



## **WATER AND SEWERAGE CUSTOMER SERVICE STANDARD (CSS)**

FLINDERS SHIRE

COUNCIL

December 2014

# CUSTOMER SERVICE STANDARD

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### OVERVIEW OF CUSTOMER SERVICE STANDARDS

Flinders Shire Council (hereinafter referred to as 'Council') is a registered service provider (SP54) of water supply and sewerage services under the [State] *Water Supply (Safety and Reliability) Act 2008*. One of the requirements of the Act is for service providers to establish and promote customer service standards.

Council has issued the *Water Supply and Sewerage Services Customer Service Standards* to meet the requirements of the *Water Supply (Safety and Reliability) Act 2008* and to act as a stimulus to improve services through a focus on customer expectations.

The Customer Service Standard (CSS) ensures you, as customers, are aware of Council's obligations and standards relating to the services we provide and your rights as a customer. The CSS sets out the expectations we have of you to provide information and comply with council policies and procedures.

The CSS outlines the process for establishing new services, billing, metering, accounting, customer consultation, lodging complaints and dispute resolution.

The Customer Service Standards contain performance targets that are used to measure our service and encourage continual improvement.

#### **Am I a customer?**

The CSS applies to any customer currently connected including:

- Property owners with water and/or wastewater connections;
- Persons who use the services (residents, tenants, the general community and visitors); and
- Those who are only liable to pay for water usage or sewage disposal charges.

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The CSS only applies to properties located in water supply and wastewater service areas within the Flinders Shire Council local government area.

This CSS will not apply during periods of declared natural disasters e.g. flooding until as soon as practicable after the affected normal services have been restored. During an emergency or natural disaster the Council will endeavour to maintain services and infrastructure and respond to incidents as soon as practicable depending on the availability of resources and the severity of the event.

### **What will Flinders Shire do for me?**

We must comply with the standards set out in the CSS when providing water supply and wastewater services to you.

We will:

- Comply with all legislative and statutory requirements, including but not limited to: the *Local Government Act 2009* (Qld), the *Water Supply (Safety and Reliability) Act 2008* (Qld), *Public Health Act 2005* (Qld), *Plumbing and Drainage Act 2002* (Qld), *Environmental Protection Act 1994* (Qld) and the *Ombudsman Act 2001* (Qld);
- Be responsible for collecting and storage of raw water and distributing treated drinking water to the community to the standards required under our Drinking Water Quality Management Plan and the Drinking Water Guidelines 2011.
- Collect, transport and treat sewage (household and commercial wastewater that may contain faecal matter). Wastewater includes black water (from residential and commercial toilets) and grey water (showers, laundry and kitchen sinks) generated from residential premises;
- Release effluent to environmental licence requirements;
- Ensure timely connection and establishment of services;
- Operate and maintain infrastructure and assets to ensure efficient services with minimal disturbances;

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- Provide efficient and secure operational facilities to assure community health and minimise environmental impact;
- Educate and inform customers by ensuring there are clear policies, procedures and forms available; and
- Ensure adequate resources including material and equipment, adequately trained personnel, outside expertise and finances are provided, maintained and audited.

### **What are your obligations as a customer?**

We expect our customers to assist in providing services by:

- Paying for water and wastewater services in accordance with council's Schedule of Rates and Charges;
- Applying and receiving approval before connecting or disconnecting to our infrastructure;
- Using water in a 'water wise' manner;
- Minimising wastewater discharge (including fats, oils and grease from residential premises);
- Preventing the discharge of prohibited substances to sewer, including but not limited to solids, stormwater and floodwater;
- Maintaining private plumbing and drainage in accordance with the requirements of the *Plumbing and Drainage Act and Regulations*;
- Engaging a licensed plumber to do work on private plumbing and drainage systems internal to the customer's property;
- Providing access to the water meter, sewer maintenance holes and other water and wastewater infrastructure within and adjacent to your property for investigations and/or work on the water supply and wastewater networks;
- Complying with the Queensland Development Code and appropriate council policies when building in the vicinity of Council Water infrastructure e.g. water and sewer mains;
- Minimising the chances of damaging water supply and wastewater infrastructure e.g. selecting appropriate garden vegetation around infrastructure;
- Keeping sewer maintenance holes clear of soil and/or mulch;

