

Guidelines for Preparing Customer Service Standards

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1 Introduction

The *Water Act 2000* (“the Act”) was enacted on 13 September 2000, and has replaced certain provisions of the *Water Resources Act 1989*. The Act can be accessed on the Internet at <http://www.legislation.qld.gov.au>

Chapter 3 of the Act (“Infrastructure and Service”) establishes a new regulatory regime covering provision of water and sewerage services. It applies to both public and private providers of services, and is based on a system of registration of service providers (Chapter 3, Part 2, Division 1 - “Registration of Service Providers”).

Part 3 of Chapter 3 (“Service Provider Obligations”) requires service providers to take certain actions designed to ensure continuity of the services they supply to customers and protect the interests of particular classes of customers. This includes a requirement for certain providers to have in place a Customer Service Standard (CSS) which documents (a) the level of service to be provided to customers; (b) processes for customer interaction with the provider (e.g. with respect to billing, metering, accounts etc) and (c) other matters set out in these guidelines. The requirement applies **only** to providers who do **not** have contracts¹ with all their customers.²

A CSS must be prepared by the service provider in accordance with the Act. **A copy of the CSS must be given to the regulator and to all customers who are not supplied under a contract with the service provider.** The regulator does not formally approve a CSS.

Currently, the “regulator” is the chief executive of the Department of Natural Resources & Mines (NR&M).

1.1 Guideline - aims

These Guidelines detail the **minimum requirements** for a Customer Service Standard i.e. what service providers **must** include in their CSS documentation in order to comply with the regulatory requirements. Service providers may choose at their own discretion to go beyond these requirements.

The Guidelines do not attempt to outline a “best practice” methodology for preparing customer service standards. These are issues for the service provider to determine at their own discretion. Other guidelines currently exist within industry which describe “best practice” in relation to these issues, for example, the Total Management Planning Guidelines issued by NR&M.

¹ The act actually states that CSS are only required where the service provider does not have a “supply contract” with all its customers. However, it is intended to amend the Act so that CSS are only required where the service provider does not have a “contract for the supply of services” with all its customers.

² Small service providers are eligible to apply for an exemption from this requirement.

The Guidelines are structured to reflect the four key components of the CSS regulatory requirement:

<i>Preparing a CSS</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • overview of the Act requirements - what is a CSS, who must prepare one, what services does it relate to; and when must a CSS be prepared • key components of a CSS and details of what must be documented
<i>Dissemination</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • requirements for dissemination to customers
<i>Annual reports and reviews</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • requirements for annual reports and reviews
<i>Customer complaints</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • information on specific circumstances in which customers can make further complaint to the regulator or ombudsman (under the <i>Ombudsman Act 2001</i>)

1.2 Application of the Guidelines

The service provider regulatory regime represents “new territory” for both service providers and the regulator. In preparing these Guidelines, the regulator has given careful consideration to the practicability and feasibility of compliance, particularly in the short term. Please note that

- *some requirements will be mandatory only from 1 October 2007*. This relates particularly to the requirement to include level of service standards in a CSS for particular indicators and is outlined in Section 2.5 - “Level of Service Standards”.
- *the Guidelines will be the subject of a review within the next 5 years* (before the commencement of the 1 October 2007 requirements) to ensure they remain appropriate for the purposes of the regulatory regime. The review will include:
 - consideration of outcomes arising from the first round of CSS (and related Strategic Asset Management Plans - see Section 1.3), annual reports, and reviews by all service providers;
 - assessment of evolving industry developments (e.g. work currently being undertaken by the Water Services Association of Australia, CSIRO and IPART in regard to setting system performance and customer service standards).

The review will also consider including:

- a mandatory requirement for quantitative, rather than qualitative, statements of level of service standards to be stated in a CSS - see Section 2.5.2
- a requirement to set additional level of service standards for “process issues” - see section 2.6.1

Any proposed modifications will be considered in a full consultation process with industry.

