

East Gippsland Shire Council

Service Charter

Raymond Island Ferry

East Gippsland Shire Council (Council) operates a vehicle and passenger Ferry service between Raymond Island and Paynesville. As part of Council's commitment to provide quality service, Council has developed a Service Charter or 'level of service' commitment for the operation of the Ferry, including the provision of services during Ferry outages.

Purpose

This Charter is a statement of Council intent to more clearly define service standards for transport connectivity between Paynesville and Raymond Island. . The Charter provides overarching, principles-based policy guidance, as well as procedural guidance on specific operational issues. The Charter is a guiding but not legally binding instrument. The Charter is based on recommendations endorsed by Council at its meeting on 5 May 2020 and Council reserves the right to review and modify this Charter as required. Major changes to the Charter will be undertaken in consultation with service users.

The purpose of this Charter is to:

- Provide a set of guiding principles to be used to guide the operations of the Ferry,
- Provide a statement outlining service levels for transport connectivity and related services between Paynesville and Raymond Island;
- Provide clarity of service provision for Ferry patrons, emergency services agencies, utilities providers and other service providers;
- Serve as a basis for developing future contracts for the operation of the Raymond Island Ferry service;
- Contribute to increased certainty of service levels and associated costs; and
- Provide improved customer service through increased consistency, communication and understanding of service standards and arrangements.

Scope

This Service Charter covers:

- Guiding principles for operation of the service
- Scheduling of the service including operating times and emergency management.

- Ferry Passes
- Arrangements for Ferry outages (planned and unplanned)

The Service Charter does not cover user fees (other than in the Principles), which are set by Council as part of its annual budget process.

Principles guiding service delivery

The Raymond Island Ferry service is delivered in accordance with the following principles:

1. Provide a safe service;
2. Excellent customer service;
3. Provide a timely and reliable service;
4. Operate the service in accordance with all relevant acts and regulations;
5. Ongoing communication and co-operation with the Principal, Ferry patrons, emergency services and other relevant stakeholders;
6. Provide an environmentally friendly and responsible service; and
7. Enhancement of Council's image through the operation of the service.

Service Effectiveness

1. Transport connectivity to Raymond Island will always be constrained by the fact that it is an island with no direct road from the mainland.
2. The Ferry aims to provide reliable, efficient and effective access for persons, vehicles and services.
3. The Ferry provides a safe service that minimises the risk of harm to persons and property arising from its operations.
4. Council provides an alternative services during outages to provide a minimum level of access and minimise inconvenience caused by disruptions to the Ferry service.

Service Efficiency

1. Efficient use of resources including the Ferry itself, related infrastructure, operating and maintenance personnel, and alternate passenger and vehicle vessels.
2. Ongoing communication and co-operation between the Ferry Operator, Ferry patrons, emergency services and other relevant stakeholders.

Financial

1. In that the Raymond Island Ferry is a core service; ratepayers of East Gippsland should equitably share the cost of the service.

2. Residents of Raymond island should not incur a fee for access to their homes.

Community

1. The Ferry service will be managed and operated to address community needs and to ensure equity and access.
2. The unique character of the Ferry will be exploited to contribute to the amenity of the Raymond Island and Paynesville, visitors and the East Gippsland community.

Level of Service

Scheduling

1. Variations to Standard Operating Schedule

In the event of weather temperatures exceeding 32°C the Master of the Ferry has responsibility to ensure safety of the vessel and passengers. The master of the Ferry shall exercise absolute discretion on increasing the amount of Ferry trips against the advertised timetable as a continuous service to alleviate the risks to patrons being in vehicles for extended periods during extreme heat. This will continue until the Master is satisfied it is again safe to resume normal timetabled operations.

Alternatively, if adverse weather conditions present dangerous tidal systems in the MacMillan Strait or other unsafe operating conditions determined by the Master, the Master of the Ferry has responsibility to ensure safety of the vessel.

Accordingly, the Master shall exercise absolute discretion on reducing or ceasing the amount of Ferry trips against the advertised timetable until it is again safe to resume normal timetabled operations.

Ferry Passes

Council issues a variety of different Ferry passes, with a requirement that:

1. All drivers with a valid annual Raymond Island Ferry pass must display this pass at all times or pay the appropriate fee for travel.
2. Passes must not be copied or duplicated;
3. Transferable Passes are for the use of persons usually resident in the address to which the pass has been issued.
4. Those not abiding by the conditions of use and payment for the Ferry Service are subject to penalties described in the East Gippsland Shire Council General Local Law Part 8.