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- Do not open or access sewerage maintenance holes;
- Contacting us first if there is a suspected blockage in sewerage (e.g. toilet);
- Obtaining our approval before engaging a private plumber to work on our infrastructure;
- Contacting us if there are any service difficulties and faults that you encounter (e.g. water leaks), account enquiries, general and technical inquiries, and suggestions, complaints or compliments;
- Applying to us for a trade waste permit (industrial and commercial customers) to discharge trade waste to sewers and comply with the requirements of that approval.
- Complying with the water restrictions imposed by us.

### **Council policies and procedures**

In addition to the standards and expectations of customers outlined in the CSS, customers need to be aware of council policies. You must consult policies for the specific requirements associated with making certain applications to council. The policies state council's intent, commitment and position on strategic issues and assist in informing the community and council officers on council's desired outcomes.

Current council policies are located on the public website.

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### PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

The following table quantifies our levels of service as required under the *Water Supply (Safety and Reliability) Act 2008*. These performance indicators will be used to measure our performance each year and will be reviewed and publicly reported against annually. The annual report will be available to customers upon request at Council reception.

CUSTOMER SERVICE STANDARD	TARGET
Total water main breaks, bursts and leaks	15 Per 100km of water main
Total sewerage main breaks and chokes	20 Per 100km of sewerage main
Incidence of unplanned interruptions - water	15 Per 1000 properties
Average Response time for water incidents (bursts and leaks)	2 hours – Torrens Creek & Stamford 1 hour – Hughenden & Prairie
Average Response time for sewerage incidents (including main breaks and chokes)	1 hours
Water quality complaints	5 Per 1000 properties
Total water and sewage complaints	15 Per 1000 properties



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### **CUSTOMER SERVICE STANDARD – What you need to know about our services**

#### **New Connections and Services**

To apply for a new water or wastewater service to the property, you can contact Council reception and they will provide you with the appropriate application form. After receiving the application fee we will install infrastructure on your property to make water and wastewater services available to the land. You are responsible for connecting the dwelling/building to the infrastructure, which will involve a private plumber.

The application forms are available from Council reception or the Council's website.

#### **Water meters**

A water meter will be installed as part of a new water service connection and will remain the property of council. We aim to ensure new water meters are connected within 2 weeks of Council receiving the application. The meter will be used to measure the water consumption component of any water charges. If there are any concerns relating to its accuracy you may have the meter tested for a fee, in accordance with council policy. It is your responsibility to ensure the meter is kept visible and accessible at all times to allow easy access by council staff to read and maintain.. This is an initiative aimed at water conservation measures and the sustainability of water supply.

#### **Boundary connections**

A boundary connection will be installed as a part of connection to Council's Water's sewerage system. You are responsible for the sanitary drain up to the connection point and Council assumes responsibility for combined sanitary drains.

These services may be altered, relocated or disconnected. Please refer to the public website for the appropriate application form and applicable fee.

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### **Availability of services**

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Our water supply and wastewater systems are designed to be available 24 hours a day/7 days a week. However, we may need to interrupt or limit its services on certain occasions including, but not limited to: when there are periods of declared water supply restrictions; to inspect, maintain, repair or replace any part of the system; and if there is a potential public health risk with continuing the service.

### **Interruptions**

Our water supply services are designed to be available 24 hours a day. Under certain circumstances, however, we may need to interrupt, postpone or limit one or more of these services. This may include but is not limited to:

- if any part of the system is damaged, for example, by bursting, blockages or breakdowns;
  - when it is necessary to inspect, maintain, repair or replace any part of the system;
  - during the connection of new works or services;
- if an event occurs outside of our control, including acts by others, war, terrorism, vandalism, sabotage, civil commotion, national emergency, drought, fire, flood, storms, earthquake, landslide, explosion, power shortage or industrial action;
  - if there are periods of declared water supply restrictions;
  - in the event of a situation arising that entitles us to disconnect a service; and
  - in the event where there is a possibility of a significant health risk arising.

