



**HINCHINBROOK**  
**SHIRE COUNCIL**

# **CUSTOMER SERVICE STANDARD**

## **FOR WATER AND SEWERAGE SERVICES**

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### Document Control

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## 1. OVERVIEW OF CUSTOMER SERVICE STANDARDS

Hinchinbrook Shire Council is a registered service provider (SP62) of water supply and sewerage services under the *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 *Customer Service Standard for Water and Sewerage Services* to meet the requirements of the *Water Act 2000* and to act as a stimulus to improve services through a focus on customer expectations. Council's key responsibility is the provision of a continuous and reliable water supply and sewerage services. This document defines our approach to this commitment and responsibilities we share with our customers.

It is important, within prevailing financial, organisational and other constraints, for Council to take reasonable and appropriate steps to: -

- Assess what customers expect of their water and sewerage services
- Define the standards of service to be provided
- Achieve and consistently maintain those standards.

The establishment and maintenance of levels of service standards and the Customer Service Standards is seen as central to Council's activities and a major driver for Council's Corporate and Department Operational Plans for water and sewerage services.

### 1.1 Objectives

This Service Standards Management Plan has been developed to: -

- Ensure agreed service standards are met
- Encourage and support community participation in Council activities
- Promote community interaction
- Improve communication with the community.

To meet these objectives, Council has specified performance standards that are now supplemented with the requirements under the *Water Act 2000*. The Service Standard Plan presents the service standards and strategies for Council employees to meet these standards in water supply and sewerage management.

### 1.2 Our Responsibilities

In this document we have developed a table of performance indicators 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
- effective transportation and treatment of sewage
- continuity of water supply and sewerage services in the long-term

### 1.3 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 and areas where your assistance will be sought include:

- maintaining the pipe work and fittings within your property that connects 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 we can read water consumption and generate your account
- taking care to never discharge un-authorised substances into sewers
- notifying us of any faults that you have encountered or concerns you may have so that we can correct the problem as quickly as possible
- paying your account when it falls due

## 1.4 Current Issues

The issues, risks and opportunities to manage and improve the levels of water supply and sewerage services to customers is summarised in Table 1.

**Table 1 – Issues, Risks and Opportunities**

<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>STRENGTHS</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Water and Sewerage Operations operates a 24 hour on call response system 365 days per year <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Extensive monitoring programs are in place for treatment quality and operating parameters – by operations personnel and/or by electronic systems [SCADA]</li> <li>A computer based water and sewerage request database is in place</li> </ul> </li> <li>Service Standards are in place and continue to be monitored and developed</li> <li>All staff dealing directly with customers is qualified.</li> <li>The community is water wise and ready to advise Council of improvements</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>WEAKNESSES</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Poor resource utilisation due to lack of customer knowledge <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Peak demands during prolonged dry seasons <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vandalism and malicious activities</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>Implementation of CSS and support system require ongoing financial commitment</li> <li>Isolation of whole streets to repair a house water connection is resources efficient, but impacts on continuity service standards</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>OPPORTUNITIES</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Outsourcing of some non-core services and/or resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Development of service level agreements</li> </ul> </li> <li>Regular surveys of, and consultation with, customer groups <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expand benchmarking to enable comparison of relevant activity with other service providers</li> <li>Education and awareness activities/programs.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>THREATS</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increasing community awareness of activity, service levels and compliance with relevant standards</li> <li>Maintaining continuity of services during extended breakdowns &amp;/or electricity supply interruptions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintaining continuity of good quality raw water supplies</li> </ul> </li> <li>Privatisation – takeover by alternate service provider</li> <li>Asset condition varies considerably, affecting service reliability in some areas.</li> <li>Sewerage operations lie within the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park catchment.</li> </ul>

## 2. PERFORMANCE TARGETS FOR WATER

### 2.1 Water Supply Continuity

The water and sewerage supply services in the Hinchinbrook Shire are designed to be available 24 hours a day, but under some circumstances we may need to interrupt, postpone or limit these services. This may include, but not be limited to:

- Damage to the infrastructure requiring unplanned maintenance. E.g. burst main, breakdowns.
- Planned maintenance. E.g. inspections for asset management, maintenance or replacing parts.
- Connecting new work or services.
- Events outside of Council's control. E.g. flooding, cyclone, storm surge.
- Declared water supply restrictions.
- Event where there is a possibility of a significant health risk arising.

