforce and have them all re-apply for their jobs.
if the workforce was halved NCC might get back within budget.
as long as council workers have a job-for-life attitude nothing will improve.
if council workers thought they had to justify their remuneration ratepayers might get some appropriate service.
Same as previous response
Satisfied with service received.
See above answers
Seems fine to me. Just ensure that the person who answers the phone can answer the questions or can transfer to someone who can.
Service was adequate- got a good result. might have been helpful if i received more feedback- my contact related to a broken car window (broken by a stone kicked up by a council mower). after i initially lodged the complaint i didn't receive any confirmation that my details were received etc for a few weeks. not sure if this was because it was put "on the bottom of the pile" or for other reasons. and i didn't want to call council again because then i'd seem like i was hassling them. but i did get a good result so overall i was happy with the contact.
Some calls, for example, garbage services are hardly ever responded to immediately- you leave a message and a return call is made subsequently. This does not always work if you have gone out yourself. Also the concern or issue although generally resolved satisfactorily and hangs until the return contact is facilitated. NB As my telephone contacts have been numerous mu comments would be different for different contacts.
Sorry but I can't 'put my finger' on just what is missing - its an attitude somewhere. Some personnel are wonderful.
Staff dedicated to telephone enquiries. Roster senior staff, from different departments, on a rotational basis, to phone duties.
Staff have to know who does what within council and knows when that service is available.
For instance. When I want parking officers in stockton to book people parked in the lane way leading from Mitchell street to the patrolled beach which may I add when cars park illegally, it puts the safety of women, children and their families at risk just walking down the lane as there is not enough room for both. There are no rangers available to contact on the weekends!!!!
Staff having clearer understanding of the Department to refer you to being correct.
Staff need to ensure complaints are followed up.

staff who are out of the office should check daily what messages they have and allow time to reply.
Supervisors of various sections answer phones periodically to ensure requests are resolved.
Switch operators need to be knowledgeable about council services and structure so that inquiries are directed to the most appropriate officer or section
Switchboard needs to know exactly where to send your enquiry and give you a name of the person you will be speaking to.
Take away the automated answering at the beginning.
Take some action and not look for the reason why no action should be taken
Taking ownership of issues - not 'passing on to relevant Dept'
telephone service is fine, the girl is always polite and eventually our garbages are collected, but its down the line the problem! I'm one of 6 neighbours who constantly call and need to get the garbage picked up when they miss us! we would not have to keep calling!
Telephone service is generally good. A couple of months ago, I requested information about library service and was given a very thorough response by the person who eventually called me back.
I had a vehicle accident with a council utility/truck, which was clearly the fault of the council officer driving the vehicle. The telephone response was generally good although it took some time for me to get a replacement vehicle and I had an injured daughter to get to hospital and physiotherapy appointments. Council did not offer to help despite the fact that the officer in question admitted being at fault.
Thanking the caller first Listen to the caller Then ask the questions Don't be negative Let the caller know they want to help Do not focus on reasons why they "can't do" balance with what they "can do" Do not treat the caller as though they are being a nuisance.
That when training people for customer service to answer phones to be understanding to their needs and complaints.
The current auto system is very irritating
The customer service needs to be staffed by people who have the power to do something about problems. If they're just gatekeepers for the people who actually know how things work, then in my opinion, they're just window dressing.
The girl at the dump is rude i think her name was sheryl or sharon
The initial contact was good but from there nothing happened
The main switch may need to ask more details of the enquiry to actually get it transferred to the right department and in some cases take messages
The must know your website intimately and also the functions of various staff when a specialist needs to be called on. In my view is a key part of an organisation and an adequate career structure needs to be put in place to retain experienced staff.
The new automated service is not too bad
The people I spoke with were surprisingly helpful and professional
The person I needed to speak to was never available and the fill in people I got said they would pass on the message..but there was never a response.
The quality of service received was quite good I was transferred to the correct department, but was on hold, perhaps an approximate waiting time would be appropriate.
The selection offered at the start of call isn't clear. I was enquiring about regulations for starting a home based business and it was unclear what direction to go in.
the telephone service was good. but the bin pick up service was not good
There are some council employees who don't have a lot of manners and just don't seem to be interested in helping. This are a small percent of council that I have dealt with though.
There is absolutely no reason why a ratepayer should have to finish up a call to council receiving no satisfaction whatsoever. There are rules in place governing the operation of brothels and it is my understanding that the brothel in Tudor St Hamilton between the junctions of Milton St (my street) and William St is not operating within the rules/guidelines. If no action is taken this will no doubt just be the thing edge of the wedge and brothels will start to proliferate in the area. Hamilton may be close to

Islington but it isn't Islington and doesn't want to become such.
they couldnt because there service was great but the trees got chopped, not a customer service issue, a council issue
This was a specific request concerning the new garbage system. The person who answered the phone initially directed the call to another department, but that person kept disputing what I was saying (our new green bin wasn't "done" for weeks after it should have been, and she kept saying that it had been). She wasn't at all "customer friendly" - it really put us off altogether! It was finally attended to just before the system started.
LISTENING SKILLS are SO important!
Train all council officers to be professional and respectful and ensure follow up even if it is not the officers key area of responsibility
Train staff on switch to be more professional and knowledgeable, or at least to know who to refer calls to.
Treat customer like you do at the desk. Switch is not good for listening to entire story and transfer to appropriate dept. On phone you have to repeat story endlessly before you get even close to appropriate place THEN you get voicemail. Often at the desk the person will confer with another staff member in the area and sort the entire enquiry at the first sitting. Wonderful. On phone I would prefer to wait at the beginning for desk like person to talk to than be shuffled all over the place.
Treat it as a customer service challenge. Not just a fielding of questions !
unsure
Use a human to answer the phone and transfer you to the appropriate department and have a human answer that line also - NOT RECORDED COMPUTERIZED VOICES
Very happy with the response received. Well done to Waste Services
well you could have a person answer the phone.
When I call about my acc which I pay fortnightly the staff answer questions but don't offer information, when I ring re electricity acc with origin they sound interested and offer a lot of information.
When I rang to say I have not received a green bin as they would not change the lid and told me to ring council for a new one I was transferred to every dept in the council was eventually told I would receive a new one never did have rang several times still no bin.
When the person sought is away from their desk, have the call "roll on" to another person who knows when the call will be returned.
When one leaves a message on a "message bank" it is not known whether the person will be available in a few minutes,, the next day or at the end of a month's leave.
It would be very helpful to know whether to seek another person if the likely delay was too long.
When you phone, go and have a look at the problem. It would save so many people from having bad falls
Worked ok for me
Your staff should realise and accept, we are not whingers. We are taking time to inform the Council of a problem and as ratepayers we expect a prompt, speedy result without needing to ring over and over again.

APPENDIX V: Verbatim responses- email customer service improvements

Categorisation of respondent suggestions email customer service improvements (Q29)		
Base: contacted Council via email in the last 12mths	COUNT	PERCENT
	n=	%
Email procedures		29.3
Respond to emails / Respond to emails in timely fashion	22	9.6
No response received to email	17	7.4
Acknowledge receipt of email	14	6.1
Advise of timeframes	8	3.5
Adhere to publicised response timeframes	3	1.3
Advise if person not there	3	1.3
Staff		7.9
Be professional/helpful/friendly	5	2.2
Follow up	5	2.2
Have knowledgeable staff responding	3	1.3
Be honest, truthful, open, transparent	3	1.3
Keep promises / commitments	1	0.4
Take responsibility	1	0.4
Response from Council		7.4
Faster responses	9	3.9
Personalised response	4	1.7
Provide adequate/full/complete responses to queries	3	1.3
Plain english	1	0.4
Email Addresses		2.6
Provide departmental email addresses / Availability of NCC email addresses	5	2.2
NCC mailbox size issues	1	0.4
Other		1.7
Track and log email requests	2	0.9
Have organisational standards	2	0.9
Satisfied	17	7.4
Other	16	7.0
No answer / Not sure	106	46.3

Q29_Email suggested improvements
1. Have responsible competent officers attend to matters asap
A triage system
acknowledge email, follow up and keep commitments made
Acknowledge receipt of the email
Acknowledging email requests even if no action is to be taken
Actually get back to people in a reasonable time via email.
Don't simply fob people off with "it's not my job" try another department. Pass the buck with no followup and no responsibility or real assistance.
Actually respond to requests rather than ignoring them
Adhere to times indicated in automatic response emails without me having to re-contact to no effect. Last year one complaint was sent 8 times by email, until I faxed the complaint, and was told that nothing could be done for me, and that it would be sent on to the appropriate authority. Why couldnt I have been told that after the first email.
Advise re realistic expectation for time it takes to reply
An automated response with a projected turn around for a detailed response would be good.
answer the email
at least acknowlege emails not just ignore them
At least respond within 2 working days acknowledging receipt of email and time frame for a response.
Automated response so you know it has been received, then a timely response - some queries could be urgent so a flag from sender to alert council should be responded to that day at least - otherwise am happy to wait a day or two and get the right answer.
Be honest and answer the questions asked in a full and frank menner
Be less argumentative, be less arrogant, stop running your own agenda and denying that you are when clearly you are.
be truthful, and stick to the COuncil's objectives, OBJECTIVELY
Safe, ethical, equitable, socially just, non-discriminatory Happy, Healthy Sustainable active transport network
By acknowledging the receipt of each email and the giving of an estimated time for a reply. It's that simple
By not skirting around issues and actually providing information in their responses.
I was dissappointed to find that the person had not answered my question on one occasion. I also have put in suggestions in the past for improving services and had them flatly refused even when the capability is clearly there. Very dissappointing. Is this my taxes and rates working for me?
Council Officers give the impression that they think ratepayers are annoying
Councillor did not offer to put in print assistance for members of the community who were upset and grieving. This made me feel sad and that the councillor/s did not have empathy.
Different email addresses for specific areas of Council operation would help.
Don't even bother trying. I have given up trying to have any meaningful contact with council. You will just do some window dressing in response to this survey.
Don't give email as an option for contact if you're not even going to bother to respond! And of course you have to have email as a form of contact, so ensuring a response to every email would be a good thing. I felt completely ignored and like Council did not give a stuff about the safety concerns I expressed.
dont know
efficient response and real language not official speak
email response was good, that is not the problem. the problem is getting council officers to come and inspect the problem and call on ratepayers to talk to them ratepayers are the ones on the coal face with problems that need to be addressed and council employees stick to the guidelines and dont really care Councillors are the same, do not interact with the general public

email sent 2nd April 2012. Still no response received.
Email system generally OK. Council needs more Staff to deal with applications.
EMPLOY PROFESSIONAL STAFF
Ensure that all emails are responded to promptly, particularly those addressed to councillors (I have never had a reply from a councillor).
Ensure that someone is available at all times who can respond to email requests in a timely manner.
Faster follow up would be an improvement.
Faster response time. Email addresses more openly available.
Fine, as expected
Found this quite acceptable passed on by Aaron to staff very quickly and they responded next day. I always add mail@ncc to ensure the e-mail is delivered.
Generally works well though I have had difficulties extending library book loans on line. The process is not very clear and leads to confusion and annoyance.
get a meaningful response
get somebody to fix the problem outlined in my email
have a personalised response to queries. For example, I am the council member who will be dealing with your issue and will be in contact with you with 10 days about your query. etc.
Have a system of replies that answer all emails within six working hours of receipt to advise when the definitive reply will be sent or suggesting another officer to attend to the enquiry.
Have had email as follow up to phone enquiry. Info received in good time.
have less contact points as it becomes very complicated when trying to get information from a specific aerea.
have more online options such as pet registration etc
Have specialised customer service staff receive & forward maintenance requests via a real time asset management information & mapping system to responsible officers. Completed works should be entered into system to finalise request. Outstanding work should be persued internally for resolution & customer should be advised of any delays.
human acknowledgement, even if "don't know how to proceed"
I am satisfied with Council's email based customer service. If I had something urgent requiring an immediate response I would telephone.
i asked a question about letter i received from the GM as something was supposed to be enclosed and it wasnt, i was advised within a day why and was happy with service, i have emailed previously about other matters and never recieved a response, mainly to actual councillors
i didn't feel my email was taken seriously as it took so long for a reply,also it seemed like a brush off generated response a phone call in reply would show me you care and are going to take action to my request.
I don't have any problems with it
I dont know
I expect a response to emails to council to be answered in one working day or if the email arrives after office hours then the next day. I have had no problems with Council staff and emails - they should respond quicker in some instances but Councillors are the ones that need to do the jobs that they are elected to do.
I filed a written grievance and got an email response... Another member of thwe community who filed a grievance on a different but similar kind of issue in relation to the same Coicillor got the same email response...It was a joke!
Really , and they wonder why the community lack confidence in the Council whrn councillors are allowed to abuse community member and get away with it...
I found that Council has good service
I have said it all previously.
I really don't know

