



**REGISTERED WATER SERVICE PROVIDER NO
SP 6**

**CUSTOMER SERVICE STANDARDS
FOR
WATER SUPPLY SERVICE**

OCTOBER 2014



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1.0 REGISTERED SERVICE

These Customer Service Standards apply to the Balonne Shire Council Water Supply Service.

2.0 OVERVIEW OF CUSTOMER SERVICE STANDARDS

Water Service Providers are required to ensure continuity of the service they supply to customers. This involves developing and adopting customer service standards that document:

- The levels of service to be provided to the customers;
- Processes for customer interaction with the service provider;
- Any other matters stated in guidelines issued by the regulator for preparing customer service standards.

The purpose of this document is to outline the Balonne Shire Council's Customer Service Standards for the water supply service.

3.0 PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

Performance standards are grouped according to:

- Day to day continuity of water supply;
- Adequacy and quality of normal water supply;

To maintain a continuous high quality supply of water to our customers we will endeavour to:

- Plan and manage the water supply systems so that there will be less than 100 unplanned water main interruptions per 1 000 connections each year and less than 200 planned interruptions per 100km of mains each year;
- Restore services in the shortest possible time following unplanned events such as main burst and emergency power failures. In most cases service will be restored within 5 hours;
- Keep the time of scheduled interruptions to supply during maintenance activities to a minimum. If we have to carry out planned work that involves interrupting your supply for more than 2 hours, we will let you know in advance when the interruption will occur, and when we expect supply to be restored;
- Respond to enquiries about interruption to the supply of household water within 3 hours;
- Provide a minimum pressure of 15 m at the property connection during periods of normal demand;

- Supply drinking water that generally complies with the physical and chemical parameters listed in the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines most of the time and is free from objectionable taste and odour;
- Operate the water supply systems to limit the number of drinking water quality complaints to no more than 100 per 1 000 connections each year;
- Operate the water supply systems to limit the number of events resulting in customers registering a drinking water quality complaint to no more than 20 per year;

The performance standards have been set with regard to:

- Historical records;
- A network analysis of the St George reticulation networks;
- Affordability and financial viability of the schemes.

4.0 **PROCESS ISSUES**

Service providers are required to describe the procedures that are in place for a number of issues including:

- Service connections;
- Billing;
- Metering;
- Accounting;
- Customer Consultation;
- Complaints handling;
- Dispute resolution;

Table 4.1 outlines the procedures for the above process issues.

OVERVIEW OF PROCESS ISSUES

PROCESS ISSUES	IS THIS ISSUE COVERED BY A COUNCIL DOCUMENT		NAME OF REFERENCE DOCUMENT	PROCEDURE IF NOT ADDRESSED BY COUNCIL DOCUMENT
	YES	NO		
Service Connections				
Applications for new service connections	Y		Application Form	Prospective customer makes written application and pays the relevant fee.
Applications to restore an existing or disconnected service.		N	Application Form	Prospective customer makes written application and pays the relevant fee.
Time taken to commence installation of a new connection and to restore an existing or disconnected service		N		Subject to a suitable connection being possible, the connection is commenced within 10 working days of payment of fee.
Fees schedule for a new water connection and/or restoration of an existing or disconnected service.	Y		Revenue Policy Schedule of Fees and Charges	Fees for a connection are set annually within the Council budget. Refer to the Schedule of Fees and Charges for the current connection fees.
Billing				
Setting of charges for the supply of water to a property.	Y		Revenue Policy Schedule of Fees and Charges.	Billing is calculated in accordance with a fixed charge based on property use and the water used above a base allowance as measured by the reading on an installed water meter. A property within the declared water area but not connected to water will be charged the fixed charge, or part thereof, in accordance with the Revenue Policy.
Charges for water use	Y		Revenue Policy	Water use is charged on a per kilolitre basis above a base water allowance included in the fixed charge (Excess Water). The charge is set annually at Council budget. Refer to the Schedule of Fees and Charges for the current rate.
Water use billing cycle	Y		Revenue Policy	Water bills are included in the twice yearly rate notice
Information regarding the billing that is provided in the rate notice	Y		Revenue Policy	The customer is given the relevant water meter readings, the calculation of the quantity of water used, the cost of water used and half the fixed annual fee.
Process for rectification if a customer is under or over charged.	Y		Revenue Policy and procedures to be followed in case of overcharging complaints	Overcharging/undercharging is investigated on receipt of a complaint. Refunds to the customer are made if overcharging is confirmed. Additional accounts are rendered if the customer has been undercharged.
Procedure for finalising accounts when disconnection is requested.	Y		Revenue Policy	Finalisation of accounts is included in the ensuing rate notice.
Contacts for enquiries on billing matters.	Y		Letterheads	Enquiries regarding water accounts are dealt with by Council's Rates Clerk or Accountant.
Time lapse between water use assessment and billing	Y		Revenue Policy	Water meters are read as near as possible to the end of August and the end of February. Billing is included in the rate notices sent out in September and March.

