



CUSTOMER SERVICE STANDARDS

Water and Wastewater

2025-2030

18 December 2025

DOUGLAS SHIRE
COUNCIL

Engaging, Planning, Partnering
Muruku Kirraji - Eastern Kuku Yalanji
Nganyiji pina ngunda-lum ... Ma:lnyirri-yingku - Yirrganydji

SPID 558

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Introduction

Douglas Shire Council is a registered water service provider (SPID 558), operating three potable water schemes (Daintree, Mossman/Port Douglas and Whyanbeel), one non-potable water scheme (Dagmar Heights) and two sewerage schemes (Mossman and Port Douglas).

As a registered water service provider, Douglas Shire Council is committed to the provision of affordable water and wastewater services to meet the needs of our community and stakeholders.

Under the *Water Supply (Safety and Reliability) Act 2008*, Douglas Shire Council is required to develop Customer Service 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, and the process for service connections, billing, metering, accounting, customer consultation, complaints and dispute resolution.

Customer Service Standards do not apply during periods of declared natural disasters, but will recommence as soon as practicable following the restoration of normal services. Upon declaration of a disaster situation, the Water and Wastewater Unit will work closely with all agencies under the Douglas Shire Council Local Disaster Management Plan to communicate service interruptions, and to prioritise water and wastewater service restoration efforts aligned to preventing or minimising:

- Loss of human life
- Illness or injury to humans
- Property loss or damage; and
- Damage to the environment.

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, 2025-2030. It is a road map for the future, based on a set of strategic themes and goals.

The Corporate Plan has articulated five 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

Working together to enhance our environment, lifestyle, culture and community.

1.2 Mission

Achieving the best outcomes to shape tomorrow by working effectively today.

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:

Adapt: We adapt to changing circumstances to make a positive difference for our community.

Integrity: We act with integrity, being accountable for the decisions we make.

Respect: We respect our diverse community, cultures and heritage.

Teamwork: We work as a team.

Community care and support: We value and actively support each other to deliver for our community.

Douglas Shire Council Water and Wastewater Customer Commitment

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 around 16,000 residential customers and tourists, in addition to around 1,000 commercial and industrial customers.

2.3 Council's 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 Customer's Obligations

In addition to paying for water supply and wastewater services in accordance with Douglas Shire Council's Utility Charges and Associated Rating Matters and Schedule of Fees and Charges, customers are expected to assist us in providing services by:

- Seeking 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 on their property;
- Providing access to the water meters, 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 any issues 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

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, we commit to give customers 48 hours' notice of intention to shut off the water supply, advising the reasons for shutting it off, and for how long it will be shut off.

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 commit to 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 that 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 KPI/NPR/SWIM code are reportable to the State Government. Council publishes the data performance reports on our website.

3.1 Water and Wastewater Services Performance Indicators

Performance Indicator	Performance measure	Target	KPI/NPR/SWIM Code
Number of connections experiencing unplanned interruptions	Per 1,000 connections / year	150	QG4.7/C17/CS17
Response/reaction time to water service incidents (breaks, bursts and leaks)	<2h	95%	QG4.8a/-/CS66
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	Count	<1	
Water main breaks, bursts and leaks	Per 100km / year	17	QG4.5/A8/AS8.1
Sewage overflows	Count	<15	
Odour complaints	Per 1,000 connections / year	<2	
Response/reaction time to sewerage incidents (main breaks and chokes)	<2h	95%	QG4.9a/-/CS65
Sewer main breaks and chokes	Per 100km / year	<10	QG4.6/A14/AS39.1
Total water and sewerage complaints	Per 1,000 connections / year	<10	QG4.11/CS13

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. If a sewerage system is available for the property, the property owner is required to connect to the system.

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 (07) 4099 9444.

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 (07) 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 (07) 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 a water access charge 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.

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 General 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 (07) 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 calculated based on the average of previous three meter reads. 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 or administrative changes that may impact the services. Customer communication may include distribution of published brochures, letter drops, VMS messaging board, local and social media bulletins and providing opportunities on the Council website for the public to supply feedback.

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, feedback 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

Council welcomes your feedback. If customers have a complaint regarding water or sewerage services, 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.

If this initial response is unsatisfactory and you would like to request a review of Council's decision by a relevant manager, an internal review of an administrative action or process led by the Governance Manager or else lodge a complaint about the conduct of a Council Officer, the complaint will be investigated in accordance with Council's *Administrative Action Complaints Management Process*.

Complaints can be made by:

- Writing to the Chief Executive Officer
- Telephoning (07) 4099 9444
- Emailing enquiries@douglas.qld.gov.au
- Visiting Customer Service at the Council Administration Building, Front Street Mossman or at the Community Hub, Mowbray Street Port Douglas.

4.4.4 Emergency Assistance

Council will maintain a 24-hour emergency contact service (07) 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.

Entry to private property will be in accordance with delegations under the *Local Government Act 2009* and *Water Supply (Safety and Reliability) Act 2008*. All representatives of Douglas Shire Council will be readily identifiable from their staff uniform with Council logo and/or authorised person identity card.

4.5 Other Services

4.5.1 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 (07) 4099 9444 or enquiries@douglas.qld.gov.au for hire rates and consumption charges.

4.5.2 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).

4.5.3 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

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outs that are disposed of into the sewerage system. Council will not accept on-site systems waste if it contains trade waste.