I sent an email about the changes to the library website asking why it had changed when it worked perfectly well beforehand and did not require you to have your card to enter. Not response every received.
I think it is OK
I think my email was sitting in someone's inbox who was on leave so anaction resulting from that to re-allocate if possible might have sped up responses. Please note, I get my rates notice emailed and usually the PDF doesn't work. Reply with working PDF is usually very prompt.
I think the standard has improved over past 12 months. Professional format Looks like there must have been training over the past 12 months. I was originally disturbed by the presentation and the manner emails had been sent to me by the Life Services Manager.
I think this survey has asked the wrong questions for my sort of activity. I don't generally require personal service from council ... just want acknowledgement when I contact you and to see things being done.
I was happy with the current process.
I was surprised to not receive any type of response to my email request. Tho' equally surprised to find the issue resolved the next day--I was never sure if it was just a coincidence!
If someone replied to emails, that would be a massive start!
It may have happended, but a quick reply to say it was received and let us know who i handling with a time frame for a reply so we know when to follow a no response.
It suits me as it is.
it's fine
It's fine. Staff know their stuff.
Keep communications happening at each stage---that is inform customer what is being done at each stage, and time frame and results and options available.
Knowledge , a keenness to service the community and a interest in procedures less staff less cover up greater opennness and transparency do it right the first time have all the information and key answers on the web site do not wast time and money by also posting responses Make Council officers names and task areas easily findable.
Let ratepayers know what action has been taken, not just send an auto-reply
List emails for all the different departments and respond quicker
listen to the community in relation to concerns.
Lodging an email to the council via the website is quite easy. There ins't that much that can be done to improve its ease of use. Follow up is a bit of an issue.
mail box's reject mail because of size capacity. Shayne Connel in particular.
Make Directors accountable - for the over-generous salary they receive. In particular, ensure a record is kept of their reponse rate, time, etc to both written and oral contacts with ratepayers/customers
Make it more readily available. It appears to me that we are not meant to email Council.
Make sure all areas of council adhere to the same standard.
Make sure the person who is addressed answers and does so within 14 days
no standard form letters/emails.
Perhaps answer them.

Perhaps send an acknowledgement response and an estimate reply time
quicker response times
Quicker responses, again change focus from what is best for council to what is best for the Newcastle Community
rather than leave contact us with email that have no response automatic response actual email account that have physical people check on & also respond that they have been received with an expected response time with dealing with
Receive a reply
reply to all emails
reply to emails don't ignore them
replying would be a good start
respond
Respond to all queries.
Respond to emails within agreed timeframes
respond to emails, even if it is a difficult question, or at least respond with "we don't know "
Respond to the email
Responding to an enquiry within a certain time limit, even if it is only to say there is no news yet.
Responding to emails sent would be a start.
Responses received have always been by formal letter in the mail not be a return email. Any actions indicated by the council in these letters have never actually been acted on which is very disappointing. On two instances close to nine months apart I contacted about the same issue due to this lack of action and there was an element of sarcasm in the letter that was sent in response to the issue being raised. I have kept these letters as the issue being raised was a traffic safety issue that the urban reforestation strategy seemed to have little regard for.
Return emails in a timely manner which specifically address the issues raised in the email.
Same day or next day response, work harder and more efficiently like the rest of us.
see above notes
Seems acceptable to me.
senior staff to have smart phones so a response can be provided during the day.
Service satisfactory.
Since my emails have been to lodge concerns within the time frames for responses for council developments and events I have not received any responses other than computer generated ones.
Take the correspondence turn-around time commitment in Council's Customer Service Charter more seriously - treat this as a KPI (including for senior staff).
Follow up complaints about not meeting this time commitment, so that correspondents feel that they are being heard and heeded.
The email/correspondence wasn't the problem, the problem was the issue I was emailing about took way too long, and too much money to resolve.
The girls were fantastic and kept me well informed regarding the memorial seat, they were apologetic at the length of time to complete and compassionate in the dealings
The length of time to respond has deteriorated over the past 12 or so months.
The officer in the DA section I sent emails to took more than 3 weeks to reply. A response that day, or at worst an acknowledgement the email was received that day would be nice. That's how businesses in the real world operate.
The person was on leave and there was no message response. When the person did return a week later I still had not received a response. No sure how you have staff respond
The person you are trying to contact should tell you if they are off sick so you don't waste time waiting and worrying
The response of the customer service person I emailed was fantastic - got back immediately and was clear and professional - but again the response of the people behind them was terrible - slow, didn't get back to me until I chased.
The response time frame of 2-3 days is acceptable.

the supervisor of parks & gardens maintenance or road maintenance or ward councillor should respond-not automated responses
there is a massive difference between receiving an automated response, and an actual acknowledgement. i think the council needs to be more involved in what the community wants and needs and to actually take into consideration what the people of the community think.
treat our requests with a reply but we are dealing with Newcastle City council with a piss poor attitude
Try to reply sooner. Sometimes we get a mailed letter and no email response. If a mailed letter is going to be sent, then Council should email it as soon as it is approved
Usually I do not get a response within the time specified on the web site.
Varies for issues so hard to say however more knowledge in certain areas and more rapid response
Well maybe all heads of Departments should have their email address on there. NCC site.
When a professional, manager, or specialist are sitting behind a screen typing they are sacrificing time away from their paid discipline i.e they are paid well to do a skilled job that may have taken years of study and accumulated practical experience, not type. Pick up the phone and discuss, then confirm agreement or decision by email.
when I lodged a formal objection to a development application, I received an adequately speedy response. However, when I arrived home from overseas to find that a fig tree opposite my house was to be removed within two days, I received NO response from council to my telephone enquiry. I also wrote to the general manager to enquire about fig trees at Arthur Park and Gregson Park and received NO reply. I also made a complaint through the Council website's customer feedback facility and received no reply
You could start by replying
you people are confused. you think all that matters is getting your point across and answering the phone. YOU NEED TO LEARN HOW TO LISTEN TO PEOPLE ESP AS MANY OF THEM ARE MORE HIGHLY EDUCATED THAN YOURSELVES. the tree debacle fooled nobody. we all know the trees did not have to ALL go. you cannot lie to the community and expect us to be interested in how fast you answer the phone. it's what you say when you DO that counts. listen and take some advice.

APPENDIX VI: Verbatim responses- in person customer service improvements

Categorisation of respondent suggestions in person customer service improvements (Q13)		
<i>Base: contacted Council in person in the last 12mths</i>		
	COUNT	PERCENT
	n=	%
Staff		32.0
Better knowledge, education, training	19	8.6
Need/have friendly, professional staff	14	6.3
More staff / adequate staff numbers	10	4.5
Seek info if not known / accurate info	9	4.1
Ensure follow up is completed	7	3.2
Be polite /respectful	6	2.7
Helpful attitude needed	3	1.4
Listen to people	2	0.9
Take responsibility	1	0.5
Systems & Processes		12.2
Faster service or responses / Shorter waiting times	15	6.8
Ticketing system	4	1.8
Drop box	3	1.4
Advise of waiting times	2	0.9
Track enquiries	2	0.9
Be available for prearranged meetings	1	0.5
Shorter waiting times	0	0.0
Logistics		4.1
Layout and signage in foyer	3	1.4
Better parking	3	1.4
Don't use call centre, computer phone system etc	2	0.9
Take down the time limit sign	1	0.5
Positive		24.8
Satisfied	53	23.9
Staff are friendly/helpful	2	0.9
Other	25	11.3
No answer / Not sure	68	30.6

Q13_in person suggested improvements
<p>* Take the correspondence turn-around time commitment in the Customer Service charter seriously, and either be more prompt with substantive responses, or more forthcoming (and honest) about how long something is going to take. People don't mind waiting, provided they feel something is being done, and that the wait is reasonable and legitimate. It's the silence that damages council. This will improve the in-person customer service by reducing the number of unnecessary inquiries at service points.</p> <p>* Try to resolve more matters at the counter on the first visit, to reduce the number of trips (or follow up phone calls) that a member of the public needs to make.</p> <p>* Have copies of key council documents (especially those required to be presented to the public under GIPA, such as pecuniary interest disclosures, etc) available at the front counter, to reduce the need for officers to be called downstairs, and on the council website, to increase public access.</p> <p>* Make council officers more directly contactable by the public (the Admin Centre is sometimes referred to as the council fortress, because of how difficult officers are to access by ordinary members of the community).</p>
<p>[NOTE: One thing that definitely did not do council's professional image any good was the small but glaring usage error ("Thank you for submitting s service request or correspondence via email/web") which was allowed to persist in its automatic email responder for many years after council was notified about it (by me and by others). By the time council finally got around to correcting it, it had become the butt of widespread community disparagement for not being able to attend to even such a simple matter.]</p>
<p>NOTE 2: Customer Service staff at the Administration Centre's Customer Service Counter are excellent, despite the difficulties they face that are not of their making in performing this task. Senior council staff should be required to do regular stints at the customer service desk, to maintain a feel for what is involved at this coal-face of community contact.</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Have a person answer the phone. 2. Make sure the person either has the knowledge necessary or is aware of who you need to be put through to in order to solve the problem. 3. Do not use call centres, who do not know what or where you are talking about, use local people. 4. Education of staff would be the most important thing, so much knowledge was lost with the removal of so many good staff and many new ones know nothing.
<p>A pleasant reception when entering council is important. It is irritating to be given the "run-around", that is "that person is not here today; therefore we can't help you". It is useful to have another person who can take up the issue if the main person is sick, or on leave, or away on business. That way, you don't feel you have wasted your time coming in to see someone who isn't there, or can't help you.</p>
<p>Accurate information. Use language that residents can understand, explain clearly processes that may be confusing to some people.</p>
<p>All staff members were busy (either at their desks or in one case, attending to another customer) when I visited - it was just a matter of waiting till the next staff member was available.</p>
<p>As I said previously, don't make people take a number and wait in line when all they want to do is drop off an envelope for a staff member.</p>
<p>It's akin to making me line up behind multiple people with full trolleys at the supermarket, when I have a single item.</p>
<p>At King Street head office the service is excellent. However more expansion of the Voice will also assist residents with becoming easily aware of council activities and encourage seamless communications</p>