PROCESS ISSUES	IS THIS ISSUE COVERED BY A COUNCIL DOCUMENT		NAME OF REFERENCE DOCUMENT	PROCEDURE IF NOT ADDRESSED BY COUNCIL DOCUMENT
	YES	NO		
Metering				
Requirement for water meters.	Y		Revenue Policy Water Undertaking Policy	It is Council's policy to have every water connection metered.
Application to have a meter installed	Y		Water Meter Policy	Water meters form part of the water connection installation made by Council.
Testing of meters for accuracy	Y		Water Meter Policy	All new meters must pass governmental statutory requirements for accuracy. Installed meters are only tested by Council on customer complaint.
Procedure if a meter is found to be inaccurate and needs to be replaced	Y		Water Meter Policy	If a water meter is found to have any type of fault it is replaced by Council
Council's process for accessing properties for the purpose of reading water meters	Y		Water Meter Policy	Where possible, meter reading is carried out without entering the property. It is the responsibility of the customer to ensure that the meter is accessible to Council's meter reader if entry to the property is necessary.
Contacts for enquiries on meters.		N		Enquiries regarding water meters should be directed to Council's customer service operator who will arrange contact with the relevant staff.
Accounting				
Notification of due dates for payment of accounts	Y		Rates Notice	Times for the issuing of rate notices and due dates for payment are notified in the press.
Period for payment of accounts.	Y		Rates Notice	Payments are due immediately on the issue of a rate notice. Discounts of 15.0% and 7.5% are available for payment in 30 days and 60 days respectively.
Contact for enquiries on accounts	Y		Rates Notice	Enquiries regarding accounts should be directed to Council's Rates Clerk or Accountant
Consequences of non or late payment	Y		Rates Notice	Late payment – Loss of discount Non Payment – Result in recovery by legal action. As with land rates, the water bill becomes a lien on the customer's property. Late payment of accounts for a period of 3 years may give Council cause to sell the customers property to settle outstanding accounts.
Conditions for approval of a new water connection.		N	<i>Water Supply (Safety and Reliability) Act 2008</i>	The property to be connected must lie within the declared water area, be paying vacant water fees and be physically capable of being supplied to an acceptable standard.
Special requirements for operation of the service		N	<i>Water Supply (Safety and Reliability) Act 2008</i> Water Undertaking Policy	Use of the water service must comply with the Water Act 2000 and Council's policy for a water supply connection.
Methods of payment	Y		Rates Notice	Payment may be made by cash, cheque, EFTPOS, credit card and direct transfer.
Cont'd Over...				

