



Service Review – Customer Care

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Disclaimer:

This Service Review is provided for information and planning purposes only. It reflects circumstances at the time of preparation and may be subject to change.

Executive Summary

Customer Care is the first point of contact between Council and the community.

The service manages enquiries, payments, registry and licensing, records, complaints and library programs. It delivers statutory functions under the Service Delivery Agreement (SDA) with the Commonwealth and supports community access to essential information and services.

The review assesses service performance, systems, staffing, financial position and compliance against Council's Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework. It draws on operational data, staff engagement, financial analysis and benchmarking with other small island councils.

Customer Care operates with a small team that manages broad responsibilities and high community expectations. Transaction peaks during billing cycles increase workload and extend response times. Registry officers perform legislative functions normally handled by state agencies, and Records staff manage Freedom of Information requests and a large digitisation backlog. Library services deliver valued community programs.

Financial analysis indicates the service operates within its approved funding envelope through a combination of SDA support and internal allocations. Benchmarking confirms that service standards and customer responsiveness are consistent with peers, although the scope of statutory responsibility is significantly wider. Operational risks sit within the low-to-moderate range and relate mainly to information management, record storage, staff safety and workforce continuity.

The service is performing well but constrained by system fragmentation and limited staffing capacity.

Short-term improvement priorities focus on system integration, workforce relief and digitisation of critical records. Medium-term priorities strengthen governance and data management through the Retention and Disposal Authority, standardised registers, staff development and customer-feedback systems. Long-term actions aim to complete full records digitisation, unify Customer Care systems, modernise library facilities and expand digital access to community services.

Customer Care remains a core statutory and community service that connects Council and the public. Investment in digital platforms, records modernisation and workforce capability may improve efficiency, reduce compliance risk and support quality service delivery over the long term and is subject to Council approval and SDA arrangements.

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1. Service Review Scope and Purpose

This review assesses the Customer Care division of the Norfolk Island Regional Council (NIRC). Customer Care is the primary contact point between Council and the community. It delivers a wide range of statutory and community services that connect residents, businesses, and visitors with Council's operations. These include frontline customer service, registry and licensing, records management, receipting, library services, and associated customer transactions.

The division also provides coordination and support for a number of related functions such as courts administration, deceased estates, Radio Norfolk, community information, cemetery maintenance and tourism engagement.

The purpose of this review is to:

- Analyse the current state of Customer Care service delivery, systems, and resourcing.
- Assess compliance with statutory and policy obligations under the *Local Government Act 1993 (NSW)(NI)*, the Service Delivery Agreement (SDA) with the Commonwealth, and other relevant legislation.
- Review financial sustainability including revenue sources, expenditure patterns, and net subsidy requirements across core functions.
- Benchmark performance and structure against peer island and regional councils with comparable size and resourcing.
- Identify operational strengths, challenges, risks, and constraints impacting service quality and sustainability.
- Highlight opportunities for improved customer experience, efficiency, and digital transformation.
- Provide indicative recommendations to strengthen long-term sustainability, governance, and community outcomes.

The scope of this review covers the following functions delivered within Customer Care:

- **Customer Care:** Frontline enquiries and transactions across all Council services, including Telecom customer support, complaints handling, CRM requests, rural addressing, pension verifications, tertiary and community grant processing, and licensing support (drivers, firearms, vehicles, names and addresses).
- **Receipting:** Payment processing for Council invoices, including electricity, water assurance, waste management, land rates, telecom, lighterage, permits, licences, registrations, land transfers, planning and environment fees, with associated billing and account-query support.
- **Registry and Licensing:** Management of statutory registers and certifications under Norfolk Island legislation, including land titles, births, deaths and marriages, liquor licensing, dog registrations, firearms and drivers' licences, tourist accommodation,

associations, companies, land valuations, surveys, Crown lease inspections, brands and marks, and related legal instruments.

- **Records Management:** Oversight of the Electronic Document and Records Management System (EDRMS), physical archives, digitisation programs, tender documentation, and Freedom of Information (FOI) compliance.
- **Library:** Community lending, reference and literacy services, volunteer engagement, and preservation of Norfolk Island reference materials.

Related functions including Courts and Tribunals administration, Deceased Estates, Radio Norfolk and Tourism and Visitor Information are recognised for their interdependencies with Customer Care but are not assessed as part of this review.

2. Service Summary

- **Service Name:** Customer Care
- **Service Owner:** Norfolk Island Regional Council (NIRC)
- **Funding Source:** NIRC operational budget and Commonwealth Service Delivery Agreement (SDA) support
- **Review Period:** September – October 2025
- **Review Lead:** Manager Customer Care
- **Last Review Date:** Not previously reviewed

Governance and Legislative Basis

Customer Care operates within a mixed governance environment that includes local, NSW-applied and Commonwealth legislation.

The service is delivered under the Local Government Act 1993 (NSW)(NI), the Service Delivery Agreement (SDA) with the Commonwealth and Norfolk Island statutes governing registry, licensing, records and information management.

Commonwealth legislation applies to SDA functions and records, including the *Archives Act 1983 (Cth)*, *Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)*, and *Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)*, where relevant. Council records and privacy are governed by NSW-applied legislation for Norfolk Island, such as equivalents of the *State Records Act*, *Government Information (Public Access) Act (GIPA)*, and *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act (PPIP)*.

Supporting Policies

- Customer Service Charter
- Complaints Policy
- Information Management Policy
- Council Code of Conduct

Key Legislation

- Land Titles Act 1996 (NI)
- Registration of Births, Deaths and Marriages Act 1963 (NI)
- Liquor Act 2005 (NI)
- Traffic Act 2010 (NI)
- Firearms and Prohibited Weapons Act 1997 (NI)
- Tourist Accommodation Act 1984 (NI)
- Dog Registration Act 1936 (NI)
- Archives Act 1983 (Cth)

Key Assets and Systems

Customer Care is an information-intensive service. Core assets are digital systems, records and collections rather than physical infrastructure.

