

 Adelaide Plains Council	Customer Service Charter (Community Wastewater Management System)	
	Version Adoption by Council:	31 January 2022
	Resolution Number:	2022/021
	Current Version:	1
	Administered by: General Manager Infrastructure and Environment	Last Review Date: 2022 Next Review Date: 2024
Document No: D22/3058	Strategic Outcome: Enviable Life Styles - Provide, support and acquire facilities, assets, services and programs that build community capacity, health and connection	

1. Purpose of “Customer Charter”

The purpose of our Charter is to provide our Community Wastewater Management System (CWMS) customers with a clear understanding of the standards of service they can expect from us and their rights and responsibilities.

2. Scope

Council provides to customers Community Wastewater Management System services at the towns of Mallala and Middle Beach with services to collect, treat and dispose of wastewater.

3. Aim of this Charter

This Charter outlines the rights and responsibilities of both Council and the customer and is consistent with the Essential Service Commission of South Australia (ESCOSA) Water Retail Code for Minor and Intermediate Retailers, the Water Industry Act 2012 and associated regulations.

The Water Retail Code - Minor & Intermediate Retailers, developed by ESCOSA, contains a detailed description of your rights and our responsibilities in providing you with CWMS and non-drinking water services and can be found at ESCOSA’s website www.escosa.sa.gov.au.

This Charter and other related documents can be found on Council’s website www.apc.sa.gov.au.

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4. Definitions

In this Charter:

Connection means an agreed point of supply at which a customer receives a retail service from a supplier;

Consumer means a person supplied with retail services as a consumer or user of those services (as defined in the Water Industry Act 2012). (Note: you may be a consumer by virtue of being a council ratepayer).

Customer means a person who owns land in relation to which a retail service is provided and includes:

- where the context requires, a person seeking the provision of a retail service; and,
- in prescribed circumstances, a person supplied with retail services as a consumer or user of those services (without limiting the application of this definition to owners of land); and,
- a person of a class declared by the regulations to be customers (as defined in the Water Industry Act 2012) (Note: you may be a customer by virtue of being a council ratepayer);

Customer hardship policy means the policy adopted by the Adelaide Plains Council for Residential Customers of Minor and Intermediate Water Retailers, in accordance with section 37 of the Water Industry Act 2012;

Financial hardship means a circumstance of experiencing a lack of financial means, that may be either ongoing or temporary, but does not include circumstances where a person chooses not to meet a liability for an unpaid debt;

Hardship means financial hardship;

Hardship customer means a residential customer who has been identified under, accepted into, or is eligible for assistance under our hardship program;

Hardship program means an agreement between us and a hardship customer for payment of outstanding sums due for retail services;

Intermediate retailer means a retailer that provides retail services to more than 500 but less than 50,000 connections;

Minor retailer means a retailer that provides retail services to less than 500 connections;

Our, us, we or Council means Adelaide Plains Council

Regulations means regulations under the Water Industry Act 2012;

Residential customer means a customer or consumer who is supplied with retail services for use at residential premises (as defined in the Water Industry Act 2012) (Note: you may be a residential customer by virtue of being a council ratepayer);

Retail service means a service constituted by:

- the sale and supply of sewerage services for the removal of sewage (including but not limited to community wastewater management systems) (even if the service is not actually used) but does not include any service, or any service of a class, excluded from the ambit of this definition by the regulations (as defined in the Water Industry Act 2012);

Retailer means the holder of a licence issued by the Essential Services Commission of South Australia under the Water Industry Act 2012;

Sewage includes any form of waste that may be appropriately removed or dealt with through the use of a sewerage service (as defined in the Water Industry Act 2012);

Sewerage service means:

- a service constituted by the collection, storage, treatment or conveyance of sewage through the use of a reticulated system; or,
- any other service, or any service of a class, brought within the ambit of this definition by the regulations (as defined in the Water Industry Act 2012) (Note: sewerage service includes but not limited to community wastewater management systems);

Water includes rainwater, stormwater, desalinated water, recycled water and water that may include any material or impurities, but does not include sewage (as defined in the Water Industry Act 2012);

Water service means:

- a service constituted by the collection, storage, production, treatment, conveyance, reticulation or supply of water; or,
- any other service, or any service of a class, brought within the ambit of this definition by the regulations (as defined in the Water Industry Act 2012).

