

BULOKE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE STRATEGY 2022-2025





ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Buloke Shire Council acknowledges the Wotjobaluk, Jaadwa, Jadawadjali, Wergaia and Jupagalk people and the Dja Dja Wurrung people as the traditional owners of parts of the land now known as Buloke. We pay our respects to Elders past and present, and value their ongoing contribution to our heritage and our community.



MAYOR'S MESSAGE

It gives me great pleasure to present the Buloke Shire Council Customer Experience Strategy 2022-2025.

The community is at the heart of all we do at Buloke Shire Council. We are committed to our Customers and to providing efficient and responsive services, whilst always striving for improvement.

Our community have told us that they want to be consulted and to have the opportunity to be involved in decisions that impact them. This Council has made the commitment to improve our engagement and communications with the community and to build great Customer experiences.

This Strategy describes the steps we will take to achieve our commitments and clear guidelines how our strong organisational approach; supporting our staff to create a dynamic environment; will build great Customer service outcomes and deliver on the Council Plan. This Strategy will guide Council's actions over the next three years. It is a living document that will be reviewed each year to ensure Council is adaptable and takes advantage of any opportunities that will help drive our Customer satisfaction.



Mayor, Cr Daryl Warren.



CEO'S MESSAGE

Creating a great Customer experience through good communication, working collaboratively, being responsive and timely is fundamental to what we do, that is why these qualities are listed among our key organisational values.

Customer experience reaches beyond making contact with our frontline staff in the Wycheproof Customer Service office, and those we recognise working directly in the wider community of Buloke.

It is about the entire interaction Customers have with us: supporting staff who do come into direct contact with our community; improving service delivery through digital and business innovation; and a systems management model that creates the environment for us all to be responsible for providing great Customer experiences, now and in the future.

This Strategy sets out the organisation's commitment to both internal and external continuous improvement for the range of services we provide.

It outlines the key actions which align with the strategic objectives in delivering Customer service excellence, outlined in the Council Plan 2021-2025.



CEO, Wayne O'Toole.

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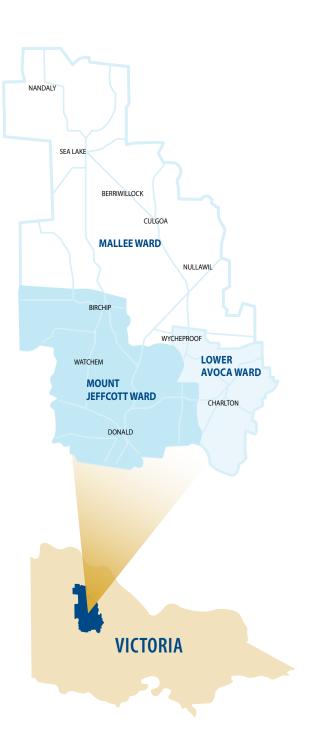
SNAPSHOT OF COUNCIL

The Buloke Shire is located in North-West Victoria between 210 and 360 kilometres from Melbourne. It is bounded by both the Mildura and Swan Hill Rural Cities in the north, Gannawarra and Loddon Shires in the east, Northern Grampians Shire in the south and Yarriambiack Shire in the west.

Buloke is predominantly a rural area. The main townships are Birchip, Charlton, Donald, Sea Lake and Wycheproof. The Shire also comprises of the smaller townships of Berriwillock, Culgoa, Nandaly, Nullawil and Watchem. Buloke encompasses a total land area of 8,000 square kilometres and is approximately 140 kilometres long and 60 kilometres wide.

Council maintains a road network spanning 5,302 kilometres. There are also 747 kilometres of roads under State Government control within Buloke. The two main highways servicing the Buloke are the Calder Highway and the Sunraysia Highway. Both highways run north and south through the Shire. Land is used largely for agriculture, particularly grain (such as wheat, barley, pulses and oilseeds) production and sheep grazing.

The Buloke Shire is named after the 'buloke' or 'bulloak' tree, 'Allocasuarina Luehmannii', which is common in the area and the feature of the Buloke Shire logo. Council formed in 1995 after the amalgamation of the Shire of Wycheproof, Shire of Birchip, Shire of Charlton, Shire of Donald and Parts of the Shire of Kara Kara.





WHO ARE OUR CUSTOMERS?

