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CUSTOMER SERVICE CODE

URBAN WATER BUSINESSES

5 AUGUST 2020

Customer Service Code Urban Water Businesses

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AMENDMENT RECORD

<i>Issue No.</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Nature of amendment</i>
1	7 July 2005	Schedule 1 approved GSLs
2	7 July 2005	Schedule 2 approved service standard targets for Grampians Wimmera Mallee and Lower Murray Water for 2005-06
3	30 June 2006	Schedule 2 removed
4	11 July 2007	Changes reflecting hardship policy review and other minor amendments
5	25 June 2008	Amended Schedule 1 approved GSLs; Schedule 2 approved service standards
6	22 June 2009	Amended Schedule 1 approved GSLs; Schedule 2 approved service standards
7	15 October 2010	Amended clause 7.2(a) threshold for restricting supply or taking legal action (takes effect from 15 October 2010) Amended Schedule 1 approved GSLs (takes effect from 1 January 2011)
8	27 June 2012	Amended clauses to account for consequential, administrative and transitional changes following passing of <i>Water Amendment Act 2012</i>
9	5 December 2012	Amended clauses to account for debt management changes following the passing of the <i>Water Amendment Act 2012</i>
10	1 July 2013	Amended Schedule 1 approved GSLs; Schedule 2 approved service standards
11	24 September 2014	Amended clauses to account for consequential changes following the making of Water (Estimation, Supply and Sewerage) Regulations 2014
12	7 April 2017	Inserted family violence clause and consequential amendments made
13	1 August 2018	Amended schedules 1 and 2 to give effect to GSLs and service standards approved in water price review 2018
14	10 June 2020	Amended schedules 1 and 2 to give effect to GSLs and service standards approved in water price review 2020 (takes effect from 1 July 2020)
15	5 August 2020	Inserted new clause and schedule 3 to effect coronavirus support.

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PART A — INTRODUCTION

This code is made under section 4F of the *Water Industry Act 1994* and in accordance with the Water Industry Regulatory Order, made pursuant to section 4D of the *Water Industry Act 1994*.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this code is to specify standards and conditions of service and supply that water businesses (and their agents) must comply with in providing certain regulated services to customers. It applies in respect of water businesses' basic retail water services (including drinking water, reticulated non-potable water and recycled water services (unless specifically exempted by this code or by a decision of the Commission)) and sewerage services.

The Commission's Trade Waste Customer Service Code places additional obligations on water businesses and Melbourne Water specific to the management of trade waste services.

This code does not apply to water businesses in respect of diversion services (including groundwater), retail water services related to irrigation and stock and domestic, and irrigation drainage services which are covered by the Commission's rural water customer service code. This code does not apply to bulk water, sewerage or recycled water services provided to a water business.

Each water business is required to:

- (a) meet the customer-related standards, procedures and practices set out in this code; and
- (b) develop, issue and comply with a customer charter which meets the procedural and substantive requirements of this code and sets out the water business's approved service standards.

AMENDMENT TO THIS CODE

This code may be amended by the Commission on its own initiative or in response to a proposal by a water business or other stakeholders.

The Commission will not amend this code until water businesses and other stakeholders have had a reasonable opportunity to make representations and those representations have been considered, in accordance with the Commission's Charter of Consultation and Regulatory Practice.

The Commission will give reasonable notice to water businesses of any amendments to this code.

COMMENCEMENT

This code regulates water businesses from 1 July 2005, except for Part C which applies from 1 November 2004.

New clause 14 (Family Violence) commences on 1 July 2017. A water business must have a family violence policy from that date and must ensure that the policy is fully implemented by 30 June 2018.

New clause 15 (National Cabinet Coronavirus Support Policy and Principles – April 2020 (National Principles)) commences on 18 August 2020. A water business must apply the National Principles as required by clause 15.

SEPARATE WRITTEN AGREEMENTS

A separate written agreement for the provision of a service made before 1 November 2004 need not comply with this Code.

A separate written agreement made after 1 November 2004 need not comply with this Code if the agreement does not extend beyond 30 June 2005.

A separate written agreement made after 1 November 2004 to apply beyond 1 July 2005 for the provision of a service cannot reduce the rights of a customer provided or implied in this code unless the water business can demonstrate that satisfying the code requirements is not practical and the water business expressly identifies any material departures from this code to the customer in writing.

A recycled water contract need not comply with this code if it does not provide for domestic reticulated recycled water or if the Commission expressly decides otherwise.

PART B — STANDARDS AND CONDITIONS OF SERVICE AND SUPPLY

1. CONNECTION AND SERVICE PROVISION

1.1 Obligation to provide service

Subject to water law and this code, if a customer's property is connected to a system, the water business must provide the relevant service in accordance with this code.

1.2 Obligation to connect

Subject to water law, where a person requests connection to a service that is available, a water business must connect or approve connection to the person's property within 10 business days, or such later date as agreed, if:

- (a) the customer has paid or agreed to pay all applicable connection fees; and
- (b) the customer has complied with all reasonable terms and conditions of connection imposed by the water business.

1.3 Limits on recycled water services

A water business may refuse to provide a recycled water service if the customer has not either entered into a recycled water agreement in a form acceptable to the water business or otherwise received the consent of the water business. A water business may discontinue a recycled water service if the customer breaches the applicable permitted use rules.

A water business must advise customers of the standards and requirements necessary for entering a recycled water agreement or obtaining a consent.

2. CHARGES

2.1 Variation

Subject to water law and this code, if a customer's property is connected to a system, the water business must provide the relevant service in accordance with this code.

A water business must notify customers of any variation in charges for services on or with the first bill after the decision to vary the charges has been made.

A water business may calculate a pro rata charge to effect a variation in charges where the variation date falls within a billing period.

2.2 Schedule of charges

A water business must publish its schedule of approved fees and charges on its website and provide a copy to a customer upon request.

3. COMPLAINTS AND DISPUTES

3.1 Complaints and disputes policy

A water business must have and comply with policies, practices and procedures for the handling of complaints from customers and others affected by the water business's operations.

Without limiting this general obligation, a water business's complaints and disputes policy must provide:

- (a) that if a written reply is requested the water business will take no more than 10 business days to respond to an enquiry or complaint; and
- (b) that a reply to a customer's enquiry or complaint must deal with the substance of the enquiry or complaint or tell the customer when they will receive such a reply if the enquiry or complaint is complex; and
- (c) the reasons for a decision to be given to the complainant, including details of the legislative or policy basis for the reasons if appropriate; and

- (d) a complaint escalation process that gives a customer:
 - (1) the opportunity to raise the complaint up to the level of a senior manager within the water business's management structure; and
 - (2) information about referral to EWOV and any other relevant external dispute resolution forum in the event that the customer has raised the complaint to a higher level and is not satisfied with the water business's response; and
- (e) that the water business is restricted in its ability to recover an amount of money which is in dispute, until the dispute has been resolved; and
- (f) that a complainant is informed of the matters in paragraphs (a) to (e) above.

3.2 Resolution of disputes

A water business must endeavour to resolve in good faith any dispute directly with its customers and others affected by its operations.

For the purposes of clause 3.1(e), a water business may consider a dispute about non-payment resolved if:

- (a) it has informed the complainant of its decision on the complaint or any internal review of the complaint; and
- (b) 10 business days have passed since the complainant was informed; and
- (c) the complainant has not:
 - (1) sought a further review under this clause; or
 - (2) lodged a claim with EWOV or another external dispute resolution forum.

A water business must not consider a dispute resolved until any claim lodged with EWOV or another external dispute resolution forum has been finalised.

4. BILLING

4.1 Billing cycle

A water business's billing cycle must be at least quarterly unless otherwise approved by the Commission or more frequently if agreed with the customer.

A water business may bill commercial customers or other customers with high water or recycled water usage, or high trade waste or sewage disposal more frequently.

4.2 Water business's meter readings

A water business must use reasonable endeavours to ensure that all customers whose properties have a meter which measures volumetric use for billing purposes have an actual meter reading every billing cycle, or otherwise at least once every 12 months.

4.3 Special meter readings

Upon request by the customer a water business must determine a customer's outstanding charges outside of the normal billing cycle within the period (if any) specified by water law.

The water business may calculate the outstanding charges by:

- (a) arranging for a special meter reading at a reasonable charge payable by the customer; or
- (b) where permitted by water law, providing an estimated bill at no cost to the customer.

4.4 Issue of bills

A water business may issue a bill to:

- (a) a customer at the physical or electronic address specified by the customer; or
- (b) a customer's agent at the physical or electronic address specified by the customer if the customer has made a written request to the water business; or
- (c) any person authorised to act on behalf of the customer at the physical or electronic address specified by that person.

If no address has been specified, a water business may send the bill to the physical address of the property in respect of which the charges have been incurred, or to the customer's last known address.

4.5 Content of bills

A bill issued by a water business must contain the following information:

- (a) the date of issue;
- (b) the customer's billing address and account number;
- (c) the address of the property to which the charges in the bill relate;
- (d) the date on which the meter was read, or if the reading is an estimation, a clear statement that the reading is an estimation;
- (e) the amount the customer is required to pay;
- (f) the date by which the customer is required to pay;
- (g) the ways in which the customer can pay the bill;
- (h) information about help that is available if the customer is experiencing difficulties paying;
- (i) details of the water business's enquiry facility, including a 24 hour emergency telephone service number;
- (j) referral to interpreter services offered by the water business;
- (k) any outstanding credit or debit from previous bills;
- (l) the total of any payments made by the customer since the last bill was issued;
- (m) information on concessions available and any concession to which the customer may be entitled;
- (n) the average daily rate of water or recycled water use at the property for the current billing period; and
- (o) if a water business intends to charge interest on outstanding amounts, a clear statement of the rate of interest and from what future date it is to be applied.