Basically, all council workers provide customer service.
The ones who lie, insult and deceive (a very small proportionate)customers should be sacked. The rest complimented
Be available at the time that was set for the meeting.
Better follow up
Better interaction between library staff and residents
Better knowledge. Faster response/turn around time.
Better parking
Better training (or a greater degree of empowerment to) for customer service level staff so that they didn't need to refer to 'bosses' so often.
Get rid of the too many levels of bureaucratic (and often underemployed) middle management.
Better training and staff knowledge of areas of responsibility and expertise: re who does what and where. A management "tree" or flow chart should be kept upto date
By organising induction for staff on profesional conduct.
By training its officers
Call back needs to be as quickly as promised. ALL information about DA under investigation needs to be on hand.
Clearer areas for general public to know where to go / where to wait etc., when at Council building.
Continute to provide current level of service. Communication between the different sections of Council could be improved slightly.
Council could in fact follow up and do the things they say they are going to do. I contacted Council about the tree in front of my house which is growing onto the roof of my house. I have requested almost 2 months ago that the tree be pruned and this has not happened.
Customer service staff are always friendly and helpful so no improvements
Different procedure. an information officer to direct one to an expert knowledgable officer, not just general blah
Do the work you are employed to do !!If you don't know an answer find out! Treat all with equal concern. This is a shared town not a convent employment opportunity for circuit malcontents.
Don't concede defeat
dont really have any complaints except neither of us had enough knowledge on DA's for units above the first floor. Other questions and issues, re bins etc. have all been dealt with very well. Friendly staff
Educate staff re customer service.
employ more professional knowledgable people who actually listen to residents and don't act out a predetermined agenda eg Newcastle West parking meters
Ensure all customer service desks are manned.
Ensure the parking meters work - so we don't have to run back and forth topping it up - during our contact!
Everybody has bad days in the office, but in customer service roles you really need to try and put that behind you and be polite, we all need to remeber this not just council but they are in a rolse of responsibility.
Explain likely wait time and if delay keep updated on time to be served and why any delays
faster service, more professional service, more exacting answers to questions, aware of how to be service oriented.
Found service good. Delays in speaking to that person should be reduced.
Friendly and welcoming customer contact staff
Friendly, knowledgeable, Professional and PROMPT attention
Front line staff are very knowledgeable (service desk, library) and under rated. Have more issues with getting an adequate response in regards to DA issues however this is not necessarily staff related but rather the applicant. Have real challenges in getting to hire a hall

Get some people working there who actually care about customer service, and stop asking us stupid questions about customer service. If the council was a normal business relying on customer service to get repeat customers you would go out of business.
good as is
Have adequate staff on counters during busy periods. Continue to keep the service personalised with knowledgeable people on front counter positions. Trainees should be mentored and have experienced staff work alongside them until they know exactly what is expected of them. Anyone who doesn't like customer service should be working behind the scenes, put people up front who do like dealing with the public.
Have competent staff. Respond to all queries. Be professionally courteous.
Have council personnel better knowledge of who to contact for a particular service.
Have knowledge &/or details of current affairs
Have more officers on hand to assist customers at busy periods
Have more people at the front desk.
Have more work so there is more contact.
have no problems as it is
Have systems that allow conversations/correspondence to be tracked and followed up. And proper delegation from front of house to relevant Council officers.
Hire more professionally, technically qualified people, as opposed to generic 'management' skills
I am happy with the established system
I applied for public voice. The other speaker advised that he was told his was the only application. When I contacted council they appeared to then "find" my application, and I was then able to speak. This is not satisfactory.
The lady who received my application did stamp it with the date so the problem appears to be what happened next.
I can think of no way they can improve as they have always been okay with me
I can't recall my last in-house experience but in general, I would wish to be dealt with immediately by a person with a pleasant and helpful manner, who can answer my question or, if not, has access to information that they can look up and then answer my question .
I could not ask it to be any better
I don't see how as the in-person contact I had was excellent
I find in person contact much more productive. Voicemail, "I'll get back to you" etc on phone often drags out the process for days to weeks to the point you just give up.
I found no need for improvement
I have been happy with the customer service I have received - thank you
I have had only good experiences in person
I have no problem with the front office staff...They are helpful and courteous...It was at a deeper level . And my concerns were written in a complaint...I prefer to go to council to deal with issues as I find i get an immediate response...I also live nearby so its not an issue...
Regarding my complaint it was necessary to document and write my grievance
I haven't had a problem.The system is streamlined as it is.
I only went in to pay my rates bills. The people at the counter are usually nice, but there's not a lot to the task, so there's not much to improve upon. All they have to do is take my money! ;>
I thought the customer service officers were friendly & helpful even though it was Friday arvo close to closing time
I was attended to by a most pleasant young woman who was extremely helpful so I have no knowledge of how this could be improved.
I was lodging a DA. It takes for ever to hand it over the counter, and so I prefer to mail it - otherwise you could be there for 20-30 minutes - you should just take the DA and return (as you would if posted) if incomplete.

<p>I was paying my account. There was one person handling the bills and this took a long time because the cash had already been counted and the bills were being done manually at 4.30 pm - surely this is a bit early to balance the money (1/2 hour before closing)?!!?</p>
<p>I was really happy with my contact with council staff at King Street when I went in to update the registration details for my new dog. I took in the signed forms from the old owner and the lady that served me was super-quick and helpful and even printed out a copy of the updated registration certificate for me then and there to take away with me.</p> <p>When contacting council for information on other subjects through via email I found I rarely got a response.</p>
<p>I was there to arrange permission to use the shed area at honeysuckle, last christmas (as per 3 previous christmas occasions). The service, assistance has always been fantastic, no complaints. I love being able to hire the area, it is a fantastic venue for a large number of families to get together. This has been for the Samaritans Brighter Futures program. Thank you to all staff for such a seamless effort in allowing this to happen.</p>
<p>I was waiting to be served and there seemed to be help desk employees who were not otherwise engaged - a bit annoying</p>
<p>If they could be as specific as possible</p>
<p>If they do not know say so.</p> <p>Smile and be friendly and help to relax the customer.</p> <p>Do not hide behind legislation offer suggestions and alternatives.</p> <p>I was told what I cannot do by NCC, but never informed what I could do however, private company did offer some assistance about my request.</p> <p>Help people and do not just put up barriers. I have found assistance and information from private companies that NCC should provide or know.</p> <p>Treat the customer with some respect.</p> <p>Take responsibility of the request/issue do not pass it onto someone else and indicate that it is not NCC's issue or fault.</p> <p>Follow up and honour your promise and commitment.</p> <p>Just help and guide people through their request or issues. It is that simple.</p>
<p>i'm happy</p>
<p>In King Street - I always feel as though I am pulling them away from their desk to come to the counter. Most of the time there is no 'real' friendly atmosphere there.</p>
<p>In person customer service is pretty good but it can be difficult to get to the right person or department which is knowledgeable about the issue. It appears that departments and people don't share information as well as they could</p>
<p>In person customer service was fine unfortunately follow up wasn't.</p>
<p>Insist council staff do the job they are paid to do - represent their constituents.</p>
<p>It was fine on the day we visited.</p>
<p>It's pot-luck how long the queue is, I was lucky this year. Maybe the ticket system could indicate a time that the customer service would be ready? However, this would mean assuming/specifying a time quantum for each type of service, which may not work in practice.</p>
<p>It's pretty good now. More general knowledge of "Council responsibilities" by customer service would help.</p>
<p>just keep encouraging your staff to be helpful and courteous</p>
<p>Just speed things up.</p>

<p>Knowledge of services. Response to letters of objection regarding objection to development in adjoining property - points raised in my letter were not addressed, merely a 'standard' and bland response. Most unsatisfying. Please advise council officers to read correspondence and answer points raised by the public, especially those raised by an adjoining neighbour to a development where the development has a major impact in the area.</p>
<p>Less communication between staff & more focus & correct information given to customers especially when there is insufficient parking plus when you do find a park you have to feed meters is it a wonder why newcastle itself is dying people don't go to shop in newcastle as theres nothing there plus you have to pay for the inconvenience people are aggravated prior to enter the building due to parking meters & lack of parking prior to David Jones closing at least one could get a park there</p>
<p>Less staff greater skill of those present a better web site eg all DA.s should be fully visable and totally trackable on the web. It would be helpful if the staff were honest, open and all activities were transparent.</p>
<p>Less waiting time.</p>
<p>Library staff very good. The person I talked to in the street about the tree-planting programme in Stockton I thought was a bit evasive, but pleasant enough. Maybe he didn't know all the facts, but I felt sure he should have.</p>
<p>Limit each enquiry to 15 minutes as we are asked to do.</p>
<p>Listen and be a bit more polite. No doubt there are some rude customers but counter staff need to rise up over that.</p>
<p>Maintain several methods for providing customer service as different issues require different contact methods for resolution. In my case I was able to either leave a phone kmessage, send an email from the council website; the most successful method for resolving my issue was by going to the depot and speaking to someone and receiving immediate confirmation that my issue would be resolved and what to do about it if it wasn't - very helpful last piece of information.</p>
<p>Maintain speedy over the counter service</p>
<p>Make DA documentation directly accessible again, not hidden behind the counter.</p> <p>Provide a drop off box at the Admin Centre counter for hand delivered submissions.</p>
<p>Make sure documents are accurate and contain all the relevant information.</p> <p>eg The traffic plan for the streets around Westfield contained many inaccuracies, which then makes a mockery of any so called 'informed' decisions. eg the pedestrian refuge near the back entrance of Westfield was missing from the plans, and is in the most dangerous location on Lexington. Also, the concrete surrounds do not allow traffic to ease past to the left - causing huge bank ups.</p>
<p>Make the decision makers more accessible. The person at the counter, 1st contact, obviously does not have the answer to the reason why you are there. The decision maker or arbitrator hides behind a telephone extension and can make himself available or unavailable dependent on the counter query.</p>
<p>Make the ticketing more specific - ie list which ticket is needed for more options</p>
<p>maybe just have more people with specific knowledge about various area's of the NCC as opposed to just a general spread of info.</p>
<p>Mediation with other services to help where Council not able to oblige and those services be made known to community</p>
<p>More consultation regarding strategic and development actions</p>
<p>more dog rangers</p>
<p>More politeness</p>
<p>More staff but then they would need more desks as all the desks were busy, the lady who served me was lovely and very helpful and did apologise for the waiting time. The staff had development applications, which was explained. Maybe putting a time limit on when DA's can be submitted, eg between 9.00am and 2.00pm would free up staff to attend other matters - customers could be advised of this over the phone and in the literature given to customers.</p>

<p>My in person experience at the Council chambers was quite acceptable.</p> <p>My phone inquiry was very poorly handled and trying to follow up the phone call with local council resources was very poor. (this was in relation to trying to obtain a tree for my house front in Stockton). I realise that some people objected to the trees. I was not one. The woman I was put through to was very unhelpful and I would not attempt to contact this area again.</p>
<p>My three contacts with council resolved the queries I had quickly and efficiently. My last visit was to arrange a tip voucher. I was put through by phone to a very pleasant female council officer who advised that the voucher would be received in the mail over the next week. It was, so I can really make no suggestions, as my visits to King Street have all been pleasant, as well as my one phone contact.</p>
<p>New People, particularly leadership because poor attitude from managers is flowing down the chain</p>
<p>New phone system is irritating</p>
<p>No improvement needed</p>
<p>No problems with switchboard operation, onsite customer service poor. Should provide documentation of visit and decision.</p>
<p>No suggestions- very happy with the service I received</p>
<p>Noticed marked improvement on last visit to previous occasions. Suggest you continue trying to be better and better.</p>
<p>Overall a positive experience with the staff at the council.</p> <p>It appears to be the decision makers that I have an issue with.</p> <p>I was excited this morning when I saw a tree being planted down opposite Bar beach near the skate park. Another another couple of hundred tree/shrubs from Merewether along the shoreline would be fantastic. It would make for a more beautiful place to sit in summer with some sun protection.</p> <p>Thank you</p>
<p>People at the counter were very nice but the people I was dealing with behind that were hopeless.</p>
<p>Person, reception information located near counter, May be able to answer quick questions only, able to refer to correct individual or dept.</p>
<p>planning is a complex issue when the development planned is unusual. I suspect the duty officer we consulted had a background that did not give them the background to answer our specific questions clearly. Neverthe the less they were able to point to relevant parts of the regulations which we could tryh to comprehend time.</p>
<p>Previously a person with some knowledge came to talk with you. Now it seems the front person only directs you to the staff area by phone. You really do not know who you are getting information from !</p>
<p>My previous enquireys at council over the years have been much better that recently.</p>
<p>Provide a competent and early response to site matters</p>
<p>Provide contact names / numbers with invitation to contact if necessary</p>
<p>Provide free parking for the first hour outside council offices, to have to pay for up to and hour for a consultation that should take 10 minutes is a bit upsetting. Yes you could only pay for 15 minutes but run the risk of a parking fine or losing your place in the queue, if you run out to feed the meter.</p>
<p>Provide more on-call staff for people dropping in.</p>
<p>Put someone back on the reception counter</p>
<p>Putting aside red tape, more staff, better efficiency</p>
<p>Quicker times online payment for things like dog registration</p>
<p>respond to information requests</p>
<p>retun phone calls answer calls action requests care about the community</p>
<p>Satisfied witg service received at locations attended.</p>
<p>Smile.</p>