Our Customers come from a diverse range of backgrounds and interests, so their needs and expectations are also wide and varied. These needs and expectations can also change, as we have seen during the COVID-19 pandemic. To have a baseline understanding of how Buloke Shire can deliver excellent Customer service to maximise Customer satisfaction, continual feedback processes are essential to provide information to develop targeted directions and actions.

Our Customers include:



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WHAT SERVICES DO WE PROVIDE?

Buloke Shire Council provides more than 40 services to the community. As a service-based organisation, customer experience and service provision is Council's principle business with 113.52 full-time equivalent (FTE) staff (at 30 June 2022) responsible for delivery.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Statutory Compliance – The purpose of the Statutory and Compliance Service is to provide Statutory Planning, Building Services and Compliance and Local Laws services. This department also includes areas such as fire hazards, dog and cat registration and control and stock control.

Library Services – This Council delivered service provides library services to the townships of Berriwillock, Birchip, Charlton, Culgoa, Donald, Nullawil, Sea Lake, Watchem and Wycheproof.

Environmental Health – This service promotes the health and well-being of the Shire's local communities through a range of Public Health Programs including immunisations, food surveillance and registration of food premises, accommodation standards and waste water management.

Early Years – This service is to advocate for the wellbeing of children and their families and ensure services are supported through planning and development. The service provides preschool services in five towns, maternal and child health and support for playgroups led by parents.

Community Grants – This service provides donations, allocations and support to groups that contribute to services connecting and involving others in the community.

Community Support – This service develops links between and within the communities in the Shire, connecting individuals and groups and encouraging access and inclusion in activities recognised by the community as priorities. A range of youth services supporting young people aged 12-15 is also provided. The service also facilitates economic development throughout the Shire and provides support to local businesses and assists in the promotion of tourism.

Aged and Disability Services – This service provides a range of maintenance and support services to assist those who are experiencing barriers to accessing services to live independently at home. Council's service provides domestic assistance, personal care, respite care, home maintenance, meals services, volunteer coordination and five senior citizens centres. These services are integral to allowing many people to stay living in their homes.

Environmental Planning – This service manages Council's Environmental Compliance and Sustainability Programs and Services.

WORKS AND TECHNICAL SERVICES

Recreation – This service provides recreational facilities and support to community operated recreation reserves in 10 towns across the Shire, as well as governance support to community recreation clubs and committees.

Property Maintenance – This service provides Property Maintenance Services to a range of Council's building-based assets, focusing on their upkeep and renewal. This area maintains in excess of 250 buildings across the shire and aims to keep them maintained in a fit for purpose state.

Road Services – This service is to provide road maintenance for the 1100km of sealed, 650km gravel and 3800km of earth roads across the Shire.

Swimming Pools – This service manages and operates seven seasonal swimming pools, from the third week in November to the third week in March (annually).

Assets and Project Management – This service is to provide for the management, design and administration of Council's assets and Infrastructure services, including planning management of the Capital Works Program.

Saleyards – This service provides management and administration of Councils Saleyards Precinct at Wycheproof for external Livestock Agents to sell livestock.

Urban Areas – This service manages and coordinates Council's parks, gardens and urban infrastructure providing routine, preventative and ongoing maintenance and improvement.

Lakes – This service provides a contribution to the management and development of the recreational lakes including Tchum, Watchem and Wooroonook Lakes. Council undertakes toilet cleaning at the lakes outside the summer peak period.

Waste and Environment – Waste and Environment Services is responsible for the maintenance and improvement of Council's landfill and transfer stations as well as providing a Residential Kerbside Garbage and Recycling Service in all towns within the Shire.

Municipal Emergency Management – This service develops, coordinates and delivers Council's Municipal Emergency Management Plan and coordination of the Municipal Operation Coordination Centre and associated software.

CORPORATE SERVICES

Finance – This service encompasses all areas of financial reporting, rates, debtors and creditors for Council. Expenses include loan interest, internal and external audit fees, property valuation fees and other miscellaneous corporate expenses.

Information Management – This service is to provide the organisation with Records Management Services and Information and Telecommunication Services.

Governance and Executive Management – This service provides for Councillor's and the organisation's overall governance services.

Executive Administrative Support – This service provides administrative support to Councillors and Executive Leadership and is responsible for the distribution of Council agendas.

