

5.5. WATER AND WASTEWATER CUSTOMER SERVICE STANDARDS REVIEW

REPORT AUTHOR Melissa Mitchell, Environmental Technical Officer Water and Wastewater

DEPARTMENT Water and Wastewater

MANAGER Peter Tonkes, Manager Water and Wastewater

RECOMMENDATION

That Council receives and notes the updated Water and Wastewater Customer Service Standards review 2020 within Douglas Shire.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Douglas Shire Council is required under the *Water Supply (Safety and Reliability) Act 2008* to develop customer services standards to protect customers that do not have a contract with the service provider. The customer service standards must inform the customer of the level of service to be provided, how that service will be provided and how to engage and communicate with the service provider.

The regulator recently advised all Queensland councils that the service provider must review their customer service standard at least every 5 years. It also must be published and open for public consult by a period set by the service provider.

The Water and Wastewater department have reviewed all feedback from within the department and the community, has made all necessary amendments and is now ready to publish the finalised customer service standard for the Douglas Shire community. The next review will be approximately 2025.

BACKGROUND

The Water and Wastewater Department within the Douglas Shire Council is responsible for providing water and wastewater services to the Douglas Shire community. These services are provided to over 16,000 residential customers and tourists, in addition to over one thousand commercial and industrial customers.

This document provides details on the following:

- Obligations of the Water and Wastewater Department in delivering the water and wastewater services;
- Customer expectations;
- Levels of service to be provided to our customers based on performance indicators and goals; and
- Processes for establishing new services, billing, metering, customer consultation, lodging complaints and dispute resolution.

COMMENT

The current Water and Wastewater Customer Service Standard document for Douglas Shire Council was reviewed in 2018 however, items such as below were modified to be in line with current legislation and accuracy performance of the water and wastewater network:

- The maximum pressure at property boundary of 720 kpa was changed to 800 kpa as a target based on the average water pressure across the network; however there are pressure fluctuations depending on gravity fed main.
- We were required to declare and identify our water and sewer services under the Water Supply (Safety and Reliability) Act 2008. Maps were created to show these declared service areas and can be viewed on the Douglas Shire Website.
- Under the Plumbing and Drainage Act 2018 only an appropriately QBCC licenced plumber can install a water meter, the subsequent repair, maintenance or replacement of existing water meters can be performed by authorised persons, appointed by a water service provider.
- Council will not accept on-site systems waste if it contains trade waste as our wastewater treatment plants are not capable of processing trade waste to acceptable standard

PROPOSAL

That Council receives and notes the finalised amended Water and Wastewater Customer Service Standards 2020 for the Douglas Shire community.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

Economic: Nil

Environmental: Water and Wastewater department are obligated to operate, and maintain infrastructure for collection and treatment of raw water, distribute safe drinking water, collection, transportation, treatment and disposal of wastewater and provide treated wastewater for beneficial use whilst protecting the environment for future generations.

Social: Douglas Shire Council have an obligation and commitment to the community to deliver water and wastewater services, meet customer expectations, inform the customer of the level of service that is to be provided and advise on the processes for water and wastewater services.

CORPORATE/OPERATIONAL PLAN, POLICY REFERENCE

This report has been prepared in accordance with the following:

Corporate Plan 2019-2024 Initiatives:

Theme 3 - Leading Environmental Stewardship

Our visitors and residents deeply value the unparalleled environment in which we live. We recognise our responsibility in protecting and preserving our natural world for generations to come.

We understand the strong link between the environment and the economy: they are interdependent. Douglas Shire will be at the forefront of environmental protection by developing strategies, setting policies, and working with all stakeholders to become the envy of and to inspire locations across Australia and the World.

Goal 3 - We will continue to build water infrastructure so that the Douglas Shire may enjoy water security and water quality.

Operational Plan 2020-2021 Actions:

3.4.1 - Implement an education campaign targeting schools and residential properties within the Shire to raise awareness of water security, how it is produced, impacts on the reef and how to live a more water efficient life.

COUNCIL'S ROLE

Council can play a number of different roles in certain circumstances and it is important to be clear about which role is appropriate for a specific purpose or circumstance. The implementation of actions will be a collective effort and Council's involvement will vary from information only through to full responsibility for delivery.

