

# CUSTOMER SERVICE STANDARDS FOR WATER AND WASTEWATER

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## ***Introduction***

North Burnett Regional Council (Council) is committed to providing access to affordable, safe, and reliable water and wastewater services to residents connected to those services. Council is a Water Service Provider (SPID 490), delivering potable water services and sewerage services across Monto, Mulgildie, Mount Perry, Eidsvold, Mundubbera, Gayndah, Mingo Crossing, and Biggenden.

## ***Purpose***

Council's Customer Service Standards (CSS) outline the commitments, responsibilities, and standards customers can expect in relation to water and sewerage services across all reticulated systems in the Council area. These standards ensure compliance to the requirements of the *Water Supply (Safety and Reliability) Act 2008* (the Act) and associated regulation. The CSS ensures that our customers are protected by the provisions of the Act. These provisions, along with customer service performance target measures, form the basis for which Council aims to deliver water and wastewater services. The CSS sets out the rights and obligations of Council and its customers and provides details of:

- the process for establishing new connections
- billing arrangements
- metering
- accounting
- customer consultation
- complaint and dispute resolution.

The CSS has been developed to achieve:

- adequacy and quality of the water supply system
- day-to-day continuity of your water supply
- effective transport of sewage.

## ***When the Customer Service Standard does not apply***

These Standards do not apply during periods of declared natural disasters and emergencies and immediately after, or where the customer has failed to provide clear, safe access to Council's infrastructure.

## ***Water and Wastewater – Shared Rights and Responsibilities***

Both the Council and its Customers have rights and responsibilities associated with the provision and use of water and wastewater services.

#### Council's Rights and Responsibilities as a Service Provider:

- Council has the right to interrupt, postpone or limit the supply of services in situations when:
  - infrastructure is damaged or requires inspection, maintenance, repair or replacement;
  - in the event of drought or as part of a Demand Management Plan; or
  - in the event of fire, flood, cyclone, power shortage or other emergencies.
- To inspect, maintain, operate, repair, replace or remove local government infrastructure, employees and agents of Council may enter a property without providing notice and without the permission of the owner and occupier of the property. As soon as an employee enters the property, they must inform any occupier of the property of the reason for entering the property and that the representative is authorised under the *Local Government Act 2009* and the Act to enter the property and produce an identity card for the owner and occupier of the property to inspect.
- Council is responsible for maintaining water services between the water main and up to the meter installation.
- Council's sewerage infrastructure commences at the inspection opening (i/o) on the property connection stub.
- Council has the authority to request customers to effect necessary repairs to their internal plumbing to ensure compliance with the *Plumbing and Drainage Act 2018*.
- Council has the right to recover all costs from the property owner for damage by the property owner or third party to any Council infrastructure including water services and meters.

#### Customer Rights and Responsibilities:

- Customers within the declared water and sewerage service areas may apply to be connected to Council's infrastructure. Service connections will only be approved if:
  - a reticulation main is available to your property; and
  - the reticulation main can deliver the service at the minimum standard.
- Customers have the right to make a complaint in accordance with Division 3, s.118 of the Act.
- To connect to water and wastewater services or alter a connection, customers must apply to and receive approval from Council.
- Wastewater and trade waste customers are responsible for maintaining all plumbing, drainage, and fixtures to the point where they connect with Council's infrastructure.
- The Customer is responsible for the installation and maintenance of plumbing on the property side of the meter and must engage a licensed plumber to do internal work on the customer's property including connection to a water service.

- Customers can assist Council's response to water and wastewater issues by:
  - gaining Council permission to build over sewerage infrastructure within their property;
  - providing clear access to the water meter, sewer manholes and other infrastructure within and adjacent to their property by ensuring that any concrete or other structures, tree roots and vegetation are kept well clear and not covering sewer manholes or meter pits with soil, garden mulch or parked vehicles;
  - reporting any unauthorised discharge into, or interference with, the water and wastewater networks; and
  - notifying Council's Customer Service Centre of any service difficulties and faults that customers have encountered.
- Customers must comply with all notices served by Council under the *Water Act 2000*, the Act, and *Local Government Act 2009*, to carry out remedial works within their property within the specified timeframe. Should the customer not comply with an issued notice within the specified time frame, Council has the authority under the acts to enter private property, carry out the required work and recover all costs from the owner.

## ***Responding to Water and Wastewater Service Requests***

Council's Customer Service Section facilitates registration of reports about water and sewerage system faults. These are then investigated and rectified as appropriate.

System faults include damaged water and sewerage mains, blocked sewerage mains, odour issues, overflows, leaks, pressure or flow issues, and faulty water meters including the isolating stopcock.