Customer Service – This service provides for both internal and external Customers by resolving the majority of Customer enquiries, requests and payments at the first point of contact.

Risk and Human Resources – This service provides the organisation with recruitment, training, organisational development, occupational health and safety, corporate risk management and insurance programs.

Media and Communications – This service is responsible for the management and provision of advice on external communication, in consultation with relevant stakeholders on behalf of Council. The service is responsible for outgoing media releases, social media and advertising.

HOW YOU CONTACT US:

Buloke Shire Council's head office for **Customer Service is located at 367 Broadway Wycheproof, Victoria 3527**. Customer Service Officers can assist you with your enquiries about our services or facilities and process your payments. **Customer Service is open Monday to Friday 8.30am-5.00pm (excluding public holidays) call 1300 520 520.**

IN THE FIRST FOUR MONTHS OF 2022:



Customer Service staff took well **over 8,600 calls** on 1300 520 520, **averaging around 100 calls per day**

572 work 81 worki

572 works requests were received over the 81 working days - an average of 7 per day.

ADD

SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media is a useful communication tool that delivers just-intime information utilising video and picture formats via Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube and Facebook, which is the most popular, with over 3045 followers and steadily increasing reach to over 23,700 people (May 2022).

Council also annually receives:

- Thousands of pieces of written hard mail are received at our post box at PO Box 1, Wycheproof, 3527
- An estimated 25,000 emails are received at our buloke@buloke.vic.gov.au address
- A range of communication links are available on Council's website: www.buloke.vic.gov.au.

Council aims to respond promptly to all inquiries. However, not all Customer requests can be resolved quickly, and may need to be referred to a staff member in a specialty area for information or follow-up. Monthly benchmarking reports closely monitor the rate of closed requests - lifting to 59% during the month of April 2022.



WHY DO WE NEED A STRATEGY?

Buloke Shire Council aspires to continually improve and innovate to create a Customer-centred culture, generating benefits and outcomes for our Customers, as well as fostering positive relationships when partnering with Council to advocate for wider benefits for the community.

Commitment to great Customer experiences involves:

- Listening and showing care and empathy with Customers to understand their expectations and in turn provide outstanding service levels
- Understanding how our Customers interact with us, developing and maintaining personalised and accessible methods that suit our Customer's needs and respects their privacy
- Making it quick and easy for Customers to find information they seek and resolves problems in a timely and consistent way
- Friendly, easy to deal with and knowledgeable staff, who are inspired to build a culture of excellent Customer service across the organisation
- Safe and welcoming environment for Customers and staff
- Culturally respectful and supportive of diversity.



Achieving an outstanding Customer experience is vital to our overall performance. Everyone needs to play a role in shaping our Customer focus and contributing to our culture, technology and service provision, through solid Customer service leadership at all levels.

of service excellence

Generation are key to digital DRIVERS TO DELIVER A POSITIVE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE. CUSTOMER EXPECTATIONS HAVE CHANGED SO WE ARE TRANSFORMING TO RESPOND TO THIS CHANGE "

VIEW FULL SCREEN

- Cecilia Connellan, Senior Manager Business Transformation.

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WHERE ARE WE NOW?

A number of drivers have been identified that recognise the importance of developing a Customer Experience Strategy. During the COVID-19 pandemic a disturbingly sharp rise in occupational violence and aggression towards staff was documented across Victorian local government areas, particularly among those working in frontline roles. The safety and wellbeing of our staff remains the highest priority.

Issuing fines and enforcement to Customers is inevitable and continues to require delivery, however emerging from the pandemic some of the ways Customers once engaged with the organisation have also changed. Feedback from Customers has identified some new pain points during this time due to financial and psychological impacts.

Supporting staff through training, ensuring procedures are in place, regular evaluation of interactions, and assisting them to understand the value of their role in the chain of service delivery, is an essential element to the success of this Strategy, it's implementation and ongoing systems management improvement process.