4.6 Presentation of charges

A bill issued by a water business must separately itemise each charge, including:

- (a) any service charge to the property;
- (b) the usage charge for each service to the property;
- (c) any other charge in connection with the provision of services provided;
- (d) any interest payable on outstanding amounts; and
- (e) any rates and other charges.

4.7 Presentation of customer water usage

A bill issued to a residential customer must display a graphical illustration of the customer's current water and recycled water usage and, to the extent the data is available:

- (a) the customer's usage for each billing period over the past 12 months; and
- (b) a comparison of the customer's usage with the customer's usage for the same period of the previous year.

4.8 Adjustment of bills

A water business may recover from a customer an amount undercharged if:

- (a) except in the case of illegal use, the amount to be recovered is limited to the amount undercharged in the 12 months prior to the water business notifying the customer that undercharging has occurred; and
- (b) the amount to be recovered is listed as a separate item and is explained on or with the customer's bill; and
- (c) it allows the customer to pay the amount to be recovered over a time period equal to the period in which undercharging occurred, up to a maximum of 12 months; and
- (d) it allows the customer to pay the amount to be recovered through a water business's flexible payment plan in accordance with clause 5.2.

A water business may identify an amount undercharged as a result of a customer's illegal use of water or recycled water by estimating, in accordance with water law, the usage for which the customer has not paid. In respect of this amount, a water business may exercise other rights available to it, including rights under clause 7.

If a water business overcharges a customer, it must

- (a) inform the customer within 10 business days of becoming aware of the error; and
- (b) refund or credit the amount overcharged in accordance with the customer's instructions.

5. PAYMENTS

5.1 Payment methods

A water business must accept payment from customers:

- (a) in person at a network of agencies or payment outlets;
- (b) by mail;
- (c) by electronic means;
- (d) through a facility (if any) provided by a provider of income support (eg Centrelink);
- (e) by direct debit arrangement in accordance with any agreement between the water business, the customer and the customer's bank; and
- (f) in advance.

A water business must not require customers to agree to direct debit as a condition of service.

5.2 Flexible payment plans

Subject to water law, a water business must make flexible payment plans available to customers in accordance with the customer's capacity to pay.

A flexible payment plan must:

- (a) state how the amount of the payments has been calculated; and

- (b) state the period over which the customer will pay the agreed amounts; and
- (c) specify an amount to be paid in each period; and
- (d) be able to be renegotiated at the request of a customer if there is a demonstrable change in their circumstances; and
- (e) be confirmed prior to or as soon as practicable after the flexible payment plan commences in writing to the customer.

A water business is not required to offer a customer a flexible payment plan if the customer has, in the previous 12 months, had 2 flexible payment plans cancelled due to non-payment unless the customer provides a fair and reasonable assurance (based on the circumstances) to the water business that the customer will comply with the plan.

5.3 Payment difficulties

Subject to water law, a water business must assist customers on a case-by-case basis who have payment difficulties by:

- (a) making provision for alternative payment arrangements in accordance with a customer's capacity to pay including:
 - (1) offering a range of payment options, including flexible payments in accordance with clause 5.2; or
 - (2) redirection of the bill to another person for payment provided that person agrees in writing;
- (b) providing for written confirmation of an alternative payment method referred to in clause 5.3(a) to be sent to customers within 10 business days of an agreement being reached;
- (c) offering to extend the due date for some or all of an amount owed;
- (d) informing customers of any circumstances in which it will waive or suspend interest payments on outstanding amounts; and
- (e) where appropriate, referring customers to:
 - (1) government funded assistance programs (including the Utility Relief Grant Scheme); or
 - (2) an independent financial counsellor at no cost to the customer.

5.4 Hardship policy

A water business must have a hardship policy and apply it to residential customers who are identified either by themselves, the water business, or an independent accredited financial counsellor as having the intention but not the financial capacity to make the required payments in accordance with the water business's payment terms.

Without limiting this general obligation, the hardship policy must:

- (a) provide internal assessment processes:
 - (1) to determine a customer's eligibility using objective criteria¹ as indicators of hardship; and
 - (2) designed to make an early identification of a customer's hardship; and
 - (3) to determine the internal responsibilities for the management, development, communication and monitoring of the policy;
- (b) provide for staff training about the water business's policies and procedures and to ensure customers in hardship are treated with sensitivity and without making value judgments;
- (c) subject to clause 6.6, exempt customers in hardship from supply restriction, legal action, and additional debt recovery costs – including by waiving any interest accrued prior to the customer being identified as in hardship and exempting the debt from the accrual of interest on overdue amounts during the customer's period of hardship – while payments are made to the water business according to an agreed flexible payment plan or other payment schedule;
- (d) state any circumstances in which it will waive or suspend interest payments on outstanding amounts;
- (e) subject to water law, offer a range of payment options in accordance with the customer's capacity to pay;
- (f) provide for written confirmation of any alternative payment method to be sent to customers within 10 business days of an agreement being reached;

¹ Criteria may include, but are not limited to: a customer's eligibility for concessions, a customer's status as a tenant, previous customer applications for the Utility Relief Grant Scheme, a customer's previous payment history, and appropriate self-assessment by the customer.

- (g) offer information and referral to government assistance programs (including the Utility Relief Grant Scheme) and no-cost independent financial counsellors;
- (h) offer information about the water business's dispute resolution policy, and the customer's right to lodge a complaint with EWOV and any other relevant external dispute resolution forum if their hardship claim is not resolved to their satisfaction by the water business;
- (i) offer information on how to reduce water usage and improve water efficiency and referral to relevant government water efficiency programs (including the Smart Homes program);
- (j) detail the circumstances in which the policy will cease to apply to customers; and
- (k) provide for a review mechanism of the policy and its associated procedures.

A water business must publish its hardship policy on its website and must make a copy available to a customer upon request.

6. COLLECTION

6.1 Reminder notices

If a customer fails to pay by the required date stated in the bill, a water business must send a reminder notice (in the same manner in which it sent the bill).

6.2 Warning notices

At least 7 days prior to taking action for non-payment under clause 7, a water business must send a payment warning notice (in the same manner in which it sent the bill) that:

- (a) specifies any assistance that is available to the customer, including information about EWOV (including EWOV's telephone number) and the water business's hardship policy; and
- (b) advises the customer that the bill is overdue and must be paid for the customer to avoid legal action or supply restriction; and
- (c) cautions that, if legal or restriction action is taken, the customer may incur additional costs in relation to those actions; and

- (d) specifies the date from which interest (if any) may be applied on outstanding amounts, and the percentage interest rate that may be applied; and
- (e) specifies that the water business might be able to recover outstanding amounts at the time of any sale of the customer's property (if the customer is also the property owner).

6.3 Additional content of reminders and warning notices

A reminder notice under clause 6.1 and a warning notice under clause 6.2 must contain (in addition to the requirements of those clauses) all of the information listed in clause 4.5 except information about meter readings, usage, previous bills or past payments.

6.4 Interest on unrecovered amounts

- (a) Subject to water law, clause 5.4(c), clause 6.5 and the remainder of this clause 6.4, if:
 - (i) a water business fixes a date by notice in (or provided together with) the customer's bill, being not less than 14 days after an amount is due to be paid by the customer; and
 - (ii) the notice referred to in paragraph (i) indicates that if an amount due remains unpaid after the date fixed by the notice, interest will accrue from the date the amount is due; and
 - (iii) any part of the amount payable by the customer is not paid by the date fixed by the notice referred to in paragraph (i),

then, a water business may charge interest on the unpaid amount.

- (b) For the purposes of section 4F(2)(f) of the *Water Industry Act 1994*:
 - (i) on and from 1 July 2013, a water business must not charge a customer interest on unrecovered amounts if that customer is the holder of an eligible concession card; and
 - (ii) a metropolitan water business must not charge any customer interest on unrecovered amounts that accrued prior to 1 July 2013.

6.5 Maximum rate of interest that may be charged

For the purposes of section 281(1) of the *Water Act 1989* and section 4F(2)(f) of the *Water Industry Act 1994*:

- (a) the maximum rate of interest that may be charged on unrecovered amounts is:
 - (i) 10 per cent until 30 June 2013; or
 - (ii) on and from 1 July 2013 an annual rate set by the Commission each May based on the 10 year Australian Commonwealth Government Bond Rate plus a margin to be determined by the Commission; and
- (b) the interest starts accruing on the day the amount is due and ends on the date all unrecovered amounts of the charge are paid in full, both days inclusive.

6.6 Charges over property

For the purposes of section 274(4A) of the *Water Act 1989* and section 4F(2)(f)(iii) of the *Water Industry Act 1994*:

- (a) where a customer is liable to pay a metropolitan water business an amount for water and sewerage services provided to a property owned by the customer-
 - (i) any portion of that amount that is unpaid on or after 1 July 2013, that amount is a charge on that property; and
 - (ii) any portion of that amount that is unpaid prior to 1 July 2013 is not a charge over that property; and
- (b) subject to water law, where a customer is liable to pay a regional water business an amount in relation to a property owned by the customer, that amount is a charge on that property.