5. Charter Details

5.1. Retail Services Provided

CWMS Removal

Council will:

- Remove sewage and wastewater from your property in accordance with all relevant health and environmental regulatory requirements;
- Use our best endeavours to minimise the frequency and duration of interruptions or limitations to your CWMS service;
- Provide you with information on any planned interruptions to your CWMS service at least 4 business days prior to us undertaking any

works or maintenance;

- Provide an emergency telephone number on our website for you to call in the event of an emergency or interruption to the supply of your CWMS service.

You (the customer):

- Will report any blockages, bursts or leaks to us as soon as possible by calling the emergency telephone number displayed on our website;
- Will not discharge restricted wastewater into our CWMS infrastructure;
- May be liable to pay us for a proportion of the costs reasonably attributable to you for a blockage, burst or leak. Council will advise you of the reasons for cost recovery in these circumstances and any amounts payable will be subject to the payment assistance and financial hardship provisions of your contract with us.
- Contact us to discuss our requirements for disposal of industrial or non-domestic waste into our sewerage infrastructure.
- Uncover septic tank access cover when requested by our contractor and allow site access to allow de-sludging of septic tank.

5.2. Our Pricing – Fees and Charges

Council will:

- Publish our Fees and charges, which sets out all of the fees and charges associated with the supply of your retail service, each year by July on our website at www.apc.sa.gov.au. We will also make this available at 2a Wasleys Road, Mallala.
- Publish our Pricing Policy Statement, which outlines how our fees and charges are compliant with ESCOSA's pricing principles set out in its Price Determination, each year by July on our website at www.apc.sa.gov.au. We will also make this available at 2a Wasleys Road, Mallala.
- In the case that any fees and charges set out in the Price List change, publish these on our website at least 14 days prior to these fees and changes taking effect and make these available at our offices;
- Customers will receive the annual CWMS service charge as a part of the council rates and it will be shown on the annual rates notice issued each year;

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- If a new service is activated during the financial year then the first billing that the customer will receive is at the following July rates declaration;

5.3. Connections

Existing Connections

Where your property is currently connected to our infrastructure:

Council will:

- Maintain connection of your property to our CWMS service within the ambit of this Customer Service Charter and undertake the services as described in clause 5.1 of the Charter subject to you providing us with information required by us and paying the relevant connection and account establishment fees as set out in our Price List.

New Connection Requests

Where your property is not currently connected to our infrastructure:

Council will:

- Inform you within 14 days of enquiry whether or not you can be connected to our infrastructure and required fees to be paid
- supply technical, approval and inspection services to ensure that the new connections to the CWMS service are constructed by the new customer in an approved way
- Approve “Application For onsite wastewater works approval” form when they comply with our requirements

You (the customer) will:

- Provide us with the following information about your supply address: Fully completed “Application For onsite wastewater works approval” form
- Pay the relevant connection and account establishment fees as set out in our Price List

Further details connecting new properties to our infrastructure is available on our website at www.apc.sa.gov.au or by visiting our office at 2a Wasleys Road, Mallala

5.4. Billing and payments

Council will:

- Include your CWMS service charges on your rates notice (separately identified), issued annually with quarterly payment options available.
- Offer you the ability to pay your bills in person, by mail, by direct debit, by B-Pay or by credit card over the phone.

You (the customer) will:

- Pay your bill by the payment due date unless we have agreed on a flexible payment arrangement.
- Pay any fee we incur if any of your payment methods are dishonoured

5.5. Payment Assistance and Financial Hardship

Council will:

- Provide you with the ability to pay your bills by instalments or enter into a flexible payment arrangement.
- Provide information on government assistance that may be available to you.
- Arrange an alternative payment scheme in line with your ability to pay.
- Inform you about and assess your eligibility for our Hardship Program if requested

You (the customer) will:

- Pay your bill by the payment due date unless we have agreed on a flexible payment arrangement.
- Inform us if you are having difficulty paying your bills prior to the due date.
- Further information on our Hardship Policy is available on our website at www.apc.sa.gov.au or by visiting 2a Wasleys Road, Mallala. We will provide you with a copy of our Hardship Policy upon request.

5.6. Reviewing your bill/billing disputes

Council will:

- Not commence our debt collection processes where a bill (or part of a bill) is in dispute.
- Review your bill and inform you of the outcome of our review within 30 business days of your request.
- Inform you about our independent external dispute resolution body where you remain dissatisfied following our review.

You (the customer) will:

- Pay any portion of your bill that is not in dispute while your bill is being reviewed or any future bills that become due.