PROCESS ISSUES	IS THIS ISSUE COVERED BY A COUNCIL DOCUMENT		NAME OF REFERENCE DOCUMENT	PROCEDURE IF NOT ADDRESSED BY COUNCIL DOCUMENT
	YES	NO		
Customer Consultation				
Customer notification of the adopted levels of service standards for the water supply	Y		<i>Water Supply (Safety and Reliability) Act 2008</i> Customer Service Standards	Customers are notified of the Customer Service Standards in accordance with the requirements of the <i>Water Supply (Safety and Reliability) Act 2008</i>
Publication of results of review of standards and/or progress against standards		N		The service provider's overall performance in providing the service and the outcome of any review of standards is included in the Annual Report
Customer surveys		N		Customer consultation is undertaken by mail outs including advice in rates notices. Council may undertake surveys and hold public meetings when considering matters of significant community interests.
Publication of customer survey results		N		Results of customer surveys are published in the local press and included in rates notice mail-outs.
Emergency contact and normal enquiries telephone numbers		N		Emergency contact for water supply matters is listed in the telephone directory under Balonne Shire Council.
Notification to customers of planned interruptions to the water service.		N		Customers are notified of planned water supply interruptions by letter box drops or face to face contact. 48 hours notice of interruption is given.
Notification to customers of Council's intention to enter property to undertake work.		N	<i>Local Government Act 2009</i> <i>Water Supply (Safety and Reliability) Act 2008</i>	Except under emergency situations, customers are given written advice of any need for Council to enter their property to carry out work, or direct that work be carried out by the customer. Under emergency situations, Council has the right to enter a property without notice to carry out work on its infrastructure.
Complaints Handling				
Who may make a complaint		N		A property owner may make a complaint against any process matter or performance standard. A tenant may only make a complaint against a performance standard.
Process for submitting complaints	Y		Request for Actions	Customers may lodge a complaint in person, by calling Council's general telephone number or in writing addressed to Council's Chief Executive Officer. The complaint is registered for attention by a relevant staff member.
Response to complaints		N		Service interruptions, pressure and flow complaints are recorded and passed to the operational staff for attention. Other complaints are directed to the relevant Council officer for attention.

PROCESS ISSUES	IS THIS ISSUE COVERED BY A COUNCIL DOCUMENT		NAME OF REFERENCE DOCUMENT	PROCEDURE IF NOT ADDRESSED BY COUNCIL DOCUMENT
	YES	NO		
Response time for acknowledging and responding to complaints.		N		Telephoned complaints are acknowledged immediately and responded to in accordance with the urgency of the situation. Written complaints are acknowledged in writing, within 5 working days and responded to in accordance with the severity of the complaint, but not later than 20 working days.
Dispute Resolution				
Process for mediation or dispute resolution		N	<i>Local Government Act 2009</i> <i>Water Supply (Safety and Reliability) Act 2008</i>	If a customer is not satisfied with the attention provided by a member of Council's staff, the customer may request in writing the attention of the Chief Executive Officer of Council. If satisfaction is not obtained, the customer may submit the complaint in writing to the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administrative Investigations (the Ombudsmen).

TABLE 4.1

5.0 ANNUAL REVIEW

Council will undertake an annual assessment of its performance as a service provider. The assessment will be carried out by about the end of March each year to provide time for consideration of funding requirements in the annual budget for the coming year.

The assessment will take into consideration Council's overall performance and particularly:

- The number of unplanned service losses due to infrastructure failure;
- The time for restoration of services due to unplanned interruptions;
- The number of planned interruption incidents;
- The response time for all events;
- The number of service complaints and incidents in relation to:
 - : Low pressure;
 - : Drinking water quality;
- The number of main breaks and leaks;
- Water losses in the systems;
- The capacity of the infrastructure to provide the present and immediate future service required by customers;
- Overall financial considerations.

6.0 ANNUAL REPORT

The Local Government Act 2009 requires Council to submit a report on its performance to the Department of Local Government and Planning (the governing authority) each year.

The Water Supply (Safety and Reliability) Act 2008 requires the Water Service Provider to submit a report to the regulatory authority (Department of Energy and Water Supply) each year.

The Water Supply (Safety and Reliability) Act 2008 allows for a local authority that is also the water service provider, to include the service provider report in the annual report to the Department of Local Government and Planning.

Balonne Shire Council will include the service provider report in the annual report to the governing authority. The Annual Report will include:

- A measure of the service provider's performance for the registered service against the corresponding CSS for the service;
- A statement concerning the outcome of any review of the standards and how the service provider has addressed matters raised in the review;

After approval by the governing authority the Annual Report will be available, at the Council Office, for inspection and purchase by members of the public.