6.7 Other charges

Apart from the application of section 274(4A) of the *Water Act 1989* to unpaid amounts and clause 6.6, a water business must not impose other charges in respect of outstanding amounts owned by a customer unless otherwise approved by the Commission.

6.8 Dishonoured payment

A water business may recover from a customer an amount charged by the water business's financial institution due to:

- (a) a customer's cheque being dishonoured; or
- (b) a customer having insufficient funds available when paying by direct debit.

7. ACTIONS FOR NON-PAYMENT

7.1 Restriction and legal action

A water business may take legal action or restrict a customer's water or recycled water services for non-payment if:

- (a) more than 14 days have elapsed since the issue of a reminder notice referred to in clause 6.1;
- (b) the customer has been sent a warning notice referred to in clause 6.2 including information on the water business's hardship policy and other programs that are available to help customers with payment difficulties; and
- (c) the water business or its agent has attempted to make contact with the customer about the non-payment; and
- (d) the customer has been notified of the proposed restriction or legal action and the associated costs, including the cost of removing a restrictor; and
- (e) the customer has:
 - (1) been offered a flexible payment plan under clause 5.2 and the customer has refused or has failed to respond; or
 - (2) agreed to a flexible payment plan and has failed to comply with the arrangement.

7.2 Limits on restriction and legal action

A water business must not commence legal action or take steps to restrict a customer's service due to non-payment if:

- (a) the amount owed by the customer is less than \$200, unless the customer has failed to pay consecutive bills in full over a period of not less than 12 months; or

- (b) the customer is eligible for and has lodged an application for an eligible concession card and the application is outstanding; or
- (c) the customer has made an application under the Utility Relief Grant Scheme and the application is outstanding; or
- (d) the customer is a tenant and:
 - (1) the amount unpaid is owed by the landlord; or
 - (2) the tenant has a claim against the landlord in respect of a water bill pending at the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal; or
- (e) the amount in dispute is subject to an unresolved complaint procedure in accordance with a water business's complaints policy.

This clause does not restrict a water business's rights under water law to pursue a debt owed to it by a person who is no longer a customer.

7.3 Additional limits on restriction

A water business must not take steps to restrict a customer's service due to non-payment if:

- (a) it is a Friday, public holiday, weekend, day before a public holiday, or after 3.00 pm; or
- (b) the customer is registered as a special needs customer under clause 9.5; or
- (c) the water business believes that the restriction will cause a health hazard having taken into consideration any customer concerns; or
- (d) it is a day of total fire ban declared by the Country Fire Authority in the area in which the property is located.

A restriction under clause 7 may reduce the supply of water, recycled water or non-potable water to no less than 2 litres per minute at the tap nearest the meter.

7.4 Removal of restrictions

A water business must restore a service restricted under this clause within 24 hours of becoming aware of the reason for restriction no longer persisting.

8. QUALITY OF SERVICES

8.1 Product quality

In addition to complying with applicable requirements of health and environmental regulation, a water business must provide a service in accordance with any commitments in the water business's approved service standards.

8.2 Delivery quality (flow rates)

A water business must ensure that a customer's water supply and recycled water supply is at least equal to minimum flow rates specified in the water business's approved service standards, except to the extent that:

- (a) a property owner's infrastructure falls short of the required condition;
- (b) a service is provided via a private extension;
- (c) there is a drought or an emergency;
- (d) there is a water shortage due to peak summer demand;
- (e) there is an unplanned or planned interruption;
- (f) recycled water is reduced due to a shortage;
- (g) recycled water is reduced in accordance with a water business's permitted use rules;
- (h) supply is restricted or disconnected in accordance with this code; or
- (i) water law provides.

The flow rate must be measured at the meter or the tap nearest the meter assembly.

8.3 Testing

A water business must test flow rates and water quality for compliance with clauses 8.1 and 8.2 upon request by the customer.

A water business:

- (a) must advise the customer prior to the test that a reasonable charge may be imposed if the test demonstrates compliance with clauses 8.1 and 8.2;

- (b) must pay the cost of a test if the test demonstrates that the water business is not complying with clauses 8.1 and 8.2;
- (c) may impose a reasonable charge on the customer in the event the test demonstrates compliance with clauses 8.1 and 8.2.

8.4 Rectification

A water business must rectify any deficiency in satisfying clauses 8.1 to 8.3 as soon as possible, or within a time agreed with the customer.

9. RELIABILITY OF SERVICES

9.1 Obligation to provide reliable services

Subject to its Statement of Obligations, a water business must develop and implement plans, systems and processes to manage its assets to provide reliable services.

9.2 Unplanned interruptions – response

A water business must comply with standards specified in its approved service standards for the:

- (a) number of unplanned water supply interruptions for each customer in any 12 month period;
- (b) number of sewer blockages for each customer in any 12 month period;
- (c) hours from notification to attend water bursts and leaks, and sewer spills and blockages;
- (d) hours to restore an interruption to water services;
- (e) hours for clearance of sewer blockages in the water business's pipe;
- (f) hours for containment of sewer spills; and
- (g) any other standard which is approved by the Commission.

A water business must have policies, practices and procedures:

- (h) to minimise the impact of unplanned interruptions to services (including restoration as soon as possible, and the provision of information); and

- (i) in relation to providing customers with access to emergency supplies of drinking water in the event of an unplanned interruption to water services.

9.3 Bursts, leaks, blockages and spills

A water business must have policies, practices and procedures to deal with a burst, leak or blockage in its system, including to:

- (a) promptly attend the site upon notification;
- (b) take action to rectify the situation taking into account the potential or actual impact on:
 - (1) customers;
 - (2) others affected by the failure;
 - (3) property; and
 - (4) the environment;
- (c) provide information about any unplanned interruption to a service through a 24 hour telephone facility which advises callers of the estimated duration of any interruption;
- (d) ensure that, in the event of a sewage spill on a customer's property, damage and inconvenience to customers and others affected is minimised; and
- (e) ensure that a sewage spill is promptly cleaned up and the affected area disinfected.

9.4 Planned interruptions – information and response

A water business must inform affected customers in writing of the time and duration of any planned interruption to a service at least two business days in advance.

A water business must have policies, practices and procedures in relation to providing customers with access to emergency supplies of drinking water in the event of a planned interruption to water services.

9.5 Special needs

A water business must keep an up to date register of customers who require water for:

- (a) the operation of a life-support machine; or
- (b) other special needs that may be assessed on a case-by-case basis by the water business;

A water business must contact customers registered under this clause:

- (c) as soon as possible in the event of an unplanned interruption to a service; and
- (d) at least 4 business days before a planned interruption unless a longer period of notice is requested by a customer in which case that longer notice must be given if it is reasonably necessary and able to be accommodated by the water business.

In all cases a water business must endeavour to minimise inconvenience to these customers.

10. RECONNECTION

A water business must promptly reconnect a customer's property which has been disconnected upon:

- (a) the reason for disconnection no longer persisting; or
- (b) receipt of a written undertaking as to compliance by the customer in a form acceptable to the water business; and
- (c) payment by the customer of any reasonable charge imposed by the water business.

11. WORKS AND MAINTENANCE

11.1 Quality improvement programs

Subject to water law, a water business must implement programs to maintain its systems in accordance with its approved service standards.

11.2 Worker identification

A representative of a water business must not enter a customer's property without appropriate identification.

A representative of a water business entering a property except for the purpose of reading an accessible meter, must either:

- (a) notify any occupant present of the representative's purpose for entry; or
- (b) if no occupant was present at the property, leave a notice stating the representative's identity, and the date, time and purpose of entry.

11.3 Keys held by water business

If a water business holds keys to a customer's premises, the keys must be held in safe custody and returned to the customer upon notification of the customer's vacation of the relevant property or if access is no longer required.

12. INFORMATION

12.1 Enquiries

A water business must have policies, practices and procedures to provide the following information to customers through an enquiry facility:

- (a) account information;
- (b) bill payment options;
- (c) concession entitlements;
- (d) programs available to customers who are having payment difficulties, including the water business's hardship policy;
- (e) information about the water business's complaint handling procedures; and
- (f) information about EWOV.

12.2 Fees for information or advice

Unless stated otherwise in this code, a water business must not charge a fee for the provision of information or advice required under this code to customers or others affected by its operations.

12.3 Permitted use

A water business must regularly inform relevant customers of the water business's required limits on the permitted use of recycled water, non-potable water and its sewerage service which at least reflect:

- (a) health regulation and environmental regulation; and
- (b) clause 1.3 in respect of recycled water.

12.4 Trade waste

A water business must comply with the requirements in the Trade Waste Customer Service Code in relation to the provision of information to trade waste customers.

12.5 Sustainable use of water

A water business must provide information to customers about the sustainable use of Victoria's water resources and how customers may conserve water.

12.6 Water reuse

A water business must provide information to customers upon request about lawful and practical possibilities for the reuse of water.

12.7 Billing history

Upon request by a customer, a water business must provide the customer's account and usage history for the preceding three years within 10 business days, or other period by agreement. A water business may refuse to provide a customer with their account and usage history where the provision of such information is contrary to the information handling procedures set out in the water business's family violence policy and the refusal is not in breach of law.