Except in emergencies and in situations where interrupts are limited to a short duration, Hinchinbrook Shire Council will aim to provide customers with at least 48 hours notice of any intention to interrupt, postpone or limit the supply of

services. 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 Quality and Delivery of the Water Supply System**

Hinchinbrook Shire Council has several pressure monitoring stations across the water network to monitor the delivery of the water to the customers. Council endeavours to maintain the water pressure and flow to the adopted target of 17 litres/minute at 220 kpa.

It is possible that the customer may experience periods of reduced pressure and flows, which is likely to occur during periods of high demand, hot weather, fire fighting elsewhere in the system, etc.

Council strives to ensure that the water supply complies with the Water Quality Standards outlined in the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines and has implemented a Drinking Water Quality Management Plan. Council performance regular monitoring of the system, including samples sent to a NATA Certified Laboratory to ensure that the water quality meets the guideline.

## **2.3 Water Supply Restrictions**

Under certain circumstances, Council may need to impose water supply restrictions. Examples of some circumstances where these may be required:

- Periods of drought.
- Short term supply problems with system capacity and asset performance.

Water restriction levels have been determined by Council, and are implemented in circumstances where the water supply is vulnerable due to periods of drought or supply issues. Level 0 Water Restrictions are currently in place in the Hinchinbrook Shire. A description of the water restriction levels are given below:

### **Level 0**

Applies to sprinklers only:

- Even numbered houses – Monday, Wednesday and Friday
- Odd numbered houses – Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday.
- Sprinklers are not permitted on Sunday.

Hand held hoses are permitted on any day.

NOTE: Occurs when low lift pumps are operating less than 12-14 hours/day.

### **Level 1**

The use of sprinklers is permitted between the hours of 6 – 8 am and 6 – 8 pm only:

- Even numbered houses – Monday, Wednesday and Friday
- Odd number houses – Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday.
- Sprinklers are not permitted on Sunday

Hand held hoses are permitted on any day.

NOTE: Occurs when low lift pumps are operating more than 14-16 hours/day on average.

### **Level 2**

The use of sprinklers is permitted between the hours of 6 – 8 am only:

- Even numbered houses – Monday, Wednesday and Friday
- Odd number houses – Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday.
- Sprinklers are not permitted on Sunday

Hand held hoses are permitted on any day.

NOTE: Occurs when low lift pumps are operating more than 18-20 hours/day on average.

## 2.4 Performance Indicators

The following table quantifies our levels of services as required under the *Water Act 2000*:

Indicator	Performance Indicator	Target	Comment
<b>Water Supply Continuity</b>			
Unplanned Interruptions	Number per 1000 connections	≤ 100	
Response Time	90% restored within timeframe (depends on priority level)	1 week	Priority Low – No appreciable loss of supply
		3 days	Priority Moderate – Minimal effect to supply
		3 hours	Priority High – Appreciable loss of supply
		2 hours	Priority Urgent – Total loss or imminent total loss of supply
Rectification Time	90% restored within timeframe (depends on priority level)	1 month	Priority Low – No appreciable loss of supply
		1 week	Priority Moderate – Minimal effect to supply
		6 days	Priority High – Appreciable loss of supply
		6 hours	Priority Urgent – Total loss or imminent total loss of supply
Notice for Interruption to Supply	Planned Interruptions	48 hours	Provide customers with at least 48 hours notice of any intention to interrupt the water service for a planned event.
Installation of a new standard 20mm water service	New water service	Commence within ≤ 10 working days	Application does not being processing until Council has received the form and fee. Larger diameter connections to be installed by agreement.
<b>Adequacy and Quality of the Water Supply System</b>			
Minimum Pressure	220 kPa	220 kPa	
Minimum Flow	17 L/min	17 L/min	
Drinking Water Quality Microbiological	Compliance with NHMRC Guidelines	≥ 98%	
Drinking Water Quality Physical/Chemical	Compliance with NHMRC Guidelines	≥ 90%	Some known issues with Iron, Turbidity and Colour.
Drinking Water Quality Issues	Number per 1000 connections	≤ 30	
Drinking Water Quality Incidents.	Number incidents/ year	≤ 20	
<b>Long Term Continuity of Water Supply Services</b>			
Water Main Breaks & Leaks	Number per 1000 connections	≤ 10	
	Number per 100 km of main	≤ 25	
Water Loss	L/connection/day	220 L	

### 3. PERFORMANCE TARGETS FOR

Hinchinbrook Shire Council provides customers with a service for the collection, transportation and treatment of domestic sewage and trade waste. Council carries a licence with the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection for the treatment and disposal of the treated sewerage effluent.

