



ETHERIDGE SHIRE COUNCIL

REGISTERED WATER

SERVICE PROVIDER NO. SP49

CUSTOMER SERVICE STANDARDS

Revised December 2019



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1.0 TO OUR CUSTOMERS

Etheridge Shire Council (hereinafter referred to as 'Council') is a registered service provider (SP49) of water supply services under the [State] *Water Act 2000*. One of the requirements of the Act is for service providers to establish and promote customer service standards.

Council has issued the *Water Supply Services Customer Service Standards* for the purposes of meeting the requirements of the *Water Act 2000* and to act as a stimulus to further improve services through a focus on customer expectations.

In establishing performance targets for these Customer Service Standards, we have reviewed performance targets across the industry together with historical performances of Council. The standards set are consistent with industry levels and are intended to provide a measure that will test our service and encourage continual improvement.

Council accepts as one of its key responsibilities, the provision of continuous and reliable water supply services. You, as a recipient of those services, can rely on the information in this document to assist you in establishing what you need to know about your water supply services, our service commitments, your rights and both your and our shared responsibilities in our ongoing customer / service provider relationship.

Our Responsibilities

In this document we have developed a table of performance indicators (Section 4.0) that detail our aims in achieving a specified level of performance with respect to providing:

- day-to-day continuity of your water supply;
- an adequate and high-quality water supply system;
- continuity of water supply services in the long-term.

This document also outlines our procedures for:

- connecting, reconnecting to, and disconnecting from our water supply services;
- metering and payment of services;
- managing customer requests;
- complaints handling; and
- solving your water supply problems.

Your Responsibilities

To deliver the best service to our customers and achieve the standards detailed in this document we will need your assistance. A key to this partnership is your protection of our water supply infrastructure, particularly where services are located on your property.¹ In general, areas where your assistance is sought include:

- maintaining the pipe work and fittings within your property that connect you to our services;
- allowing our staff access to your property to carry out repairs and modifications to our infrastructure if required;
- providing accessible passages to the water meter so that we can read water consumption and generate your account;
- notifying us of any faults that you have encountered or complaints you may have so that we can correct the problem as quickly as possible; and
- paying your account when it falls due.

In general, Council's infrastructure ends at the water meter for water supply.



2.0 PERFORMANCE TARGETS FOR WATER SUPPLY

2.1 Day-to-day continuity on your water supply

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 (eg. war, terrorism, vandalism, sabotage, civil commotion, national emergency, drought, fire, flood, cyclone, 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 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 high quality and reliable service.

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.

2.2 Adequacy and quality of the water supply system

We will generally provide water pressures and flows, within the distribution system, in accordance with State Government guidelines. The topography of the Shire presents a significant challenge for the designers and the operators of the water supply system, in maintaining pressure and flow to elevated areas. Therefore some areas will not receive pressure and flow consistent with other parts of the Shire.

We will endeavour to maintain the water pressure and flow to the adopted targets. However, there may be times when you experience periods of reduced pressures and flows. This will be likely during periods of high demand for example, hot weather, fire fighting elsewhere in the system, etc.

We aim to provide you with a high quality water supply that complies with the standards outlined in the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines issued by the National Health and Medical Research Council.

We encourage you to contact us (see page 19 for contact details) if you experience any problems with pressure, flow or water quality, which includes taste and odour. We will investigate your concerns and advise you of the outcome of our investigations. If it is determined that the source of the problem relates to your premises pipes and fittings you will need to have the problem corrected by your own plumber.

2.3 Long-term continuity of water supply services

We will undertake all planned maintenance and repair programs on the current water supply system so that it will continue to operate efficiently in the long-term. We will also commit to ongoing investigation, review and, where appropriate, implementation of improved practices and processes as they become available.

We have adopted performance targets as a measure of long-term continuity of water supply services (see page 8). Our performance relating to these performance targets will be reported on an annual basis.



2.4 Water supply restrictions

Under certain circumstances, we may need to impose water supply restrictions. These circumstances may include but are not limited to:

- bulk limitations of water supply;
- periods of drought, causing limited availability of water resources;
- compliance with the terms and conditions of special agreements with external bulk suppliers;
- short term supply problems with system capacity and asset performance;
- compliance with Council and State Government directives; and
- industrial disputes

2.5 Water conservation and education

Etheridge Shire Council has undertaken a commitment to implement community education programs on water conservation. This commitment will be delivered through community consultation, Water Wise brochures and annual reporting.

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

The following table quantifies our levels of service as required under the *Water Act 2000*. These performance indicators will be used to measure our performance each year and will be reviewed and reported against annually.

We realise that some water supply terms are not widely known to customers. To this end we have included a list of definitions in Schedule 2 on pages 20 and 21 of this document. The term Priority 1 (or Urgent) Events feature in the table and a definition is provided here to assist your understanding of this term.