The following areas outline where Council has a clear responsibility to act:

Builder/Owner	Council makes a significant investment every year in the infrastructure that underpins the Shire through its capital works program. Council will manage its assets with appropriate frameworks and deliver its projects through robust project management.
Information Provider	Council provides the community with important information on services, events, policies, rules, strategies, and any other relevant data that helps the community to stay informed. In performing this role, Council seeks to be open and transparent.
Regulator	Council has a number of statutory obligations detailed in numerous regulations and legislative Acts. Council also makes local laws to ensure that the Shire is well governed. In fulfilling its role as regulator, Council will utilise an outcomes based approach that balances the needs of the community with social and natural justice.

CONSULTATION

Internal: Water and Wastewater department

External: Public consultation via Douglas Shire Council website

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The Douglas Shire Council Water and Wastewater Customer Service Standard was open to public for consultation until 18 July. We have received one public feedback, we have considered and received all feedback and finalised the document.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Water and Wastewater Customer Service Standards [5.5.1 - 16 pages]

WATER AND WASTEWATER CUSTOMER SERVICE STANDARDS 2020 - 2025

5 June 2020



SPID 558

Table of Contents

DOUGLAS SHIRE COUNCIL CORPORATE PLAN.....	2
1.1 Vision	2
1.2 Mission	2
1.3 Values	2
DOUGLAS SHIRE COUNCIL WATER AND WASTEWATER CUSTOMER COMMITMENT	3
2.1 Mission Statement	3
2.2 Vision Statement.....	3
2.3 Our Obligations	3
2.4 Expectations of Our Customers	4
PERFORMANCE TARGETS FOR WATER AND WASTEWATER SERVICES	4
3.1 Water Services Performance Indicators	6
3.2 Wastewater Services Performance Indicators.....	7
CUSTOMER SERVICE PROCEDURES.....	7
4.1 New or Reconnected Services	7
4.1.1 New or Reconnected Water Supply and Sewerage Connections.....	7
4.1.2 Community Title Development	8
4.1.3 Water Meters	8
4.1.4 Disconnection of Water or Sewerage Services	8
4.1.5 Reconnection of Water or Sewerage Services	8
4.2 Restricting Water Supplies.....	9
4.3 Charges and Customer Accounts	9
4.3.1 Rates, Fees and Charges	9
4.3.2 Dishonoured Cheques	9
4.3.3 Assistance with Paying Accounts.....	9
4.3.4 Special Meter Reads	10
4.3.5 Estimation of Water Consumption	10
4.4 Customer Assistance	10
4.4.1 Customer Consultation	10
4.4.2 Customer Contacts	10
4.4.3 Complaints Handling and Dispute Resolution.....	10
4.4.4 Emergency Assistance	11
4.4.5 Entry to Private Property	11

4.5 Other Services11

 4.5.1 Vulnerable Persons.....11

 4.5.2 Water Standpipes11

 4.5.3 Trade Waste Services.....12

 4.5.4 Acceptance of Waste from On-site Treatment Systems12

DSC WATER AND WASTEWATER CONTACT DETAILS13

Review Document Information

Version	Created By	Issued To	Qty	Date	Reviewed	Approved
1	Wouter van der Merwe, Peter White, Mark Howarth	QLD Water Supply Regulator	1	3/12/2014	Wouter van der Merwe	Paul Hoye
2	Mark Howarth, Lara Balzarolo	QLD Water Supply Regulator	1	Nov 2018	Peter White	Michael Kriedemann
3	Water & Wastewater Department	QLD Water Supply Regulator	1	June 2020	Water & Wastewater Department	Peter Tonkes

Document and DWQMP- related Information Controller:

SPID 558

Manager Water and Wastewater: Peter Tonkes

T: (07) 4099 9444

E: enquiries@douglas.qld.gov.au

DOUGLAS SHIRE COUNCIL CORPORATE PLAN

The Douglas Shire Council Corporate Plan is a key strategic document illustrating how Council will deliver on our purpose for the five years, 2019-2024. It is a road map for the future, based on a set of strategic themes and goals.