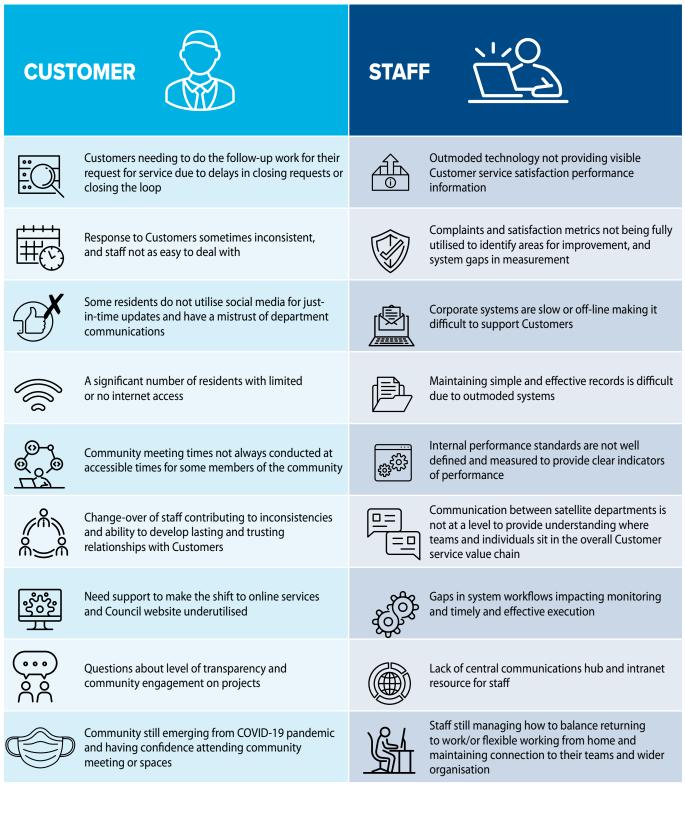
This Strategy will influence priorities and guide Council's transformation in step with the expectations of our Customers and meeting their needs through digital innovation, service redesign to put the Customer at the centre of all we do.

To better understand what we need to change, we need to get a baseline to understand how we are performing now. Feedback received from 'Have Your Say' surveys over the past year has gauged the current needs, value to Customers and quality of service. Face-to-face interactions with community leaders at the Community Forum Summit, conducted in May 2022, and it's follow-up survey, also evaluated future Council planning against community expectations.

Additional benchmarking and feedback processes will also be needed to further inform the implementation of this Strategy. This will enable targeted directions, changes and actions required to guide the transformation process including external Customer and internal staff surveys and evaluation.

WHAT ARE OUR CHALLENGES?

Key focus points have been identified from internal and external research including surveys, face-to-face consultation and team meetings:



WHERE DO WE WANT TO BE?

Council still has much to learn, with constant staff and Customer and community feedback vital to measuring the appetite for change and ensuring it is consistent and ongoing.

Council's staff are as central to this change as the desire of the community for services provided to be more Customer-centred.

OUR ASPIRATIONS:

Customers receive a consistent response to enquiries Customers are kept updated regularly throughout the process

Customers are informed and understand timeframes for requests to be completed

> Service is personalised with an empathetic approach to Customer needs

CUSTOMER

An effective records management system to meet legislative requirements consistently Website is easy to use, emphasises transparency and intersects with a centralised flexible online communications hub

Interactions are easy and seamless across Council



CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

Buloke Shire Council's approach outlines how we will put the Customer at the centre of service delivery by understanding their different needs and preferences to redesign service options that meet their expectations of great Customer experiences.

This Strategy guides Council in our responsibilities to implementation, monitoring and evaluation, by identifying and developing opportunities to improve services and removing barriers to access, as well as enhance and transform our Customer experience.

OUR VALUES:

Council addresses its key values through:

- ✓ Good Communication
- Transparency in decision making
- Accountability by actions
- ✓ Working collaboratively with partners
- Taking responsibility
- Being responsive and timely
- ✓ Showing care and respect

OUR CUSTOMER COMMITMENTS:

- We understand that our Customers want to know what to expect when you contact Council by phone, in person, online or in writing
- Excellent Customer service outcomes are built on two way relationships
- Council outlines clearly what Customers can expect when they contact us and in return we ask our customers to help us to help them by being respectful and courteous
- Customers can expect to be spoken to in a friendly and courteous, helpful and professional manner
- Our Customers will be listened carefully to establish their requirements
- Valuing Customer privacy by treating all personal information confidentially
- Provision of necessary and relevant information in a timely manner

OUR GOALS:



GOAL 1

Inspire Customer focused culture and leadership



GOAL 2

Effective Customer experience measurement to manage and inform standard improvements



GOAL 3

Understand our Customers, their needs, ideals, and experiences to drive better service



GOAL 4

Customised and effective communication tools, providing choice as well as digital and technological solutions



GOAL 5

Continuous business improvement and streamlining services to be simple and easy to use and access through innovation



GOAL 1 Inspire Customer focused culture and leadership

Action	Outcome	Timeframe	Resources	Responsible area
Customer Service Business/Systems Training (incl. health and wellbeing)	 Builds a Customer centred culture Enables organisational capacity to drive change Creating great Customer experiences and support Supportive environment for staff to enhance wellbeing 	Ongoing	Up to \$10,000 annually	 Human Resources Customer Engagement Executive Team
Council Plan Review	 Measured Customer experience satisfaction reflected in each position description Ensures organisational-wide focus Drives staff behaviour and collaborative effort 	Year 2, Ongoing	Officer time	 Customer Engagement Human Resources Executive Team Management Team
Customer Service Charter Review	 Incorporation of Customer service standards in our training programs and staff inductions 	Year 1	Officer time	Customer Engagement Human Resources
Rewarding outstanding service	- Valuing innovations and contributions	Ongoing	Officer time	 Executive Team Management
Promote staff as Council Ambassadors	 Continue to develop an internal Customer service focused culture across all departments 	Year 1, Ongoing	Officer time	 Executive Team Management Customer Engagement
Review Business and Community Grants Concierge	 Streamlined Customer support for major business or community investment proposals 	Year 2, Ongoing	Officer time	 Economic Development and Tourism Planning Assets and Infrastructure Customer Engagement Community Development
Internal reviews: - Qualitative review - 3-yearly - Climate survey - quarterly - Pulse survey - 2-weekly - Custom - on demand	- Increase greater participation and drive change from end-to-end with engagement metrics to start conversations, monitor change, timely intervention and share initiatives and learning	Year 1-3	Officer Time	• Executive Team • Management Team • Customer Engagement
Fully integrate internal communications - introduction of Microsoft Teams and Sharepoint	- Improved security of information in the cloud and communication processes	Ongoing	Officer time	• ICT • Customer Engagement • Management Team



GOAL 2

Effective customer experience measurement to manage and inform standard improvements

Action	Outcome	Timeframe	Resources	Responsible area
Improve organisation processes	- Development of Business and Service Plans in each service and implement efficiencies and Customer benefits with a focus on delivering optimal service levels that can clearly be communicated to Customers	Year 1 Business Year 2 Service	Officer time	 Customer Engagement ICT Human Resources Executive Team Management Team
Review complaint management policies and processes	 Ensure Customer Service Charter meets Customer needs 	Year 3	Officer time	Customer Engagement ICT Executive Team Management
Review KPI framework	 Cross organisational commitments to Customer service delivery through ongoing measurement and reporting of Customer service KPI's at all levels of the organisation Monthly Customer and reporting analytics for evaluation Visible Customer metrics Common language 	Year 2, Ongoing	Officer time, investment in reporting and share systems, including a staff and Customer communications hub	 Customer Engagement ICT Management Teams Executive Team
Quarterly reporting on Strategy to Council	 Monitoring of existing and new qualitative and quantitative measures for quality improvement Additional engagement opportunity for community discussion and greater transparency Builds confidence Council is motivated and focused on creating great Customer experiences Develops Ratepayer understanding of challenges and achievements, capacity and willingness to partner with Council on the improvement journey 	Year 1, Ongoing	Officer time, investment needed in reporting and share systems	 Customer Engagement ICT Management Teams Executive Team



GOAL 3

Understand our Customers, their needs, ideals, and experiences to drive better service