1.3 Linkages with other regulatory regime components

1.3.1 Strategic Asset Management Plan (SAMP) requirements

CSS are the primary way of ensuring customers without contracts¹ are adequately informed about the services they receive, including the standard of service they can expect to experience. However, they don't, of themselves, ensure those services are delivered reliably and in continuity - this latter objective is achieved through the complementary regulatory requirement, Strategic Asset Management Plans (SAMPs). The requirements for SAMPs are in Chapter 3, Part 3, Division 1 of the Act, and in the *"Guidelines for preparing Strategic Asset Management Plans"*.

CSS and SAMPs are inter-related. SAMPs require providers to "set" level of service standards and then document and implement a strategy that will ensure those standards are delivered. A CSS, on the other hand, essentially informs customers who do not have contracts¹ with their service provider of the level of service standards that are detailed in the SAMP. Thus, a CSS is **not** a separate process for "setting" level of service standards - rather, it **reflects** the level of service standards outlined in the SAMP.

Any subsequent changes to the level of service standards in the SAMP must be appropriately reflected in the CSS.

In determining level of service standards for a SAMP, service providers should have regard to contractual obligations and what they have previously told their customers they can expect to receive. Where service providers consult with customers about level of service standards outlined in a CSS, any resulting changes to the level of service standards in the CSS should, in turn, be appropriately reflected in the SAMP.

1.3.2 Exemptions

Small service providers² are eligible to apply to the regulator for an exemption from all or part of both CSS and SAMP requirements (s434).

In assessing an exemption application, the regulator will take into account the inter-relationship between CSS and SAMPs. Thus, where the regulator grants an exemption which relates to the level of service standards component of the SAMP requirement, an exemption will generally be granted for the level of service standards component of the CSS requirement (i.e. since the level of service standards expressed in a CSS are expected to reflect the level of service standards identified in a SAMP).

1 See footnote on Page 1

3 Schedule 4 of the Water Resources Act 2000 defines small service providers.

2 Preparing a CSS

2.1 What is a CSS?

The Act requires certain service providers to prepare a CSS with respect to the registered services they provide. In general terms (and in accordance with s425 of the Act), a CSS is required to document the following information:

- **Level of service to be provided by the service provider**—this is a direct reflection of the level of service standards identified in a SAMP, although they may be expressed in qualitative rather than quantitative terms. See section 2.5
- **Process issues**—process for service connections, billing, metering, accounting, customer consultation, complaints and dispute resolution. See section 2.6
- Any other matter required to be stated in these guidelines, for example the CSS must clearly identify the registered service or services to which it applies e.g. “water” services and/or “sewerage” services. See sections 2.3 to 2.6.

A CSS is intended to protect customers of a service provider who do not have contracts¹ with that provider, by ensuring they are adequately informed as to the service they are receiving, the level of service they can expect to experience, and how they interact with the provider. Service providers are required to comply with the CSS in supplying services to customers (s426).

2.2 Who must prepare a CSS?

The requirement to have a CSS applies to persons/entities that are registered under the Act as a water or sewerage “service provider”.

A “service provider” is the *owner* of the infrastructure providing the service, *not* the operator of the infrastructure (an operator may be a separate entity to the service provider). It is therefore the owner who is responsible for preparing a CSS.

However, the requirement does NOT apply to *all* service providers. The Act makes it clear that a **CSS will only be required if there are customers who are not supplied under a contract¹ with the service provider**. A CSS is also not required to be prepared if an exemption is obtained under s435 of the Act.

2.3 Which services must a CSS apply to?

A CSS must be prepared for **each** “registered service”. A **registered service** is a “water service” or “sewerage service” for which the person/entity is a registered service provider.

Many service providers supply **more than one registered service** (i.e. both “water” and “sewerage” services). In these circumstances, a combined CSS may be prepared that addresses all services provided.

Each CSS must clearly identify the registered service or services to which it applies.

¹ See footnote on Page 1

2.3.1 Different schemes

A “water” and/or a “sewerage” service is taken to be the *whole* service and need *not* be divided into part, individual or stand alone schemes. For example, a “sewerage” service provider may actually supply three separate sewerage schemes in three towns. In this case, all that is required is a single CSS for the provision of the “sewerage” service as a whole. However, a service provider can issue separate CSSs for individual schemes if it wants to.