The Corporate Plan has articulated two sets of values, which focus on the way we interact with the community and each other to deliver customer focused and efficient service. By operating in this manner, Council will achieve sustainable economic growth, environmental stewardship, robust governance and inclusive planning and partnerships.

1.1 Vision

A unique, beautiful and sustainable Shire with a connected and inclusive community, thriving economy and deep commitment to protecting the environment for future generations, while honoring our past.

1.2 Mission

Council's mission is to provide for the good rule of the local government area. In fulfilling this mission, Council plays many important roles within the community. Our mission is to balance all of these roles while we deliver on the vision of this Council in an efficient and effective manner.

1.3 Values

The values of Council underpin its delivery of its vision, mission, strategy and service delivery. Council has articulated two sets of complimentary values:

Corporate/Community Values

- Accountability
- Integrity
- Inclusive
- Ethical
- People focused

The Way We Work Values

- Teamwork
- Honesty
- Fairness
- Respect

DOUGLAS SHIRE COUNCIL WATER AND WASTEWATER CUSTOMER COMMITMENT

Douglas Shire Council is required under the *Water Supply (Safety and Reliability) Act 2008* to develop customer services standards to protect customers that do not have a contract with the service provider. The customer service standards must inform the customer of the level of service to be provided, how that service will be provided and how to engage and communicate with the service provider.

The Water and Wastewater Department within the Douglas Shire Council is responsible for providing water and wastewater services to the Douglas Shire community. These services are provided to over 16,000 residential customers and tourists, in addition to over one thousand commercial and industrial customers.

This document provides details on the following:

- Obligations of the Water and Wastewater Department in delivering the water and wastewater services;
- Customer expectations;
- Levels of service to be provided to our customers based on performance indicators and goals; and
- Processes for establishing new services, billing, metering, customer consultation, lodging complaints and dispute resolution.

2.1 Mission Statement

To deliver quality and reliable water and wastewater services that meet the needs of our community whilst remaining compliant with statutory requirements and minimising environmental impacts.

2.2 Vision Statement

To be recognised as a customer focused provider of quality services to the Douglas Shire community that:

- Values innovation and continuous improvement in the delivery of our services; and
- Fosters input from staff and the community into our decision-making processes.

2.3 Our Obligations

The Water and Wastewater Department must plan for, establish, operate and maintain infrastructure and systems for the following:

- Collection and treatment of raw water and distribution of safe drinking water;
- Collection, transportation, treatment and disposal of wastewater; and

- Provision of treated wastewater for beneficial reuse,

In providing these services Water and Wastewater must follow the 5 strategic themes of the Council's Corporate Plan, comply with Council policy and local laws, and satisfy all statutory requirements with respect to management and operation of Council's water and wastewater activities.

2.4 Expectations of Our Customers

In addition to paying for water supply and wastewater services in accordance with Douglas Shire Council's schedule of fees and charges, Water and Wastewater expects our customers to assist us in providing services by:

- Applying to Council and receiving approval before connecting to water and wastewater systems;
- Using water in a 'water-wise' manner;
- Maintaining internal property pipes and fittings (water and wastewater) in accordance with obligations under s70(1) of the Plumbing and Drainage Act 2018;
- Engaging a licensed plumber to perform work internal to their property;
- Providing access to the water meter, sewer manholes and other infrastructure within and adjacent to their property;
- Not building structures over water or sewer mains and selecting garden vegetation that won't damage water supply and sewerage infrastructure;
- Not covering sewer manholes with soil, mulch or other obstructions;
- Notifying us of any faults that you have encountered so that we can rectify the problem as quickly as possible;
- Taking care not to discharge unauthorised substances into sewers; and
- Applying to Council for trade waste approval (industrial and commercial customers) to discharge trade waste to sewers.

PERFORMANCE TARGETS FOR WATER AND WASTEWATER SERVICES

The Douglas Shire water supply system has been designed to provide water and wastewater services 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. However, under certain circumstances, such as those described below, we may need to interrupt or limit these services:

- If we need to inspect, maintain, repair or replace any part of the system;
- When new mains are being connected to the system;
- When there are periods of declared water supply restrictions; or
- If there is a possibility of a significant public health risk, a likelihood of serious injury to persons or damage to property or another emergency arising from the continuance of the service.