speedier service courteous staff
Staff have greater knowledge of regulations.
Staff training so that staff know it's not OK to embarrass a customer or treat a customer as if they are stupid.
Start again
Starting treating your community with respect.
Stop compliance officers acting as police. They are not and give a very poor impression of Council (and I'm noe of the few who have never been fined - I just see who they treat other members of my community).
Take down the signs saying to 'please limit your enquiry to 15 minutes'. They are offensive for folks struggling with complex issues or who have difficulty understanding.
Take the "Bunnings" option - every person employed who is near a person who might be a customer makes eye contact and just nods a greeting, or asks if they can be of assistance - works for me!
The council need to take a 'we can do that' a 'what can we do to solve that problem' instead of making EVERY excuse and put up every unreasonable and irrational "YOU CANT DO THAT" argument
The Directors, Managers and Councillors need to be honest with community and our Neighbourhood. Not break up a community through greed and deals with developers.
The front-desk staff are great. It's the policy-makers who are appalling.
The Ground floor customer service staff are very professional
The interaction I had was to try to find information on the history of the home I currently own, specifically the date it was built and the names of the first owners. The customer service officer said that information would not be available. She was rude, disrespectful and overall the most unhelpful person there could possibly be.
I was extremely annoyed and unenlightened.
Improvement could be made by redirecting people to more appropriate places to find the information, and soem basic courtesy.
The last in-person service I received was good.
The last time I was reporting a bad footpath out the front of Carrington Post Office and mailbox, I even told them about a lady who damaged her knee very badly falling because of the bad footpath. I wasted 2 months before I rang about said footpath, still had to wait 4 weeks before it was fixed
the library staff are already wonderful
The original phone call on Sat 26/5/12 to the afterhours service was not given to the Ranger. luckily, I phoned again the enxt day. The Ranger didn't have much time to investigate the dog attack. He tried to do it between patrolling for dogs.
The set out of the front entry and knowing where to go is not straight forward!
The system of waiting is not good and there is no specific person to speak to for any particular area.
This could be improved
The talks by council officers at the information night were unspecific and so general as to be fairly useless. One of the staff at a stand was annoyed by a comment I made about the development of West End, which stopped all discussion, so I found the night a PR exercise rather than genuine engagement.
There are some council employees which don't have a lot of manners or just don't seem to be interested in helping. This is a low percentage of council that I have dealt with though.
They could tell the truth, and follow the COuncil objectives OBJECTIVELY for a Safe, ethical, equitable, socially just, non-discriminatory Happy, Healthy Sustainable active transport network

<p>This is so goods that itis difficult to sugest improvements.</p> <p>When attending Council Service Counter, the receptionis always prompt and courteous.</p> <p>When awaiting a Duty Officer or someone in another part of the building, it may be possible to give a more definitive estimate of the likely waiting time.</p> <p>The "time loss" now is not great, so it may be more trouble than it its worth to try to speed this up.</p>
<p>train staff, if staff do not know the answer they should say so and find someone who does</p>
<p>use of personal pages reduces cost and hits target when sent, not like mobiles that are forgotten.</p>
<p>Very satisfied with in-person service</p>
<p>Web access to library reminders system is problematic. I will need to enquire further about free e-mail advice system</p>
<p>When an officer is unable to see an unannounced in-person visitor they should give details of how long the client should expect to have to wait.</p>
<p>Your in-person customer service at your admin centre is fine.</p>

APPENDIX VII: Verbatim responses- website improvements

Categorisation of respondent suggestions website content and services (Q39)		
<i>Base: accessed Council website in the last 12mths</i>	COUNT	PERCENT
	n=	%
General		21.1
Easier navigation / Hard to find information	11	5.5
Better search engine	8	4.0
More up to date	6	3.0
Clearer layout / Less cluttered	4	2.0
List of direct contact numbers	3	1.5
Bill payment	3	1.5
Online booking forms	3	1.5
Opening Hours, Locations etc	2	1.0
List all fees and charges	1	0.5
Lodge complaints	1	0.5
About Newcastle		9.5
Events info / Info on local fairs, community groups etc	16	8.0
Maps	2	1.0
Museum	1	0.5
Council		6.5
Council meetings/agendas/minutes etc	8	4.0
Committee info	2	1.0
Organisational Chart	1	0.5
Councillor email addresses	1	0.5
Webcasts of Council meetings	1	0.5
Services		5.0
Register animals	3	1.5
Waste events eg e-watse, mattress muster and bulk waste	3	1.5
Library	3	1.5
Report stray or dangerous animals	1	0.5
Laws & Permits		1.5
Info on roadworks	2	1.0
Local laws	1	0.5
Building & Planning		3.0
Online DA application / track or search DAs online	6	3.0
Other		3.0
Tourism information	3	1.5
Receive responses to online submissions / give ref # or similar	3	1.5
Satisfied	15	7.5
Other	18	9.0
No answer / Not sure	106	53.3

Q39 Internet suggested content and services
"Public Exhibitions" should be more honestly referred to as "Public Comment" (items) - and made readily visible at a Home Page level - not hidden as they are at present. There should also be a section where the results of previous ones are summarised (and kept for at least 6 months).
a complete makeover
A list of all charges to save me having to wait on the phone for the information and it should be easier to navigate, I find the web site very confusing
A search engine that works quickly, effectively and with a high level of accuracy. Each department head should be responsible for the web content of their area.
Admission by senior staff that they have wasted countless ratepayer dollars on cynical projects with lip service only to ratepayers.
All the information that I have ever wanted is already on the website.
Areas of information more obvious on the Home Page
Better access to Council Guidelines; better intuitive searching (often can't find things by doing a "search" - searches return irrelevant information; end up having to manually search around. Can be very time consuming to find information that should be easier to search.
clearer links to maps such as bushfire map.
could we report stray dogs online?
what about non-compliance with regulations reporting online?
covers all at this stage
DAs. Council meeting minutes should be within a few days not over a month. Meeting agendas are not there in a timely manner. Search engine is very poor
Difficult to say. My search related to registration of my new cats; information required was not clear - payment locations for animal registration, so I had to phone to clarify options. Also registration of animals on line is very difficult indeed.
Direct contact numbers for services so that you don't have to go through a merry go round of calls to get to the service you need.
Dog registration online and similar user friendly services
Easy to find forms
Easy to find listed applications for Development and responses
Easy to find local laws regarding issues eg, fences, noise, animals, etc.
Easy to find council minutes from each meeting with summary or agenda posted in title.
Easy to find council run resources and when they are open etc. Eg pools, and when their activity items are open etc, Librarys/museum and links to tourist information with accomodation, conference facilities, how to set up an event in newcastle etc.
And what on earth happened to Laman st? Iconic trees disappeared, such an embarassment when took a visitor them from OS. What incredible mismanagement that must have been.
Educational information about dogs and cats instead of Council thinking that to get people to comply they have to put more laws in place
Events, complaints, bill payments, library services, roadworks, council meetings.

<p>Events, organisations or groups in my neighbourhood that i might want to join e.g. sporting, mother's group etc.</p> <p>Maybe now and again - a good news story regarding the environment and how as a community/individual we can do our bit.</p> <p>Report back to the community on interesting milestones that have been achieved from plans that were developed in consultation with the community i.e. Newcastle 2030. People invest time in contributing to these plans and often they are never heard about again or are hidden away in annual report.</p>
<p>Exact operating hours for various services.</p>
<p>Exact details on services.</p>
<p>FAQ</p>
<p>All information about council services so I don't have to bother people.</p>
<p>For paying rates etc, the site is fine. I have,however found information about events out of date or absent. One instance is information about main street fairs.</p>
<p>Get your Development Application online properly. Why should we have to go in and look at folders in the library in the age of GIS mapping and pdfs??</p>
<p>Had to lodge a tender via the website and found it very difficult to find the links. I don't find the website intuitive at all.</p>
<p>How about minutes of Council meetings a week altyer instead of aver a month later?</p> <p>How about the agenda of the Council meeting being available more then a few days before.The agenda for the July 3 meeting was not available 5 days before.</p>
<p>The search engine is very poor.</p>
<p>I am currently happy with the website for the areas I have looked at</p>
<p>I am satisfied with Council's website.</p>
<p>I can't recall whether there was any mention of religious websites or info, but if it isn't there, that would be a helpful inclusion</p>
<p>i have not examined it enough to suggest anything but overall it seems informative...is there a link to tourist information?</p>
<p>I have submitted several online requests for information or issues. I have not received a response to any of them. If the website is considered to be a form of communication, the submission of comments via the online feedback service should warrant a response. Each submission I made was in relation to projects and assets/infrastructure. This area seems to have poor (or no) customer service.</p>
<p>I just could not get through and had to book by phone to make sure the bulk waste was collected.</p> <p>I can't remember what it looked like but I booked on the first week of collection as was suggested on the informations card I received</p>
<p>i like the website</p>
<p>I think the content is generally OK ... there is a tendency to hide information which you don't want people to examine too closely, but this is not just a website peculiarity.</p>
<p>I would like enquiries to be individually numbered and the ability to track/check status on web.</p>
<p>I would like to see some extra litter and graffiti eradication strategies services put in place. Also more attention could be made to illegal parking. I am a Maryville resident and visibility at corners due to illegally parked cars is a problem.</p>
<p>I'd like a link to a transcript of every council meeting.</p>

<p>I'd like it more clearly laid out, and easier to find information. If you keep drilling down, you eventually find what you need, it'd be better though to have a cleaner-looking opening web page with drop-down menus for the various departments and facilities and services.</p>
<p>informaion dated</p>
<p>no all reports available</p>
<p>Information on areas past Beaumont St Hamilton that would be of interest to other "Inner City Dwellers" Fairs,Attractions and services</p>
<p>information/timetables about activities held in local community halls.</p>
<p>It's actually pretty good.</p>
<p>I've always found what I'm looking for.</p>
<p>Latest council sponsored events.</p>
<p>Minutes of most recent Council meetings/consultations</p>
<p>LEP zoning maps - could not be found on my last visit to the website</p>
<p>Less dead information re suburbs and parks. Booking of sites possible online.</p>
<p>Library site changed without notification or issue of instructions for customers regarding new usage</p>
<p>Lots of local events</p>
<p>Maintenance of information ie old documents need to be replaced with latest documents & policies promptly.</p>
<p>Maitland council has a wonderful resource where you can look up community buildings etc with photo's and full details. When looking for a venue Newcastle (and Lake Mac council) did not - and it's just a positive thing to have. They are supposed to be for the community - so why not put up more information about them!</p>
<p>More consistency in the way studies are described, ie if all current studies were available by searching 'current studies' or similar</p>
<p>More detailed information on tourism services and council road repairs</p>
<p>More display information. Often I need to go to a library or Council office to look at something which means I often don't. Reports (e.g. traffic) for larger developments would be good to access via the web</p>
<p>More information on playgrounds within the local council area, and other activities for children.</p>
<p>more information on what the rates cover, more about local events, better layout of information that is updated more regular.</p>
<p>More online booking forms, online payments</p>
<p>More prominence given to upcoming events. In particular the chemical, e-waste and other recycling days. So often, I only know about these AFTER the event when the Council pats itself on the back in its e-Council news at how successful they were. Most recent example was the Mattress Muster Day. Did not hear or see anything about it before the event.</p>
<p>more self serve payment and applications</p>
<p>mOre specific details and/or more easily found details about planning proposals</p>
<p>More upto date, easier to navigate, more complete list of events and relevant contact details for those events or appropriate follow-on info such as website link. The events calander is not up-to-date on the website - no information on Darby St Fair and similar events</p>
<p>Most of the above could already be on the website but things I think would help that may not be there already are:</p> <p>Locations of waste disposal sites for things like oil, tyres electronic waste.</p> <p>Contacts for various committees helping look after council sporting facilities</p>

Coming evens in Newcastle (both council sponsored and other key events)
Most other councils have application tracking and provide a much greater level of information for development and planning. e.g. Lake Macquarie development planning tool is excellent. Newcastle lags way behind in this regard.
needs to be updated on a more regular basis with relevant local information for the city and surrounding area's.
No comment
Not happy with the changes to the library website. Also, tried to find out about carols by candlelight last year and ended up having to look on the KOFM website as nothing on NCC website until the last minute. Your "Calendar" of events is not great as it is out of date and only seems to have repeating events. I realise that you have a lot of information to provide but the website needs to be updated regulary whcih does not always seem to be the case.
Not sure I need more than is there.
Nothing extra
Often I experienced difficulty in identifying the appropriate page/s / departments etc before I could find what I was looking for.
organisation chart - who does what = what are the secitons. finding the person to provide the information can be very difficult. reception staff don't have that level of detailed knowledge.
Plans and maps online should all be available as downloadable PDF format. For example this plan is impossible to see online esp if using a mobile device: http://www.newcastle.nsw.gov.au/council/projects_and_works/islington_park_playground_construction The headings/tabs on the homepage are difficult to navigate if you don't know which section your query relates to. Museum should have a custom interactive website that enhances and extends the exhibitions and programs it runs. Current museum website is too 'council corporate' - an opportunity lost.
Put the ward maps on website.
Quite happy with the current system...don't use the site very often.
Register animals online, interactive maps online showing local services & planning information.
Safe, ethical, equitable, socially just, non-discriminatory Happy, Healthy Sustainable active transport network
Search engine needs a lot of work and stop the self promotion. You are not in competition with other councils
So far it has met all my needs
Sometimes gets re-organised - maybe there should be a changes summary when updating the website eg. Difficult to find community gardens - seemed to change location. Would have thought it should be under environment.
Suburb specific activities. For example I'm always looking to see what's being done in the Beresfield area.

