



# Customer Service Charter

May 2007



This Customer Service Charter is our commitment to our customers.

AQWEST is an independent water authority responsible for supplying drinking water to the City of Bunbury (except Pelican Point).

The operating area is shown at Appendix A.

AQWEST is governed by the Water Boards Act (1904).

This Charter

- ? Sets standards for water quality and pressure
- ? Defines areas of responsibility for maintenance
- ? Provides information about new connections
- ? Details complaints and faults processes
- ? Explains issues related to account payments; and
- ? Explains customers' rights to be involved in decision-making forums and processes

The Charter is independently assessed and approved by the Economic Regulation Authority and a summary is sent to customers every two years. Copies are available at [www.aqwest.wa.gov.au](http://www.aqwest.wa.gov.au) or from AQWEST headquarters.

### Water restrictions

On occasion, AQWEST may restrict water supply. This could happen:

- ? When there are limitations on supply
- ? During drought periods (there is a state-wide ban on the use of sprinklers between 9am and 6pm); or
- ? To ensure a continuous supply during short-term problems with the network, treatment plants or bores

Restrictions may also apply if an account is unpaid and no alternative arrangements have been made. AQWEST will provide notice in writing at least 48 hours before restricting supply.

### Water quality

AQWEST conducts regular tests to ensure that water quality meets the standards set

by the WA Minister for Health. Water quality reports are open and comprehensive, and are issued:

- ? Monthly to the AQWEST Board
- ? Quarterly to the Water Purity Committee and Department of Water; and
- ? Annually to the WA Department of Health and Department of Water

AQWEST has a Memorandum of Understanding with the WA Department of Health which sets rigorous rules for testing the quality of Bunbury's water, and ensures independent verification of the results. A detailed action plan exists to deal with non-complying test samples and customers are welcome to contact AQWEST for details.

In January 2007, AQWEST established a Water Quality Committee to implement the 2004 Australian Drinking Water Quality Guidelines.

### Water pressure

AQWEST guarantees a minimum flow of 20 litres per minute at a pressure of 150 kilopascals (kPa). Maximum meter pressure should not exceed 1000 kPa.

During peak times, water pressure may be reduced, but should still exceed the minimum standard. Please call if you notice a significant change in your usual water supply pressure.

AQWEST will negotiate a special agreement where usual quality and pressure standards can not be delivered.

If you are concerned about water quality or pressure, call AQWEST. We will investigate the matter and respond within two working days.

Water pressure standards apply to household services, but not to garden reticulation.

Any reticulation system designed for pressures and flows above the minimum standards is installed and operated at the owner's risk.

AQWEST reserves the right to alter available

pressures to better manage its operations and costs.

### **Interruptions to supply**

AQWEST's supply network is designed to deliver water 24 hours a day, every day.

For any planned interruptions, such as maintenance to local water supply, households will be given 24 hours notice and commercial customers three days.

If the water is off for more than six hours, AQWEST can arrange to access drinking water from another source if requested.

In the case of unplanned interruptions, because of an emergency or accidental damage, AQWEST will endeavour to keep interruptions to a minimum.

If there is a potential health or safety risk, water supply will be stopped immediately.

### **Service connections**

There is a standard application form for new water services. If there is a water main available with enough capacity for the service, AQWEST will connect it within 15 business days of receiving the application and payment.

Applications for services in developing areas or for special projects will be considered subject to engineering and financial assessment. A service quotation will be sent within 10 business days.

Applications for a water service connection can be made at AQWEST's office. A copy of your building plan, indicating where the meter is to be installed, is required.

AQWEST will disconnect your water service, for a fee, upon request.

If you sell your home, or there is a change of tenancy, you can request a special meter reading for a fee.

### **Maintenance of pipes and fittings**

The pipes and fittings from the water main, up to and including the meter at the property boundary, belong to AQWEST, and will be maintained and replaced for normal wear and tear. If the water supply fails

because of damage, repair costs are charged to the owner, or whoever is responsible for the damage.

Pipes and fittings from the water meter to the house or business are the property owner's responsibility. It is also the owner's responsibility to protect the water meter if required, but it should always remain accessible.

Plumbing works must comply with Australian Standard AS3500 and repairs or modifications must be carried out by a plumber who is licensed with the Plumbers Licensing Board (Phone: 08 9282 0478).

### **Access to property**

State legislation gives AQWEST staff the right to enter private property to read water meters, or during an emergency. They will otherwise not enter private property without notifying the owner or tenant. Staff members carry authorised identification at all times.

Owners need to ensure easy access to the water meter so that readings and maintenance can be carried out.

### **Water Conservation**

AQWEST supports water conservation and education campaigns in the local community through:

- ? Media coverage and campaigns
- ? Providing customers advice on water conservation practices
- ? School group site tours
- ? Close monitoring of key consumption performance indicators

### **Emergency calls**

The 24-hour emergency contact telephone number (for burst water mains etc) is (08) 9791 3272.

AQWEST will provide emergency advice within an hour.

## Reporting faults

Water supply faults will be responded to on a priority basis. Response times will be:

TYPE OF COMPLAINT	RESPONSE TIME
Major leaks, water quality problems or a breakdown in supply to a number of properties	2 Hours
A minor leak, water quality problems or a breakdown in supply to a single property	4 Hours
Minor problems and complaints which do not require urgent attention or which can be deferred by arrangement with the property owner or occupier	2 Business Days
Weekend callouts are determined by how serious a water supply problem may be. Any major leak or threat to life, public health or property will lead to a rapid response.	2 Hours

## Dealing with complaints

Customers concerned about water supply or related issues should call or write to AQWEST. We welcome your feedback and will respond as soon as possible.