2.3.2 Different types of water services

In practice, a service provider may supply more than one “type” of water service e.g.:

- bulk water - sale of water in large quantities, other than for irrigation
- retail water - reticulated service in a defined service area (other than for bulk water, irrigation, or recycled water)
- irrigation - supply of water or drainage services for irrigation of crops or pastures for commercial gain
- supply of water for stock and domestic purposes.

A CSS is usually concerned with the water service *as a whole*, regardless of the different types of water service supplied. However, where the service provider has chosen to set separate level of service standards for different “types” of water services in a SAMP (e.g. for retail water and irrigation services), then the CSS must reflect these separate standards.

2.4 When must a CSS be prepared?

Timing for preparation of a CSS depends on whether the service provider is:

- an “existing service provider” i.e. operating *at the time of commencement* of the relevant provisions of the Act - 1 October 2000; or
- a “new service provider” registered and commencing operations *subsequent* to 1 October 2000:

“***New service providers***”—a CSS must be prepared within 1 year of being registered as a service provider (unless exempted). (s424).

“***Existing service providers***”—for service providers operating as at 1 October 2000, an extension of time applies through the operation of transitional arrangements to the Act (s1061). The extension periods vary depending on whether the service provider is classified as large, medium or small⁴ - such providers must prepare a CSS by:

<i>Large</i>	1 October 2002
<i>Medium</i>	1 October 2003
<i>Small</i>	1 October 2004 (unless exempted)

⁴ Schedule 4 of the Water Resources Act 2000 defines large, medium and small service providers.

2.5 Level of service standards

2.5.1 Relationship to SAMP level of service standards

The “Guidelines for preparing Strategic Asset Management Plans” require providers to determine and set appropriate level of service standards in their SAMP, for a minimum range of performance indicators in their SAMP - these indicators are outlined in detail in the SAMP Guidelines.

Service providers set standards, *not* the regulator. The regulator does not in any way set standards to be achieved by the provider. It is the responsibility of the service provider to determine a set of appropriate standards for the prescribed indicators having regard to the unique circumstances of the system and the customers served.

The range of performance indicators relates to both:

- i) what customers will experience of the service; and
- ii) how the system needs to perform in order to deliver that service in continuity, both now and in the future (this includes integrity and viability of the assets delivering the service)

These **SAMP performance indicators** are grouped within four broad service outcome areas:

Day to day continuity of supply (water only)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • extent of unplanned interruptions to supply - (a) incidents; and (b) <i>connections affected by an interruption*</i> • time for restoration of service • <i>customer interruption frequency*</i> • relative incidence of planned and unplanned interruption incidents • <i>average interruption duration*</i> • response/reaction time to incidents
Adequacy and quality of normal supply (water only)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • minimum pressure/flow • <i>connections with deficient pressure/flow*</i> • drinking water quality (physical and chemical parameters only) • drinking water quality complaints • drinking water quality incidents
Effective transport of waste effluent (sewerage only)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • total sewage overflows • sewage overflows to customer property • odour complaints • response/reaction time to incidents
Continuity in the long term - (water and sewerage)	<p>Water</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • water main breaks and leaks • system water loss <p>Sewerage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sewer main breaks and chokes • sewer inflow/infiltration

* Note: it will only be mandatory for a service provider to set a standard for the italicised indicators from 1 October 2007

In the SAMP, service providers are required to set a **quantitative** standard for each of the above indicators (where relevant to the service provided) and to measure that standard in a particular manner (with a default measure or one alternatively defined by the service provider). For example, the provider may set a standard (for a given year) for restoration of supply as - 90% of all unplanned interruptions will be restored within 5 hours; or a standard for total sewage overflows as - no more than 30 sewage overflows will occur per 100km main. The standards set will generally relate to the “whole” system i.e. they are standards the service provider will achieve across the entire “registered service” as distinct from standards set for individual “schemes”.