This service does not include faults associated with plumbing or drainage within your property, or on the customer side of the connection point, including internal water leaks, blocked house drains or combined drains.

### Customer Service Procedures

**Service Areas:** Council must, by resolution, declare all or part of its local government area to be a Declared Service Area for a water and/or wastewater. In the case of a new service outside of the Declared Water Service Area, Council will consider each application on its merits. Should the connection be approved, all costs for extension to, and provision of, the service will be recovered from the customer for the provision of the service.

**Connections:** On submission of the appropriate application form and payment to Council, the request will be assessed, and if consistent with operational standards the following services will be scheduled by Council:

- New water service
- Relocation of existing water service
- Disconnection/reconnection of water service
- Upgrade water service
- New wastewater service connection
- Relocation of wastewater service connection

**Charges and Customer Accounts:** Fees, charges and rates are set annually by Council resolution. The current water and wastewater rates and charges are available on our website.

Council charges users an annual fixed access charge to its water and wastewater networks and six-monthly consumption charges for water used. Water meters are read twice per year in June and December.

**Water Meters:** It is compulsory that all serviced properties be metered. A water meter will be provided as part of a new water service connection and will remain the property of Council. The meter will be used to measure the water consumption component of any water charges. All new water meters will be within industry standard limits of accuracy and located according to industry standards.

Council monitors the accuracy of its water meter fleet, and through its water meter replacement program targets inaccurate meters. Water meters are designed to under-register if they wear or fail, but where a customer has reason to doubt either the accuracy or reliability of their water meter, Council will provide advice to the customer on how to check the accuracy of their meter. If the customer still feels the meter is inaccurate, Council offers to test the meter for the fee prescribed in Council's Schedule of Fees and Charges. If the meter is found to be defective, then the fee will be reimbursed along with the amount of any water consumption over-charge. Should you have any problems or enquiries regarding your meter, please contact the Customer Service Centre.

**Sanitary Drains and Combined Drains:** The owner of a property is responsible for the maintenance and repair of any sanitary drains on their property, up to and including the connection point on Council's sewer. This also includes the cost of clearing any blockages caused by the ingress of tree roots or other foreign objects.

Council is responsible for clearing blockages in Council's wastewater infrastructure. Private plumbers or drainers are not to undertake any work to clear a blockage in Council sewer or wastewater infrastructure without obtaining Council's approval prior to commencing any work. If approved, the Council will reimburse the private Plumber or Drainer fees.

Neighbours with a shared interest are responsible for clearing blockages and performing repairs to a combined drain. If neighbours cannot agree on the solution to a problem, Council may, at its discretion, carry out rectifications and recover costs from the responsible parties based upon the Manager of Water and Wastewater's assessment of contributory responsibility for the cause of the issue.

**Damage to Infrastructure:** If Council's water or wastewater infrastructure is damaged, please report the damage to Council's Customer Service Centre 24 hours a day, 7 days per week.

Council will charge the owner of the property for the cost of repairing any damage caused to Council's infrastructure by the property owner or third parties. It is the property owner's responsibility to recover costs from any third party that may have caused the damage.

Where incidental damage to Council infrastructure is caused by a customer's tree or tree roots, the customer will be provided the opportunity to remove the tree at their own cost. Should the customer fail to do so to the satisfaction of Council, Council may remove the tree and recover costs associated with the removal.

If Council's infrastructure is damaged intentionally this is considered an offence and is provided for in the Act. If you witness Council infrastructure being intentionally damaged, please report the damage as soon as possible to minimise any potential compromise to community health.

If damage is done to infrastructure on the property owner's side of the property boundary, after the water meter, then it is the responsibility of the owner to repair or replace the infrastructure. Where a Council employee caused the damage through no fault of the owner, Council will be responsible for the repair of any infrastructure on the property owner's side.

**Works and Repairs:** When conducting works or repairs, Council will provide reasonable care to ensure the area is left in the same standard as before the work or repairs were carried out. Any work area will be adequately fenced and/or signed to ensure safety.

**Water Restrictions:** Water restrictions will be implemented consistent with the provisions of PRO-2247 Drought Management Urban Water. Unless it is an emergency, Council will notify customers a minimum of 1 week in advance of water restrictions coming into effect to ensure security of water resources and continuity of supply.

**Trade Waste:** A customer may only discharge trade waste into Council's Wastewater System provided the customer has first obtained approval for a trade waste permit from Council.

Council will accept trade waste only where there is no likelihood the trade waste will harm a person/s, the environment and/or Council's wastewater system.