Except in emergencies and short duration interruptions, we will give customers 48 hours' notice of interruption to service by delivery of a written notice placed in the mailbox or under the front door of each affected property.

We will make every reasonable effort to limit disruption to services caused by operations and maintenance activities. However, it is not possible to provide notice of service disruption caused by unplanned events. Where we are unable to provide prior notice, we will complete all work as quickly and efficiently as possible to minimise disruption to the daily activities of our customers.

The following performance indicators reflect the level of service we intend to provide to our customers for water and wastewater services. Please be aware, some performance indicators are determined by the Australian Drinking Water Quality Guidelines and the Public Health Act 2005 and performance indicators with a QG/NPR/SWIM code are reportable to the State Government.

3.1 Water Services Performance Indicators

	Performance Indicator	Performance measure	Target	QG/NPR/SWIM Code	
<i>Day to Day Continuity</i>	Number of connections experiencing unplanned interruptions	Per 1,000 connections / year	150	QG4.7/C17/CS17	
	Number of connections experiencing planned interruptions	Per 1,000 connections / year	15		
	Time for restoration of service	% of services restored < 5 hrs	98%		
	Response/reaction time to incidents (emergency)	% of response to emergency < 30 min	98%		
	Response/reaction time to incidents (all events)	% of response to incident <24 hours	95%	QG4.8a/-/CS66	
	Connections receiving 1 interruption per year	% of connections	12%		
	Average interruption duration – planned	Hours	2		
	Average interruption duration - unplanned	Hours	2		
	Relative incidence of planned and unplanned interruption water incidents (events)	Ratio	1:70		
<i>Adequacy and quality of normal supply</i>	Minimum pressure at property boundary	kpa	220		
	Maximum pressure at property boundary	kpa	800		
	Drinking water quality complaints	Per 1,000 connections / year	<5	QG4.10/C9/CS9	
	Drinking water quality incidents	Number of incidents	15		
	Urban / rural supplies – E. Coli	Nil per 100mL	98%		
	Urban / rural supplies - turbidity	< 5 NTU	95%		
	Urban / rural supplies – pH	6.5 to 8.5	98%		
	Urban / rural supplies - colour	< 15.0 PCU	98%		
	<i>Continuity in the long term</i>	Water main breaks and leaks	Per 100km / year	17	QG4.5/A8/AS8

3.2 Wastewater Services Performance Indicators

	Performance Indicator	Performance measure	Target	QG/NPR/SWIM Code
<i>Effective transport of sewage</i>	Sewage overflows	Per 100km / year (gravity and rising main)	<15	
	Sewage overflows to customer properties	Per 1,000 connections / year	<2	
	Odour complaints	Per 1,000 connections / year	<2	
	Response/reaction time to incidents (all events)*	% of response to all events < 24 hrs	98%	QG4.9a/-/CS65
	Response/reaction time to incidents (emergency)	% of response to emergency < 1 hour	98%	
	Priority one events when service restored within 5 hours	% restored within 5 hours	95%	
<i>Continuity in the long run</i>	Sewer main breaks and chokes	Per 100km / year	<10	QG4.6/A14/AS39

CUSTOMER SERVICE PROCEDURES

4.1 New or Reconnected Services

4.1.1 New or Reconnected Water Supply and Sewerage Connections

If customers wish to apply for a water or sewerage connection within the serviced area, they are required to submit application forms together with appropriate fees to Council. State government legislation provides time frames for processing these applications.

Forms are available from Douglas Shire Council Administration Building at 64-66 Front Street, Mossman, the Council website (<http://douglas.qld.gov.au/>) or by calling 4099 9444.

Please note that under current Council policy, if a sewerage system is available for the property, the property owner is required to connect to the system.

A property can only be connected to a reticulated water or sewerage service within Douglas Shire, if it is identified in the declared service area. Maps showing the declared service area can be viewed on the [Douglas Shire Website](#).