Primary platforms include the Customer Resolution Management System (CRM), Civica finance suite, BESY (electricity billing), Boss (telecom billing), ERP Suite (registrations and licences) and Content Manager (EDRMS).

Staffing and Customers

- **Workforce 2024–25:** 8 FTE, 2 part-time positions, 1 casual employee, no contractors.
- **Customers:** Residents, businesses and visitors seeking Council services, together with off-island solicitors, real estate agents and government agencies who require official records and registrations.

3. Strategic Alignment

Customer Care aligns to Council’s Community Strategic Plan 2016-2026, the Delivery Program 2022–2026, the Operational Plan 2025-26, and the Service Delivery Agreement (SDA) with the Commonwealth Government. The service is also guided by Council’s Customer Service Charter and supporting governance policies.

The table below summarises this alignment, showing how the service contributes to each strategic document and its supporting policy framework.

Strategic Driver	Alignment to Customer Care
Community Strategic Plan 2016-2026	Contributes to objectives for an informed and engaged community, a caring community access to quality services, and preservation of Norfolk Island’s records and heritage.
Delivery Program 2022-2026	Operational Area 3 – Customer Care. Key actions include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modernisation of customer forms and online lodgement. • Online booking calendar for Council facilities. • Review of Customer Service Charter and Complaints Policy. Review of Information Publication Scheme and Privacy Statement. • Customer service centre improvements and better access to information. • Digitisation of all records, pre and post 2016
Operational Plan 2025–26	Priorities include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer Service Charter review and customer survey. Streamlined Complaints Policy and procedure. • Re-establishment of the CRM system. • Online forms made available across core services. • Continued digitisation of records and expansion of EDRMS. • Library programs and promotion of local authors. • Updating of Official Survey • Updating of Liquor Licensing manual
Service Delivery Agreement (SDA)	Under the 2024–25 SDA between the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts (DITRDCA) and NIRC, Customer Care delivers statutory services on behalf of the Commonwealth. These include Deceased Estates, Courts and Tribunals, Registry and Licensing, Records Management. Each function is defined in the SDA Schedule of Services with standards, key performance indicators and quarterly reporting requirements. This review acknowledges the SDA as the governing framework for those services, and all findings are indicative only and subject to Commonwealth agreement, funding availability and Council approval.
Policy Framework	Supported by the Customer Service Charter, Complaints Policy, Information Management Policy, FOI obligations, WHS, and Code of Conduct.

4. Service Delivery Agreement (SDA) context

Customer Care delivers several statutory services on behalf of the Commonwealth under the *Service Delivery Agreement (SDA) 2024-25* between the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts (DITRDCA) and the Norfolk Island Regional Council (NIRC).

The SDA sets out the legislative, financial and reporting framework through which Council administers Commonwealth responsibilities for registry, courts, and records.

Each service is defined in a Schedule of Services that specifies deliverables, key performance indicators (KPIs), reporting frequency and funding levels.

SDA-Funded Services Managed through Customer Care

The table below summarises SDA-funded services delivered by Customer Care and their approved Commonwealth allocations for the 2024-25 financial year (as per the SDA Schedule of Services 2024-25). Forward estimates for 2025-26 within the existing SDA schedules indicate similar funding levels and are pending confirmation through the next SDA negotiation and approval process.

SDA Service	Service Title / Function	Description and Key Obligations	2024–25 Budget (\$)
1	Deceased Estates	Administration of deceased estates under Norfolk Island law, including appointment of Curator and Deputy Curator, management of trust monies and quarterly KPI reporting.	55 000
2	Courts, Tribunals, Probates and Boards	Delivery of court and tribunal registry support, debt recovery, clerk and registrar functions, probate registration and management of the Legal Aid Fund.	190 000
3	Registry and Licensing	Administration of statutory registry and licensing functions covering land titles, births, deaths and marriages, vehicle registration, drivers' licences, liquor licensing, associations, companies, brands and marks and related records.	787 969 (revenue)
9	Records Management	Custody, digitisation and archiving of Commonwealth and SDA records (pre-2016 and current), including FOI compliance and participation in National Archives programs.	175 950

Note: Positive values represent Commonwealth payments to Council for service delivery.

Registry and Licensing appear under the SDA because these functions relate to Commonwealth-delegated Norfolk Island legislation administered locally by Council on behalf of the Commonwealth.

Only Registry & Licensing is recorded as revenue in Council's accounts because it is funded through a direct Commonwealth payment. Other SDA allocations are treated as cost reimbursements and reported within Council's operating expenditure.

5. Service Profiles

The following service profiles describe the purpose, resourcing, daily activity, challenges, opportunities and priorities for each function within Customer Care.

Customer Care

Service Purpose

Customer Care is the first point of contact between Council and the community. The team manages over the counter, phone and online enquiries, complaints, payments and billing queries. It provides information and guidance to residents, businesses and visitors, while ensuring that requests are logged through the Customer Resolution Management (CRM) System for tracking and referral. The team supports the delivery of statutory and discretionary services across Council, including Telecom, Licensing, Planning, Waste, and Registry matters.

Service Type

Mandatory – *Local Government Act 1993 (NSW)(NI)*.

Resourcing 2024–25

- Staffing 4.4 FTE (headcount 5)
- Funding Mix of internal Council revenue and SDA support

Daily Activity and Systems

Customer Care operates a high-volume counter, phone and email service. Staff handle enquiries on electricity, water assurance, waste, rates, telecom and planning. Payments and billing queries are processed daily through Civica (rates, licences, registrations), BESY (electricity), Boss (telecom) and ERP Suite (licensing).