If you are not satisfied with our response, concerns can be directed to AQWEST's Chief Executive Officer for review. Your complaint will be resolved within 21 days of receipt.

If you are still not satisfied with the result, complaints can be referred to the Department of Water on (08) 6364 7600. Full contact details are shown at the end of this Charter.

Once referred to the Department of Water, the complaints resolution process is independent of AQWEST.

The Director General of the Department of Water may, based on a written application, direct that serious or urgent matters be heard by an independent arbitrator. The arbitrator's decision, including the awarding of costs, is binding on both parties.

Customers may also choose to use common law to resolve a matter.

Complaints relating to the use of sprinklers between 9am and 6pm may be lodged directly with AQWEST or with the Bunbury Office of the Department of Water on (08) 9726 4111.

## Fees and charges

AQWEST's accounts are issued every four months and are made up of a fixed service charge and a variable charge for water consumption. Water prices are approved by the Minister for Water Resources annually. In some circumstances, water prices may be set by special agreement.

If you are overcharged by AQWEST you may:

- ? Choose to retain a credit against a future charge; or
- ? Have the excess amount refunded

If, by error, you are undercharged, you may be required to pay the shortfall.

Please contact AQWEST to discuss issues regarding account payments as repayment plans can be arranged.

Property owners can request in writing that accounts be placed in their tenant's name, however, these charges ultimately remain the owner's responsibility.

Additional charges apply for:

- ? Overdue accounts; and
- ? Dishonoured cheques

Please notify AQWEST immediately of any change of ownership or address.

## Pensioner rebates

Pensioners may qualify for a discount on rates and charges. Generally, they can claim up to half of the annual supply fee and the first 350 kilolitres of water used each year.

Seniors and Commonwealth Seniors Health Care card holders can claim between 25 and 50 per cent off the supply fee and 50 per cent off the first 150 kilolitres used.

The rebate does not apply to Homeswest tenants.

## Excess charges

If your account is unusually high because of

an undetected water leak, AQWEST may negotiate payment of charges or for your account to be reduced. Please call for details.

If you believe your meter is faulty, AQWEST can arrange for it to be tested, however a fee applies if no fault is found. If a meter is faulty, consumption charges will be based on an estimate of average use of past consumption.

### Customer consultation

A number of opportunities exist for customers to provide feedback about AQWEST's services and to contribute to our decision-making process.

AQWEST is managed by a Board of community members, appointed by the Minister for Water Resources.

Monthly Board meetings are open to the public and provide an opportunity for public questions. Please contact AQWEST for an up-to-date meeting schedule.

AQWEST also holds an Annual Public Meeting, the time and date of which is advertised in local newspapers at least two weeks before the event.

The agenda and minutes for each meeting are available on request.

The Annual Report is also available on request and can be found at [www.aqwest.wa.gov.au](http://www.aqwest.wa.gov.au). The Annual Report details Key Performance Indicators which allow customers to track AQWEST's effort in a range of areas over several years.

Information for some of these indicators is taken from an annual customer satisfaction survey.

As well, three times a year, AQWEST distributes its "On Tap" newsletter to all customers. We also host displays at the annual Bunbury Show allowing direct customer interaction.

### A sustainable supply

AQWEST's role is to 'provide sustainable, high-quality water services at minimum long-term cost'.

We are committed to achieve this through:

- ? Detailed formal planning including a five-year Finance Plan, five-year Capital Works Plan and five-year Corporate Plan, which are all revised annually
- ? Monitoring water resources to ensure capacity to deliver a sustainable supply
- ? Undertaking annual maintenance programs to ensure high water quality and supply network efficiency
- ? Adopting water-efficient technologies and guidelines
- ? Proactive leak detection programs, in partnership with customers

Sustainable supply management will deliver the community economic, social and environmental benefits.

### Customer enquiries

AQWEST contact details are shown in the "Contact Us" section below.

Please call us to report faults, enquire about accounts or with questions, feedback or suggestions. Any over-the-counter enquiry or telephone call will be answered by the next business day. Responses to letters and e-mails are guaranteed within 10 working days.

### Contact us

Phone: 9780 9500

Fax: 9780 9509

E-mail: [aqwest@aqwest.wa.gov.au](mailto:aqwest@aqwest.wa.gov.au)

Web site: [www.aqwest.wa.gov.au](http://www.aqwest.wa.gov.au)

24-hr Emergency Service: 9791 3272

Postal address	Street address
PO Box 400	5 McKinnon Way
Bunbury WA 6231	Bunbury WA 6230

Office hours:

8.30am to 5.00pm Monday to Friday

### Contact Department of Water (DoW)

**Phone:** (08) 6364 7600

**Fax:** (08) 6364 7601

**Website:** [www.water.wa.gov.au](http://www.water.wa.gov.au)

### Contact Economic Regulation Authority

**Phone:** (08) 9213 1900

**Fax:** (08) 9213 1999

**Website:** [www.era.wa.gov.au](http://www.era.wa.gov.au)

# Appendix A