A water business may impose a reasonable charge for providing a customer's account and usage history held beyond three years in accordance with the relevant Public Record Office Standard General Disposal Schedule for the Records of Water Authorities.

12.8 Regulatory information

A water business must provide to customers upon request any regulatory instruments other than primary legislation under which it operates, including a copy of this code.

12.9 Communication assistance

A water business must provide, or provide access to, an interpreter service and a TTY service for speech and hearing impaired customers.

A water business must publish, and provide upon request, its customer charter in languages other than English to the extent required under the guidelines issued by the Victorian Office of Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship.²

12.10 Customer obligations

A water business must use reasonable endeavours to keep each customer informed of the customer's material obligations under water law including:

- (a) to pay charges incurred after vacating a property unless a water business is given at least 48 hours' notice of the customer vacating the property;
- (b) to ensure that each water meter is accessible by the water business;
- (c) to maintain the property owner's infrastructure upon notice by the water business;
- (d) to remove trees upon request of the water business;
- (e) to seek the consent of the water business for any building or construction work which might interfere with a service or system;
- (f) to not alter any works connected to the water business's works without the water business's consent;
- (g) to observe restrictions imposed by the water business in accordance with water law;
- (h) to maintain combined sanitary drains in accordance with the water law or any independent agreement with other land owners connected to the combined sanitary drain.

² Current guidelines are titled "Improving the Use of Translating and Interpreting Services: A Guide to Victorian Government Policy and Procedure".

12.11 Privacy

A water business must outline in its customer charter such obligations and particulars of the water business's privacy practices in accordance with applicable privacy laws.

13. GUARANTEED SERVICE LEVELS

If a water business implements a guaranteed service level scheme as approved by the Commission:

- (a) the scheme must provide for any GSL rebate available to customers under the scheme to be applied automatically in the event that customer entitlement to the GSL rebate arises; and
- (b) the scheme must ensure that any GSL rebate is paid or given to customers as soon as practicable after a customer entitlement to the GSL rebate arises.

14. FAMILY VIOLENCE

A water business must have and implement a family violence³ policy.

As a minimum, the policy must:

- (a) provide that all relevant staff have ongoing training to:
 - (1) identify customers affected by family violence;
 - (2) deal appropriately with customers affected by family violence; and
 - (3) apply the water business's family violence policy and related policies and procedures to customers affected by family violence;
- (b) identify the support the water business will provide to staff affected by family violence, including any training, leave, external referrals and counselling available;
- (c) promote customer safety by providing for the secure handling of information about those who are affected by family violence, including in a manner that maintains confidentiality;
- (d) specify the water business's approach to debt management and

³ "Family violence" has the meaning given in section 5 of the *Family Violence Protection Act 2008* (Vic).

recovery where a customer is affected by family violence, including but not limited to:

- (1) the recovery of debt from customers with joint accounts; and
- (2) the circumstances in which debt will be suspended or waived;
- (e) recognise family violence as a potential cause of payment difficulties and as an eligibility criterion for access to the water business's hardship policy under clause 5.3 and 5.4, and address what payment support will apply to customers affected by family violence;
- (f) provides for a process that avoids customers having to repeat disclosure of their family violence, and provides for continuity of service; and
- (g) provide a means for referring customers who may be affected by family violence to specialist family violence services.

A water business must:

- (h) publish on its website, and keep up to date, the assistance and referrals available to customers affected by family violence and how customers may access such assistance;
- (i) provide a copy of the family violence policy to a customer upon request; and
- (j) provide for a periodic review mechanism of the policy and its associated procedures.

15. NATIONAL CABINET CORONAVIRUS SUPPORT POLICY AND PRINCIPLES – APRIL 2020 (National Principles)

On 9 April 2020, the National Cabinet agreed a policy approach and set of principles to support households and small businesses facing hardship in paying for essential services during the coronavirus pandemic (the National Principles). The National Principles are set out in Schedule 3.

The National Principles are intended to protect both residential and small business customers of water businesses experiencing financial hardship during the coronavirus pandemic. They seek to establish a nationally consistent approach by essential utility services providers, including water businesses, to providing hardship support to their residential and small business customers.

Each water business must apply the National Principles to its residential customers (households) as well as non-residential customers that qualify for the JobKeeper

Payment from the national government (business customers). These two categories of customers will, for purposes of this clause 15, and implementation of the National Principles, be the households and small business customers referred to in those Principles.

A water business may apply the National Principles to a broader class of non-residential customer.

To the extent that any standards and condition of service and supply provided in this code are inconsistent with the National Principles, the National Principles applied as required by this clause 15 takes precedence.

PART C — CUSTOMER CHARTERS

16. REQUIREMENT FOR CHARTER

16.1 Purpose of charter

A water business must develop and issue a customer charter to inform customers about the services performed by the water business and the respective rights and responsibilities of the water business and of customers.

16.2 Multiple charters

A water business may have more than one charter with the approval of the Commission.

16.3 Consultation

Before adopting or varying a customer charter, a water business must consult with its customers.

16.4 Submission for assessment

Before adopting a charter or any variation to a charter, a water business must submit it to the Commission, with details of customer consultation undertaken, for the Commission to review it and assess compliance of the charter with this code and the water business's approved service standards.

16.5 Required amendment

A water business must amend its charter at the request of the Commission to:

- (a) deal with matters raised by the Commission as a result of its assessment under clause 15.4; or
- (b) update the charter to reflect an amendment to this code or the water business's approved service standards.

17. CONTENT OF CHARTER

A water business must set out in its charter:

- (a) information about or explaining each of the standards and conditions in Part B of this code (including, where relevant, the detail of the standards and conditions which are set out in the water business's approved service standards); and
- (b) all material rights and responsibilities of the water business and its customers in relation to services performed by the water business.

In particular, and without limiting this general obligation, the charter must include:

- (c) where this code requires a water business to have a policy or provide information, an indication of how the policy or information may be obtained;
- (d) an explanation of the water business's rights and obligations in respect of:
 - (1) connection and service provision in accordance with clause 1;
 - (2) the number of days from the issue of a bill by which it must be paid;
 - (3) actions it may take for non-payment in accordance with clause 7;
 - (4) reconnection in accordance with clause 10; and
 - (5) works and maintenance;
- (e) a description and explanation of the water business's practices and processes in respect of:
 - (1) the types of charges for provision of a service and any reconnection;
 - (2) how the water business will deal with complaints and disputes under clause 3;
 - (3) billing, payments and collection in accordance with clauses 4, 5 and 6;
 - (4) quality standards, testing and rectification of services under clause 8;
 - (5) standards and targets it intends to meet in relation to reliability of supply under clause 9; and

- (6) any approved guaranteed service level scheme;
- (f) information about how services may be affected and any penalties that may apply under applicable drought, emergency, or permanent water saving plans; and
- (g) information about how the water business will assist customers (including joint account holders) affected by family violence, including the handling of customer information, billing and debt management.

18. CUSTOMER COMMUNICATION

18.1 Publication of charter

A water business must publish its charter on its website and must make a copy available to a customer upon request.

A water business must keep a copy of its charter at its offices for inspection upon request.

18.2 Summary of charter

A water business may summarise or otherwise communicate the contents of its charter if the summary document at least addresses:

- (a) the issuing of bills;
- (b) the types of charges;
- (c) the payment of accounts;
- (d) concessions and assistance available to customers;
- (e) key service standards (eg quality and reliability);
- (f) the maintenance responsibilities of the water business;
- (g) guaranteed service levels (if applicable);
- (h) enquiry and complaint handling details, including contact details for EWOV;
- (i) privacy information in accordance with privacy legislation;
- (j) contact details of the water business; and
- (k) where a copy of the water business's charter may be obtained.

18.3 Provision of charter or summary

A water business must provide a copy of the charter or a summary of the charter:

- (a) to existing customers with the first bill after it has been approved by the Commission in accordance with clause 15.4; and
- (b) to new customers within one month of becoming registered with the water business in respect of a property.

18.4 Notification of variation

If a water business materially changes its customer charter, it must inform each customer on or with the next bill sent to the customer that the charter has changed and that details of the change are available on its website or upon request.

PART D — DEFINITIONS

“approved service standards” means standards and conditions of service and supply approved by the Commission under clause 15 of the Water Industry Regulatory Order.

“available” means that the property is a declared property in respect of that service under section 144 of the *Water Act 1989*.

“billing period” means any period for which a customer’s bill is calculated.

“business day” means a day on which banks are open for general banking business in the city or town in which the water business’s head office is located, not being a Saturday or a Sunday.

“Commission” means the Essential Services Commission established under the ESC Act.

“complaint” means a written or verbal expression of dissatisfaction about an action, proposed action or failure to act by a water business, including a failure of the water business to observe its published policies, practices or procedures.

“customer” means a person who is:

- (a) an owner and occupier of a property connected to a water business’s system;
- (b) an owner of a property which is connected to a water business’s system but is not an occupier;
- (c) an occupier of a property that is connected to a water business’s system and is liable for usage charges;
- (d) an owner of a property that is not connected but to which a service is available from a water business and the water business imposes a service charge.

“disconnect” means to physically prevent the flow of water, recycled water or sewerage.

“drinking water” has the same meaning as in the *Safe Drinking Water Act 2003*.

“electronic address” means an email or internet address supplied by a customer to a water business for the purpose of the receipt of bills and other service related communications.