4.1.2 Community Title Development

Community Title Development is a form of development where allotments are individually owned, with all associated infrastructure being owned in common and privately operated. All associated infrastructure is to be of Far North Queensland Regional Organisation of Councils (FNQROC) Standards and approved as a part of a Development Application. Council has an obligation to ensure that all services meet its statutory obligation at the property boundary for the development as a whole. Further information on servicing a Community Title Development can be obtained by contacting Council on 4099 9444.

4.1.3 Water Meters

A water meter will be installed as part of a new water service connection and will remain the property of Council. The meter will be used as the basis of any consumption component of water charges. The Water and Wastewater Department will maintain water meters within industry standards limits of accuracy (i.e. $\pm 4\%$). Where a customer has reason to doubt either the accuracy or reliability of their water meter, Water and Wastewater will offer to test the meter for the fee prescribed in Council's fees and charges. If the meter is found to be defective and resulting in overcharging, the overcharged amount will be refunded and no fee will be charged for the meter test. If the meter is defective, it will be repaired or replaced at no charge to the customer, and will continue to remain the property of Council.

4.1.4 Disconnection of Water or Sewerage Services

If a customer no longer requires a water supply, (e.g. demolition of house) they will need to submit application forms together with appropriate fees to Council for disconnection.

If a customer no longer requires a sewerage service, they will need to submit application forms together with appropriate fees to Council. These forms are available from Douglas Shire Council Administration Building at 64-66 Front Street, Mossman, the Council website (<http://douglas.qld.gov.au/>), or by calling 4099 9444.

4.1.5 Reconnection of Water or Sewerage Services

If customers wish to reconnect water or sewerage services, customers will be required to pay a fee to cover the reconnection service. Sewerage services can be reconnected by a licensed plumber/drainer with the design and inspection of the works undertaken by a Council Plumbing Inspector (please note that an additional fee is levied for this service). For permit approval of a water service reconnection, customer will be required to pay a water service connection fee. A QBCC licensed plumber will be required to connect the internal property side and lodge a Form 1 to Council.

4.2 Restricting Water Supplies

Water supply restrictions may need to be imposed by Council. These restrictions may be required during the following events:

- bulk supply limitations;
- During a drought, or on the anticipated approach of a drought where the water supply needs to be protected;
- To ensure continuity of supply where there are short term problems with system capacity and asset performance; or
- Council imposed policies that limit supply.

4.3 Charges and Customer Accounts

4.3.1 Rates, Fees and Charges

Rates, fees and charges will be set annually by Council resolution. Water services are subject to an annual connection fee and volumetric fees based on water consumption. Different rates exist for residential and commercial volumetric use. Water meters are read approximately every 4 months with invoices sent at the same frequency.

Unmetered properties will be charged a fee based on the deemed reasonable consumption for the particular premises.

Sewerage services are subject to an annual charge to all serviced properties, with an additional charge per water closet applied to commercial properties.

Additional statements of account will be available to customers on request. However, a fee will be charged for this additional service.

Council may charge customer's interest on overdue accounts as prescribed in Council's Revenue Policy.

4.3.2 Dishonoured Cheques

If customers pay by a cheque which is not honoured for any reason, Council may include any costs incurred in the process of receiving payment with the next account.

4.3.3 Assistance with Paying Accounts

The Council has a range of payment options and can negotiate special financial arrangements to assist customers experiencing hardship in the payment of accounts. Information on these options is available from Douglas Shire Council Administration Building at 64-66 Front Street, Mossman, or by calling 4099 9444.

4.3.4 Special Meter Reads

When customers sell their home or there is a change of tenancy, customers can request a special water meter reading to determine the amount of water used. Customers will be charged a fee to cover the cost of this service.

4.3.5 Estimation of Water Consumption

In certain circumstances, Council may need to estimate customer water consumption charges. Such estimation will be based on either past usage records or use by similar customers under similar circumstances. This estimate may be necessary where:

- A water meter is shown by test to be recording inaccurately;
- A water meter ceases to register;
- Access to the water meter is prevented; or
- An illegal connection has been made.

In circumstances where the meter is located within the customers property, it will be the customer's responsibility to ensure their water meter is accessible to meter readers (i.e. not overgrown with vegetation or otherwise inaccessible).