Ferry operating times

Council commits to develop and publicise a Ferry Timetable that will be readily available to passengers via Council's website and / or fixed signage at both the Raymond Island and Paynesville waiting areas. Council will where possible also use electronic signage to advise of any temporary changes to the timetable.

The Ferry operators will make every effort to follow the published timetable, other than in emergency events or other events beyond the Ferry operators' control.

1. Seasonal Peak Periods:

A continuous service will operate during peak periods. This will be at the discretion of the Ferry Master.

During Winter school and public holidays, an immediate return trip will only operate when the Ferry is full. This will be at the discretion of the Ferry Master.

An additional operator shall be provided to provide greater efficiency and manage risk during these seasonal peak times with approval given by the Superintendent.

2. Emergency evacuation

The Ferry service will be available 24 hours a day for evacuation in the event of major emergencies.

Transportation during an emergency will include emergency service responding vehicles and walk-on passengers only. Emergency service vehicles will always have priority.

Depending on the nature of the emergency, and the emergency management command and control protocols operating at the time, the Ferry Master may be required to act on direction of another authority. However, the Ferry Master will retain absolute control over the physical operation and safe passage of the Ferry itself.

3. Suspending of the Ferry service

The Master may suspend the service at any time, without notice, if the Master determines that continuing the service may expose the operators or passengers to unacceptable risk. Such situations include, but are not limited to, passengers adversely affected by alcohol or drugs, displaying agitated behaviour, exhibiting a dangerous weapon, or not following the operator's directions to the extent that safety is compromised. In such events, the service will be suspended, and Police will be called. Subject to Police advice, the operator will determine when it is safe to resume normal service.

Abuse or threatening behaviour towards Operators and/or other passengers will not be tolerated.

Ferry outages

1. Definition of services to be provided during Ferry outages:

Council's Raymond Island Ferry Operations team will aim to provide a range of alternate services when the Ferry is not able to operate. This will dependant on current weather conditions and availability of extra resources.

These service disruptions are described generally as an “outage”, either planned or unplanned. During an outage the services that replace the Ferry and other associated arrangements are generally described as “outage services”.

Planned outages generally relate to an outage requiring minor or major maintenance in which the Ferry is deemed unsafe for use. Council will provide advanced notice of a planned outage allowing for residents and other commuters to appropriately prepare. Unplanned outages generally occur without notice where the Ferry required immediate maintenance. Therefore appropriate advanced notification is not possible.

The expected duration of the outage will influence which outage services are activated. An outage up to 24 hours will only activate the water taxi and standby barge. An outage exceeding 24 hours may result in additional services being provided.

Council will seek to reduce the frequency of “out of water” survey and maintenance interventions for the Raymond Island Ferry to achieve a balance between risk and Ferry maintenance requirements.

Water Taxi

A Water Taxi will be provided for outages up to 24 hours or longer. When in operation, the following measures for the use and operation of the Water Taxi apply:

- The Master of the water taxi is responsible for the safety of the vessel and passengers. The Master shall exercise absolute discretion on all matters of vessel and passenger safety.
- Emergency response will take priority over all other water taxi services.
- The water taxi will operate from a single landing point on Raymond Island (Public Jetty to the north of the Ferry terminal or the Raymond Island boat ramp Jetty (depending on weather conditions) and a single landing point in Paynesville - this maybe the boardwalk near the Ferry shelter or the Gippsland Lakes Yacht Club boat ramp jetty.
- The water taxi service will be provided for the same hours of operation as the Ferry when the Ferry is in normal service.
- An emergency stand-by service will be provided for emergency services.
- The water taxi will be free to all passengers during normal Ferry operating hours.
- Shelter will be provided at the Paynesville water taxi landing for the comfort of passengers where possible.