“eligible concession card” means a Commonwealth Government-issued Pensioner Concession Card, Commonwealth Government-issued Health Care Card or a Department of Veterans' Affairs Repatriation Health Card (Gold Card).

“enquiry” means a written or verbal approach by a customer which can be satisfied by the water business providing written or verbal information, advice, assistance, clarification, explanation or referral about a matter.

“enquiry facility” means a telephone call centre and may also include an on-line information facility or an over-the-counter information service.

“environmental regulation” includes applicable requirements of the Environment Protection Authority and (insofar as they relate to planning and environment matters) of local councils.

“ESC Act” means the *Essential Services Commission Act 2001*.

“EWOV” means the Energy and Water Ombudsman (Victoria).

“external dispute resolution forum” includes Consumer Affairs Victoria and the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal.

“financial year” means a year ending 30 June.

“GSL rebate” means any form of payment or compensation made to a customer by a water business due to a breach of the water business’s stated obligations under a guaranteed service level scheme as approved by the Commission.

“health regulation” includes the *Safe Drinking Water Act 2003*, the *Food Act 1984*, the *Health (Fluoridation) Act 1973* and other applicable requirements of the Department of Human Services.

“interruption” means in the case of a customer’s water or recycled water supply, a total loss of flow from a water business to a customer.

“Melbourne Water” means Melbourne Water Corporation (ABN 81 945 386 953) and its successor.

“meter assembly” means the apparatus consisting of a meter, stop valve, strainer and any additional valves, but does not include a backflow prevention device installed downstream of the outlet of the meter.

“metropolitan water business” means City West Water Corporation, South East Water Corporation, Yarra Valley Water Corporation and their successors.

“non-potable water” means water that is the subject of a declaration made by the Minister under section 6 of the *Safe Water Drinking Act 2003*, known under that Act as ‘regulated water’.

“occupier” means a person in occupation of a property to which a service is available, including:

- (a) a tenant or caravan park resident registered as such with the water business, for the period of such registration; or

(b) the property owner.

“permitted use rules” means a water business’s requirements under clause 12.3.

“planned interruption” means a scheduled interruption to a service to a customer which is caused by a water business to allow routine maintenance or augmentation to be carried out.

“property owner’s infrastructure” includes the customer’s pipes, backflow prevention devices and other equipment of the customer connected to a system.

“reasonable charge” means a fee or charge that is approved or specified by the Commission in accordance with clause 8 of the Water Industry Regulatory Order.

“regional water business” means a regional urban water authority constituted under the *Water Act 1989* or its successor.

“service” means a water supply service including a reticulated non-potable water supply service, a recycled water supply service or a sewerage service.

“system” means a water business’s physical infrastructure for providing a water supply service, a recycled water service or a trade waste or sewerage service.

“trade waste” has the meaning given to that term in the relevant water law.

“Trade Waste Customer Service Code” refers to the Commission’s Trade Waste Customer Service Code: Urban Water Businesses which places additional obligations on water businesses and Melbourne Water specific to the management of trade waste services.

“TTY service” means a facility to enable a deaf or hearing impaired person to communicate by telephone through the use of a telephone typewriter.

“unplanned interruption” means an interruption to services to a customer caused by a fault in the water business’s system or a fault which is the maintenance responsibility of the water business.

“water business” means a metropolitan water business or a regional water business.

“water law” means the relevant requirements contained in or made under the *Water Act 1989* and the *Water Industry Act 1994*.

SCHEDULE 1

APPROVED GSL SCHEMES

For the purposes of clause 13 and the definition of “GSL rebate”, the following service level obligations and corresponding amounts of payment for failure to attain the stated obligation have been approved by the Commission as guaranteed service level schemes for the following businesses.

A water business is not required to make a payment where the failure to attain the stated obligation arises because of the action or inaction of the customer or a third party. For the avoidance of doubt, third party does not include any person or firm acting on behalf of the business.

Barwon Water

<i>Approved service level obligation</i>	<i>Approved payment (\$)</i>
No more than five unplanned water supply interruptions per customer per year	80
No more than three unplanned sewerage service interruptions to a customer's property per year	80
No more than two sewer spills on a customer property per year	613
We will not restrict water supply or take legal action against a customer prior to making reasonable efforts to contact the customer and provide information about help that is available if the customer is experiencing difficulties paying a bill.	367

Central Highlands Water

<i>Approved service level obligation</i>	<i>Approved payment (\$)</i>
Failure to provide clean drinking water with the presence of dirty water (more than 5 turbidity units) as the result of a Central Highlands Water fault	100
Failure to rectify an unplanned interruption to a customer's water supply upon becoming aware of the interruption	100
Water supply interruptions for each customer in any 12 month period	100
Failure to repair leaking service upon becoming aware of the leak	100
In the event of a sewer spill within a customer's house, which is caused by Central Highlands Water, the annual wastewater service fee will be refunded as a rebate	750
Failure to rectify a sewer interruption upon becoming aware of the interruption	100
Sewer sewerage service interruptions for each customer in any 12 month period	100
Restricting the water supply of, or taking legal action against, a residential customer prior to taking reasonable endeavours to contact the customer and provide information about help that is available if the customer is experiencing difficulties paying.	300

City West Water

<i>Approved service level obligation</i>	<i>Approved payment (\$)</i>
No more than five unplanned water supply interruptions in a 12 month period.	200
No more than three sewerage service interruptions in a 12 month period.	100
Unplanned Water Supply Outage not restored within 5 Hours of notification.	100
Sewerage interruptions not restored within 5 hours of notification	75
Sewage spill in a house, caused by the business or a failure of the business' system(s), not contained within 1 hour of notification	3,000
Sewage spill not contained within 5 hours of notification	75
Restricting the water supply of, or taking legal action against, a residential customer prior to taking reasonable endeavours (as defined by the ESC) to contact the customer and provide information about help that is available if the customer is experiencing difficulty paying.	300
Failure to give at least 2 business days' notice of a planned water interruption	75
No planned interruptions during peak hours (5am to 9am and 5pm to 11pm)	50
Sewage spill in a house, caused by the business or a failure of the business' system(s)	1,000
No more than 3 unplanned water interruptions within any 12 month period	100

Coliban Water

<i>Approved service level obligation</i>	<i>Approved payment (\$)</i>
A blown seal sewer intrusion into your house (contained instantly)	50
Any sewer intrusion into your house contained within 1 hour	300
Sewer intrusion into your house not contained within 1 hour	1000
Special Meter Read not completed within 2 business days of the scheduled SMR date	no charge for SMR
3+ sewer blockages affecting you in a year (note target down from 4+ to 3+)	100
4+ water supply outages affecting you in a year (note target down from 6+ to 4+)	50
Water supply outage not restored within 5 hours	50
Your correspondence (letter or email) to Coliban Water not responded to within 10 business days	10
Planned water supply outage during peak periods (6AM-9AM & 6PM-9PM weekdays and on weekends)	100
Rural customers receive <100% of water allocation	rebate on fixed charge
Restricting the water supply of, or taking legal action against, a residential customer prior to taking reasonable endeavours (as defined by the commission) to contact the customer and provide information about help that is available if the customer is experiencing difficulties paying	300
There is an ongoing adverse water quality issue in your system, for example poor taste or colour	25% water access fee
High Priority inspection at practical completion not completed within 2 business days	250
High Priority mains extension approval not completed within 10 business days	no charge for service
There is a significant sewer spill to local waterways or the environment (community)	20000

There is poor water flowrate / pressure in a supply area over a prolonged period (community)	5000
Coliban Water issues a "boil water" or "do not consume" notice in your water supply system (community)	5000
There is a short-term adverse water quality issue in your system, for example poor taste or colour (community)	5000

East Gippsland Water

<i>Approved service level obligation</i>	<i>Approved payment (\$)</i>
Sewage spill within a customer's house, caused by the business	1000
Planned water supply interruptions – failure to notify 48 hours in advance	65
Planned water supply interruptions – duration exceeds the period in the notice	65
Not restricting the water supply of, or taking legal action against, a residential customer prior to taking reasonable endeavours (as defined by the commission) to contact the customer and provide information about help that is available if the customer is experiencing difficulties paying	300
A 21 per cent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2025, and a six monthly update on progress provided to the community	East Gippsland Water to provide a written public apology if any six monthly update is not provided.
Commitment to spend \$90,000 per year on native vegetation planting and habitat creation projects.	Unspent money will be safeguarded for use only on the program.