4.4 Customer Assistance

4.4.1 Customer Consultation

Council will inform customers on matters relating to water supply, sewerage and on other issues such as charging and complaints handling. Customer communication may include distribution of published brochures, local media bulletins to advise customers of any system change that may have a significant effect on local service levels (e.g. water restrictions), or other options as appropriate.

4.4.2 Customer Contacts

In the interests of improving customer service, customers are encouraged to contact Council for assistance on matters such as service difficulties and faults, account enquiries, general and technical enquiries, and suggestions.

Council will respond promptly to customer enquiries, complaints and requests as per Council's Customer Service Charter (document is available on the Council website).

4.4.3 Complaints Handling and Dispute Resolution

If customers have a complaint regarding customer service standards, the Water and Wastewater Department will investigate the complaint and take all reasonable action to solve the problem or

address the issue promptly and effectively as per Council's Customer Service Charter (document is available on the Council website).

4.4.4 Emergency Assistance

Council will maintain a 24-hour emergency contact service (4099 9444) for emergency events related to service systems such as a burst water main or sewerage overflow.

4.4.5 Entry to Private Property

In certain circumstances, representatives of Council may need to enter a customer's property to carry out investigations and/or work on the water supply and sewerage transportation systems. To limit any inconvenience, Council will attempt to carry out this work during business hours or at other times convenient to commercial customers, except in emergencies.

For planned work within a property, customers will be provided a minimum of 48 hours advance notice. In an emergency, Council will inform the occupier, if present, of the repairs to be undertaken and the anticipated duration of the work. Council will also endeavour to inform customers when the work is complete. All representatives of Council will be readily identifiable from their staff identification badge and from wearing the Council logo on clothing.

4.5 Other Services

4.5.1 Vulnerable Persons

If you are registered with Council as having a life-support machine requiring water, we will advise you of any planned interruptions and emergency situations. Council can provide assistance for those customers that require mains water during the interruption. Contact Council on 4099 9444 to be added to the register or for more details.

4.5.2 Water Standpipes

Council will lease metered standpipes for the taking of water from the reticulated water network. There are short and long-term hire agreements with forms able to be collected from Douglas Shire Council Administration Building at 64-66 Front Street, Mossman. Further details can be obtained by contacting Council on 4099 9444 for hire rates and consumption charges.

4.5.3 Trade Waste Services

Industrial and commercial customers may discharge treated trade waste to the sewerage system provided the customer has first obtained a 'Trade Waste Approval' or entered into a "Trade Waste Agreement".

Council will only allow trade waste to discharge into the sewerage system if:

- There is no likelihood that the trade waste will harm the system;
- There is no risk to the health and safety of sewerage workers;
- The trade waste will not inhibit biological processes at the wastewater treatment plants;
- The trade waste will not accumulate in bio-solids making their re-use difficult or impractical; and,
- The trade waste does not contain contaminants that may pass through the wastewater treatment plants untreated resulting in environmental contamination.

All trade waste discharged to sewer must meet all the requirements contained in the Council Trade Waste Environmental Management Plan (document is available on the Council website).

4.5.4 Acceptance of Waste from On-site Treatment Systems

Properties with on-site sewage treatment and disposal systems (e.g. septic tanks) will need to arrange for pump outs on a periodic basis. Council will issue licenses to contractors for approval to provide sullage and septage disposal services within the Shire. We will also require a disposal fee for pump outs that are disposed of into the sewerage system. Customers should contact private operators in the yellow pages of the Douglas phone book to arrange for pump-out of their system. Council will not accept on-site systems waste if it contains trade waste.

DSC WATER AND WASTEWATER CONTACT DETAILS

Website: <http://douglas.qld.gov.au/>

Email: enquiries@douglas.qld.gov.au

Customer Service Centre:

Douglas Shire Council Administration Building at 64-66 Front Street, Mossman

Office Hours Contacts: 07 4099 9444

After Hours Emergency Phone: 07 4099 9444

Facsimile: 07 4098 2902

Postal Address: Chief Executive Officer

Douglas Shire Council

PO Box 723

MOSSMAN QLD 4873

Business Address: 64 -66 Front Street, Mossman QLD 4873