Core activities include:

- Processing payments and reconciling daily banking
Re-issuing invoices, notices and statements
- Correcting customer account data and following up missed payments
- Logging service requests and complaints in CRM
- Scanning and digitising forms for records compliance
- Providing assistance to residents with licence renewals, rural addressing and verification of pensions
- Responding to calls for telecom SIMs, phone faults and directory enquiries

Challenges

- Activity levels rise sharply during billing cycles for electricity, telecom and rates, which can triple counter volumes.
- Heavy reliance on multiple ICT systems that require frequent switching and manual workarounds
- Peaks in transaction volume during billing periods
- Community perception influenced by billing accuracy and system reliability
- Small team capacity under sustained enquiry load

Opportunities

- Re-establish and expand the CRM to improve tracking, reporting and closure of requests
- Extend online forms and payment channels to reduce counter load
- Employ a trainee or apprentice to support workforce continuity and customer-facing coverage
- Benchmark customer satisfaction to guide improvement priorities

Priorities to 2026

- Review and update Customer Service Charter (Aug 2025)
- Undertake Customer Service Survey (Dec 2025)
- Streamline Complaints Policy and Procedure (Jun 2026)
- Re-establish CRM system and ensure all service areas log requests (Aug 2025)

Registry and Licensing

Service Purpose

Registry and Licensing deliver statutory registration, certification and licensing functions on behalf of Council and the Commonwealth. The team manages land titles, births, deaths and marriages, powers of attorney, tourist accommodation, liquor licensing, firearm licences, dog registration, motor vehicles, brands and marks, lotteries, associations, companies, land valuations, surveys and GIS records. One staff member assists with rates notices and provides land ownership details and category changes, with an intention to transition rates processes to Finance.

Service Type

Mandatory. Part of Norfolk Island statutes and Commonwealth SDA.

Resourcing 2024–25

- Staffing 2 FTE
- Funding Commonwealth SDA

Daily Activity and Systems

Registry officers carry out broad daily statutory duties, including:

- Registering births, deaths and marriages and issuing certified copies
- Officiating marriages and preparing ceremonies
- Issuing and renewing driver licences and special licences
- Maintaining the firearms register and issuing licences
- Managing tourist accommodation and liquor licences
- Maintaining association, brands and lotteries registers
- Preparing gazette notices and processing land transfers and mortgages
- Maintaining the Map Info GIS database and Official Survey records
- Providing land ownership information for rating and valuation purposes

Challenges

- Constant workload pressure across numerous statutes and regulatory timeframes
- Outdated forms and certificates needing professional updates
- Interruptions from urgent requests by courts, police, lawyers and grieving families
- Reliance on a small specialist team with limited succession capacity

Opportunities

- Digitise land dealings and licence registers to reduce manual searches
- Update all forms and certificates to modern standards
- Develop online access for certificate requests and licence renewals
- Automate reminder letters for renewals to reduce manual mail-outs
- Benchmark registry practices with other small jurisdictions

Priorities to 2026

- Update Liquor Licensing Manual (Aug 2025)
- Update Official Survey (Dec 2025)
- Review succession planning for specialist roles
- Increase compliance inspections from 2026-27

Records Management

Service Purpose

Records Management maintains Council's records in accordance with legislative requirements and archival standards. It oversees digital and physical archives, supports Freedom of Information requests, and manages Council's digitisation and information governance framework.

Service Type

Mandatory – *Archives Act 1983 (Cth)*, *Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)*, *Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)*, and *Local Government Act 1993 (NSW)(NI)*.

Resourcing 2024–25

- Staffing 1.5 FTE (headcount 2)
- Funding Mix of internal revenue and SDA allocations

Daily Activity and Systems

- Operate Council's Electronic Document and Records Management System (Content Manager)
- Manage legacy files in RecFind6 and coordinate digitisation of historic records
- Process FOI requests, create file containers and manage gazette uploads
- Support departments in records creation and compliance
- Oversee archive storage and coordinate relocation projects
- Liaise with National Archives on retention and disposal authorities

Challenges

- Large digitisation backlog and limited resourcing
- Slow network access to Content Manager from remote sites
- Reliance on records staff to upload documents for other teams
- Compliance risk if retention and FOI requirements are not met

Opportunities

- Expand digitisation capacity and train additional staff in Content Manager
- Establish central registers for complaints and tenders
- Secure additional funding for FOI and retention projects
- Improve integration between Content Manager, CRM and Civica

Priorities to 2026

- Finalise Retention and Disposal Authority project with National Archives
- Relocate 1,300 boxes of records to purpose-built storage (2026) – **completed ahead of schedule.**
- Expand use of Content Manager across Council
- Digitise Hansards, company files and planning applications as priority sets

Library

Service Purpose

The Library provides public lending, reference and community information services to support literacy and cultural engagement on Norfolk Island. It maintains a public collection, preserves Norfolk Island reference materials and offers programs that encourage reading and learning.

Service Type

Discretionary – delivered under Council’s community and cultural functions.

Resourcing 2024–25

- Staffing 0.87 FTE (headcount 3)
- Funding Internal Council revenue

Daily Activity and Systems

- Manage lending and returns of fiction and non-fiction collections
- Maintain Norfolk Island reference section and local author works
- Support literacy and reading programs for children and adults
- Coordinate volunteer rosters and daily library operations
- Manage cataloguing and record-keeping for all collections

Challenges

- Limited space for collections and programs
- Ageing shelving and furniture requiring replacement
- Inconsistent program delivery due to competing demands
- Resource constraints limit ability to expand digital services

Opportunities

- Enhance literacy and cultural programs through partnerships
- Strengthen Norfolk Island reference and heritage resources
- Develop volunteer training and succession planning
- Modernise facilities to improve user experience

Priorities to 2026

- Deliver at least two community programs annually as resources permit
- Acquire new shelving and furniture by 2026–27
- Support local authors and expand Norfolk Island reference collection

6. Quantitative Analysis

This section summarises operating revenue and expenditure across Customer Care functions, drawing on Council's financial system data for the FY 2024-25 actuals and the adopted FY 2025-26 budget (as of October 2025).