Action	Outcome	Timeframe	Resources	Responsible area
Introduce Translation Information Services	- Supports CALD groups and overcomes barriers to service access	Year 1	Officer time	Customer Engagement
Cultural and diversity training	- Ensures services and approaches are appropriate and foster supportive partnerships in the spirit of healing	Ongoing	Officer time Investment in training	Community Services Community Engagement
More face-to-face opportunities in all towns	 Provides Customer insight and satisfaction measurement Promoting online engagement through education support 	Ongoing	Officer time	Customer Engagement Management Teams
Regular update of information on Messages on Hold	 Provides accurate information and explains processes to better inform Customers 	Year 1, Ongoing	Officer Time	• Customer Engagement
Review of Customer request system	 Monitor closed and open requests for improvements, measured against Customer Service Charter Identify service gaps 	Ongoing	Officer Time	Customer Engagement
Regularly evaluate Customer satisfaction of communication channels	- Ensure information and feedback opportunities are provided in an accessible way to enhance Customer experience in line with their needs	Year 1, Ongoing	Officer Time	• Customer Engagement
Customer journey mapping	 Better understand Customer experience through mapping Look for value by identifying pain points and costly rework 	Year 2	Officer time	Customer Engagement Management Teams



GOAL 4

Customised and effective communication tools, providing choice as well as digital and technological solutions

Action	Outcome	Timeframe	Resources	Responsible area
Improve access to website information	- Ensure Customers are fully informed, with links in social media and other communication platforms	Year 1, Ongoing	Officer Time	Customer Engagement
Flexibility in provision of communication and engagement tools	 Ensure tools are targeted to Customers' needs; access and technology i.e., access to service no matter their technology status Ensure communications are delivered to those without technology access using methods they prefer 	Year 1, Ongoing	Officer Time	 Customer Engagement Management Teams
Investigation into agile centralised communications toolkit and Customer interface	 Increase online Customer engagement, transparency in process, maintain privacy and security of contact lists Internal hub for staff for community engagement evaluation 	Year 1	Officer time, investment in systems evaluation and communication systems	 Customer Engagement Management Teams

GOAL 5

Continuous business improvement and streamlining services to be simple and easy to use and access through innovation

Action	Outcome	Timeframe	Resources	Responsible area
CRMS platform review	 Improved Customer satisfaction levels Improved staff satisfaction levels Reduction of follow-ups Expand system to integrate mail, email, communication hub and social media platforms for requests Full view of Customer interaction and status 	Year 1	Officer time, Investment in modern CRMS system and guided analysis and implementation	 ICT Executive Team Management Teams Customer Engagement Governance
Investigate enhancement of Records Management System and Processes	 Ensure a seamless user experience Simpler system of recording and management of all incoming Customer interactions Link to customer request system for singular view of the Customer 	Year 2	Officer time, Investment in modern records system and guided analysis and implementation	 ICT Management Teams Customer Engagement Governance
Investigate e-services and low-code business models	 Ensure we consider digital interactions, payments, booking and permits for Council's website when designing new interactions Increase self-service transaction volumes Increase referrals from website 	Year 1, Ongoing	Officer time	 ICT Management Team Exec Team Customer Engagement



MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Cultural change takes time as inclinations are sometimes well entrenched. Culture can't be traded in as if it were a used car, nor can it be forced upon like a merger. Our community understands that this begins with some small interventions, drawing on the positive aspects and turning these into an advantage to create change that sticks.

Evaluation is ongoing throughout this process, such as faceto-face qualitative research with our Customers and journey mapping to find opportunities to improve the Customer experience at each stage of our efforts. It is also important that these improvements can be demonstrated in tangible evidence that is transparent, maintains the positive momentum by celebrating milestones which gives confidence to our Customers that we are in this for the long haul.

Additionally, performance reporting is a key program of Local Government Victoria in promoting council transparency, accountability and performance. Customers can view how Council is performing, what measures have been undertaken of their performance and how to make a complaint via the 'Know Your Council' website www.knowyourcouncil.vic.gov.au. This includes an annual Local Government Community Satisfaction Survey. This survey is conducted across each council and provides data to fulfil a number of statutory reporting requirements and assists in benchmarking. The Victorian Government established the Local Government Performance Reporting Framework (LGPRF) in 2014 to ensure that all Councils measure and report on their performance in a consistent way. The LGPRF and the reporting format for indicators and measures are prescribed by the Local Government Act 2020 (the Act) and the Local Government (Planning and Reporting) Regulations 2020.

RELATED DOCUMENTS

- Council Plan 2022-2025
- Customer Service Charter
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Councillor Code of Conduct
- Social Media Policy
- Communication Strategy
- Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan
- Inclusiveness Plan
- Community Engagement Strategy
- Community Support Policy
- Complaints Handling Policy



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Buloke Shire Council