As indicated in Section 1.3, service providers “set” level of service standards in a SAMP, and “inform” customers of those standards in a CSS. Thus, CSS are *not* a separate process for “setting” level of service standards, but **reflect the quantitative level of service standards outlined in a SAMP**.

However, while all of the above indicators are important to ensure continuity of services to customers (the primary objective of SAMPs), not all are relevant, or meaningful, to customers i.e. not all are descriptive of what customers can expect to experience of the service. **Thus the level of service standards included in a CSS need only relate to a “subset” of the SAMP performance indicators, as outlined below.**

2.5.2 Requirements for CSS level of service standards

The level of service standard component of the CSS must comply with the following:

1. Service providers must include a statement in their CSS which reflects the SAMP level of service standard set for the following performance indicators⁵

Day to day continuity of supply (water only)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • extent of unplanned interruptions to supply - (a) incidents; and (b) <i>connections affected by an interruption*</i> • time for restoration of service • <i>customer interruption frequency*</i> • average interruption duration* • response/reaction time to incidents
Adequacy and quality of normal supply (water only)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • minimum pressure/flow • <i>connections with deficient pressure/flow*</i> • drinking water quality (physical and chemical parameters only) • drinking water quality complaints • drinking water quality incidents
Effective transport of waste effluent (sewerage only)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • total sewage overflows • sewage overflows to customer property • odour complaints • response/reaction time to incidents

* Note: it will only be mandatory for a service provider to include a standard for the italicised indicators from 1 October 2007 - this is consistent with the approach taken for SAMPs.

⁵ Note: the CSS only reflects what standards have been set in the SAMP - depending on the service provided, the provider may not have set a standard for all of these indicators

2. Each statement must be EITHER:

- a) a **direct** reflection of the SAMP standard i.e. include the same **quantitative** standard as set by the provider (e.g. 90% of unplanned interruptions will be restored within 5 hours); OR
- b) a **qualitative** expression of the quantitative SAMP standard. NB this option was included to reflect the current uncertainty and debate within industry as to how best to communicate quantitative standards in a meaningful way to customers. *The approach will be re-assessed during the 5 year review of the CSS guidelines - any changes would only take effect from 1 October 2007.*

Where **qualitative** statements are used, the provider must ensure that:

- i) each statement:
 - specifically and identifiably, relates to the relevant level of service standard set in the SAMP; and
 - is consistent with, or equivalent to the quantitative standard. Some examples are included in Box 1 below - **these are provided as a guide only** - providers should develop qualitative statements appropriate to the unique circumstances of their systems and services;
- ii) the underlying quantitative standard relating to the qualitative statements must be available to customers (including a copy of the most recent Annual Report which relates to reporting performance against level of service standards)

Box 1 - a guide

Example 1 - drinking water quality - a statement such as “we will supply good quality water” would not be sufficient. However, a statement such as “we will use our best endeavours to ensure water supplied is in compliance with the physical and chemical parameters of X Guideline and is free from objectionable taste and odour” would be sufficient.

Example 2 - interruptions - “we will use our best endeavours to maintain supply of water to customers on a reliable and permanent basis. We will endeavour to restore service in the shortest possible time following unplanned events such as main bursts, emergencies, and power failures - in the majority of cases this will be within X hours. We will also use our best endeavours to keep the time of scheduled interruptions to supply (e.g. for maintenance purposes) to a minimum. If we have to carry out planned work which involves interrupting your supply for more than X hours, we will let you know in advance when the interruption will occur and when we expect supply to be restored”.

Example 3 - pressure/flow - “our aim is to ensure a continuously adequate supply of water in terms of flow/pressure is available for all customers. We will use our best endeavours to maintain pressure/flows in the supply system at a minimum X at the connection (i.e. boundary supply). For example, where your inlet pipe is Xmm, this would mean that you would be able to fill a X litre bucket within X seconds”.

Example 4 - sewage overflows - “we will use our best endeavours to operate our sewerage system to minimise the number of sewerage overflows to both private property and public land. Where overflows do occur, our aim, for the majority of cases, is to be on site to fix the problem and clean up the affected area, within X hours”.