<p>Talking about Stockton, where I live..More info about the Stockton tree planting and what choice we have for tree selection.Although not affected personally, I thought the selection of Norfolk Pines was extremely unwise...are they an indigenous tree of this area? No, I think not. There were better shade trees to choose from that were more suitable. Were the residents and ratepayers whose views were affected consulted?...apparently not, which demonstrates a worrying lack of consultation and a 'stand-over' Council attitude</p>
<p>The Council plans available online proposed redevelopment of Stockton foreshore was quite detailed and easily obtainable.I generally agree with most of the proposals to beautify the area. New Library building is not necessary though and is a waste of ratepayers money...just extend the opening hours and open on more days. The employment of extra staff to man the library here (and probably elsewhere) would be much, much cheaper than building a whole new library.</p>
<p>The councillors email addresses</p>
<p>the functions councillors are invited and which ones they attend.</p>
<p>The information is there it just isnt easy to navigate. I need information on home businesses. I had to ring to get help finding the information online.</p>
<p>The new website is very much better than the old one. Great to get the overview of openings hours and different actions you can take (such e-news subscriptions) on the front page. Well done.</p>
<p>The search tool is not always that accurate</p>
<p>The services are all there. It is finding them that is the challenge. Please ensure that the search function works "just like google".</p>
<p>The site has DA's listed by application number only. Very hard to find a particular DA when you don't know which group to look in or the DA number.</p>
<p>Why can't we search for da's based on maybe street name for example or any keyword?</p>
<p>The website contained all of the info that I was looking for.</p>
<p>The website is often very slow, and the navigation is mysterious. Its very unclear where to find things. Several times there have been discrepant versions of documents in different locations, and documents that are faulty when downloaded.</p>
<p>Too cluttered. I use the search engine almost everytime cause info is too hard to find. Would like to log my query, and then received follow up via email</p>
<p>Up to the minute information about things going on, including links to Hunter Water activities such as water outages, Electricity companies ditto, garbage removal delays, etc. Perhaps a page off the home page named "What's up?" or the like. Could include information (NOT advertising) about events, especially those that affect traffic, noise (e.g., concerts on the Foreshore), and even things like protests about cutting down the figtrees.</p>
<p>NB Up to the MINUTE. So somebody in Council should remain awake at least during business hours, and preferably at the weekend too.</p>
<p>Upcoming changes planned for the town.</p>
<p>Community need to be aware of what is going on. After all it is OUR town, not council's town.</p>
<p>More information about what is available in terms of access to walks, beaches, entertainment, parks etc for disabled people. disabled people ned to know this info in planning their outings.</p>

Webcasts of council meetings (including an online archive of these).

All information required by GIPA (including things like pecuniary interest disclosures, etc).

Much better access to archival documentation (e.g., documents from previous council and committee meetings, which should be able to be much more easily accessed than they currently are). Other websites provide much easier ways of accessing archival material.

Information and navigation that is more targetted at particular kinds of users and their needs (eg., citizens, service-users, visitors, residents, NESB residents, etc).

when rates are increased why doesn't the council offer more help for pensioners especiallt single pensioners

You have had all information I required when I went to the website.

APPENDIX VIII: Verbatim responses- mail improvements

Categorisation of respondent suggestions mail customer service improvements (Q35)		
<i>Base: Council via posted mail in the last 12mths</i>		
	COUNT	PERCENT
	n=	%
Mail procedures		15.9
Acknowledge receipt of letters	4	6.3
Respond to letters	3	4.8
Adhere to publicised response timeframes	2	3.2
No response received	1	1.6
Responses		9.5
Response method	3	4.8
Provide adequate/full/complete responses to queries	2	3.2
Faster responses	1	1.6
Other		1.6
Track and log email requests	1	1.6
Staff		1.6
Empathy	1	1.6
Satisfied	6	9.5
Other	9	14.3
No answer / Not sure	34	54.0

Q35_mail suggested improvements
a proper response and not a holding pattern
Acknowledge receipt of the request by sending a card quoting reference number and expected time to respond. This procedure is followed by some government departments and it created a positive atmosphere to requests.
Approve DA's more quickly
at least acknowledge the letter
By responding within a maximum of 2 weeks. Since this was to compliment one of council's employees for a job well done and to pass this on to the employee, it was discouraging as well as disappointing to not receive a response.
Can not fault the service.
Develop a policy that gives preference to email communication over postal, unless specifically requested by the other party. This will save on postage, time and archiving, and should make retrieval easier (using digital search capability - though I have doubts about council's capacity to do this on the basis of other information I have received).
Don't have enough experience of it to say
Don't know how mail is distributed so can't comment
Empathy, understanding that my time is valuable and I would only complain as a last resort when I need help so that assistance in solving the problem is what is needed. Being fobbed off or ignored is not helpful.
Happy with service
I am satisfied with Council's mail based customer service.
I cannot say as I do not know what happens once my letter was received by the Council. You need to do a survey of that workplace to discover improvements to customer service
I received a letter that spouted "propaganda" from a senior council officer that did not address the matter under discussion.
I received notification that the grievance was received...I had a reply about a month later...
i understand there must be a lot of people who write letters especially older people over 50yrs of age. They do not use email maybe? That's ok except one does not usually make a copy of what was written. Therefore if there is too long a delay between writing the letter and receiving a reply, the writer can forget what specifically they said in the letter, especially if the matter is complicated, such as a dispute over time. In cases like this, a council officer could telephone or visit the writer to discuss the issue, but this may not be an effective use of an officer's time I realise?
If all officers responded in the same manner as the General Manager, it could save ratepayers having to bother him before they get any satisfaction.
It is not the mail based service that is the problem, it is the senior management
It obviously depends on the complexity of the issue.
Mail based service seems fine
Needs to be speeded up. Perhaps an acknowledgement of receipt of mailed correspondence giving a contact and an expected formal response time would be appropriate.
Reply to their mail.
Respond
respond!!
Same as everything else - do your job and respond professionally and quickly
scan and email letters
see previous comments
Stop the overkill, although you might be bound by legislation, otherwise good
These questions are not sensible. Each contact with the council can be varied. How can you compare contact over graffiti, with a complaint about parking to a query about a DA. As usual a completely unbalanced survey. I really don't know how you will get any statistically relevant or useful information.
They replied by phone, if I write a letter I expect a letter in return.



With mail regarding objections to development applications, council seems to be quite attentive to responses

APPENDIX IX: Verbatim responses- suggestions for improvements, customer service overall

Categorisation of respondent suggestions for improvements (Q40)		
<i>Base: contacted Council in the last 12mths</i>	COUNT	PERCENT
	n=	%
Staff		20.8
Cultural change / community focus / customer focus	30	5.0
Better knowledge, education, training	14	2.3
Need friendly, professional, courteous, general manners etc staff	12	2.0
Follow up	10	1.7
Take responsibility	10	1.7
Be more open, honest transparent	10	1.7
Listen	8	1.3
More staff / adequate staff numbers	7	1.2
More helpful	5	0.8
Seek info if not known / accurate info	4	0.7
Solutions focussed / results driven	4	0.7
Bad attitude	3	0.5
Be consistent in responses	2	0.3
Don't care / dismissive / arrogant / rude	2	0.3
Should know who to transfer call to / not multiple transfers	2	0.3
Empower staff / give more authority	2	0.3
Systems & Processes		12.2
Respond to voicemail / email / internet queries etc, return calls	17	2.8
Faster responses / service	15	2.5
Better online presence	12	2.0
Computer or Automated service comments	6	1.0
Have direct contacts available / Directory	5	0.8
Advise of waiting times or response times	4	0.7
Make records / log enquiries / give ref number	3	0.5
Have a real person answering	3	0.5
Acknowledge query received	3	0.5
Can't get through / phones ring out / answer the phone	2	0.3
Ticketing system	1	0.2
Voicemail comments	1	0.2
Have one point of contact / Not having to make multiple contacts	1	0.2
Other		8.8
Councillors / Council staff	19	3.2
Consultation	16	2.7
Compliance	7	1.2
Communication	5	0.8
Waste	5	0.8
Satisfied	30	5.0
Other comment	45	7.5
No answer / Not sure	330	55.0

Q40_suggestedimprovements
A better directory on the NCC website with more specific email addresses to avoid going directly to sections.
A clearer directory on the council website as to which dept is responsible for which council functions. That way we know what to ask for when we ring instead of relying on someone who clearly hasn't been trained well enough.
A focus on the customer rather than a focus on how to make it easier for the council. The idea that council is the working body of the community should be instilled in every manager and employee, that the wages and salaries are sourced from the community.
Community consultation is not an added service but the right of the community in council decisions.
A person answering the phone is far better than a recording.
A response to queries would be a significant improvement. I have sent several queries and requests only to never hear from council. These have been simple maintenance requests for a local park mainly. Even if it was a "sorry we can't do what you asked" - at least it would be an answer. Usually I never hear anything.
Acknowledgement of letter with a contact officer who will deal with issue
Actually respond to queries and improve the customer service skills of the staff who are doing the work - not the people on the front desk, they are fine - but the people doing the DA's - dealing with that office was frustrating and they were incredibly unprofessional and never followed through until I threatened them.
Actually thought the response time excellent.
Actually try to solve the issue rather than side step the problem.
Again a designated time set aside each day or at least each week where every is in the office at one time, so phone transfers don't become an endless stream of message banks.
Again work harder and more efficiently like the rest of us. Don't let the work load pile up and attend to it at a snail's pace. If employees are on holidays someone else should be taking over their workload during this time - again like the rest of us must do.
Allow for the giving of basic information about Council services over the phone so that people are not required to use their email to do so. Many citizens do not have email, yet are entitled to receive information. Moreover, citizens should be entitled to receive basic information without having to reveal their contact details.
Always have a ready reference base so customer/ratepayer/resident can use a reference/incident number when following up previous matters.
Are you actually serious about giving ratepayers access to all council info? It doesn't look like it as a newcomer to Newcastle I can only comment on my brief experience which was positive
as before
As before
As earlier suggested, use human interface and respond faster
As stated previously, by acknowledging receipt of mail especially when a request was made to provide the relevant worker with the positive feedback Council had received for a job well done.
At the Waratah Depot was excellent. The girls there were very helpful.
attitude is the key.
what will it take to change the workplace culture of entitlement?
Be a good listener.
Have a smile in your voice.
The customer isn't always right but we're not always wrong either!