#### 3.1 Effective Transportation of Sewage

Council's sewerage services are designed to be available 24 hours a day. Under certain circumstances, these services may need to be interrupted, postponed or limited. This may be:

- Damage to the infrastructure requiring unplanned maintenance. E.g. burst main, breakdowns.
- Planned maintenance. E.g. inspections for asset management, maintenance or replacing parts.
- Connecting new work or services.
- Events outside of Council's control. E.g. flooding, cyclone, storm surge.
- Event where there is a possibility of a significant health risk arising.

Except in emergencies and in situations where interrupts are limited to a short duration, Hinchinbrook Shire Council will aim to provide customers with at least 48 hours notice of any intention to interrupt, postpone or limit the supply of services. 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.

#### 3.2 Performance Indicators

The following table quantifies our levels of services as required under the *Water Act 2000*:

Indicator	Performance Indicator	Target	Comment
<b>Effective Transportation of Sewerage</b>			
Sewage Overflows	Number per 100 km/year	≤ 20	
	Number per 1000 connections	≤ 8	
Odour Issues	Number per 1000 connections/year	≤ 10	
Response Time	Requests that are priority urgent	90% in ≤ 2 hours	Sewerage overflows, blockages, etc
	Other non urgent requests	90% in ≤ 3 days	Odour issues, etc
Rectification Time	Requests that are priority urgent	90% in ≤ 6 hours	Sewerage overflows, blockages, etc
	Other non urgent requests	90% in ≤ 2 weeks	Odour issues, etc
<b>Long-term Continuity of Sewerage Services</b>			
Sewer Breaks & Chokes	Number per 100 km of main	≤ 12	
Sewer Rising Main Breaks & Chokes	Number per 100km of main	≤ 1	
Sewer Inflow & Infiltration	8 (MD/AD)	8 (MD/AD)	



## **4. CUSTOMER SERVICE**

### **4.1 Public Relations**

Council publishes community announcements on a regular basis in local newspapers and in other associated community newsletters and distributed to the mailbox of every house in the Shire and surrounding areas. The newsletter deals with a wide variety of issues such as paying rates, library services and items of community interest, such as festivals.

Council also provides regular information bulletins in the local newspapers of the latest Shire news such as road works, water supply disruptions, etc.

Council has a general policy “To facilitate public consultation and community representation at Council level on general or specific issues” and expects all its service groups to involve the community in matters that do or have the potential to affect the community. Therefore, the community is notified of known changes or disruption of water and sewerage services through local news media or (because the Hinchinbrook Shire communities are small) by direct contact from Council employees.

Council keeps both customers and the general public informed of upcoming water and sewerage service works through the following modes according to the complexity, impact and project duration: -

- Newspaper
- Public displays at Council’s office
- Public meetings
- Key stakeholder or interest group meetings.
- Social Media (Facebook)

### **4.2 Customer Consultation**

Characteristically, the service communities: -

- Are relatively small
- Are aware of Council’s activities (uniforms, marked vehicles, infrastructure near major roads)
- Have good knowledge of the Council’s day to day activities
- Can readily contact the Council office or employee for help or enquiry
- Do not participate in regular customer surveys, although community consultation is part of the planning process (refer Service Standards Management Plan and Infrastructure Planning).

Community consultation has been utilised for larger water supply and sewerage planning and management issues, projects and tariff changes in accordance with Council’s corporate public relations objectives.

The community is very water waste conscious and Council receives regular formal and informal feedback from the community about the quality and reliability of their water and sewerage services.

### **4.3 Construction (Maintenance, Renewal/ Augmentation)**

Customers, commercial businesses and the general public are informed via letter, newspaper and in notices posted on Council’s website prior to the commencement and throughout planned capital and maintenance works - particularly where there is likely to be disruption to service, traffic or pedestrian access. Affected residents and businesses are given progress updates monthly and again notified upon resumption of services and site cleanup to confirm customer satisfaction.