Priority 1 (Urgent) Events relate to events defined by Etheridge Shire Council, which warrant immediate and urgent attention.

- For water supply services a Priority 1 Event is defined as a complete failure to maintain continuity or quality of supply to a group of customers or to a critical user at a critical time.



Performance Indicators (PI)	Target
Water Supply – Continuity	
Unplanned interruptions per 1,000 connection/year	<200
Restoration of services due to unplanned interruptions	80% restored within 5 hours
Ratio of unplanned to planned interruption incidents	8:1
Number of connection experiencing unplanned interruptions per annum	<100
Events/ incidents causing an unplanned interruption to customers (number per 100km of main)	<20
% connections experiencing more than 5 interruptions per annum.	5%
Overall Average duration of service interruption (hrs)	4 hours
Response time to all events	2 hours – Urgent 8 hours – Non Urgent
Adequacy and Quality of Normal Supply	
Minimum water pressure and/or flow expectation at boundary	22 metres
% of connections with deficient flow/ pressure	5%
Compliance with ADWG & NHMRC Guidelines	
- microbiological * (optional information)	95% of samples taken
- physical/chemical	95% of samples taken
Drinking water quality complaints per 1,000 connections/year	#20
Drinking water quality incidents/year	<10
Continuity in the Long-Term (a) Water	
Water leaks/breaks per 100 km mains/year	<20
System water loss (l/connection/day)	150

3.0 CUSTOMER SERVICE PROCEDURES

3.1 Connecting and Disconnecting

3.1.1 Obtaining a Water Supply Service Connection

Water supply service connections can be applied for by contacting Council (see page 19 for contact details). Fees and charges for the service vary. The full list of fees and charges is available from Council.

3.1.2 Water Supply Connection

Water supply connection will only be approved if:

- your property is within the service area – (this information can be sourced by contacting Council); and
- Council's infrastructure can provide a service that meets the adopted performance targets as detailed earlier in this document; and
- all other relevant Council requirements can be met.



Customers can normally expect the installation of the new water service connection to commence within 10 working days from Etheridge Shire Council's receipt of your application and Council's receipt of payment for your application. If this period is too long or too soon, we will negotiate a suitable installation date with customers, with any additional administrative costs or work commitment costs forming part of the negotiations.

If your application for water service connection requires an engineering and financial assessment you can normally expect that we will advise you of the outcome within 20 working days.

3.1.3 Maintenance of Water Supply Service Connections

We provide water supply services from the water main to the water meter. Plumbing fixtures beyond the water meter belong to and are the responsibility of the property owner.

We aim to maintain a continuous water supply service. We will endeavour to perform corrective works within 5 hours of a fault with the service being reported that results in significant water loss or possible property damage.

Repair work of a less urgent nature is usually undertaken as staff and resources become available but will usually be addressed within 5 working days.

3.1.4 Grounds for Flow Limitation and Disconnection of Service Supply

We reserve the right to restrict the flow of water to the property and/or disconnect water supply service if:

- you do not comply with the terms and conditions of this document;
- you do not pay, or meet and make arrangements to pay, overdue charges for the services;
- you do not comply with imposed water supply restrictions; or
- provisions of a special service agreement made with you have been breached.

We will discontinue the service if we find reason to believe the service poses a health, safety and environmental risk.

We will provide you with 48 hours notice in writing of our intention to refuse, alter or restrict supply for planned maintenance of the water supply network. The anticipated duration of the interruption shall be stated on the notice.

When it is necessary to carry out emergency repairs to the water supply network, there may not be time enough to notify all affected customers. In such situations we will keep customers informed until the service is restored.

3.1.5 Disconnection

If you no longer require a water supply service, you have the right to apply for disconnection and this can be done by contacting Council. Approval for disconnection is dependent on whether the disconnection of the service will cause an environmental and/or public health concern. A cost will apply to cover the disconnection service. These fees and charges can be obtained by contacting Council.

The disconnection of services must comply with the relevant State Government legislation and Council requirements.

Disconnection of a water supply service does not terminate these Customer Service Standards. As detailed in our Revenue Policy, which is available from Council, we will still levy a service availability charge to the owner of the land (including vacant land) where water supply services are available for connection.

3.1.6 Reconnection



If you wish to reconnect, we will carry out this service on compliance with the terms and conditions of this document relating to connections as detailed on page 9. You will be required to pay a fee to cover the reconnection service. Details of fees and charges can be obtained by contacting Council.

3.1.7 Charges and Customer Accounts

3.1.8 Water Supply Charges

Water supply fees and charges are set annually by Council resolution. Annual fees and charges are published in Council's Revenue Policy and Information Booklet, which is available from Council upon request.