Income Statement - 2024 Actuals and 2025 - 2026 Proposed Budget

The table below presents operating revenue and expenditure across Customer Care functions for the FY 2024–25 actuals and the FY 2025–26 adopted budget.

Function / Account	FY 2024–25 Actuals (\$)	FY 2025–26 Budget (\$)
Records Management		
Operating Expenditure	196,249	11,717
Records Management Total	196,249	11,717
Library		
Operating Expenditure	55,665	117,451
Operating Revenue	(4,354)	(3,000)
Depreciation	12,076	11,983
Library Total	63,387	126,434
Registry		
Operating Expenditure	59,182	75,131
Operating Revenue	(3,852)	(3,000)
Registry Total	55,330	72,131
Customer Care		
Operating Expenditure	445,353	(5,552)
Operating Revenue	(1,444)	0
Customer Care Total	443,909	(5,552)
C/Wealth – Registry, Licensing & Regulatory		
Operating Expenditure	1,152,657	1,778,867
Operating Revenue	(2,446,601)	(1,778,868)
C/Wealth – Registry, Licensing & Regulatory Total (1,293,943)		(1)

Function / Account	FY 2024–25 Actuals (\$)	FY 2025–26 Budget (\$)
C/Wealth – Record Keeping		
Operating Expenditure	132,780	242,994
Operating Revenue	(175,950)	(175,950)
C/Wealth – Record Keeping Total	(43,170)	67,044

Note: The 2025-26 Records Management operating expenditure of \$11,717 reflects internal allocation or posting changes.

Operating Position Summary

The table below summarises the operating position for each function within the Customer Care division and linked SDA cost centres.

Function	FY 2024–25 Net Result (\$)	FY 2025–26 Net Result (\$)	Position
Records Management	196,249	11,717	Deficit (cost)
Library	63,387	126,434	Deficit (cost)
Registry	55,330	72,131	Deficit (cost)
Customer Care	443,909	(5,552)	Surplus (accounting adjustment)
C/Wealth – Registry, Licensing & Regulatory	(1,293,943)	(1)	Accounting neutral (SDA-funded)
C/Wealth – Record Keeping	(43,170)	67,044	Accounting neutral (SDA-funded)
Total Division	(578,238)	271,773	Net cost / offset by SDA funding

Customer Care and its linked functions recorded a combined cost of **\$0.76 million** in FY 2024-25 offset by Commonwealth funding for registry licensing and record keeping. The division operates at a modest net cost to Council once SDA reimbursements are applied.

Customer Care: \$445k expenditure in 2024–25 with minimal direct revenue. The 2025-26 (–\$5.6k) result reflects internal cost recovery.

Records Management: \$196k in 2024-25 for staffing compliance and digitisation. The 2025-26 \$11.7k allocation reflects internal postings.

Library: \$63k net cost in 2024-25 rising to \$126k in 2025-26 for programs and depreciation.

Registry: \$55k in 2024-25 increasing to \$72k in 2025-26 with system and regulatory updates.

Commonwealth funded functions: Registry licensing and record keeping costs are largely offset by SDA revenue with changes reflecting funding timing and scope.

Direct Council revenue remains limited with most statutory and SDA income managed through Council’s central budget.

7. Benchmarking

Benchmarking was undertaken to provide a contextual comparison of Customer Care and related functions against small or remote councils with similar geographic isolation or population size. Comparators were selected for scale, service breadth and accessibility of public information.

Delivery models, governance frameworks and legislative responsibilities differ significantly between Norfolk Island and other jurisdictions therefore, findings are indicative only and should not be interpreted as like-for-like operational comparisons. Where numeric or performance data are referenced, they are derived from published annual reports, service charters or websites as of October 2025.

Method and Sources

Benchmarks were compiled from publicly available council websites, annual reports, and service charters accessed October 2025. No direct cost-per-capita or staffing-ratio analysis was undertaken due to differing accounting treatments and legislative scope. Full list of sources is available on request.

Comparators

- **Lord Howe Island Board (NSW)** – state-supported board; provides community, environment and limited customer-service functions under NSW legislation.
- **Flinders Council (TAS)** – remote island council with combined customer-service and community-engagement roles.
- **King Island Council (TAS)** – small island local government, similar population and resourcing scale.
- **Christmas Island (External Territory)** – functions delivered under Commonwealth/WA-applied legislation, included for external-territory context only.
- **Paroo Shire (QLD)** – non-island remote control retained as a rural baseline for library and charter comparisons.

Customer Service Standards

Most peer councils operate under customer service charters that set response times of five to ten business days for written enquiries and 24 to 48 hours for phone messages. NIRC's targets of two working days for phone responses and ten working days for written enquiries are consistent with these standards. The use of annual customer surveys is also common practice.

Registry and Licensing

For Lord Howe, Flinders and King islands, many registry and licensing functions are supported or delivered through state systems and agencies. On Norfolk Island these responsibilities sit directly with Council under Norfolk Island legislation (births, deaths, marriages, land titles, tourist accommodation, firearms, liquor, dogs and associations). This results in a broader scope per officer and less access to external specialist pools than peers.