Gippsland Water

<i>Approved service level obligation</i>	<i>Approved payment (\$)</i>
A sewer spill within a house, caused by failure of Gippsland Water's system, contained within one hour of notification	500
Hardship GSL – if a customer in genuine hardship is restricted for non-payment Gippsland Water will pay \$300 per day to a maximum of \$900 until the service is restored	300 - 900
If we are required to issue a 'boil water' alert, we will contribute \$5,000 to a fund administered by our Community Consultative Committee.	5,000
If a planned interruption goes longer than advised then each affected customer will be compensated by a \$50 credit to their next water bill.	50
If a customer is affected by a planned interruption and was not provided a minimum of five days notification, we will credit that customer \$50 on their next water bill.	50
If we receive a sanction from a regulator for harm to the environment we will contribute \$5,000 to a fund administered by our Community Consultative Committee.	5,000
We commit to investing a minimum of \$30,000 per year in programs that support the wellbeing of our communities.	30,000

Goulburn Valley Water

<i>Approved service level obligation</i>	<i>Approved payment (\$)</i>
No more than 3 sewage interruptions to a property within a year	50
Containment of a sewage spill in a building within an hour of notification	1000
Water interruption restored within 5 hours of notification	50
No more than 3 sewage interruptions to a property within a year	50
Legal action against, or restriction of water supply to, a residential customer will not be undertaken unless the requirements of the commission's customer service code have been satisfied	300
Tariff-structure trial: A tariff-structure trial will be underway from 1 July 2019. In the event of this deadline not being achieved all residential customers will receive a GSL credit.	5
Tariff-structure trial: A decision will be made by 30 June 2022 as to whether to extend or vary the trial or to adopt a new tariff structure.	5
Water pressure: In the event of water pressure still not being up to standard set out in our customer charter after the implementation of the pressure improvement program, affected customers will receive an annual credit until such time as the pressure is deemed satisfactory.	25
Water taste: Once the program is established, any towns with systemic taste issues will be informed of the timing for improvements. In the event of the timing not being achieved affected customers will receive a credit for each year of delay.	25
Real-time notification of supply events: In the event of an SMS notification not being sent when a prescribed event occurs after 1 July 2019, a credit will be due to all affected customers.	25
Hydration stations: In the event of a hydration station not being delivered within the indicated timeframe, each customer in that town will receive a GSL credit for each year of delay.	20

GMMWater

<i>Approved service level obligation</i>	<i>Approved payment (\$)</i>
Notification to customer advising drinking water not suitable for drinking	100
Unplanned water interruptions not restored within five hours of notification	50
Planned interruption longer than notification	50
Sewer interruption not restored within five hours of notification	50
Sewer spill within a house caused by failure of system not contained within one hour	1,000
Restricting the water supply of, or taking legal action against, a residential customer prior to taking reasonable endeavours to contact the customer and provide information about help that is available if the customer is experiencing difficulties paying.	300

Lower Murray Water

<i>Approved service level obligation</i>	<i>Approved payment (\$)</i>
More than 5 unplanned water supply interruptions in a year	75
More than 3 sewer blockages in a year	75
Sewerage spill caused within house caused by Lower Murray Water assets where customer's internal plumbing is functioning correctly	1500
Restricting the water supply of, or taking legal action against a customer prior to taking reasonable endeavours (as defined by the commission) to contact the customer to test for hardship	300

North East Water

<i>Approved service level obligation</i>	<i>Approved payment (\$)</i>
Unplanned water interruptions within any 12 month period	50
Sewer spills in a house not contained within 1 hour	1,000
Restriction of water - inappropriately	300

South East Water

<i>Approved service level obligation</i>	<i>Approved payment (\$)</i>
More than five unplanned water supply interruptions in any 12 month period (from 2018-19 for every water supply interruption from the sixth in any 12 month period)	60
Three sewerage interruptions during any 12 month period (from 2018-19 for every sewerage interruption from the third in any 12 month period)	60
Unplanned water supply interruption longer than five hours	60
Sewerage service interruption longer than four hours to restore the service	60
Sewer spill within the premises and we take longer than 1 hour to contain it	1500
Sewer spill we take longer than 5 hours to contain	1000
Beach closure	10,000 paid to a community group affected by the spill
Not restricting the water supply of, or taking legal action against, a residential customer prior to taking reasonable endeavours (as defined by the commission) to contact the customer and provide information about help that is available if the customer is experiencing difficulties paying	500

South Gippsland Water

<i>Approved service level obligation</i>	<i>Approved payment (\$)</i>
South Gippsland Water will rebate the customer an amount when it fails to restore sewer supply (within 5 hours of notification) to a customer's property	100
South Gippsland Water will pay the customer an amount if it causes a sewage spill within a customer's property. It will also clean up the property and provide alternative accommodation as required	1000
South Gippsland Water will rebate the customer an amount where it restricts the water supply of, or takes legal action against, a residential customer prior to taking reasonable endeavours to contact the customer and provide information about help that is available if the customer is experiencing difficulties paying	300

Wannon Water

<i>Approved service level obligation</i>	<i>Approved payment (\$)</i>
Subject to exclusions, If there are more than two unplanned interruptions to the service supplying water to the customer's property in any 12-month period.	100
Subject to exclusions, If there is a sewerage spill in a customer's house.	500
Subject to exclusions, If there is a sewerage spill on a customer's property.	100
If Wannon Water restricts the water supply of, or takes legal action against, a residential customer prior to taking reasonable endeavours to contact the customer and provide information about help that is available if the customer is experiencing difficulties paying.	300

Western Water

<i>Approved service level obligation</i>	<i>Approved payment (\$)</i>
Planned water supply interruption during peak hours (i.e. 5am-9am; 5pm-11pm)	100
Planned water supply interruption longer than notification given	100
More than three sewer interruptions in 12 months	100
More than five water supply interruptions in 12 months	100
Sewerage spill inside the house, not stopped within one hour of notification	500
Restricting or commencing legal action prior to taking reasonable endeavours (as defined by the Essential Services Commission) to contact the customer about help available if they are experiencing difficulties paying	300

Westernport Water

<i>Approved service level obligation</i>	<i>Approved payment (\$)</i>
No more than five unplanned water supply interruptions in any 12 months (applicable for years 1–3)	75
No more than four unplanned water supply interruptions in any 12 months (application for years 4–5)	75
All water quality complaints will receive a response within three business days after notification (noting resolution may take longer)	100
Not restricting the water supply of a residential customer, or taking legal action, prior to taking reasonable endeavours to contact the customer and provide information about help that is available if the customer is experiencing difficulties paying	Annual water access charge fee or \$350 for tenants
We will contain sewage spills within a house resulting from the failure of our pipes within one hour of notification (GSL is in addition to clean-up costs)	Annual wastewater access fee or \$550 for tenants
We will contain sewage spills onto property within five hours of notification	350

Yarra Valley Water

<i>Approved service level obligation</i>	<i>Approved payment (\$)</i>
Customer's planned water or sewerage service interruption exceeds 5 hours	50
Customer's planned water or sewerage interruption is longer than advised	50
Customer is not provided at least 1 weeks' notice of a planned water interruption	50
Customer experiences a planned water supply interruption during peak hours (5am to 9am and 5pm to 11pm)	50
Customer's water service is not restored within 4 hours of an unplanned event occurring	50
Customer's water service is not restored within 12 hours of an unplanned event occurring	50
Customer experiences more than 5 unplanned water or sewerage interruptions in total within any 12 month period	50
Customer water flow does not meet minimum standard	77.87
Sewage spill within a customer's house is not contained within 1 hour of notification	1000
Customer experiences a subsequent sewage spill in their house that is not contained within 1 hour of notification in a 12 month period	2000
Sewage spill within a customer's property is not contained within 4 hours	1000
Customer experiences a subsequent sewage spill in their property that is not contained within 4 hours in a 12 month period	2000
Customer's sewerage service is not restored within 4 hours of an unplanned event occurring	50
Customer's sewerage service is not restored within 12 hours of an unplanned event occurring	50

Customer experiences more than 3 unplanned sewerage service interruptions within any 12 month period	50
Customer's letter or contact is not responded to within 4 days	50
Customer experiences more than 2 separate water quality related issues in 12 months	50
Not restricting the water supply of, or taking legal action against, a residential customer prior to taking reasonable endeavours (as defined by the Essential Services Commission) to contact the customer and provide information about help that is available if the customer is experiencing difficulties paying	300

SCHEDULE 2

APPROVED SERVICE STANDARDS

For the purposes of clauses 8 and 9 and the definition of “approved service standards”, the following standards and conditions of service and supply and associated targets have been approved by the Commission for the following businesses.

Targets in the tables have been rounded to one decimal place.

Barwon Water

<i>Service Standard</i>	<i>2018-19</i>	<i>2019-20</i>	<i>2020-21</i>	<i>2021-22</i>	<i>2022-23</i>
Water					
Number of customers experiencing more than 5 unplanned water supply interruptions in the year (number)	100	100	100	100	100
Average time taken to attend bursts and leaks (priority 1) (minutes)	27	27	27	27	27
Average time taken to attend bursts and leaks (priority 2) (minutes)	43	43	43	43	43
Average time taken to attend bursts and leaks (priority 3) (minutes)	226	226	226	226	226
Average duration of unplanned water supply interruptions (minutes)	125	125	125	125	125
Average duration of planned water supply interruptions (minutes)	210	210	210	210	210
Sewerage					
Customers receiving more than 3 sewer blockages in the year (number)	1	1	1	1	1
Average time to attend sewer spills and blockages (minutes)	53	53	53	53	53
Average time to rectify a sewer blockage (minutes)	178	178	178	178	178
Spills contained within 5 hours (per cent)	100	100	100	100	100

