

Customer Service Charter

MAY 2010
TO MAY 2013

Final Version



The purpose of AQWEST's Customer Service Charter is to inform you of the standards of service we will provide and your rights and responsibilities. It is our commitment to you and applies for a three (3) year term from May 2010 to May 2013.

AQWEST is an independent water authority responsible for supplying drinking water to the City of Bunbury, except Pelican Point, and also water to parts of East Dalyellup and the Preston Industrial area.

Our operating area is shown in 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 relating to account payments; and
- Explains customers' rights to be involved in decision-making forums and processes.

This Charter is independently assessed and approved by the Economic Regulation Authority and a summary is sent to customers every three (3) years. Copies are available at www.aqwest.wa.gov.au or from AQWEST's Water Services Centre.



Sustainable supply

AQWEST's purpose is to provide sustainable, high-quality water services.

We are committed to achieving this through:

- Detailed annual formal planning including the following 10 year plans:
 - Strategic Development Plan
 - Capital Works Plan
 - Finance Plan.
- An Annual Statement of Corporate Intent.
- Undertaking annual maintenance programs to ensure high water quality and supply network efficiency.
- Adopting water-efficient technologies and guidelines.
- Engaging in proactive leak detection programs, and in partnership with customers, actively manage water pressure to minimise water losses and consumption. You can assist by regularly reading your water meter.
- Developing awareness of Water Efficiency Measures (WEMs) including the following:
 - Two day per week garden watering rosters
 - Total sprinkler ban between 9.00am and 6.00pm each day
 - Total winter sprinkler ban.
- Implementing Water Wise and Water Detectives initiatives for school age children.

The Department of Water is the Resource Manager and monitors water resources in accordance with the Groundwater Licence Operating Strategy to ensure capacity to deliver a sustainable supply. AQWEST is licensed by the Department of Water to extract water and is required to adhere to the licensing requirements.

We believe that managing a sustainable water supply will deliver the community economic, social and environmental benefits.

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, and
- Quarterly to the State Committee for the Purity of Water.

We have 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 you are welcome to contact us for details.

Our well-established Water Quality Committee oversees Water Quality matters.

If you intend being absent from your property for an extended time, you should consider turning off the water at the meter (if there is no garden reticulation or water dependant appliances) when you leave and turning it on when you return. Run your taps for a minute or two and capture the water from this flushing and use it in the garden.

Water pressure

In accordance with our Operating Licence and under normal operating conditions, we guarantee 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 if water pressure is reduced, AQWEST shall still guarantee the minimum flow. This applies 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.

We may alter available pressures to better manage long-term sustainability of the supply.

Please call us if you notice a significant change in your usual water supply pressure or you would like to report a service fault.

Water conservation

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

- Media coverage and campaigns
- Providing customers with advice on water conservation practices
- A Waterwise schools program in primary schools in the Bunbury region
- Close monitoring of key consumption performance indicators
- The Water Detectives website www.waterdetectives.com.au
- Water Efficiency Measures that are in place in Bunbury. These include limiting the use of scheme water, to water gardens by sprinklers or reticulation, to two days a week based on your house or lot number. Gardens can only be watered once on each of the allocated days, either before 9am or after 6pm. No sprinkler or reticulation can be used on any day between 9am and 6pm. The two-day restriction does not apply to bore users. At the Government's discretion, a total sprinkler ban applies to the mid winter months. The 9am to 6pm ban and winter sprinkler ban applies to all users. There are eight (8) stages of restrictions where Stage 1 is least severe and Stage 8 is the most restrictive. Any changes or updates to the water efficiency stages or bans are shown on our website at www.aqwest.wa.gov.au

A water calculator is also available on our website.

Service connections

There is a standard application form for new water services. If sufficient water main is available with enough capability for the service, we 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 water service connection can be made at AQWEST's Water Services Centre. You are required to provide a copy of your building plan indicating where you would prefer the meter to be installed.

You can request the disconnection of your water service, which attracts a fee.

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

Maintaining 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. Plumbing work must comply with Australian Standard AS3500 and repairs or modifications must be carried out under the direction of a plumber who is licensed with the Plumbers Licensing Board (Phone 1300 249 223).

It is also the owner's responsibility to protect the water meter, if required, and it should always be accessible. Please maintain a clear space of not less than 300mm horizontally and 1200mm vertically from the water meter to ensure easy access.

Access to property

State legislation gives our staff the right to enter private property to read water meters, undertake maintenance, 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.

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

Restricting water supply

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

- When there are limitations on supply, and
- 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. We will provide notice in writing at least 48 hours before restricting supply.

Interrupting water 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 (6) hours, we can arrange access to drinking water from another source, if requested.