Records Management

Paroo, Flinders and King Island operate within state archive frameworks (e.g., State

Records/Archives offices) and benefit from shared guidance and tools. Norfolk Island complies with Commonwealth legislation (Archives and FOI) and operate its own EDRMS and digitisation program. This increases reliance on a small local team and makes digitisation and retention/disposal more resource intensive.

Library Services

Libraries in Paroo and King Island are supported by state library partnerships that provide access to catalogues, interlibrary loans and program material. NIRC's library operates independently, with its own collection management and community programs. This ensures local control but results in higher cost per capita and limited access to broader state-level services.

Benchmarking Snapshot

Service Area	NIRC	Lord Howe Island (NSW)	Flinders Island (TAS)	Christmas Island (External Territory)	Paroo Shire (QLD)	King Island (TAS)
Customer Service Standards	Charter sets 2 days for phone, 10 days for written. Survey cycle being established.	Charter typically 5-10 days written, 24-48 h phone.	Charter typically 5-10 days written, ~2 days phone.	Services align to Commonwealth service standards; some applied-WA frameworks.	Charter typically ~10 days written, ~2 days phone.	Charter typically 5-10 days written, ~2 days phone.
Registry & Licensing	Wide scope held locally (BDM, land titles, firearms, liquor, tourist accommodation, associations, dogs).	Limited local scope; NSW agencies/systems support.	State-level functions off-island via TAS agencies.	Functions supported through Commonwealth delivery; some applied-WA arrangements.	Limited registry; QLD systems support.	Limited registry; TAS agencies support.
Records Management	Commonwealth Archives/FOI compliance. EDRMS (Content Manager). Digitisation backlog.	NSW State Records framework support.	Tasmanian Archive & Heritage Office support.	Commonwealth records frameworks apply.	Queensland State Archives support.	Tasmanian Archive & Heritage Office support.
Library Services	Independent service. ~\$125k budget, 0.87 FTE. Local programs incl. school holidays and Writers' Festival stream.	State Library of NSW support.	Libraries Tasmania support.	National/territory frameworks; limited island-scale services.	State Library of QLD support.	Libraries Tasmania support.

All benchmarking data is indicative and based on publicly available reports and internal estimates as at Oct 2025.

Benchmarking Findings

Benchmarking shows NIRC's customer service standards are consistent with comparable councils. Response times and complaint handling align with accepted practice.

Registry and Licensing cover a broader scope on Norfolk Island than in peer councils. Other island and small regional councils rely on state or territory agencies for births, deaths, marriages, land dealings and compliance registers. NIRC carries these responsibilities in full, which increases workload per staff member and requires in-house expertise due to the unique Norfolk Island legislative framework.

Records Management is more resource-intensive at NIRC. Peers use state archive offices and shared systems, while Norfolk Island must comply directly with Commonwealth legislation, operate its own EDRMS and address a large digitisation backlog.

Library services are comparable in community role but differ in delivery. Peers are supported by state library networks that provide catalogues, interlibrary loans and program materials. NIRC delivers services independently, maintaining local control but increasing the resourcing burden on local staff.

Overall, NIRC provides a wider set of services with fewer external supports than its peers. This places greater pressure on small teams and increases the compliance and resourcing load that must be managed locally.

8. Asset Management

Customer Care maintains few physical assets. Its primary assets are information systems, records, and library collections that enable statutory and community services.

As an information-intensive service, Customer Care's value lies in the accuracy, accessibility, and security of its data rather than in physical infrastructure. The effectiveness of the service depends on how well these digital and document assets are maintained, digitised, and made available to the community, supported by reliable ICT platforms and record-keeping systems.

- **Digital and Information Systems**
 - Civica enterprise finance platform used for billing and receipting.
 - Customer Resolution Management System (CRM) for logging and tracking requests (in re-establishment).
 - Electronic Document and Records Management System (Content Manager), implemented in 2024 to standardise recordkeeping across Council.
 - ERP Suite for licences and vehicle registration processing
- **Records and Archives**
 - More than 7,000 boxes of archived records stored in four locations on Norfolk Island.
 - Historical planning and company files under digitisation.
 - Official survey sheets and registry records associated with land titles, births, deaths, and marriages.
- **Library Collections**
 - Fiction and non-fiction lending collections.
 - Children's section and a dedicated Norfolk Island reference collection.
 - Small stock of donated books sold to raise funds for the library.

9. Operational Activity and Qualitative Analysis

This section provides a qualitative view of how Customer Care operates day to day. It draws from operational walkthroughs, staff interviews and “Day in the Life” (DILO) observations conducted in 2025.

Operational Observations and Process Review

Customer Care operates as a high contact service. Staff manage over-the-counter transactions, phone enquiries, billing queries and registry lodgements. A large share of daily activity centres on billing cycles for electricity, rates and telecom. Systems in use include Civica, BESY, Boss, ERP Suite, Content Manager and the CRM. Each system covers different functions which leads to frequent switching and manual workarounds.

Registry and Licensing officers manage statutory registers for births, deaths, marriages, land dealings, firearms, liquor, tourist accommodation and associations. Work is process heavy, with staff required to draft gazette notices, post renewals and respond to urgent requests from courts, police, lawyers and grieving families.

Records staff manage FOI requests, digitisation and file creation. They provide daily support to Customer Care, Registry, Planning and Electricity staff. Content Manager has been rolled out, but many areas still rely on paper or local files which must be converted by records officers.

The library delivers lending and reference services.

DILO Reflections and Staff Insights

The DILOs highlight the scale and variety of work handled by small teams. Staff move constantly between customer enquiries, billing systems and statutory processes. The reflections show both the intensity of the workload and the dedication of staff to resolving issues at first contact.