Except in emergencies and in situations where interruptions are limited to a short duration, we will give customers between 24 - 48 hours notice of the need to interrupt, postpone or limit the supply of services for regular maintenance or works programs.

It is important that customers understand that regular maintenance works are essential to the ongoing delivery of a reliable service.

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For both unplanned and planned interruptions we will make the reinstatement of the service a priority and do all in our power to restore the service as quickly as possible.

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### **Responsibility for infrastructure**

For each type of infrastructure (water or wastewater) there is a connection point, where a customer's private infrastructure connects to Council infrastructure so that a service may be received. Council is responsible for maintaining and repairing the infrastructure on their side of the connection point. For example this includes: a water meter and anything from the meter towards the foot path, and for a sewerage connection anything from the boundary connection point to the main sewer system. A customer is responsible for all private infrastructure located on their property after the connection point to and inside their house/structure. For example this includes all water pipes after the water meter, irrigation pipes and internal sanitary drains (grey and black water).

### **Damage to Infrastructure**

If council's infrastructure is damaged please report the damage to reception. If council's infrastructure is damaged intentionally this is an offence and is provided for in the *Water Supply Act*. Council will charge the owner or occupier of the property with reasonable cost of repair for accidental and intentional damage to council's infrastructure by the owner or occupier of the property.

If damage is done to infrastructure on the property owner's side of the property boundary, then it is the responsibility of the owner to repair or replace the infrastructure. Council will only be responsible for damage on the owner's side if it was through fault of a council employee.

### **Entry to Private Property**

In certain circumstances, Council representatives may need to enter your property (other than your house) to carry out investigations and/or work on the water supply and wastewater transportation system. To limit any inconvenience, we will attempt to carry out

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this work during business hours or at other times convenient to property owners and occupiers, except in emergencies.

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Authorised persons of Council can enter private property at certain times without needing the consent of or notifying an owner or occupier. For example to read, maintain and check the accuracy of water meters at reasonable times or if urgent action is required. Where required we will provide notice to an occupier in accordance with the requirements of the *Local Government Act* and the *Water Supply Act*. When entering private property Council representatives must inform occupiers of their position and authorisation (show their identity card) and the reasons for being there.

When conducting works or repairs to our infrastructure we will ensure that the area is left in a reasonable standard given consideration to all the circumstances relating to the repairs, including the condition of the area prior to the repairs and type and location of

the works. Any work area will also be adequately fenced or signed to ensure safety.

## **RATES, FEES AND CHARGES**

### **WATER**

Rates, fees and charges will be set annually by council resolution.

Council will levy a Water charge on each consumer/property, whether vacant or occupied that Council has is able to provide with water services. Where a property is within 100 meters of a water main or a road in which mains are laid and Council deems that the property is able to be provided with a water service.

The charge will be based on the size of the water connection together with Council's estimate of demand patterns and measured in units. One unit equals 120kL of water.

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### **New Premises**

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Where a new building is erected, water charges will be pro-rated from the date the supply is connected to the boundary of the allotment on which the building is erected. Charges for new or existing premises not classified above will be fixed by Resolution of Council at time of connection.

### **Vacant land – Partially Occupied**

Where two separately surveyed parcels of land (being an allotment or parcel of land separately shown and described in a Plan of Survey) situated wholly or partly within 100 metres of a road in which a water main is laid have a dwelling situated over both parcels of land so that individual occupation only is possible, the Vacant Land charge will be 2 units per annum. This charge is additional to the normal unit charges applying for a dwelling (i.e. the total charge levied will be 12 units).

### **Miscellaneous Sales**

Where Council agrees to supply water from stand pipes, consumption will be charged per 1,000 litres or part thereof.

### **Excess Water**

All properties will be metered and where consumption exceeds the annual allowance, an excess water charge will be applied.