## **Water Service Levels**

### Continuity of water supply

Council aims to provide a continuous and reliable delivery of water supply to all customers. At times, Council may need to interrupt your water supply service to undertake planned maintenance and repair work. In these instances, we aim to provide you with at least 48 hours' notice prior to the event.

Our water supply system may also be interrupted by acts outside of our control. For unplanned events, we are unable to provide notice. If your service is affected, we aim to restore your connection as quickly and effectively as possible.

### Quality of normal water supply

It is a goal of Council to ensure, by regular and thorough testing of water quality, that the treated water complies with the appropriate standards.

Council aims to maintain compliance with all health-based targets for physical, chemical and microbiological parameters in the Australian Drinking Water Quality Guidelines formulated by the National Health and Medical Research Council.

### Adequacy of normal water supply

Council will endeavour to maintain the water flow and pressure in accordance with minimum standards appropriate to service zones.

If you notice a significant change in the usual water supply pressure not caused by household pipes and fittings, we encourage you to contact Council immediately. We will investigate and advise you of any action that has been, or needs to be, taken to rectify any problems.

## **Sewerage Service Levels**

If you notice a significant change in the usual functioning of the sewerage service not caused by household pipes and fittings, we encourage you to contact Council immediately. We will investigate and advise you of any action that has been, or needs to be, taken to rectify any problems.

### Effective transport of waste/effluent

Council will treat sewage and dispose of the effluent and sludge in accordance the Department of Environment & Science environmental licenses issued for each of the Council's sewage treatment plants.

## **Amending the Customer Service Standard**

This Standard is adopted by Council resolution and can only be varied by same, or at the direction of the Regulator. Council, in accordance with Section 120 of the Act, must review the customer service standard at least every five (5) years.

## **Consultation and Resolution**

### Customer Consultation

Council will endeavour to inform customers of any planned interruptions to normal service provision at least 48 hours in advance. This will be via posting relevant information on Council's website, Council's social media platforms, advertising in the local paper, displayed on roadside LED message boards or alternative methods as appropriate. In the event of a planned loss of supply to customers' residence or business, Council will endeavour to complete a letter drop at the affected address at least 48 hours prior to work beginning.

For further information on the above standards, or to make a request, please contact Council's Customer Service staff as detailed below.

Phone 1300 696 272  
Email [admin2northburnett.qld.gov.au](mailto:admin2northburnett.qld.gov.au)  
Fax 07 4161 1425  
Mail P.O. Box 390 Gayndah Qld 4625  
Website [www.northburnett.qld.gov.au](http://www.northburnett.qld.gov.au)

If you are not satisfied with the response to your request, you may ask for it to be escalated via the above means also.

If you remain dissatisfied with Council's service after attempted resolution, the matter may be referred to the Energy and Water Ombudsman Queensland (EWOQ) for further assistance as detailed below.

Phone 1800 662 837  
Email [complaints2ewoq.com.au](mailto:complaints2ewoq.com.au)  
Fax 07 3227 7068  
Mail P.O. Box 3640 South Brisbane Qld 4101  
Website [www.ewoq.com.au](http://www.ewoq.com.au)

Customers can also phone 13 QGOV (13 74 68) if they have any concerns.



## Water Services Performance Targets

Key Service Characteristics	Customer Service Issue Indicator	Resolution Indicator	Target Response Time	Target Repair Time	Customer Service Target	
Day to Day	Dirty Water / Water Quality		<90 minutes		>95%	
		Flush		<5hours	>90%	
	Broken Water Main	Repair -urgent LOS	<90 minutes	<8 hours	>90%	
	Broken Water Service	Repair -urgent LOS	<90 minutes	<5 hours	>90%	
		Repair	<2 working days	<10 working days	>90%	
	Leaking Water Service, Main, Hydrant -Non-urgent	Repair or replace	<2 working days	<30 Working days	>90%	
	Defective Stopcock (urgent)	Repair or replace	<90 minutes	<5 hours	>90%	
	Defective Stopcock (non-urgent)	Repair or replace	<2 working days	<30 Working days	>90%	
	Low Water Pressure	Repair (If verified)	<2 working days	<30 working days	>90%	
	Water Service Replacement			<30 Working days	>90%	
New Water Service			<45 working days	>90%		
Flow / Pressure Investigation				<30 Working days	>90%	
Long-term	Total Water Main Breaks		Annual		<30	
	Average Response Times (incidents <sup>2</sup> )		<60 minutes		>90 %	
	Total Water and Sewer Complaints <sup>3</sup>		Annual		<20	
	<b>Customer Consultation</b>					
	Provide Prior Notice of Planned Work Interruptions		>48 hours			>90%
	Provide Prior Notice of Planned Work Interruptions- Minimum Requirement Water		>24 hours			>98%
	Supply (Safety and Reliability) Act 2008					
	Unplanned Interruptions Rate			<50/1000 connections		
	Ratio of Unplanned to Planned Interruptions				>2:1	
	Minimum Water Pressure-Urban				12m	
	Minimum Water Pressure-Rural Residential				5m	
Minimum Flow Rate-Urban				20L/min		
Minimum Flow Rate-Rural Residential				4L/min		
Water Quality	<b>Water Quality</b>					
	Physical/Chemical Parameters (Health Guidelines)		Tests completed and in limits		>95%	
	Physical/Chemical Parameters (Aesthetic Guidelines)		Tests completed and in limits		>75%	
	Water Quality Complaints (Taste/Odour – validated)		Rate of Incidents		<10/1000 connections	
	Dirty Water Complaints (validated)		Rate of Incidents		<10/1000 connections	
Microbiological (Coliforms & E-Coli)		Tests completed and in limits		>98%		