5.7. Overcharging

Council will:

- Inform you within 10 business days of becoming aware of you being overcharged as a result of an act or omission by us and credit the overcharged amount to your next bill.
- Pay the overcharged amount directly to you within 10 business days if you have ceased to purchase a retail service from us.

5.8. Undercharging

Council will:

- In relation to a retail service which is metered, limit the amount we recover from you to the amount undercharged in the 12 months prior to the meter reading date on the last bill sent to you.
- In relation to unmetered services, limit the amount we recover from you to the amount undercharged in the 12 months prior to the error being advised to you in writing.
- List the undercharged amount as a separate item in a special bill or in your next bill with an explanation of that amount and, if requested, offer you an extended time to pay the amount.
- Not charge you interest on the undercharged amount.

5.9. Debt recovery

Council will:

- Only commence debt collection/recovery action where you have failed to pay your bill by the due date and you have not contacted us to discuss a payment extension or other flexible payment arrangements (including eligibility for our Hardship Program).

You (the customer) will:

- Contact us if you are having difficulty paying your bill prior to the due date.

5.10. Entry to your property

Council will:

- Provide you with at least 24 hours' notice if we need to enter your supply address for the purposes of connecting, disconnecting, restricting, inspecting, repairing or testing your retail service. Note that notice is not required for emergency repairs.

You (the customer) will:

- Ensure safe access to our infrastructure (including but not limited to the meter) located at your supply address. Our infrastructure maybe located within easements on your property.

5.11. Disconnections

Subject to any applicable regulatory requirements that prohibit disconnection, we will only disconnect your retail service if:

- you request the disconnection.
- there is a public health, environment or safety risk to our services from your connection point (e.g. backflow risk or unauthorised industrial waste discharge).
- you are found to be using the services illegally or have refused entry to person authorised to read your meter or undertake maintenance or repairs in accordance with relevant regulatory instruments.
- Where you request a disconnection (and it is not prohibited), we will use our best endeavours to issue you with a final account in accordance with your request. We will inform you if you are still required to pay our "service availability charge" when you request

the disconnection.

5.12. Complaints and dispute resolution

If you have a complaint, you should contact the Customer Service area of Council by telephone on 08 8525 3200; or by email to info@apc.sa.gov.au. Alternatively by visiting 2a Wasleys Road, Mallala.

Council will:

- Acknowledge your complaint or enquiry within 5 business days.
- When a resolution cannot occur within 14 calendar days, a response will be delivered to you outlining timeframes set by the Council employee responsible for resolving your complaint.
- Refer you to one of our senior managers if you are not satisfied with our initial response.
- Advise you of your option to escalate your complaint to the Ombudsman SA and provide you with the details of that organisation, should you not be happy with Council's response.

Further details on Council's Complaints Handling Policy are available on our website at www.apc.sa.gov.au, or by visiting 2a Wasleys Road, Mallala.. We will provide you with a copy of our Policy upon request.

5.13. Useful contacts

Ombudsman SA

Where required, the Ombudsman of South Australia Investigates complaints regarding Council's processes and decisions to determine if they are fair, reasonable and lawful.

Essential Services Commission of South Australia (ESCOSA)

ESCOSA is the economic regulator of the South Australian water industry. ESCOSA can be contacted by telephone on (08) 8463 4444 (metro) 1800 633 592 (mobiles and SA only); or via its website "www.escosa.sa.gov.au"

5.14. Changes to the Charter

This Customer Service Charter may only be changed with the approval of the Essential Services Commission. Customers will be informed of any substantive changes on or with the next available Council rates notice sent, that the Charter has changed and that details of the change are available on Council's website or upon request.

6. Related Documents

This policy shall operate in conjunction with the Adelaide Plains Council Complaints Handling Policy, Community Wastewater Management System Policy, Water and Sewerage Service Hardship Policy and Rates Arrears and Debtor Management Policy.

7. Record Management

All documents relating to this Policy will be registered in Council's Record Management System and remain confidential where identified.

8. Document Review

This Policy will be reviewed every two (2) years to ensure legislative compliance and that it continues to meet the requirements of Council and its activities and programs.

9. References

Local Government Act 1999 (SA)

Water Industry Act 2012

Codes of practice

Standards

10. Further Information

Members of the public may inspect this Policy free of charge on Council's website at www.apc.sa.gov.au or at Council's Principal Office at:

- 2a Wasleys Road, Mallala SA 5502
- A copy of this Policy may be obtained on payment of a fee.
- Any queries in relation to this Policy must be made in writing to info@apc.sa.gov.au to the attention of General Manager – Infrastructure and Environment.

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