In the case of unplanned interruptions, because of an emergency or accidental damage, your water supply may be stopped immediately. We will endeavour to ensure complete interruptions to water supply do not exceed one hour.

AQWEST has a well-developed and robust Business Continuity Plan (BCP) to deal with emergency situations.

Fees and charges

Every four months we issue our accounts, which show the fixed service charge and a variable charge for water consumption. Each year the Minister for Water approves the water prices.

All fees and charges are detailed on our website at www.aqwest.wa.gov.au

If we have overcharged you, you may:

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

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

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

In accordance with our annual budget, an interest penalty applies to overdue accounts.

Please contact us to discuss any issues regarding paying your account, as payment plans can be arranged.

If there is a change of ownership or address, please let us know immediately.

Pensioner rebates

Pensioners may qualify for a discount on supply fees and charges. Generally, pensioners 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 cardholders can claim between 25 and 50 per cent off the supply fee and 50 per cent off the first 150 kilolitres used. This includes private tenants who hold these cards.

The rebate does not apply to State Housing Commission tenants.

Full details are available on our website at www.aqwest.wa.gov.au

Excess charges

If your account is unusually high, because there is an undetected hidden water leak within your property, then you may qualify for an ex-gratia allowance of up to 50 per cent. Special conditions apply so please call us for details.

If you believe your meter is faulty, we can arrange for it to be tested; however, a fee applies if no fault is found. The fee is detailed annually in the Board's approved budget and on our website. If a meter is faulty, consumption charges will be estimated and based on an average of past consumption.

You are encouraged to read your water meter every week. A chart for this purpose is distributed to all customers annually. Additional copies are available on request and from our website.

Customer consultation

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

The following opportunities exist for you to provide feedback about our services and to contribute to our decision-making process.

- Monthly Board Meetings are open to the public and provide an opportunity for public questions. Please contact us for an up-to-date meeting schedule.
- We also hold 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 from our website at www.aqwest.wa.gov.au. The Annual Report details Key Performance Indicators, which allow you to track our efforts in a range of areas over several years. Information for some of these indicators is taken from an annual customer satisfaction survey.
- Four (4) times a year, we publish our 'On Tap' newsletter. We also host displays at external venues to promote Water Week and water conservation.

Information

Key corporate documents are available from our office or they can be viewed or downloaded from our website at www.aqwest.wa.gov.au

Customer enquiries

Our 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 usually be answered the same day or, if some research is required, no later than the next business day. Responses to letters and e-mails are guaranteed within 10 working days.

Emergency calls

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

We will provide emergency advice within an hour.

See page 6 where it relates to reporting complaints about Water Efficiency Measures (WEMs).

Reporting faults

We will respond to water supply faults on a priority basis. Response times will be:

Type Of Complaint	Response Time
Major leaks, water quality problems or breakdown in supply to a number of properties.	2 hours
A minor leak, water quality problem or a breakdown in supply to a single property.	4 hours
Minor problems and complaints that 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

Please call or write to us if you are concerned about water supply or related issues. 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 15 business days of receipt.

Where a complaint has not been resolved within 15 business days, we will inform you of the option to refer your complaint to the Department of Water on (08) 6364 7600.

If you have a dispute with AQWEST regarding a provided or requested water service, you may refer your dispute to the Department of Water (DoW) at

any stage. The DoW will respond with its opinion on the matter and suggest a solution to the parties involved. Contact details for the DoW are:

Customer Services Officer
The Department of Water
Water Services Branch
P O Box K822
PERTH WA 6842

The Atrium
168 St Georges Terrace
Perth Western Australia

Phone: (08) 6364 7600
Fax: (08) 6364 6525
Website: www.water.wa.gov.au
Email: WISBcomplaints@water.wa.gov.au

The Department's responsibilities include protecting water quality, analysing water resources information, issuing licences and regulating water use.

Once the complaint is referred to the Department of Water, the resolution process is independent of AQWEST. The Department of Water may resolve the dispute or direct the customer or us to binding arbitration.

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

Complaints relating to the use of sprinklers between 9am and 6pm or outside the two (2) allocated watering days or outside the total winter sprinkler ban may be lodged directly with AQWEST on 9780 9500. Reports relating to the non-compliance of bore water use should be directed to the Department of Water on 1800 508 885.

Contact Us

Phone: (08) 9780 9500
Fax: (08) 9780 9509
E-mail: aqwest@aqwest.wa.gov.au
Website: www.aqwest.wa.gov.au

Postal Address	Street Address
PO Box 400	5 MacKinnon Way
BUNBURY WA 6231	BUNBURY WA 6230

Office Hours:
8.30am to 5.00pm Monday to Friday