- The Master will attempt to accommodate mobility aids and patrons with special needs to the extent of the vessel's design and safety parameters.
- The configuration of water taxi landing platforms will aim to provide all-ability access.
- Operators of mobility scooters must display adequate competence in the operation of the mobility aid in the conditions prevailing for boarding and disembarking from the water taxi. (i.e. a floating platform subject to movement from sea state and wind).
- Passengers with pets or bicycles will be conveyed subject to the discretion of the Master as to loading arrangements and compatibility with other passengers, luggage, and animals either waiting or being conveyed. [Patrons with pets or bicycles, other than bicycle commuters/school children should seek to avoid times of peak demand (0700-0900 and 1500-1700) to minimise being required to wait until passenger only demand has been met].
- Dogs will be limited to those belonging to one family per trip with a maximum of two dogs. A dog may be refused boarding at the discretion of the vessel Master for safety reasons.
- Pets must be accompanied by a person capable of exercising effective control and must be on a suitable control lead or caged. All pets must always travel and remain at the rear (stern) of the water taxi.
- No more than two bicycles will be transported at the same time as the vessel is conveying passengers, other than at the Master's discretion.
- Dangerous goods and flammable liquids in small quantities and in suitable approved containers may be carried on the outside of the water taxi and at the absolute discretion of the Master. Gas cylinders are not permitted to be carried on the water taxi.
- Local schools and A'Beckett Park will be notified of these arrangements in advance of planned outages.

Barge

A Barge shall be made available for outages expected to exceed 24 hours, with the following measures for use applying:

- The Master of the barge has responsibility to ensure safety of the vessel and passengers and accordingly shall exercise absolute discretion on all matters of vessel and passenger safety.

- Emergency response will take priority over all other barge services.
- The barge is not available as a general commuter service..
- Access to the barge will only be available to:
 - Those vehicles (including vehicle and trailer combinations) that in the sole judgement of the Master can be conveyed safely. (this may vary from time to time depending upon sea state, wind and water levels). Caravans and small trailers will generally be unsuitable for carriage and will only be accepted where they meet all necessary safety requirements to the Master's satisfaction.).
 - Trade services and utilities providers providing urgent repair / maintenance to Raymond Island properties and infrastructure that for safety or similar compelling reasons cannot reasonably be postponed until the Ferry returns to service.
 - Trades service providers (registered businesses normally based on Raymond island) with vehicles that are specifically "tool of trade" vehicles that the service provider requires to be available on the mainland in order to perform their normal trade services. (tool of trade vehicles should be interpreted to include utilities, trucks, vans, tool trailers with specialised trade equipment and/or materials. Passenger vehicles operated by trades people are not included in this category).
 - Injured wildlife transport.
 - Mobility scooters that cannot be safely conveyed on the Water Taxi but can be safely conveyed on the Barge.
 - Vehicles delivering goods / products that the recipient could not have reasonably foreseen as being required and/ or cannot reasonably be expected to await a delay in delivery. (i.e. the recipient would suffer significant financial or other loss or damage). Inconvenience does not fall within this category nor do non-essential goods deliveries.
 - Vehicles conveying essential service providers and their equipment (visiting health/medical or home help services) for service provision that cannot reasonably be delayed, or the service provider cannot reasonably be expected to use the Water Taxi, or, it is unreasonable for the recipient to attend service provision on the mainland via the Water Taxi.
- Fee for service trips will be available to customers who do not meet the criteria for free passage at a fee determined by Council.

Temporary Car Parking

For outages exceeding 24 hours:

- Council will aim to ensure that temporary car parking is designated on public land within Paynesville during extended outages.
- Public safety lighting may be provided in designated car park area/s where practicable to do so.
- Normal parking restrictions will be monitored and enforced in areas outside of the designated temporary car parks to ensure parking is available for visitors.
- Additional disabled parking bays will be made available adjacent to the water taxi landing where practical and possible to do so.

Communication

The arrangements applicable for Ferry outages will be communicated to customers and other stakeholders through:

- the East Gippsland Shire Council Website and social media pages.
- Raymond Island Community Association.
- Normal SMS and dynamic signage arrangements.
- Printed notices on the Ferry and at the Paynesville Service Centre.
- Mail-out to Raymond Island Residents and other known users of the Ferry service (for scheduled, extended outages only).

Courtesy Bus

A courtesy bus will be made available during planned outages by Council but not operated by Council.

The operation of bus service is not an obligation of Council. Operation of the bus is dependent on the Raymond Island community's voluntary operation of the bus.

The bus service will operate during the hours the Ferry would normally operate and will travel a defined route determined by the bus service operator.

On-demand deviation from the prescribed bus service route will be accommodated where possible, where the service is pre-booked via mobile phone and SMS notification.

Dangerous goods and flammable liquids are not to be carried on the bus.

Animals, other than assistance dogs, are not permitted on the bus.