<sup>1</sup> Attendance at site, call-back to customer, or remote intervention via SCADA constitute a response.

<sup>2</sup> Incidents refer to specific conditions as defined in legislation or regulation.

<sup>3</sup> Only repeated requests outside normal service targets where the customer states they are calling to complain about the failure to meet the targets are considered complaints.

## Sewerage Services Performance Targets

Key Service Characteristics	Customer Service Indicator	Resolution Indicator	Target Response Time <sup>1</sup>	Target Rectification Time	Customer Service Target
Continuity of Supply	Sewage Main Breaks and Chokes (confirmed)	Response and repair times met	< 90 minutes	<8 hours	>90%
	Sewage Overflows (confirmed)	Response and repair times met	< 90 minutes	<8 hours	>90%
Effective Transport of Waste / Effluent	Compliance with EPA Licence Conditions/Annum	Percentage compliance			>95%
	Odour Complaint Rates/annum	Number of Incidents <sup>2</sup>			<10/100km Sewer
	Sewer Main Breaks and Chokes	Number of Incidents	Annual		<10/100km Sewer
	Pump Station Overflows/Annum	Number of Incidents <sup>2</sup> (Dry weather)	< 90 minutes	<8 hours	<2/annum
	Rising Main Breaks	Number of confirmed Incidents			<1/10km Rising Main
	Sewer Inflow/Infiltration	Ratio of ADWF to MWWF			<1:4
	Total Sewage overflows Rate/annum	Number of confirmed Incidents <sup>2</sup>			<10/100km Sewer
	Confirmed Odour Complaints <sup>3</sup> Rate/annum	Number of confirmed Incidents <sup>2</sup>			<5/100km Sewer
Sewage Overflows to Customer properties Rate/annum	Number of confirmed Incidents			<5/1000 conn.	

<sup>1</sup> Attendance at site, call-back to customer, or remote intervention via SCADA constitute a response.

<sup>2</sup> Incidents refer to specific conditions as defined in legislation or regulation.

<sup>3</sup> Only repeated requests outside normal service targets where the customer states they are calling to complain about the failure to meet the targets are considered complaints.

## At a Glance

Council will always endeavour to:	You can help Council provide a better service by:
Maintain continuity of service for customers	Only using registered drainers to install and maintain your internal house and combined drains
Respond promptly to issues on a priority basis	Only using registered plumbers to install and maintain internal water pipes
Provide at least 48 hours' notice before planned interruptions	Learning to read your meter and keep track of usage
Rectify the cause of emergency interruptions as soon as possible	Learning how to detect internal leaks and have these fixed promptly
Replace inaccurate water meters in a timely manner	Keeping access to your meter and any manholes on your property clear
Exercise care not to unnecessarily cause damage to private property	Promptly reporting damage to or issues with Council infrastructure
Rectify damage to private property from carrying out our activities at our cost	Not planting tree species with invasive roots near Council infrastructure or combined drains
Provide at least 1 week's notice of water restriction changes (except in emergencies)	Ensuring Council's underground infrastructure is located and protected before commencing excavations
Maintain Australian Drinking Water Guideline Health standards in all water supplies	Seeking approval before discharging anything other than household sewage into Council's network
Maintain agreed levels of water flow and pressure to service zones	Calling Council if you have any concerns about the safety of your water supply (taste, odour, colour)
Achieve target compliance with ADWG aesthetic guidelines	Calling Council if you notice changes in pressure or flow to your property
Maintain transport and treatment of sewage to licence conditions	Calling Council if you notice unusual odours from our sewer networks or sewage overflows
Consult with customers	Complete applicable requests, supplying all necessary information requested
Treat customers in an appropriate manner	Treating Council staff in an appropriate manner