Customer Care

Frontline staff reported heavy reliance on multiple billing platforms: Civica for rates and licences, BESY for electricity and Boss for telecom. Each day involves processing payments, correcting account data, reissuing bills and following up missed payments. A single officer may log more than a dozen Civica transactions, manage phone enquiries and handle counter interactions while balancing daily banking tasks. During billing cycles, the counter becomes crowded and transaction volumes triple. Staff also cover unexpected tasks such as troubleshooting SIM cards, email resets and mobile service queries, reflecting the blurred boundary between customer service and ICT support.

Registry and Licensing

Registry staff described the workload as broad and constant. They issue and renew licences across multiple statutory areas while also officiating marriages and preparing ceremonies. Work often involves preparing gazette notices, folding and posting bulk renewal letters, and responding to urgent requests from police, courts, solicitors and grieving families. Interruptions are frequent, making it difficult to complete planned tasks. Outdated forms and certificates add to the frustration, with staff noting the need for modernised templates and automated renewal processes.

Records Management

Records officers explained that they are central to supporting other departments. Daily tasks include creating file containers, processing FOI requests, running mail deliveries and publishing gazette updates. Staff manage both Content Manager and RecFind6 while also handling legacy paper files. Many services cannot use Content Manager directly due to network slowness, so Records staff must upload documents on their behalf. The backlog of digitisation was described as unmanageable at current levels, with staff estimating that it would take more than 50 years to complete all outstanding records without additional resources.

Staff Culture

Despite these pressures, the DILOs reflect a strong customer service culture. Staff consistently aim to resolve enquiries on the spot, even when outside their defined role. Examples include setting up new SIM cards, supporting ICT issues and personally contacting other agencies to close out customer requests. Staff take pride in being the face of Council, though many expressed concerns about sustainability without improved systems and workforce support.

Customer Complaints Process

Customer Care manages the registration and coordination of complaints across all Council services in line with Formal Complaints Management Policy and the Customer Service Charter. Complaints are acknowledged within ten working days and usually resolved within twenty. Each case is logged in the Customer Resolution Management (CRM) system and referred to the responsible area for response, with oversight and quarterly reporting maintained by the Governance Team.

The process separates formal complaints from general service requests and supports transparency and continuous improvement through consistent data capture and reporting.

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Operational Constraints and Themes

The DILOs show three clear themes that constrain daily operations across Customer Care, Registry and Records.

- **System fragmentation**
Staff move between Civica, BESY, Boss, ERP Suite, Content Manager, RecFind6 and CRM. Each platform handles a narrow function which forces staff to re-enter data, manage workarounds and spend time correcting errors. This fragmentation is most visible during billing where electricity, telecom and rates are issued from separate systems, creating extra handling and delay.
- **Workload pressure**
Billing cycles triple transaction volumes at the counter. Registry staff face constant interruptions from courts, police and urgent community requests while also managing bulk renewals and ceremonies. Records officers spend large parts of each day processing FOI requests, creating containers and uploading documents for other teams who cannot access Content Manager directly. These pressures limit capacity for planned work and create backlogs.
- **Compliance and resourcing**
Unlike peers, NIRC must deliver statutory registry functions and records compliance locally without support from state or territory agencies. This increases reliance on small teams with specialist knowledge. Records staff estimate digitisation of historic files would take more than 50 years at current resourcing levels. Staff across all functions expressed concern about sustainability unless additional resourcing and system support is provided.

Together these themes point to a service that is committed and responsive but operating under sustained strain. The constraints are structural and will require investment in systems, digital processes and workforce continuity to ease the load.

10. Risk and Compliance Assessment

Customer Care operates within a combined local and Commonwealth regulatory environment that defines obligations for information security, records management, complaints handling and customer privacy.

These obligations shape the service’s risk management approach and are monitored through Council’s corporate risk register and compliance reporting processes.

Most risks sit within the low-to-moderate range, with higher-priority actions focused on information management, workforce continuity and site safety.

Operational Risk Areas

The main operational risks relate to

- information security and privacy of customer and registry data
- storage and preservation of physical records
- server and data-backup resilience
- staff and volunteer safety across multiple sites
- documentation, training and succession planning
- internal communication between Customer Care, Governance and service managers

These risks are tracked and managed through digitalisation, cloud migration, procedure updates and workforce planning.

Customer Care Risk Register – October 2025

The table below summarises key risks recorded for Customer Care as of October 2025, including their current rating, existing controls and indicative actions identified through Council’s corporate risk register.

Note: The following risk register is extracted directly from Council’s corporate risk records. Ratings and classifications are shown as provided by Council and have not been modified as part of this review.

Risk Type	Description / Detail	Existing Controls	Current Risk Rating	Required Actions
Legal & Compliance	Unauthorised disclosure of information due to limited admin controls.	Digitalisation project underway.	Low (4)	Complete digitalisation project.
Legal & Compliance	Misuse of Council data not detected due to weak user-activity logs.	Records project in progress.	Low (4)	Complete records management project.
Health & Safety	Suspicious parcel or letter causes evacuation.	Basic mail-handling procedures.	Moderate (4)	Review mail-handling procedure.