<p>Be accountable,</p> <p>Transparent,</p> <p>Accessible.</p>
<p>Be Honest and customer focussed remember the ratepayers are both employers and customers and deserve greater respect from their own council</p>
<p>Be more open and honest about recognising, acknowledging and addressing the significant problems in this area(the response to the recent general community survey was somewhat refreshing in this respect, though there was still an attempt to put an overly positive gloss on the results).</p> <p>Make a serious attempt to change council's current anti-community organisational culture, so that it genuinely sees itself as part of the community rather than as "them and us", and actively invites people to engage with council in a way that reflects a view of the community as about doing this don't ring true, because council doesn't walk the talk.</p> <p>This will be a very difficult task, given the apparently entrenched anti-community attitude of some senior council staff. Innovative staff who want to engage with the community should be nurtured and encouraged. Recent innovations such as the catchment tours are an excellent example of how council can improve its customer service.</p>
<p>Be more responsive and understanding of customer needs.</p>
<p>Be proactive in engaging the community with new technology how about a community app with announcements for events that r upcoming straight to residents phones</p>
<p>Be results driven ie quick & efficient by minimising the number of steps & people in the chain. Delegate & empower staff.</p>
<p>Because I have had little need to communicate with Council - I have no problems with the way its customer service is handled.</p>
<p>Better access to online services, particuarly in relation to property development (eg: Lake Mac Council have a very useful online property enquiry service);</p>
<p>Better follow up, especially when Council-specified timeframe for development applications is not going to be met.</p>
<p>Better use of our rates and protection of community resources. I still can't believe how much money you guys spent about those figs - they've come down, supposedly for safety reasons, and just about the very next day you announce grand new plans for the site. Such a sham!</p> <p>Protect our environment better - T4 will not benefit newcastle at all. what are you doing about it? the jobs will be miniscule in number and the pollution and disruption enormous - we will not see financial reward for our loss.</p> <p>Plus, finally please don't close the local pools. You can afford to keep newcastle baths open (without lifeguards); the art gallery and library and museum are FREE - DON'T take our pools away.</p> <p>that may not be the "custome service" answer you were hoping for - but it's what really counts.</p>
<p>Bring back the Administrator.</p>
<p>by keeping up maintenance without having to be prompted such as clearing of gutters of debris and leaves</p>
<p>By putting weight on "community consultation" rather than being a tick box concept or even a threat to some council plan.</p>
<p>By training personnel so they can offer options which are acceptable rather than telling ratepayers what they are not allowed to do.</p>
<p>Change focus to Community needs not council needs</p>
<p>Change the senior officers particularly in Planning so that a genuine and progressive customer focus could be developed not one based on power with a winners and losers mentality.</p>
<p>community polls/voting; suggestions box</p>

Consider setting up kiosk areas in local shopping centres
content improvement on internet
don't ignore emails
return calls in 24 hours
don't continue to pass the buck
Continue to ask the residents how they want their area to change as people outside the areas do not understand the emotions and attachments that are involved especially very old things with historical significance which may not have monetary value.
Continue to provide full information to residents affected by development applications or work to be performed in their immediate area
Continue to provide good customer service & improve communications between the different sections of Council.
Council a complex organization with ever increasing array of services and responsibilities. On last visit felt officer not fully conversant with issue. May be idea to have folder-type reference "bible" that's easy to update regularly for all staff to have at "fingertips".
Council customer service delivery adheres to current benchmarks of professionalism and courtesy.
I don't have any issue with it, or haven't had to date, at least.
Council must improve its appeal to ratepayers and greatly modify the attitude of its management team / supervisors and their collective bloody minded, win at all costs attitude towards completing "green canopy" works without due consideration of all ratepayers needs.
The "hidden agenda" generally only serves as the tool of choice for poorly directed autocratic management teams.
Council must realise that they are our employees and act accordingly, in a professional and helpful manner.
Council seems to have moved with the times, approachable at many levels.
Cross training!!
Customer service at the front desk in good however long delays may be experienced in receiving this service. Several phone requests have all been bad.
Customer service over the phone is generally good. the process that follows (ie up grading my recycling bin) seems to be drawn out.
Dead and dangerous trees on Council land require prompt attention - not an arborist visiting twice to confirm the obvious
Do you really want the Community to easily access information and to be fully informed? It currently doesn't look like it. It's actually the worst in the last fifteen years.
do your job
Educate the males who answer phone in all areas the importance in phone manners.
Make the web site interesting for all people including what the town has on offer for disabled people.
employ more specific staff and less top end managers
Empower your staff at customer service level - and reward them appropriately for doing a good job (customer feedback responses)
Encourage, promote , demand that there is intercommunication between all departments
Ensure that customer is transferred to the correct person/department.
establish credibility: This has been diminished by events such as the Laman Street fig tree debacle. This type of community issue affects all level of council including the perception the public has on customer service. You are all tarred with the same brush.
Expand on line services.

Face to face contact is very good and most actions can be completed at one visit. Telephone receptionists are excellent and quite friendly. Waiting for telephone follow-up from an office can be a wait in vain (see earlier response)
Faster response with name of person who will be taking action
Feedback to residents in the form of newsletters so Council Staff are responsible for their work and can set goals to achieve.
Fix the reasons I am calling for in the 1st place
Follow through complaints to completion
Follow through on commitments eg if you promise to collect bins, do so. Keep good records so if its not fixed the next time I call, you know about the matter.
Follow up and do as they say they will
Follow up is Councils only let down. It would be nice if after a request or complaint somebody rang or emailed to check the request or complaint was dealt with satisfactorily.
For any email or web enquiry, it would be good if the enquirer was given an estimate of the response time. An estimate would give me more comfort than total silence.
For the times that I have required service I have not had a problem. No suggestions on any improvement to a service that, to me is fine.
Frankly the council needs to decide if it is going to enforce it's dog regulations or not because currently the rules are mostly disregarded. There is a very bad culture that has developed due to council inaction. Dog owners need more leash-free areas and other park users should be able to use parks and take their children to parks without fear of dogs being off-leash or off stepping on dog faeces. That begin said there are some dog owners who do the right thing but they are few and far between. There needs to be an easy way for park users to notify the ranger of breaches to dog regulations and fast response from the ranger. A number should be advertised or posted on dog regulation signage for this purpose. Council should move with the times and use SMS, Facebook, and Twitter for this purpose too.
'Front of house'/ reception staff could be more welcoming. Training in conflict resolution should be provided and competency in same assessed.
Generally Council Staff are helpful and polite if you can get someone to answer the phone.
Generally satisfied.
Get managers in who understand customer service, who know about anticipating and meeting your customers' needs - eg automating DA processes, applications for small bars, etc. BTW - this has been TALKED about, DOCUMENTED for years.
Get rid of the council, put in an administrator, whose aim is to have far fewer deskbound boffins & more outdoor workers. Any manager who is continually seeking the advice of consultants is incompetent, get rid of him/her.
Get their act together
Give officers in the Building section greater authority to make minor decisions, rather than always having to follow a "process", when they acknowledge it's a pointless, futile and waste of time exercise. This would improve service, reduce cost, speed up process and free up resources.
given that once again my green bin was missed again today, perhaps you could ask the truck driver to pick up bins even when there's only a few in the street. the other two got emptied apparently!
Good comprehensive advertising of council services and special events and services. For example, the advertising of the e-waste collections has improved considerably over the last 6-9 months (after previous feedback about poor notification/advertising).
Good training incustomer relations.
Have a particular person as a contact for each town area so that someone has a history of problems that the community is facing
Have individual officers take ownership for issues, not pass them around the Council and to sub-contractors.

Have more consistency in their application of regulations.
Have more customer orientated people on the front desk at HQ.
Have the person who takes an item sees it through
Honesty and politeness would make the interchange more impressive.
Honesty, transparency and we are not always a customer. You are not flogging us a widget, you are a level of government that is supposed to be making living in Newcastle great for US ... remember the residents? That is what you are actually in existence for delivering services and facilities for the resident and making this place a great place to live
House across from me is a disgrace, yard is full of rubbish, no-one lives there, and whenever council has been contacted about it the owner just says that he is going to develop it in the next 6 months, meanwhile we have been looking at it every day for the last 3 or 4 years. On the other hand, my neighbour has someone from council there quite regularly, as the neighbour on the other side constantly complains about how noisy he is, yet no one else who lives around him puts in a complaint.
I am 100% satisfied thank you.
I am concerned that administrators such as Frank Cordingly and Judy Jeager and some councillors have their own individual agenda rather than a community agenda that the community have requested. I have lost my trust in the council.
I am disappointed in council with taking on the community input from Newcastle Voice. I attended the Hunter St workshop some time back. I am aware that many recommendations from the community were cheap and simple, yet council chose to ignore the findings and go with what they thought best anyhow. What a non-transparent waste of money. Why consult with the community if you don't then consider their views? I have become disillusioned with Newcastle Voice and my participation has dropped accordingly. If you want to provide good service - and NCC wants more and more money for that, then you need to listen to the people of Newcastle.
I am not a customer I am a rate payer!!! I expect services to be available that I contribute to.
I contacted a specific department and issue was resolved the next day
I don't like the new automated system- i prefer speaking to someone up front and then getting transferred. also, I've called on a few occasions and can't get through (this was fairly recent)
I feel council is performing pretty well. Accountability for decisions taken could be improved. Rationale behind decisions = greater transparency.
I find transparency the 'big issue': I often wonder, when I ask for information, whether I'm being given the 'whole story' in council's reply.
Build trust!
I found my contact with the Council to be good. I often use the Libraries, the Parks and a number of other public facilities and the council staff are always helpful and courteous. Thank You
I have been away for some years- yet I still hear the same comments "Nothing has been done". E.g. the gutter in a section of my street retains water. It doesn't drain and fills with leaves. It is ugly, inconvenient for those who park there and a health hazard. It stinks in summers and is a haven for mosquitos. This is just one issues that has been ignored by Council for YEARS even though a number of residents have complained. It is never cleaned (at least to my knowledge) yet fixed. I suggest a review of priorities and more civil contact with people who actually care about their community and its presentation.
I have been quite amazed at the excellence of the customer service. I know Council has a lot to do but I think they do most things relatively well.Thank you Council staff!!
I have been quite well satisfied with al;l the contact I have had with the Council staff.
I have found council helpful when called.

I have generally spoken about telephone contact. I would like to comment on face to face contact. The Library staff are very good and helpful, however the Compliance staff are the absolute opposite. The fact that they book you when you stop to let someone out of a car when there is no signed spot for this is ridiculous. They need a course on customer service as do many of the staff. The main aim of council should not be to raise money but to assist the citizens of Newcastle.

To improve customer service I would suggest you go to the senior managers and change their attitude as the attitude flows down through the organisation and it has taken several years for this situation to occur, so it will take time to turn it around.

Most importantly the senior managers need to start to listen to the community instead of constantly telling them what to do.

I have no problems with staff I have spoken to but council seems to be a

"toothless Tiger" when it comes to enforcing what needs to be done to resolve matters

I have sent in a couple of web based comments/requests, but never received any feedback from council that they were received. And therefore never received any advice either. The web forms appeared to fall into a black hole, and thus they seem to be not very useful at all. I spent time explaining a couple of general issues I'd noticed (potential safety concerns) but it may have been a complete waste of time. It's hard getting the time to phone someone, so the web forms would be a great idea as I can offer information/comments after hours (after work). But my impression is that it's a complete waste of time to use the web based forms (http://www.newcastle.nsw.gov.au/council/contact_us/customer_request_form).

I repeat- complaints need to be followed up - not shelved to another member of staff when nothing is done.

I suggest consider reintroducing large waste pickups.

I think it's up to parents to teach children good manners I suppose the only thing Council can do is watch and listen how staff are speaking on the phone.

I think overall things are OK except the time I called on a weekend. That for me was a very bad experience.

I think that they are doing better than most. Hate the voice on the queing machine in the council office

I think the customer service generally at King St is okay. I have submitted several DA and find that the information given regarding the DA's is vague and not always consistent.