Service providers must comply with the level of service standards (whether defined in a SAMP or communicated to customers in a CSS) in delivering services to customers (s414, s426). However, service providers may also choose to state in their SAMP and CSS what targets they are seeking to achieve beyond those standards ⁶. NB this is not a mandatory requirement.

2.5.3 Modification for rural/irrigation water services ⁷

The SAMP requirements for level of service standards differ for supply of water services to rural/irrigation customers. The SAMP Guidelines require providers of all services to negotiate with the regulator as to what they set level of service standards about. The CSS must reflect the SAMP level of service standards which are set by such providers.

2.5.4 Differential level of service standards - mandatory ONLY from 1 October 2007

Level of service standards will generally relate to system-wide performance i.e. unless the service provider chooses to set standards for different “schemes” or “types” of water services they are standards the provider will seek to achieve across the system for the entire registered service provided. In reporting against those level of service standards, the provider will effectively report “aggregated” performance i.e. “averaged out” across the system.

This approach has potential to be misleading as to actual performance with respect to some system areas/groups of customers e.g. some areas/customers may in fact receive a significantly lower than average level of service.

To address this issue, the following will apply **from 1 October 2007**:

Where:

1. there is a contiguous block of connections (i.e. not scattered across the system) receiving a *consistent* level of service which *less than* 80% of the standard (for one or more performance indicators) across the system; AND
2. the number of connections within the block exceeds EITHER 200 or more connections; OR is more than 15% of the total number of connections to the service, *whichever is greater*.

Then the provider must:

1. set, and report on, separate standards for that contiguous block *in the SAMP*, in a similar manner as the balance of the system; and
2. ensure that the differential level of service standards they set in a SAMP are also appropriately reflected in a *CSS for those areas*.

⁶ Service providers would need to clearly indicate that these are targets only, and not a standard to be met.

⁷ Rural/irrigation water services are primarily irrigation, drainage, and stock and domestic services.

2.6 Process issues

The Act requires service providers to state the process for:

- service connections
- billing
- metering
- accounting
- customer consultation
- complaints; and
- dispute resolution

Service providers must **describe** what processes are in place for **each** of the above matters in sufficient detail to enable customers to understand their rights and obligations, and how they interact with the service provider.

Appendix 1 includes some examples of issues water and sewerage providers have generally incorporated in documents describing these processes to customers. These are **provided as a guide only**, and should *not* be regarded as minimum requirements.

With respect to complaints, the CSS *must* include a statement that, in circumstances where a customer is unable to resolve a complaint with the service provider using the process outlined in the CSS, the customer may make a further complaint as follows:

- (a) if the service is an “agency” within the meaning of the *Ombudsman Act 2001* - to the Ombudsman;
or
- (b) if the service provider is not within the ambit of the *Ombudsman Act 2001* - to the regulator.

These mechanisms are described in more detail in Section 5.

2.6.1 Setting level of service standards for process issues

The general approach in other jurisdictions has been to require providers to set level of service standards for process matters (e.g. response time for account queries). Similarly, it is within the intent of the Queensland regulatory regime that providers set such standards. However, it is considered that such a requirement would not be feasible for all providers at this stage. **The issue will be reassessed during the 5 year review of the CSS Guidelines and approach - any mandatory requirement to set standards for process issues would not apply until 1 October 2007.**

3 Dissemination

A CSS is not formally approved by the regulator, but a copy of the CSS must be given (s424) to:

- a) the regulator; and
- b) each customer who is not supplied under a contract¹ with the service provider.

3.1 What does “give a copy to all customers” mean?

A *physical* copy of the CSS is required to be sent to each customer of the service provider (i.e. those who are not supplied under a contract¹ with the service provider).

Some providers may produce detailed CSS documentation for customers, which goes considerably beyond the Act and Guideline requirements - the resulting document may be significant in size. In these circumstances, providers may “summarise” the CSS document and give a copy of this to all customers (e.g. with a reference to a call centre or internet site for a copy of the full version). The summary document must comply with the minimum requirements of the Act and these Guidelines.