Legal & Compliance	Deterioration or loss of paper records stored across four facilities.	Locked access, shelving, alarms, pest control.	Moderate (9)	Digitise critical records and inspect sites regularly.
Legal & Compliance	Records deterioration from humidity and salt air.	Dehumidifiers and acid-free boxes.	Moderate (6)	Continue digitisation and preservation plan.
ICT / Compliance	Local server failure could cause total data loss.	60 % cloud-based; migration planned.	Moderate (9)	Complete cloud migration for RecFind and CM10.
Assets / Library	Library stock loss from fire or cyclone.	Building to cyclone standard; insurance in place.	Low (4)	Maintain insurance and annual safety testing.
Legal & Compliance	Staff not advised of legislative changes.	Informal solicitor updates.	Moderate (10)	Establish formal update process.
Service Delivery	Lack of documented procedures and guidelines.	Informal knowledge sharing.	Moderate (10)	Develop standard procedures.
Health & Safety	Safety hazards in Bicentennial Complex.	Fire escape plans in place.	Moderate (9)	Review WHS layout and signage.
Service Delivery	FOI or complaint delays when key staff unavailable.	Contractor and policy support.	Low (4)	Maintain contractor backup and monitor communication.
Service Delivery	Customer Care not updated on Council projects.	Fortnightly meetings.	Low (4)	Continue regular staff meetings.
Health & Safety	Risk of assault by customers.	Counter glass barrier installed.	Moderate (6)	Provide regular WHS and safety training.
ICT / Assets	Ageing front-of-house IT equipment.	New hardware installed 2023.	Low (3)	Maintain ICT support.
Health & Safety	Flooding of Visitor Centre and Library.	Drainage and flashing upgrades 2023.	Low (4)	Continue monitoring and maintenance.

Compliance Obligations and Actions

Obligation Area	Requirement	Control or Action
Records and Archives	Comply with <i>Archives Act 1983 (Cth)</i> and <i>FOI Act 1982 (Cth)</i> .	Progress digitisation and cloud migration.
Privacy and Data Security	Protect customer and registry information.	Apply access controls and audit logs.
Complaints Handling	Comply with Policy 3.06 – Formal Complaints Management.	Strengthen CRM logging and reporting.
Work Health and Safety	Maintain safe workplaces.	Continue inspections and staff training.
Information Governance	Meet SDA reporting and policy obligations.	Review Customer Service Charter and policies.

11. Findings

This section summarises key findings from operational review, asset assessments, staff engagement, financial analysis, and peer benchmarking. It identifies challenges, constraints and performance gaps impacting the delivery and sustainability of the NIRC Customer Care division.

Strengths observed (what's working well)

- Clear service standards through the Customer Service Charter with set targets for response times and complaints handling
- Budgets and FTE documented for each function which supports accountability
- CRM, Civica, BESY, Boss and Content Manager provide a base for modern service delivery
- Community access supported through registry services, the library and cultural programs
- Staff commitment to resolving enquiries at first contact and often going beyond defined roles

Challenges Identified

- Billing cycles create peaks that triple transaction volumes at the counter
- Registry staff manage a wide range of statutory functions without state agency support
- Records staff face FOI demands and a large digitisation backlog while also covering system access gaps for other teams
- Systems are fragmented across multiple platforms which increases handling time and risk of error
- Library facilities such as shelving and seating need renewal

12. Opportunities for Improvement and Transformation

The review identifies opportunities to strengthen Customer Care by reducing system fragmentation, easing workload pressure and addressing compliance risks.

All opportunities are drawn from operational analysis, staff insights, benchmarking and the corporate risk register.

Cost and timing are indicative only and may be refined through business cases and Council approval.

Operational and Service Enhancement Initiatives (0-12 months)

Customer Experience and Service Delivery

The table below lists short-term actions focused on improving customer systems, online access and day-to-day service delivery.

Initiative	Indicative Cost	Indicative Benefit	Implementation Notes
Consolidate billing and receipting functions across Civica, BESY and Boss.	Internal resources	Reduces duplication and handling time.	Align to IT roadmap and finance review.
Expand use of the CRM for requests and complaints.	Internal resources	Improves tracking and reporting.	Reinforce through policy and training.
Continue rollout of online forms and e-payments.	Minor ICT cost	Reduces counter load and improves accessibility.	Prioritise high-volume transactions.
Introduce automated reminders for renewals.	Minor ICT cost	Reduces manual processing.	Configure within existing systems.

Workforce and Capability

The table below outlines short-term actions to strengthen workforce resilience and operational continuity.

Initiative	Indicative Cost	Indicative Benefit	Implementation Notes
Employ a trainee or apprentice.	Ongoing employee cost	Builds capability and provides coverage.	Explore external training grants.
Appoint a team leader to assist the Manager Customer Care.	Ongoing employee cost	Strengthens supervision and daily oversight.	Include in workforce plan.
Expand training so more staff can use Content Manager.	Training cost	Reduces reliance on Records officers.	Coordinate with Records and ICT teams.

Records and Compliance Modernisation

The table below highlights short-term initiatives that address information management and records compliance risks.

Initiative	Indicative Cost	Indicative Benefit	Implementation Notes
Secure funding to accelerate digitisation of historic records.	External or SDA funding	Reduces backlog and supports compliance.	Prioritise high-value collections.
Streamline registry forms and templates.	Internal resourcing	Improves consistency and accuracy.	Standardise templates and update website.

Operational and Service Enhancement Initiatives (12-24 months)

Customer Experience and Service Delivery

The table below outlines mid-term actions that enhance customer experience and support data-driven service planning.

Initiative	Indicative Cost	Indicative Benefit	Implementation Notes
Implement structured customer satisfaction surveys.	Internal resources	Tracks performance and guides resourcing.	Build into annual reporting cycle.

Records and Compliance Modernisation

The table below lists initiatives aimed at strengthening records management and improving governance systems.

Initiative	Indicative Cost	Indicative Benefit	Implementation Notes
Progress the Retention and Disposal Authority project.	Internal resources	Strengthens records compliance.	Liaise with the National Archives.
Develop centralised registers for complaints, appointments and tenders.	ICT configuration	Improves transparency and reporting.	Integrate with CRM.
Benchmark registry and records processes against peers.	Internal or consultant cost	Identifies efficiency gains and support options.	Review annually.

Transformational and Strategic Investments (3-5 years)

Customer Experience and Service Delivery

The table below identifies longer-term actions that support digital transformation and customer accessibility.