Note: Numbers have been rounded

Central Highlands Water

<i>Service Standard</i>	<i>2018-19</i>	<i>2019-20</i>	<i>2020-21</i>	<i>2021-22</i>	<i>2022-23</i>
Water					
Number of customers experiencing more than 5 unplanned water supply interruptions in the year (number)	0	0	0	0	0
Average time taken to attend bursts and leaks (priority 1) (minutes)	45	45	45	40	40
Average time taken to attend bursts and leaks (priority 2) (minutes)	70	70	70	65	65
Average time taken to attend bursts and leaks (priority 3) (minutes)	450	450	450	450	450
Average duration of unplanned water supply interruptions (minutes)	120	120	120	120	120
Average duration of planned water supply interruptions (minutes)	200	200	200	175	175
Sewerage					
Customers receiving more than 3 sewer blockages in the year (number)	0	0	0	0	0
Average time to attend sewer spills and blockages (minutes)	45	45	45	40	40
Average time to rectify a sewer blockage (minutes)	120	120	120	120	120
Spills contained within 5 hours (per cent)	100	100	100	100	100

Note: Numbers have been rounded

City West Water

<i>Service standard</i>	<i>2018-19</i>	<i>2019-20</i>	<i>2020-21</i>	<i>2021-22</i>	<i>2022-23</i>
Water					
Number of customers experiencing more than 5 unplanned water supply interruptions in the year (number)	0	0	0	0	0
Average time taken to attend bursts and leaks (priority 1) (minutes)	32	32	32	32	32
Average time taken to attend bursts and leaks (priority 2) (minutes)	40	40	40	40	40
Average time taken to attend bursts and leaks (priority 3) (minutes)	252	252	252	252	252
Average duration of unplanned water supply interruptions (minutes)	125	125	125	125	125
Average duration of planned water supply interruptions (minutes)	133	133	133	133	133
Sewerage					
Customers receiving more than 3 sewer blockages in the year (number)	6	6	6	6	6
Average time to attend sewer spills and blockages (minutes)	31	31	31	31	31
Average time to rectify a sewer blockage (minutes)	150	150	150	150	150
Spills contained within 5 hours (per cent)	100	100	100	100	100

Note: Numbers have been rounded

Coliban Water

<i>Service Standard</i>	<i>2018-19</i>	<i>2019-20</i>	<i>2020-21</i>	<i>2021-22</i>	<i>2022-23</i>
Water					
Number of customers experiencing more than 5 unplanned water supply interruptions in the year (number)	5	5	5	5	5
Average time taken to attend bursts and leaks (priority 1) (minutes)	32	32	32	32	32
Average time taken to attend bursts and leaks (priority 2) (minutes)	80	80	80	80	80
Average time taken to attend bursts and leaks (priority 3) (minutes)	1440	1440	1440	1440	1440
Average duration of unplanned water supply interruptions (minutes)	112	112	112	112	112
Average duration of planned water supply interruptions (minutes)	140	140	140	140	140
Sewerage					
Customers receiving more than 3 sewer blockages in the year (number)	2	2	2	2	2
Average time to attend sewer spills and blockages (minutes)	30	30	30	30	30
Average time to rectify a sewer blockage (minutes)	80	80	80	80	80
Spills contained within 5 hours (per cent)	99	99	99	99	99

Note: Numbers have been rounded

East Gippsland Water

<i>Service Standard</i>	<i>2018-19</i>	<i>2019-20</i>	<i>2020-21</i>	<i>2021-22</i>	<i>2022-23</i>
Water					
Number of customers experiencing more than 5 unplanned water supply interruptions in the year (number)	0	0	0	0	0
Average time taken to attend bursts and leaks (priority 1) (minutes)	18	18	18	18	18
Average time taken to attend bursts and leaks (priority 2) (minutes)	22	22	22	22	22
Average time taken to attend bursts and leaks (priority 3) (minutes)	71	71	71	71	71
Average duration of unplanned water supply interruptions (minutes)	75	75	75	75	75
Average duration of planned water supply interruptions (minutes)	139	139	139	139	139
Sewerage					
Customers receiving more than 3 sewer blockages in the year (number)	0	0	0	0	0
Average time to attend sewer spills and blockages (minutes)	32	32	32	32	32
Average time to rectify a sewer blockage (minutes)	80	80	80	80	80
Spills contained within 5 hours (per cent)	100	100	100	100	100

Note: Numbers have been rounded

Gippsland Water

<i>Service Standard</i>	<i>2018-19</i>	<i>2019-20</i>	<i>2020-21</i>	<i>2021-22</i>	<i>2022-23</i>
Water					
Number of customers experiencing more than 5 unplanned water supply interruptions in the year (number)	0	0	0	0	0
Average time taken to attend bursts and leaks (priority 1) (minutes)	35	35	35	35	35
Average time taken to attend bursts and leaks (priority 2) (minutes)	90	90	90	90	90
Average time taken to attend bursts and leaks (priority 3) (minutes)	1500	1500	1500	1500	1500
Average duration of unplanned water supply interruptions (minutes)	90	90	90	90	90
Average duration of planned water supply interruptions (minutes)	168	168	168	168	168
Sewerage					
Customers receiving more than 3 sewer blockages in the year (number)	0	0	0	0	0
Average time to attend sewer spills and blockages (minutes)	40	40	40	40	40
Average time to rectify a sewer blockage (minutes)	95	95	95	95	95
Spills contained within 5 hours (per cent)	98	98	98	98	98

Note: Numbers have been rounded

Goulburn Valley Water

<i>Service Standard</i>	<i>2018-19</i>	<i>2019-20</i>	<i>2020-21</i>	<i>2021-22</i>	<i>2022-23</i>
Water					
Number of customers experiencing more than 5 unplanned water supply interruptions in the year (number)	40	40	40	40	40
Average time taken to attend bursts and leaks (priority 1) (minutes)	30	30	30	30	30
Average time taken to attend bursts and leaks (priority 2) (minutes)	35	35	35	35	35
Average time taken to attend bursts and leaks (priority 3) (minutes)	100	100	100	100	100
Average duration of unplanned water supply interruptions (minutes)	120	120	120	120	120
Average duration of planned water supply interruptions (minutes)	120	120	120	120	120
Sewerage					
Customers receiving more than 3 sewer blockages in the year (number)	40	40	40	40	40
Average time to attend sewer spills and blockages (minutes)	100	100	100	100	100
Average time to rectify a sewer blockage (minutes)	100	100	100	100	100
Spills contained within 5 hours (per cent)	100	100	100	100	100

Note: Numbers have been rounded

GMMWater

<i>Service Standard</i>	<i>2018-19</i>	<i>2019-20</i>	<i>2020-21</i>	<i>2021-22</i>	<i>2022-23</i>
Water					
Number of customers experiencing more than 5 unplanned water supply interruptions in the year (number)	200	200	200	200	200
Average time taken to attend bursts and leaks (priority 1) (minutes)	30	30	30	30	30
Average time taken to attend bursts and leaks (priority 2) (minutes)	40	40	40	40	40
Average time taken to attend bursts and leaks (priority 3) (minutes)	40	40	40	40	40
Average duration of unplanned water supply interruptions (minutes)	100	100	100	100	100
Average duration of planned water supply interruptions (minutes)	180	180	180	180	180
Sewerage					
Customers receiving more than 3 sewer blockages in the year (number)	4	4	4	4	4
Average time to attend sewer spills and blockages (minutes)	22	22	22	22	22
Average time to rectify a sewer blockage (minutes)	113	113	113	113	113
Spills contained within 5 hours (per cent)	98	98	98	98	98

Note: Numbers have been rounded

Lower Murray Water

<i>Service Standard</i>	<i>2018-19</i>	<i>2019-20</i>	<i>2020-21</i>	<i>2021-22</i>	<i>2022-23</i>
Water					
Number of customers experiencing more than 5 unplanned water supply interruptions in the year (number)	0	0	0	0	0
Average time taken to attend bursts and leaks (priority 1) (minutes)	20	20	20	20	20
Average time taken to attend bursts and leaks (priority 2) (minutes)	20	20	20	20	20
Average time taken to attend bursts and leaks (priority 3) (minutes)	20	20	20	20	20
Average duration of unplanned water supply interruptions (minutes)	9	9	9	9	9
Average duration of planned water supply interruptions (minutes)	180	9	9	9	9
Sewerage					
Customers receiving more than 3 sewer blockages in the year (number)	0	0	0	0	0
Average time to attend sewer spills and blockages (minutes)	18	18	18	18	18
Average time to rectify a sewer blockage (minutes)	70	70	70	70	70
Spills contained within 5 hours (per cent)	97	97	97	97	97

Note: Numbers have been rounded

North East Water

<i>Service Standard</i>	<i>2018-19</i>	<i>2019-20</i>	<i>2020-21</i>	<i>2021-22</i>	<i>2022-23</i>	<i>2023-24</i>	<i>2024-25</i>	<i>2025-26</i>
Water								
Number of customers experiencing more than 5 unplanned water supply interruptions in the year (number)	375	375	375	375	375	375	375	375
Average time taken to attend bursts and leaks (priority 1) (minutes)	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30
Average time taken to attend bursts and leaks (priority 2) (minutes)	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30
Average time taken to attend bursts and leaks (priority 3) (minutes)	240	240	240	240	240	240	240	240
Average duration of unplanned water supply interruptions (minutes)	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Average duration of planned water supply interruptions (minutes)	95	95	95	95	95	95	95	95
Sewerage								
Customers receiving more than 3 sewer blockages in the year (number)	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14
Average time to attend sewer spills and blockages (minutes)	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30
Average time to rectify a sewer blockage (minutes)	140	140	140	140	140	140	140	140
Spills contained within 5 hours (per cent)	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Note: Numbers have been rounded