3.2 Can a CSS be changed once it is disseminated?

A CSS may be changed after it is disseminated in response to:

- a) an annual review (see Section 4.2); or
- b) a complaint process (see Section 5).

If a CSS is changed, the service provider must give a copy of the changed document to the regulator and each customer of the service provider.

NB due to the inter-relationship between CSS and SAMP requirements, a substantive change to the level of service component in a SAMP document, may also trigger a change to the provider’s CSS for those services, and vice versa.

¹ See footnote on Page 1

4 Annual Reports and Reviews

4.1 Annual reports

Service providers must prepare an annual report for each financial year after the CSS was prepared. Annual Reports must be given to the regulator within 120 business days of the end of the financial year (s430), unless Section 4.1.2 (below) applies.

Annual reports must be made available for inspection and purchase by members of the public.

Annual reporting requirements apply similarly to the SAMP requirement (see linkages section). The Act allows providers to submit a combined CSS/SAMP Annual Report.

4.1.1 Components of an annual report

The annual report must:

<i>Measure the service provider's performance for the financial year against the CSS</i>	<p>With respect to level of service standards - the level of service standards included in a CSS are expected to reflect those identified in a SAMP. As such, no separate reporting with respect to CSS level of service standards is required - all reporting on performance against level of service standards may be addressed in the SAMP annual report i.e. the data need only be reported once.</p> <p>With respect to process issues - providers must report the existence and/or implementation of appropriate processes for each of the required matters.</p>
<i>Outcomes of any CSS annual review</i>	The service provider must report the outcomes of any annual review of the CSS, including how the provider has addressed issues raised by the review.

4.1.2 Local Governments may NOT have to prepare annual reports

Local government service providers do NOT have to prepare an annual report ***provided:***

- a) the required information (as outlined above) is included in a report under s531 of the *Local Government Act 1993*; AND
- b) a copy of that report is given to the regulator within 30 business days of its adoption by the local government

4.2 Reviews

The service provider is required to review a CSS *each year*. The review is undertaken in accordance with s429 of the Act.

If the CSS is changed as a result of the review, the service provider must give a copy of the changed document to the regulator and all customers of the service provider.

Outcomes of reviews are reported in the annual report.

NB due to the inter-relationship between CSS and SAMP requirements, a substantive change to the level of service component a SAMP document, may also trigger a change to the provider's CSS for those services, and vice versa.

5 Customer complaints

The primary avenue for customer complaints is the process outlined in the CSS (or in contracts where there is no CSS).

However, where the complaint is not satisfied through this avenue, the Act provides certain customers to whom a CSS applies, with an additional avenue for complaint. Application of this complaint process depends on whether the service provider is:

- a) a “public sector” service provider subject to the *Ombudsman Act 2001* (an “agency”); or
- b) a “private sector” service provider that is not subject to the *Ombudsman Act 2001*

5.1 “Public sector” service providers

If a service provider is an “agency” as defined in the *Ombudsman Act 2001*, it is subject to the customer complaint process under that Act and not the customer complaint process set out in the *Water Act 2000* (s427 and s428).

“Agencies” for this purpose are defined in the *Ombudsman Act 2001* and include:

- a department
- a local government
- a public authority

Under the *Ombudsman Act 2001*, the Ombudsman has the power to investigate certain administrative actions taken by “agencies”. Therefore, if the Ombudsman receives a complaint from a customer of a service provider (who is an “agency”), the Ombudsman will consider whether to commence, under the *Ombudsman Act 2001*, an investigation into that complaint.

The service provider must be given written notice if the Ombudsman decides to conduct an investigation and intends exercising powers under Part 4 of the *Ombudsman Act 2001*.

Depending on the results of the investigation, a report and recommendations may be given to the service provider and the Minister for Natural Resources & Mines. The complainant will also be informed of the results of the investigation.

5.2 “Private sector” service providers

“Private sector” service providers will generally not be an “agency” to which the *Ombudsman Act 2001* applies - these service providers are subject to the customer complaint process in sections 427 and 428 of the *Water Act 2000*.