Specific, or the latest, information on works can be obtained by enquiry through Council’s Customer Service Centre and in some instances on Council’s web site.

### **4.4 Service Requests**

Residents and businesses that lodge service requests are contacted following resumption of services and site cleanup to confirm customer satisfaction.

## 4.5 Service Interruptions and Emergencies

When operations emergency or service breakdowns occur, a variety of communication methods are used to alert the general public of potential service disruption or risk to health or property (refer Table 2 below). Natural Disaster and Emergency response by Council is coordinated with Council as detailed in the Council's Counter Disaster Plan.

**Table 2 - Customer Communications Announcing Service Interruption**

<b>Unplanned interruption (&lt; 2 day notice)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(&lt;200 Households affected) Customer Service Centre notified and updated as necessary.</li> <li>(&gt;200 Households affected) Possible advertising through the radio. Customer Service Centre notified and updated as necessary.</li> </ul>
<b>Unplanned interruptions (&gt;2 days notice)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(&lt;200 Households affected) Letterbox drops to affected residences and businesses. Customer Service Centre notified and updated as necessary.</li> <li>(&gt;200 Households affected) Advertising through the local newspaper and radio. Letterbox drops to affected residences and businesses. Customer Service Centre notified and updated as necessary.</li> </ul>
<b>Planned works</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(&lt;200 household affected) Letters to all residents/ businesses affected.</li> <li>(&gt;200 household affected) Letters to all residents/ businesses affected. Advertising through the local newspaper and radio.</li> </ul>

## 4.6 Customer Enquiries and Handling Concerns

Maintaining water and sewerage services is the responsibility of Council's Water and Sewerage Manager. Customer concerns are received at Council's Customer Service Centre during working hours and diverted to after-hours on call officers to handle and categorise after-hours enquiries and service concerns.

Currently, the water and sewerage request register is a database, this system allows for all concerns or issues received (even after hours) to be recorded and directed to a Council officer for attention. This system can generate reports on issues, outstanding actions, etc.

The majority of water concerns relate to mains bursts and leaks with the majority of sewerage concerns relating to sewer blockages or odours. These results include all calls to the Council (including after-hours). The Customer Service Centre: -

- Categorise the nature of the concern
- Determine the severity of the interruption
- On call Officers are paged to response
- The on call Officers contact the caller to verify and seeks additional information to determine the urgency of the request.

Council's current approach is to respond to all water and sewerage service failures within the specified Customer Service Counter response time (refer Appendix A).

All customer enquiries and concerns are recorded in Council's water and sewerage request database for tracking. Council staff is encouraged to promote Council's interests when dealing with people outside the organisation. Counter staff receive formal staff training in customer service. All staff can access procedures on Council's intranet.

## 4.7 Billing

All consumption of water is metered. Council applies a two-part water tariff for property owners; a minimum access charge and a consumption charge per kilolitre that varies according to the reading of the water meter located at a property's boundary. Water Consumption Charges are issued every 6 months (in May and November) on a Hinchinbrook Shire Council Water Bill.

Sewerage services are subject to a fixed annual access charge, which is billed on a 6 monthly basis with the rates notice.

#### **4.8 Water & Sewerage Connection/Disconnection**

The fees for a water or sewerage connection are as per Council's Fees and Charges. The application to connect a water supply service to your property is available on Council's website or at the Customer Service Centre. The new water connection will not be installed until the appropriate form has been filled out and fee has been paid.

Council will only disconnect a water connection upon a written request from the property owner.

Sewerage connections are usually installed as part of subdivision works and the application is processed concurrently with your building application.

### **5. CONTACT DETAILS**

Contact details for Hinchinbrook Shire Council are given below:

Street Address:	25 Lannercost Street, Ingham
Postal Address:	PO Box 366 Ingham QLD 4850
Office Hours:	8:30 am to 5:00 pm, Monday to Friday
General Telephone:	(07) 4776 4600
Water and Sewerage Services:	(07) 4776 4673
Email Address:	<a href="mailto:council@hinchinbrook.qld.gov.au">council@hinchinbrook.qld.gov.au</a>
After Hours Emergency Number:	(07) 4776 4600 and follow the prompts

The public after hours number is for all general inquires/emergencies after hours. All calls received will be transfer to the officer on call.