Regarding street trees service and ringing the Turton Road - forget it, nothing appears to get done. Council pulled up the pavement in front of my house almost a year ago now - it's still kitty litter (Anderton St, Islington). I trim our excessive street trees Council planted because I know that Council won't & the green waste bin isn't adequate.

I think the Newcastle Voice platform is great, and I have not seen any other Council do such a good job. The people in customer service (ie, front desk/front of house) are good and helpful.

However, my big gripe is actually the works department...There is a lot of road works that have been started then not finished, as the works crew moves to start the next job (and then not finish that). For example, the works on Scenic Drive at Merewether between Hickson St (top) and Lloyd St (bottom) were started in september last year. The works progressed reasonably, and the very top and very bottom of the road is finished. But then, the Council staff moved onto the next project, and the middle section of the road remains unfinished, with pickets along it. It is now very very dangerous for pedestrians and cyclists trying to get back up the hill. Please finish the works and the footpath! Its been nearly a year!

I think there are people in council at senior levels who exhibit a personal agenda and not a little hubris (the mark of a small, self-serving intellect). They get in the way of customer service generally. Just get rid of them.

<p>I think with the results of surveys, Council needs to consider that generally only people that have a negative view on Council and local government response. I personally dont take a lot of notice to surveys because of this.</p> <p>I do believe that the behaviour of Councillors does have a major impact on the responses Councils receive from surveys.</p> <p>Generally staff do try to do the best they can with what they have - the community expectations are too high at times.</p>
<p>I think you are doing a pretty good job, mostly. Months ago I did request the loan of a cage to collect a feral cat living nearby and was told i would be notified when one became available. I have given up on that one. However, I was delighted with the action taken and the followup after request for the removal of unregistered car bodies around Maryville. I have also written asking when the Throsby Creek bank work, east of Lewis St, would be finished and have received no reply. I think more attention to questions asked via email would be appreciated.</p>
<p>I was complaining about wilsons parking and council said it 'was not our problem' basically and to contact wilsons. After about 10 emails i finally got a response from wilsons which did not help at all. I assume wilsons are a contractor of the Council so surely the council has some responsibility for the service wilsons do or don't provide. Since that time I just don't go into town anymore.</p>
<p>i would like the council to be more available to investment in the city, the city does look in good shape, if something needs to change then serious consider to get more investment, people and business in this great city</p>
<p>I'd like to state that the people who work for Council in customer service areas are generally nice and helpful. The policies/operation of Council and especially the lack of accountability of Council Officers needs great improvements.</p>
<p>If the rest of the council could improve its customer service like you get when you first go into or phone council, your service would improve a lot and I would be happier knowing that I actually mattered.</p>
<p>If you are going to continue with the Voice, please make it statistically viable. At the moment the questions are very biased and I really fail to see how you can use any of the data collected with any validity. All this costs the rate payers. It is a good idea that you involve residents, and we like to be heard, but please try and collect information in a more reliable manner</p>
<p>If you can not adhere to time scale, advise customer, dont just wait for customer to contact council, with all the resentment that raises.</p>
<p>If you stuff up apologise, dont pass the buck. When working in the local area, have consideration for residents and dont treat them like nusiances who get in the way of your job. We pay your wages.</p>
<p>In the environment area making its environmental monitoring information more accessible, more transoarent and relevant such as data from the air quality monitoring station</p>
<p>In the newsletter maybe have a section that say contact this department here. Obviously my last email has landed nowhere so it would be good to have tax payers reicieve a response from their council members.</p>
<p>Initial contact with customer service staff has been excellent.</p> <p>Once you are given a phone number/name of the person you need to speak with, it can become a lottery in terms of making contact and getting a timely response.</p>
<p>Introduce more staff at the customer enquiry counter, people are usually looking for assistance when visiting council, and the ticketing system is sterile and slow.</p>
<p>it has to be sincere and committed to customer service</p>

<p>It is not good to have noone answer calls. My recent experience resulted in me having to ring three times and let the phone ring out then a message before ringing a 4th time to get someone who then transferred me to numbers that again rang out. Then I left messages and had to ring again later - not good enough.</p>
<p>Also some of the staff could have a better attitude and be more helpful. Some of them think they are doing us a favor by answering the phone.</p>
<p>It seems to me that some council officers have their own agenda which is cloaked in non responsive dealings with ratepayers.</p>
<p>It was difficult to find, and speak to, the person responsible for the tree planting programme. In fact I never got through to him/her.</p>
<p>It would be preferable to speak directly to the relevant officer who deals with specific matters. ie. Council depot, plumbers, carpenters, waste management etc. when small jobs need to be attended to at sportsgrounds.</p>
<p>It's impossible to make recommendations being on the outside. I would need to look at all the procedures, logistics from the inside.</p>
<p>I've had very little contact with the Council in the last 12 months so have no suggestions to make, but I would like to note I didn't receive a response on the one occasion I did contact the Council via the website.</p>
<p>just listen to the community, and respond promptly</p>
<p>Just prompt responses either by phone or email. I do understand that sometimes some queries need to be looked into and an immediate reply is not always possible.</p>
<p>Staff and councillors need to understand that they are in the positions that they are, within council, to serve the residents and ratepayers of their city or town. Respect should be shown both ways.</p>
<p>Just provide prompt feedback</p>
<p>Keep smiling.</p>
<p>Keep transactions as speedy as possible and not cut down trees without a sound reason.</p>
<p>Knowledge and a willing for service</p>
<p>LEARN TO LISTEN and change what you have chosen to do when it is shown to be WRONG.</p>
<p>library catalogue is often very slow or times out</p>
<p>Library info, catalogue</p>
<p>Listen to needs of community and not adopt 'we know best' attitude and the issue gets buried.</p>
<p>Explain the 'whys & wheres' better - not do it and run</p>
<p>Listen to people's concerns - they are the coal face and know the problem out there. Council officers should come and have face to face contact with ratepayers who raise a concern. Not sit at their desk and view a file and say that it is ok because it is brought to your attention. It is not ok.</p>
<p>Listen to Ratepayers & don't act independently. You are employees of the Ratepayers. You should not override Councillors' decisions/rulings.</p>
<p>Listen to the people on all matters</p>
<p>Look at each department individually. I think there is a difference in how each is perceived. NV should have divided that question about satisfaction up into which departments one is dealing with.</p>
<p>eg my dog issues are promptly and efficiently dealt with</p>
<p>as compared with rubbish issues and what on earth department is in charge of chopping down all our beautiful trees-that department can go, obviously mismanaged</p>
<p>mail only</p>
<p>Make it client focused and outcome based. Train your customer service staff better.</p>
<p>Make it easier to navigate!!!!!!</p>
<p>make it easier to talk to a person rather than pushing buttons</p>
<p>Make sure that the customer receives a response to the issue raised.</p>

Managers are paid to make decisions and should wear the consequences - the buck stops her. This crew hide behind 'legal opinion', appear to be scared of developers, and find the people who pay their wages a bit of a nuisance
More action less excuses
More consideration given to the locals on decisions. In my area of Hamilton South councillors in other wards are lowering our home comfort levels and valuations with decisions that do not effect them They would be screaming if building approvals and traffic was the same in their wards.
More dog rangers so problems and issues can be resolved more quickly
More prompt service
More staff on the switch board and especially ones that know their way around Council. Other than that it's fine. Very happy with Council service.
More Staff required to process Applications.
More staff training
More Staff, and a lot simpler format for DA.s which would hopefully cut down waiting times
More training on the 'smile' department when you are at the counter
My contact was usually payment of rates and only the couple of other issues have been dealt with routinely.
My contacts are based on one person whose ability to communicate is extremel;y poor. They were patronising, unhelpful, could have easily offered to look at the issue themselves but instead wanted to explain that the staff had finished for the day. As a manager there is still no reason why they should not have been prepared to do what the staff would have done in the first instance and that was at least inspect the situation.
The solution - I'm not sure you can change poor attitude but if that could be improved and I'm not convinced in this instance then COMMUNICATION TRAINING MIGHT HELP
My experience with Council employees/staff has always been favourable with minor problems because of lack of knowledge. My dissatisfaction and that of acquaintences is with elected reps of Council and that unfortunately carries over to council staff. Up to date staff training would improve satisfaction
NO AT TIMES I JUST GIVE UP
No I do not contact the council enough to form a long term view
No I have been happy with the service provided
No suggestions. But I believe in personal contact when phoning organisations. I dont like phone systems where you have to say what you want and a computer tries to interpret what you need. As if you have an accent or are in a noisy situation it does not register. So having people answer calls is I think good customer service.
No they are doing a great job
No, my difficulties with Council relate more to issues about environmental and sustainability issues and the relationship between councillors and staff.
No. Completely satisfied.
No. Completely satisfied.
No. Leave it as is. People will whinge no matter what the council does, people will always think it should be better no matter what improvements the council may make
Not at the moment.
Not be so casual
not from my recent experience
Not in the areas I deal with, but the reputation via hearsay suggests that DA's can be quite slow
Not interested in spin, just the truth and honest assessment of what's happening.
Not really. I try to use the net: saves trying to find the right person to talk to. I forgot to mention one phone conversation about a compliance issue, and that went gine.
Not sure about sevice delivery, but the 'claim for vehicle damage'was caused by a pothole in the road, there being many!

<p>Not transferring calls all over council . If they say they are going to do something mean it.</p>
<p>Act interested in caller</p>
<p>Nothing will surplant a knowledgable, courteous, efficient and responsive person attending to a client/customer inquiry, concern or complaint in a friendly manner whether that be on the telephone, in person, electronically or otherwise.</p>
<p>Nuts and bolts service delivery is fine.</p>
<p>There is more dissatisfaction with the major decisions taken by council and the apparent lack of transparency in some of the decision making processes which is leading to greater mistrust of the council's motives.</p>
<p>Often when I called the previous person who was assisting me was not available. So I had to go through my matter again. Perhaps a record of contact and calls could be kept on electronic file for quick reference when someone calls and the person dealing with the matter is not available.</p>
<p>On each visit I waited no more than five minutes (the last visit I was attended to immediately) and the service was professional and friendly. No suggestions.</p>
<p>On the whole I think the council staff do a good job and I cannot suggest more than what I already have.</p>
<p>One thing I would like the council to do more of is to give people of Newcastle a pat on the back if they have succeeded in helping the environment. For instance it would be great to hear how much landfill has been reduced through the introduction of the new three bin system. I think it is motivating for us to hear about how everybody's action is helping.</p>
<p>Onsite visiting/inspection staff should provide to resident/homeowner documentation/proof of visit and decision</p>
<p>Our last contact with Council was very satisfactory.</p>
<p>People are not aware of bulk waste pick ups and how they work. Most people now believe we don't have pick ups.</p>
<p>When Council changes their normal deliever of services to customers, more media needs to be used. Either letter drop, advertisements. Wahtever is cheaper.</p>
<p>Perhaps some understanding from parking police when a house has only three driveways at its front and not enough kerb for builders to park in front. Most cannot afford the thousands of dollars to pay for traffic controllers as suggested by one of your staff. There would still be access to the house if one of the driveways was used as if kerbed.</p>
<p>Perhaps you could advertise the fact that ratepayers are entitled to receive a limited number of bulk waste vouchers for home pickups.</p>
<p>Phone calls should be monitored to ensure the extension is answered.</p>
<p>Officers in the Planning Department need to learn how to deal with clients. From what I have seen, they have been biased, unhelpful and have given wrong information</p>
<p>Phone need to be answered as promptly as possible and when someone says they will ring back, that is what they should do.</p>
<p>phone systems, and people knowing what other people do, so that others can be helpful when everyone seems to be at lunch.</p>
<p>place the decision makers for development applications and engineers on the ground floor where they can be seen instead of hiding behind telephone extensions.</p>
<p>Plead for the NCC staff and Councillors to not be so defensive. Often people are making contact about something because they care and want to help council and make there town a great place.</p>
<p>The people that council should be worried about are the ones that dont make contact with NCC. These are the people who feel there is "no point" as nothing positive will come from it and just bring more stress and frustration.</p>
<p>please employ staff who are committed to improving the quality of living in Newcastle</p>