In accordance with this process, the customer must first attempt to resolve its complaint through negotiation with the service provider. If the complaint is not resolved, and the customer considers:

- there is a significant deficiency in a CSS; or
- the service provider has not complied with its CSS

then the customer may give the regulator notice of the complaint. If the regulator receives such a notice, the regulator must:

- give the service provider a copy; and
- inquire into the matter.

Three options are then available to the regulator:

- if the service provider has not complied with its CSS, the regulator must give the provider a compliance notice requiring it to comply with its CSS
- if the complaint highlights a deficiency in the CSS, the regulator must give the provider a compliance notice requiring it to revise the CSS;
- if the regulator is satisfied no action is required, the regulator must give the provider a notice to this effect

The regulator must also give the customer an information notice about the action taken.

Notice to the service provider:

If a compliance notice is issued, it must comply with the *Water Act's* formal requirements for such notices (Chapter 5, Part 2, Division 1 of the Act). The compliance notice must be complied with unless there is a reasonable excuse for not doing so.

If the notice requires a revision of a CSS, the service provider must give each of its customers and the regulator a copy of the revised document.

Under the review provisions in Chapter 6 of the Act, the service provider can apply to the regulator for an internal review of the decision about the CSS, if it is contained in a compliance notice, and obtain a review decision. If the service provider is not satisfied with the review decision, arbitration can be sought from the Queensland Competition Authority.

Notice to the customer:

The information notice issued must comply with the *Water Act's* formal requirements for such notices.⁸

Under the review provisions in Chapter 6 of the *Water Act*, the customer can apply to the regulator for an internal review of the decision about the CSS and obtain a review decision. If the customer is not satisfied with the review decision, arbitration can be sought from the Queensland Competition Authority.

⁸ Schedule 4 of the Water Resources Act 2000 defines an information notice.

Appendix 1 "Process issues" examples

Service Connections:

- how to apply for a new service connection
 - how long it may take to get that connection (e.g. 15 days for a 20mm water service; 20 days for a sewerage connection)
 - fees for connection
 - relevant contacts
- restoration of an existing or disconnected water service
 - how long it may take to get that connection
 - fees for connection
 - relevant contacts
- any requirements for operation of that connection or terms and conditions of use (e.g. maintenance of pump if irrigation supply; water ordering method)
- special needs customers

Billing:

- basis for bills e.g. meter reading, estimation, levy (e.g. for irrigation supplies)
- time between reading/estimation and forwarding of bill
- charging regime - metered and unmetered; fixed and usage charges
- billing cycle - when and how bills are sent
- information on the bill
- under- and over-charging
- final accounts if moving house
- relevant contacts

Metering:

(may not be relevant for all providers)

- meter installation/connection - e.g. option to have it, time from application to installation
- meter accuracy e.g. testing if believe inaccurate
- meter difficulties and replacements
- process and access for meter reading
- relevant contacts

Accounting:

- when payment is due
- methods of payment
- account inquiries and queries

- consequences of non-payment or late payment e.g. flow restrictions; debt recovery

Customer Consultation:

- e.g. about level of service standards; involving customers in service planning (e.g. customer committees); customer surveys
- publishing results of any review of standards and/or progress against standards
- contact details for service difficulties, emergencies, account and general inquiries
- notice periods for entry onto private property
- notice for planned interruptions e.g. if we have to carry out planned work which involves interrupting your water supply for more than one hour, we will let you know at least X hours in advance when the interruption will happen and when we expect the supply to be restored

Complaints and Dispute Resolution:

- avenues for making complaints e.g. phone, written
- how those complaints will be dealt with e.g. contact details for complaints; dealt with in area independent from area the subject of the complaint; acknowledged promptly and dealt with expeditiously (target times??); inform complainant of processes, time for reaching decision, decision reached and reasons for the decision and any further redress available.
- complaints should be dealt with first internally to the provider and then, if necessary referred to independent mediation or arbitration.
- response times for complaints
- if dispute resolution required - process e.g. mediation
- who may make a complaint (e.g. property owner -v- tenant)



Queensland
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