Council's Revenue Policy details the procedures for:

- issuing rates notices;
- correcting administrative errors on your rates notices;
- determination of fees and charges for the financial year;
- determining the annual charges to be levied on your property;
- payment of accounts; and
- arrangements to pay overdue rates

In general, we will send you a rates notice annually and these notices will show rates and charges based on the type of service. The metered water consumption charges are issued in a half-yearly notice to customers.

Meters are read two (2) times a year for the purpose of the billing cycle and at other times of the year when necessary. We would appreciate having easy access to your water meter so that our staff can carry out regular readings.

Our general term on payments is Net 30 days. You may pay your rates by mail, BPay or in person at any Council's office.

A discount period of 30 days applies to water supply rates except for consumption charges. After 30 days the discount no longer applies and interest accrues from the due date until Council receives payment. The interest shall be compound interest, calculated on daily balances. Details of the interest rate are available by contacting Council.

Customers who are likely to experience difficulty in paying their accounts are requested to contact Council as soon as possible to discuss arrangements possible under Council's Revenue Policy.

3.1.9 Limit on Charges

Prices for water supply services cannot exceed the charges set by Council resolution, unless a special agreement has been made with you.

3.1.10 Charge for Defective Work

If we become aware of any defective or improper work forming part of your water supply pipes and fittings, we will serve a notice requiring you to remedy the situation within a set time.

If the terms of the notice are not followed, one of our representatives may enter private property to remedy the defective or improper work. If we need to take this action, you will be charged the full cost of any remedial work. We reserve the right to take legal action if appropriate.



3.1.11 Responsibility for Payment of Accounts

The owner of land where water supply services are available or supplied is responsible for the payment of all accounts related to the property.

The accounts will include a base and a consumption charge for water supply services.

Customers are advised to contact Council should you wish to discuss the contents of your accounts.

3.1.12 Water Meters

A water meter will be installed as part of a water service connection and will remain Council property. The meter will be used to determine the appropriate water charges for the property.

The meter should be accessible so Council representatives can read it. Where we cannot read your meter we may be required to estimate your water usage based on previous readings.

Water meters can be used by you to monitor your own water usage and assist you to conserve water and reduce your water bill. For information on how to read your meter, contact Council.

3.1.13 Water Meter Accuracy

Where a customer has reason to doubt either the accuracy or reliability of their water meter, we will offer a level of testing. A fee is charged to cover the cost of these services. Details of fees and charges can be obtained by contacting Council. Fees are refundable if the meter is found to be faulty.

- **A laboratory test** will be undertaken, upon request, to determine if the meter contains a fault which may contribute to an unreliable registration. If the meter is faulty, the customer's consumption charge over the affected period will be adjusted and the fee for the test will be refunded. All meters removed for such laboratory testing will be replaced with a new meter.

3.1.14 Special Meter Readings

If you sell your home or if there is a change in tenancy, you may request a special water meter reading to determine the amount of water used. This request should be made through Council and will attract a fee as outlined in Council's Schedule of Fees and Charges available on request from Council.

3.1.15 Estimation of Water Consumption

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

- 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

It is your responsibility to ensure the water meter is accessible to meter readers.

4.0 CUSTOMER SERVICE

4.1.1 Customer Assistance



In the interests of improving customer service, we welcome customer comments, enquiries, complaints and suggestions. You are encouraged to contact Council for assistance on matters such as service difficulties and faults, account enquiries, general enquiries and to offer suggestions on how our service may be improved.

Please contact us if you observe a broken or leaking service.

4.1.2 Emergency Assistance

We will maintain an after hours emergency contact service for emergency events related to service systems such as a burst water main. The contact number for after hour's emergencies is 0427621279

4.1.3 Response to Correspondence and Telephone Calls

We will respond promptly to customer enquiries, complaints and requests. We will adopt telephone and correspondence response times based on sound business principles.

4.1.4 Customer Redress and Compensation

If our activities cause damage or disruption to your property or business, we will deal with the complaint in a fair and business-like manner.

4.1.5 Customer Consultation

We are committed to involving our customers on issues relating to our programs and services. We value customer involvement in achieving the best possible range and level of service and we will seek community involvement in service planning and decision-making processes through mechanisms such as customer surveys and processes adopted by Council in regard to delivering effective community consultation.

4.1.6 Keeping Customers Informed

We will inform customers of matters relating to water supply services and on other issues such as charging and complaints handling. We will publish brochures containing this and other information and make them readily available from Council's Offices.

Wherever possible, we will use local media bulletins to advise customers of any system change that may have a significant effect on local service levels.

We will maintain active involvement in the conservation of source water, providing customers with water conservation information.

4.1.7 Staff Identification

All our staff will be readily identifiable when engaged in discussions with customers. They will offer you identification including their name and section or affiliation. This will assist you if you need further information at a later date.