poor return calls
Possible have a feedback monitor service at the end of every phone call. E.g. Telstra has a 'survey' of 2 questions which are recorded and collated after the phone call. They monitor the customers opinion about a) the employee providing the service, and b) the outcome of the call.
Possibly asking for a contact no. and advising what will happen in regards to the complaint and if not by phone than by mail.
post more detailed information on its website (that is easier to search effectively), in newspapers and on exhibition in libraries etc.
Pretty happy with service.
Prompt, accurate answers to enquiries is essential. Poor service results in frustration and bad relations between Council and the community
Provide a list of email addresses for specific areas of council activities.
Provide customer service training and start independently measuring standards of service and benchmark to other organisations
Provide email addresses
Provide email enquiry?
Provide services the public requests.
Publish areas where parking enforcement will rigorously be enforced. It's not the same every day. Assign different enforcement officers assigned to different areas each day. Keep rotating them and drop them off by bus vice individual auto.
re organise and get rid of dead wood
Reduce the process steps involved with accessing information
Ensure staff provide information to customers within agreed timeframes, whether this be phone or email contact.
Be polite to customers
Refocus the Complaine officers. What they are doind at the moment is very ordinary and, as one of the most visable contacts between the community and Council, is simply taking a poor relationship and totally destroying it. It is in on-ones interests for the Council to be perceived so very poorly, especially when there are lots of great staff doing great things.
Replace Senior council staff who have set agendas and are not interested in community input.
Monitor Parks and Gardens telephone answering services especially message bank, to check that ratepayers are not being ignored.
Replace the afterhours message service with a Newcastle council officer. A message service is not good enough when dangerous dogs are out.
replying would be a good start. Also once a development has a form that can be looked at, then open it to public comment. ie the ocean footpath project. I belive losing two way traffic on Shortland esplande is a great lose. Look at paths on both sides of the road & look at how long it will take to go another route.
Respond to customers, even if its just to say the infomation has been received, that use the Customer Request form online.
Respond to emails within the specified time.
respond to requests for information
Response within a few days would be helpful
Return calls voicemail left

<p>Sack all council staff and start again.</p> <p>Ensure that council staff serve the councillors, who represent the people, rather than allow them to run their own agendas.</p> <p>What is the point in having an elected council if council staff are running their own agenda and railroading them to support positions that are either out of touch with the community, or actively against the community's interests?</p>
<p>Sack all staff and start afresh. There seems to be a culture of unhelpfulness, incompetency and a lack of professionalism.</p>
<p>Sack everyone who works for the council and start again. You don't even know how to spell customer service, let alone actually deliver it. In general you don't provide customer service, you provide customer obstruction and detours.</p>
<p>Sack the top layer of the administration ie all the directors. Get rid of the legal team and the tree team while you're at it. Change the culture so the people up the top act as though they're working for the community not the other way around.</p>
<p>Safe, ethical, equitable, socially just, non-discriminatory Happy, Healthy Sustainable active transport network</p>
<p>See above answers</p>
<p>See comments about senior staff. It is the culture of the place that needs overhauling and until that happens there is little point in anything else.</p>
<p>see previous comments.</p>
<p>Should not cut the fig trees down , Council will never be forgiven. We elect other Councilillos next election to prove my point</p>
<p>Simply to do the job you're supposed to do of representing ratepayers.</p>
<p>Sites like this are great so people can have a say. Community forums have been also great...greater stability within the Council...It is not the staff at the chambers who are the problem....But unfortunately its a thankless, lowly paid ,time consuming job..Lets hope the next elections bring a positive change that the city needs....</p> <p>That being said there have been some great positive changes lately ...the ocean walk...great playgrounds etc...</p>
<p>Smile</p>
<p>Speed of service and ease of access to information are the two main areas where Newcastle Council fails miserably.</p>
<p>Speedy solutions to problems reported, more pleasant professional personnel answering the phone. Staff should call back customers when messages left - this is almont non-existent. I have been waiting over 12 months for contact re a Everton St, Hamilton - over 12 months!</p>
<p>spend less money on managers offices and more money on the actual city.</p>
<p>Staffing levels must be adequate. For example there are currently a lack of planners available to handle development enquiries.</p> <p>I am not familiar enough with the website to quickly find the material I am seeking. A better search facility would help and rather than use the search engine within the NCC site I usually have more success worth Google.</p> <p>Continued staff training is imporant, both within their own fields and in the areas of stress management and in deaking with the public who are increasingly obnoxious.</p>
<p>Start again. The people a dealt with were hopeless</p>
<p>stay with a maned switch board</p>
<p>Stop using the excuse of OH&S and self insurance and get on with providing the services that ratepayers are paying far too much for.</p>
<p>take it seriously</p>

<p>Talking to people rather than a computer would help.</p> <p>Also I have rung regarding a dog being on the streets. the dog was in our yard and aggressive and no one responded to our call.</p> <p>I have seen the dog on the street sometimes and think what is the use of ringing council if they don't act.</p>
<p>Teach staff to have a smiley voice when they answer the phone, be polite, follow through on queries. In retrospect some public relations fiasco's may not have happened if there had been more of an humanitarian response to things that trod on community nerves and less of an "only following the correct process" response. Customers can be shouty and unreasonable and that isn't fair to council staff - don't quite know what to do about that other than teaching council staff that as long as they are trying to do the right thing they don't have to feel angry or guilty.</p>
<p>The change to the collection of excess waste (previously collected twice a year from kerbsides) was not adequately relayed to ratepayers. What is the current arrangement?</p>
<p>The constant drive to save money and reduce staff cannot be a good outcome. Cost savings have to be done with common sense. The council is there to deliver services not to exist in its own right. Do not get distracted by the fancy ideas.</p>
<p>The customer service delivery can be improved by professional staff who knows professional conduct and empathy. The customer service should make sure that they have helped clients to the best of their effort until what the clients come for is resolved. They should avoid unhelpful referrals while the solution is in the other direction.</p>
<p>The front counter and telephone service I received was good.</p> <p>However, my online customer service experience has been poor. The internet should be a quick and easy way to find information and submit feedback. If the requested information is too hard or not considered a priority by the council, each area of council should be required to provide a response or ring the customer to clarify.</p> <p>The area managing assets/projects/infrastructure provides the worst customer service in Council.</p>
<p>The last comment I made about advertising upcoming events like e-waste and chemical recycling days. They should be up front on the website, but much more needs to be done to advertise in other ways, eg TV, radio, more prominent notices in newspapers, but the most effective would probably be a letterbox drop twice a year that lists all the recycling events. Lake Macquarie Council is streets ahead of Newcastle in communicating to the public about these things. One shouldn't have to think to go onto the website on the off chance there will be something there re such an event.</p>
<p>The money that has been wasted over the Lamien St. Figtrees tells all that council are not willing to listen to its constituents</p> <p>we hear council saying what can we do to revitalise the city & bring back \$\$\$ to the city why not do an opinion poll on the following two points</p> <p>do parking meters deter people from coming into newcastle</p> <p>secondly</p> <p>the installation of arrival departure for cruise ships along say where the tug boats are at present even if a departure tax of crew passengers of \$5 for port facilities end result day trips bus & train not to mention the endless \$\$ spent in Cafes restaurant small businesses & department stores</p>
<p>The people who work at the ground level do all that they can to help. It's the lack of direction and poor management of senior staff that has given the council such a bad reputation</p>
<p>The person contacted was pleasant & as helpful as he could be but had no ability or material to answer my question on a current subject</p>
<p>The present situation is satisfying.</p>

The website needs to be clearer about how residents can communicate effectively with Council and how they will be responded to. In fact the Council's website is not well designed for ease of use by residents who want to interact with Council activities. However this is probably more due to the fact that Council doesn't really want residents to have much input into Council these days.

This is not a complaint about individuals. All those that I have dealt with personally have been polite and helpful, especially the person in charge of libraries.

The Urban Tree people were much less forthcoming with information, but mostly because those that I spoke to didn't seem to know very much and couldn't put me on to anybody who did know.

there are some terrific staff at NCC however there is also a lack of in-depth knowledge and history as many of the senior managers are fairly new to local government and NCC. I don't feel the rate payers (councils customers) are listened to but rather are dictated to by the administration. There needs to be more open dialogue and community consultation on matters that concern the ratepayers.

This Voice has again put forward for comment a survey that will give unreliable results.

There are no questions about fees for service. I would be very happy to pay a fee if I got what I wanted. It works at Maccas so why are you any different?

How do you propose using an unskilful survey to raise skill levels?

Your next option is a typical example as it fails to cover the options. I am happy to attend and either day or night suits. Whick box do I tick? ANY YOUR SYSTEM FORCES ME TO LODGE AN INVALID ANSWER TO COMPLETE THE SURVEY.

Thoughtfulness

Timeframes to stick to when responding to enquiries, even if it is just to say there is no news yet.

timing of response

Train the staff to deal with customers who irritate them.

Treat you customers, rate payers, visitors, with the same respect your want from us. Provide assistance, guidance and stop putting up barriers.

Understand exactly what the person is asking for . Help/ judgement/ questions/

Using PR techniques does not work. The intent of council admin policy is the problem.

When a customer rings council, writes a letter, or sends an email it is a matter of urgency or frustration to that ratepayer. In the case of an older person, it can be an issue that has been building up or festering for some time. They obsess and worry about things that can seem inonsequential to younger people. Nonetheless, their concerns are real and not to be dismissed eg the Fat As Butter concert issues. It may be useful to Council to arrange a personal visit to a complainant to let them debrief and therefore defuse the tension?

When I have made contact with the council via email, I get an automated response and thats pretty much it. For instance, I complained about an abandoned, unregistered vehicle in my street. Other than the automated response, I didn't hear anything back. About a month later, one of those green stickers was placed on the vehicle. I have no idea whether my complaint reached anyone, or whether there was another complaint, or if a council person just saw the car one day.

When I spoke to the council officers about a DA the person in charge of the DA was very condescending about my qualifications to speak on matters. When I told him I had an engineering degree he was fine with me but still viewed others poorly. He had no knowledge of a number of issues I brought up - very poor - if you don't know how can you adequately judge the DA?!?!

When ringing one of your community buildings - I am guessing (only!?!?) that is run by an external source - the man was rude and unprofessional and wholly unprofessional - which reflects on the council itself. Maitland council has a single point of contact for all public and community buildings - which makes it a positive and easier experience - and reflects well in my mind on the council itself. Newcastle moving to something similar would be fantastic for the community and the council's service delivery.

When you initially phone council it would be preferable to speak to a person rather than have a computer voice ask you to select a number
where would you like me to start no better still start with the councils in office janitor and then work your way up through the ranks until you you get to the Mayor's position and then walk out onto the street out front and then hire a complete new staff package. HAVE A NICE DAY
While council has to be concerned about costs, automated systems are the antithesis of customer service.
With its projects e.g the walkway along scenic drive provided estimated completion dates.
Yes I believe having an elected Council body who are capable of managing an unruly Administration would be a very good place to start.
yes, let the public speak a counciler without having to write a letter or email, which never get replied to.
Yes, the council has a dreadful reputation in revenue hunting as much as possible. ie..the degree of difficulty experienced when trying to get waste rubbish pickup. I was told in no uncertain terms to put the rubbish out after garbage pickup on tuesday for pickup on wednesday. I work full time and these constraints I believe were unreasonable and unrealistic. Wen mentioned to the woman she would not budge - very unaccommodating. The council needs a shake up and I am hoping this will happen in Sept.
YES. Replace Newcastle Voice-Community Reference Panel with a more competent ad effective system.
You could probably look at the processes, the initial and following dealings with staff personally was excellent so I can only presume it is the process that is an issue.
Your customer service delivery is fine in so far as your staff are concerned, it's that I don't believe councillor's themselves, in Ward 4 at least, pay enough attention to their Ward and don't advertise what they contribute as our Councillor's to the betterment of the Ward. If they did, in Ward 4 at least, they would all realise how unsafe the roundabouts at the Link Road and Thomas Street and on Cowper and Kokera Streets and would organise to have the foliage blocking views to oncoming traffic removed