Initiative	Indicative Cost	Indicative Benefit	Implementation Notes
Integrate Customer Care systems into a single platform.	Capital project	Improves data integrity and customer experience.	Stage with ICT upgrades.
Extend online access to registry, licensing and library services.	ICT investment	Expands digital access and convenience.	Develop through digital transformation plan.

Records and Compliance Modernisation

The table below lists strategic actions focused on preserving records and ensuring long-term information resilience.

Initiative	Indicative Cost	Indicative Benefit	Implementation Notes
Modernise library facilities and furnishings.	Capital project	Enhances access and comfort.	Align with asset renewal planning.
Expand library and cultural programs through community partnerships.	Program budget	Increases participation and cultural engagement.	Coordinate with schools and cultural groups.

13. Recommendations

The following recommendations build on the findings and opportunities for the NIRC Customer Care division. They are grouped by implementation timeframe to support integration with Council's annual planning cycle.

All recommendations are indicative and may be considered subject to business cases, funding and Council approval.

Short-Term (0-12 months)

Actions that maintain compliance and address immediate operational needs.

Recommendation	Intended Outcome
Expand use of the CRM across all departments for requests and complaints.	Improves tracking and visibility of customer enquiries.
Roll out online forms and e-payments for high-volume services.	Reduces counter load and improves accessibility.
Consolidate billing and receipting functions across Civica, BESY and Boss.	Reduces duplication and handling time.
Employ a trainee or apprentice to support Customer Care.	Builds capability and provides relief coverage.
Appoint a team leader to assist daily supervision.	Strengthens oversight and service consistency.
Streamline registry templates and forms.	Improves consistency and accuracy.
Expand staff training for use of Content Manager.	Reduces reliance on Records officers.
Secure funding to accelerate digitisation of historic records.	Reduces backlog and supports compliance.

Medium-Term (12-24 months)

Actions that consolidate system improvements and strengthen workforce resilience.

Recommendation	Intended Outcome
Implement customer satisfaction surveys.	Tracks performance and guides resource planning.
Progress the Retention and Disposal Authority project with the National Archives.	Strengthens records governance and disposal control.

Develop central registers for complaints, appointments and tenders.	Improves transparency and reporting.
Benchmark registry and records processes against peer councils.	Identifies efficiency gains and best practice.
Expand cross-training and succession planning for key roles.	Builds resilience and service continuity.

Long-Term (3-5 years)

Transformational actions that improve integration, community access and long-term sustainability.

Recommendation	Intended Outcome
Integrate Customer Care systems into a single platform under Council's ICT Strategy.	Improves data integrity and user experience.
Complete full digitisation of critical records and archives.	Preserves heritage documents and supports retrieval.
Modernise library facilities and technology.	Improves accessibility and community use.
Expand library and cultural programs through community partnerships.	Increases participation and cultural engagement.
Extend online access to registry, licensing and library services.	Enhances digital convenience for residents and visitors.

IP&R Alignment Summary

The table below summarises how the Customer Care recommendations align with Council’s Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R) Framework to ensure that the recommendations support long-term strategic and operational outcomes.

IP&R Element	Relevant Objective	How this Review Informs It
Community Strategic Plan (10+ yrs)	Connected and Informed Community	Supports reliable, accessible customer service, information access, and transparent communication.
Delivery Program (4 yrs)	Efficient Service Delivery and Compliance	Identifies process and system improvements that enhance efficiency and compliance in statutory functions.
Operational Plan (1 yr)	Customer Care and Information Services	Provides the evidence base for annual actions, performance indicators, and budget allocations.
Resourcing Strategy	Workforce and Digital Capability	Informs workforce planning, training needs, and digital-platform investment priorities.
Reporting Framework	Quarterly and Annual Reports	Enables monitoring of service performance and progress against improvement actions.

14. Appendix

Acronymns

Acronym Full Term

AMP	Asset Management Plan
CRM	Customer Resolution Management (System)
CSP	Community Strategic Plan
DITRDCA	Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts
EDRMS	Electronic Document and Records Management System
ERP	Enterprise Resource Planning
FOI	Freedom of Information
GIPA	Government Information (Public Access) Act
IP&R	Integrated Planning and Reporting
LTFP	Long-Term Financial Plan
NI	Norfolk Island
NIRC	Norfolk Island Regional Council
NSW (LG)	New South Wales (Local Government)
PPIP	Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act
SDA	Service Delivery Agreement
SMT	Senior Management Team

Service Review Methodology and Context

The purpose of the review is to provide an overview of NIRC's Customer Care operations, compliance obligations and financial position, and to identify improvement and transformation opportunities that support Council's planning under the Community Strategic Plan, Delivery Program, and Operational Plan.

The review also presents recommendations designed to enhance service efficiency, digital capability and customer experience, and strengthen long-term sustainability and governance.

This Service Review was undertaken in accordance with Council's Service Review Framework and the NSW Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R) Guidelines (2021).

The review draws on information from Council's financial system, internal policy documents and data provided by NIRC for the FY 2024–25 actuals and FY 2025–26 adopted budget.

Supporting evidence includes published NIRC policies, the Service Delivery Agreement (SDA) with the Commonwealth, relevant Norfolk Island legislation, and information available on the NIRC website as at October 2025.

Qualitative analysis was supplemented through Day-in-the-Life-Of (DILo) observations with frontline staff to understand daily workflows and service constraints.

Limitations

This review is based on information available at the time of analysis including Council's financial data as of 30 June 2025 and policies and records current to October 2025.

Operational observations and DILo findings reflect typical conditions during the review period and may not capture all seasonal or exceptional variations.

No independent financial or legislative audit was undertaken. The review relies on data and documentation supplied by Council and publicly available sources.