



REGISTERED WATER SERVICE PROVIDER NO SP  
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CUSTOMER SERVICE STANDARDS  
FOR  
SEWERAGE SERVICE

JOB No 4919

AUGUST 2009



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## 1.0 REGISTERED SERVICE

These Customer Service Standards apply to the Balonne Shire Council Sewerage Service.

## 2.0 OVERVIEW OF CUSTOMER SERVICE STANDARDS

Water Service Providers are required to ensure continuity of the service they provide 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 sewerage service.

## 3.0 PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

Performance standards are grouped according to effective transport of waste effluent:

To maintain a continuous high quality service to our customers we will endeavour to:

- Plan and manage the sewerage schemes so that there will be:
  - : Less than 30 sewage overflows per 100 km of mains each year;
  - : Less than 10 sewage overflows to customer property per 1 000 connections each year;
  - : Less than 10 odour complaints per 1 000 connections each year.
- Ensure that if an overflow or odour complaint is received, a Council employee will be on site within 3 hours to assess the problem and that, in most cases, the affected area is cleaned up within 6 hours;

The performance standards have been set with regard to:

- Historical records;
- 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 |   |   |
| <b>Service Connections</b>   |   |    |   |   |
| 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  |   | 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 sewer connection and/or restoration of an existing or disconnected service.        | Y   |    | Revenue Policy<br>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.  |
| <b>Billing</b>   |   |    |   |   |
| Setting of charges for the provision of a sewerage service to a property.                                  | Y   |    | Revenue Policy<br>Schedule of Fees and Charges.                                 | Billing is determined in accordance with the land use and may include an additional fee for a number of fixtures. A property within the declared sewerage area but not connected to the scheme will be charged part or the full fee, in accordance with the Revenue Policy. |
| Sewerage billing cycle   | Y   |    | Revenue Policy  | Sewerage 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 billed half the annual fee calculated in accordance with conditions set out in the Revenue Policy and the annual Schedule of Fees and Charges.  |
| 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.   |
| Charges for sewerage service   | Y   |    | Revenue Policy  | The charge is set annually at Council budget. Refer to the Schedule of Fees and Charges for the current rate.   |

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| PROCESS ISSUES   | IS THIS ISSUE COVERED BY A COUNCIL DOCUMENT |    | NAME OF REFERENCE DOCUMENT                          | PROCEDURE IF NOT ADDRESSED BY COUNCIL DOCUMENT   |
|--|---|----|---|--|
|  | YES   | NO |   |  |
| <b>Metering</b>  |   |    |   |  |
| Requirement for meters.  | Y   |    | Revenue Policy                                      | Individual sewerage connections are not metered.   |
| <b>Accounting</b>  |   |    |   |  |
| 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<br>Non Payment – Result in recovery by legal action. As with land rates, the sewerage service 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 sewerage connection.                            |   | N  | <i>Water Act 2000</i>                               | The property to be connected must lie within the declared sewerage area, be subject to vacant sewerage fees and be physically capable of being connected to the scheme.  |
| Special requirements for operation of the service                                |   | N  | <i>Water Act 2000</i>                               | Use of the service must comply with the Water Act 2000 and Council's policy for a sewerage connection.   |
| Methods of payment   | Y   |    | Rates Notice  | Payments may be made by cash, cheque EFTPOS, credit card and direct transfer.  |
| <b>Customer Consultation</b>   |   |    |   |  |
| Customer notification of the adopted levels of service standards for the schemes | Y   |    | <i>Water Act 2000</i><br>Customer Service Standards | Customers are notified of the Customer Service Standards in accordance with the requirements of the <i>Water Act 2000</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 sewerage matters is listed in the telephone directory under Balonne Shire Council.   |

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|---|---|----|---|--|
|   | YES   | NO |   |  |
| Notification to customers of planned interruptions to the sewerage service.           |   | N  |   | Customers are notified of planned sewerage scheme interruptions by letter box drops or face to face contact. At least 24 hours notice of interruption is given.  |
| Notification to customers of Council's intention to enter property to undertake work. |   | N  | <i>Local Government Act 1999, Water Act 2000.</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.                                     |
| <b>Complaints Handling</b>  |   |    |   |  |
| 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   |    | Customer Complaint Procedures                     | Customers may lodge a complaint in person, by calling Council's general telephone number or in writing addressed to Council's Chief Executive Officer.<br><br>The complaint is registered for attention by a relevant staff member.  |
| Response to complaints  |   | N  |   | Service interruption complaints are recorded and passed to the operational staff for attention. Other complaints are directed to the relevant Council officer for attention.   |
| 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.  |
| <b>Dispute Resolution</b>   |   |    |   |  |
| Process for mediation or dispute resolution   |   | N  | <i>Local Government Act 1999, Water Act 2000</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 service complaints and incidents in relation to:
  - : Total sewer overflows;
  - : Odours;
  - : Overflows of sewers to customer's properties;
- The response times for all events;
- The number of sewer main breaks and chokes;
- Inflow and infiltration to sewers;
- 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 1999 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 (Environment and Resource Management) 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 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.