### **Separate Charge for Separate Users**

Where land is occupied, charges will apply so as to ensure that all buildings situated thereon and which are capable of individual occupation and/or use, are charged in accordance with the classification applicable to each such occupation and/or use.

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### **Occupation and use of Land**

Occupied land is deemed to be land upon which there is a building or structure capable of being used or occupied. The charge applies whether or not the structure or building is actually occupied, unless specifically stated in the above schedule.

#### **Other Vacant land not connected to supply**

For each area of land, other than land described in Clause (d) held as an amalgamation of one Title or Valuer-General's Assessment and situated within 100 metres of a road in which a water main is laid down - 7 units per annum. Minimum number of allotments shall be 10.

#### **Land not connected to Supply**

Council will install a water main extension a maximum distance of 100m from the existing mains at no cost to the property owner. Any further distance required by the property owner will be at the owner's cost.

#### **Refund to Clubs for under usage of Water entitlement**

For eligible groups (Clubs/Charitable Organisations) that pay water rates above the minimum 7 units per annum, Council will refund the difference between the water allowance and actual water used in each financial year to a minimum charge of 7 units. Refunds will occur in July each year following the reading of water meters.

#### **Medical Fire Service Meters**

Meters installed under Council's Water Connection Policy for Medical or Fire purposes and coloured blue will be charged the normal connection fee. There will be no increase in the water allowance and no increase in the annual fee. Once the service is no longer required for medical reasons, it has to be removed at the owner's expense.

### SEWERAGE CHARGES

Flinders Shire Council will levy a sewerage charge on each consumer / property, whether vacant or occupied, that Council has provided or deems able to be provided with sewerage services.

The charge will be based on the number of pedestals / wastes together with Council's estimate of demand / usage patterns and measured in units as detailed in Council's current Revenue Statement.

#### **Vacant Urban land – Partially Occupied**

Where two separately surveyed parcels of land that are capable of being sewered and a dwelling is situated over the two parcels of land so that individual occupation is not possible, the Sewerage Charge will be 12 Units.

- 10 for the dwelling
- 2 for the Vacant Land.

#### **Vacant Land**

For each area of land capable of being sewered that is held as an amalgamation on one Assessment (other than land as described above) by the Valuer-General, then the Vacant Land Charge will be 8 Units per 10 allotments or part thereof.

#### **Separate Charge for Separate Users**

On occupied land all buildings capable of separate occupancy and/or use will be charged in accordance with the applicable classification.

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### **Land not connected to supply**

Council will install a sewerage main extension a maximum distance of 100m from the existing mains at no cost to the property owner. Any further distance required by the property owner will be at the owner's cost.

Further information on payment of rates can be found in Council's current Revenue Statement which is available on Council's website or from Council reception.

## **COMPLAINTS AND DISPUTE RESOLUTION**

You have the right to make a complaint regarding the service provided by the Council by contacting Council reception by phone or email; or by lodging a written complaint directed to council's postal address. These will be investigated in accordance with council policy. Council will treat all complaints confidentially and with due respect, and complainants will not suffer any reprisal from council or staff for making a complaint. All complaints will be thoroughly investigated in a timely manner (and in accordance with the principles of natural justice) with the aim of reaching a resolution to both council and the complainant. If the customer remains dissatisfied with the result they may contact the ombudsman.

## **CUSTOMER CONSULTATION**

Council will communicate with customers on changes to the water supply and wastewater services through our website and other digital feeds, distribution of published brochures, or alternative methods as appropriate.

We are committed to educating you, our customer about what we do. From time to time we will seek your feedback in order to inform our service planning and decision making process. This will be done through various forums, such as focus groups and customer surveys when needed. We look forward to hearing from you about our services when this occurs.



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### FLINDERS SHIRE CONTACT DETAILS

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34 Gray St  
Hughenden  
Qld 4821

Opening Hours:  
Monday to Friday – 8:30am to 5pm

PO Box 274, Hughenden Q 4821  
[enquiries@flinders.qld.gov.au](mailto:enquiries@flinders.qld.gov.au)  
[www.flinders.qld.gov.au](http://www.flinders.qld.gov.au)