4.1.8 Notice of Entry on a Property

Under certain circumstances, our staff may need to enter your property to carry out investigations and/or work on the water supply system. To limit any inconvenience, we will attempt to carry out this work during business hours or at other times convenient to our commercial customers, except in emergencies. We will provide you with advanced notice of this requirement wherever possible.

4.2 Customer Complaint Handling and Dispute Resolution

Council is committed to responding promptly and efficiently to requests for service or complaints. This commitment is reflected in Council's Corporate Plan.



We encourage Customer feedback because it is important we deliver the services expected by the community. Requests for service, complaints, and suggestions are welcomed and will be handled in a consistent manner according to our guidelines.

Under these guidelines a customer is entitled to:

- A prompt response to the request/complaint;
 - Be kept informed of the progress and outcome of the request/complaint;
 - Confidentiality of personal details; and
 - A thorough and objective investigation of a complaint.
-
- A customer normally needs to provide:
 - Full details of their name, address and a contact telephone number before a request/complaint will be registered. (*Anonymous complaints/requests may be accepted at the discretion of the relevant Councillor or Manager where there is a potential risk to persons or property*).
 - Sufficient details for the complaint/request to be actioned.

It should be noted that under the *Water Act 2000*, customers are entitled to take unresolved complaints to the Ombudsman.

5.0 CUSTOMER RESPONSIBILITIES

5.1.1 Damage to Water Supply Infrastructure

On occasions, some customers, as a result of their actions, cause damage to water supply infrastructure. Customers will be responsible for the total costs of rectifying any damage to infrastructure which is located on, or dedicated to, their property.

The customer shall not cover, interfere, or otherwise alter any water supply infrastructure without Council's prior approval. The cost associated with rectifying such coverage, interference or alteration will be recovered from the person or persons causing such damage or from the owner of the property on which the infrastructure is located.

The customer must not cover infrastructure with soil, concrete driveways, garden beds, etc. Maintenance workers may require access at any time and Council will charge the customer the cost of removing any obstructions.

5.1.2 Water Supply Service Connections

The customer is responsible for the maintenance of all pipes and fittings on the customer side of the water meter at the boundary of the land. Customers are legally required to use a licensed plumber/drainier to carry out any repairs and modifications on private pipes and fittings.

Customers may also be responsible for costs associated with new service installations in the following circumstances:

- additional services;
- fire services;
- temporary services;
- lowering and relocation of mains; and
- special service agreements.

There may be other instances where customers have responsibility for the repair and maintenance of services, including:

- damaged water meters;
- providing reasonable access to the water meter; and



- removal of trees that may be obstructing or damaging water supply infrastructure

Schedule 1 Contact Details

Our Website www.etheridge.qld.gov.au

Council Office: St George Street, Georgetown
Office hours: 7.30am to 5.00pm
Phone: (07) 40799090
Fax: (07) 40621285

**After Hours/
Emergency Contact:** Engineering Services Department
Facility Services
Mobile: 0427621279

**Postal Address for all
the above contact points is:** Chief Executive Officer
Etheridge Shire Council
PO Box 12
Georgetown, Queensland 4871

State Ombudsman: Ombudsman
Office of the Ombudsman
GPO Box 3314
BRISBANE 4001



Schedule 2 Definitions of Terms used in Performance Indicators

Drinking Water Quality Complaints refers to the number of complaints received by the service provider relating to the quality of the drinking water attributable to the service provider's assets and may relate to discolouration, taste, odour, stained washing etc. These complaints do not include those relating to service interruptions and/or delivery.

Drinking Water Quality Incidents refers to an event involving the water service provider's infrastructure or resource which adversely affects the water quality delivered to customers and can ultimately result in drinking water quality complaints.

NHMRC Guidelines refers to National Health and Medical Research Council's Australian Drinking Water Guidelines (as updated from time to time).

Odour Complaints refers to complaints received by the service provider regarding odours attributable to the service provider's sewerage assets or actions.

Planned Interruptions refers to an event when the customer has been provided with at least 48 hours notice of the interruption. If a planned interruption exceeds the duration that was originally notified, the interruption becomes unplanned.

Positive Response to External Customer Surveys refers to percentage of customers expressing satisfaction with services received.

Pressure refers to the minimum water pressure that a customer can expect at the boundary of the property. The target is usually provided in metres.

Response Time refers to the time taken for a response team to arrive on site to address the problem.

Restoration of Service is when all interrupted connections are restored to normal service.

System Water Loss refers to the difference between the total amount of water put into the system and the amount delivered to customers (allowing for adjustments).

Unplanned Interruptions refers to an event that has occurred without the customer having received at least 48 hours notification of the interruption, or when the time taken to restore the service exceeds the duration that was originally notified.

Water Main Breaks/Leaks refers to the number of breaks, including bursts and leaks, in all main including reticulation, distribution and trunk mains. It does not include breaks/leaks in the service connection to internal plumbing.