South East Water

<i>Service standard</i>	<i>2018-19</i>	<i>2019-20</i>	<i>2020-21</i>	<i>2021-22</i>	<i>2022-23</i>
Water					
Customers experiencing more than 5 unplanned water supply interruptions in any 12 month period (number)	532	532	532	532	532
Average time taken to attend bursts and leaks (priority 1) (minutes)	36	36	36	36	36
Average time taken to attend bursts and leaks (priority 2) (minutes)	92	92	92	92	92
Average time taken to attend bursts and leaks (priority 3) (minutes)	317	317	317	317	317
Average duration of unplanned water supply interruptions (minutes)	88	88	88	88	88
Average duration of planned water supply interruptions (minutes)	179	179	179	179	179
Sewerage					
Customers receiving more than 3 sewer blockages in any 12 month period (number)	17	17	17	17	17
Average time to attend sewer spills and blockages (minutes)	47	47	47	47	47
Average time to rectify a sewer blockage (minutes)	137	137	137	137	137
Spills contained within 5 hours (per cent)	100	100	100	100	100

Note: Numbers have been rounded

South Gippsland Water

<i>Service Standard</i>	<i>2020-21</i>	<i>2021-22</i>	<i>2022-23</i>
Water			
Number of customers experiencing more than 5 unplanned water supply interruptions in the year (number)	0	0	0
Average time taken to attend bursts and leaks (priority 1) (minutes)	30	30	30
Average time taken to attend bursts and leaks (priority 2) (minutes)	35	35	35
Average time taken to attend bursts and leaks (priority 3) (minutes)	500	500	500
Average duration of unplanned water supply interruptions (minutes)	110	110	110
Average duration of planned water supply interruptions (minutes)	240	240	240
Sewerage			
Customers receiving more than 3 sewer blockages in the year (number)	0	0	0
Average time to attend sewer spills and blockages (minutes)	30	30	30
Average time to rectify a sewer blockage (minutes)	120	120	120
Spills contained within 5 hours (per cent)	95	95	95

Note: Numbers have been rounded

Wannon Water

<i>Service Standard</i>	<i>2018-19</i>	<i>2019-20</i>	<i>2020-21</i>	<i>2021-22</i>	<i>2022-23</i>
Water					
Number of customers experiencing more than 5 unplanned water supply interruptions in the year (number)	0	0	0	0	0
Average time taken to attend bursts and leaks (priority 1) (minutes)	21	21	21	21	21
Average time taken to attend bursts and leaks (priority 2) (minutes)	30	30	30	30	30
Average time taken to attend bursts and leaks (priority 3) (minutes)	85	85	85	85	85
Average duration of unplanned water supply interruptions (minutes)	80	80	80	80	80
Average duration of planned water supply interruptions (minutes)	135	135	135	135	135
Sewerage					
Customers receiving more than 3 sewer blockages in the year (number)	0	0	0	0	0
Average time to attend sewer spills and blockages (minutes)	35	35	35	35	35
Average time to rectify a sewer blockage (minutes)	117	117	117	117	117
Spills contained within 5 hours (per cent)	99	99	99	99	99

Note: Numbers have been rounded

Western Water

<i>Service Standard</i>	<i>2020-21</i>	<i>2021-22</i>	<i>2022-23</i>
Water			
Number of customers experiencing more than 5 unplanned water supply interruptions in the year (number)	0	0	0
Average time taken to attend bursts and leaks (priority 1) (minutes)	30	30	30
Average time taken to attend bursts and leaks (priority 2) (minutes)	60	60	60
Average time taken to attend bursts and leaks (priority 3) (minutes)	1440	1440	1440
Average duration of unplanned water supply interruptions (minutes)	126	126	126
Average duration of planned water supply interruptions (minutes)	240	240	240
Sewerage			
Customers receiving more than 3 sewer blockages in the year (number)	0	0	0
Average time to attend sewer spills (minutes)	30	30	30
Average time to attend blockages (minutes)	60	60	60
Average time to rectify a sewer blockage (minutes)	47	47	47
Spills contained within 5 hours (per cent)	100	100	100

Note: Numbers have been rounded

Westernport Water

<i>Service Standard</i>	<i>2018-19</i>	<i>2019-20</i>	<i>2020-21</i>	<i>2021-22</i>	<i>2022-23</i>
Water					
Number of customers experiencing more than 5 unplanned water supply interruptions in the year (number)	0	0	0	0	0
Average time taken to attend bursts and leaks (priority 1) (minutes)	30	30	30	30	30
Average time taken to attend bursts and leaks (priority 2) (minutes)	35	35	35	35	35
Average time taken to attend bursts and leaks (priority 3) (minutes)	300	300	300	300	300
Average duration of unplanned water supply interruptions (minutes)	96	96	96	96	96
Average duration of planned water supply interruptions (minutes)	157	157	157	157	157
Sewerage					
Customers receiving more than 3 sewer blockages in the year (number)	0	0	0	0	0
Average time to attend sewer spills and blockages (minutes)	60	60	60	60	60
Average time to rectify a sewer blockage (minutes)	200	200	200	200	200
Spills contained within 5 hours (per cent)	100	100	100	100	100

Note: Numbers have been rounded

Yarra Valley Water

<i>Service standard</i>	<i>2018-19</i>	<i>2019-20</i>	<i>2020-21</i>	<i>2021-22</i>	<i>2022-23</i>
Water					
Customers experiencing more than 5 unplanned water supply interruptions in any 12 month period (number)	165	165	165	165	165
Average time taken to attend bursts and leaks (priority 1) (minutes)	44	44	44	44	44
Average time taken to attend bursts and leaks (priority 2) (minutes)	88	88	88	88	88
Average time taken to attend bursts and leaks (priority 3) (minutes)	802	802	802	802	802
Average duration of unplanned water supply interruptions (minutes)	110	110	110	110	110
Average duration of planned water supply interruptions (minutes)	128	128	128	128	128
Sewerage					
Customers receiving more than 3 sewer blockages in the year (number)	11	11	11	11	11
Average time to attend sewer spills and blockages (minutes)	82	82	82	82	82
Average time to rectify a sewer blockage (minutes)	243	243	243	243	243
Spills contained within 5 hours (per cent)	97	97	97	97	97

Note: Numbers have been rounded

SCHEDULE 3

NATIONAL CABINET CORONAVIRUS SUPPORT POLICY AND PRINCIPLES – APRIL 2020 (National principles)

Support for households and small businesses facing hardship in paying for essential services

To protect both residential and small businesses experiencing financial stress, hardship support by essential service providers (energy, water and telecommunications providers, and local governments) should:

- Adhere to the following nationally consistent principles, which builds on actions required or sought for residential and small business customers in the energy and telecommunications sectors;
- Align with nationally consistent approaches to identifying those in financial stress. For example, businesses that qualify for the JobKeeper Payment are defined as being under financial stress under this arrangement; and
- Focus on keeping those facing hardship connected and working to find a mutually sustainable solution to enable households and businesses to rebuild on the other side.

Customers who can pay their bills should continue to do so, to help ensure the continued financial viability of essential service providers.

These principles aim to promote consistency across sectors and jurisdictions, including for eligibility to hardship programs, and ensure an appropriate safety net is in place for vulnerable families and businesses during the economic shock caused by COVID-19. These principles are in addition to existing policies and requirements, which may apply to these sectors.

Support Principles

- 1 Encourage customers to contact their service providers at the earliest opportunity to discuss their situation.
- 2 Establish clear processes to identify, and to promptly and appropriately manage, households and small businesses experiencing financial stress, including small businesses eligible for the JobKeeper Payment, such as customers who:
 - a. Repeatedly fail to pay bills on time
 - b. Submit questions or issues to customer service centres.
- 3 Offer households and small businesses that indicate they may be in financial stress, including small businesses eligible for the JobKeeper Payment, the option of going on a payment plan and/or other flexible options including bill smoothing, flexible repayment options, payment deferrals, extensions and access to Centrepay or other payment services.
- 4 Be prepared to modify existing payment plans if a customer's changed circumstances make this necessary.
- 5 Do not disconnect or restrict supply to households or small businesses in financial stress, including small businesses eligible for the JobKeeper Payment.
- 6 Defer referrals of households and small businesses in financial stress, including small businesses eligible for the JobKeeper Payment, for debt recovery/collection proceedings and credit default listings.
- 7 Suspend sale of debt while there is an arrangement in place with a customer under a hardship policy.
- 8 Waive late fees, interest charges and charges for collection of overdue amounts for households and small businesses in financial stress, including small businesses eligible for the JobKeeper Payment.
- 9 Provide clear, up-to-date and readily available information about arrangements available to those in financial stress via multiple physical and digital communication channels.
- 10 Provide advice to households and small business customers about appropriate government concession programs and financial counselling services, and strategies to reduce their bills, and/or consumption of the service, in order to reduce future payment difficulties.

- 11 Minimise the frequency and duration of planned outages for critical works, and provide as much notice as possible to assist households and businesses during any outage.

Compliance and Delivery

These support measures should be provided through appropriate existing support and delivery mechanisms, including local governments, service providers and industry associations. This includes:

- Local Government NSW
- Local Government Association of South Australia
- Municipal Association of Victoria
- Local Government Association of Tasmania
- Local Government Association of the Northern Territory
- Local Government Association of Queensland
- The Western Australian Local Government Association.