



# Urban Customer Charter

July 2023



**GWM**Water

## How to contact us:

<b>Visit us at</b>	11 McLachlan Street, Horsham
<b>Postal Address</b>	PO Box 481, Horsham Vic 3402
<b>Billing and general enquiries</b>	1300 659 961 (business hours)
<b>Difficulties and faults</b>	1800 188 586 (any time)
<b>Fax</b>	(03) 5381 9881
<b>Email</b>	info@gwmwater.org.au
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://gwmwater.org.au">gwmwater.org.au</a>
<b>Social media</b>	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/GWMWater">Facebook.com/GWMWater</a>

## Contents

### PART A -

**Introduction** 7

**Trade Waste** 8

**Part B – Service and supply** 9

**1. CONNECTION AND SERVICE PROVISION** 9

1.1 **Obligation to provide service** 9

1.2 **Obligation to connect** 9

1.3 **Limits on recycled water services** 9

**2. CHARGES** 9

2.1 **Variation** 9

2.2 **Schedule of charges** 9

**3. PERMITTED USE** 9

**4. SUSTAINABLE USE OF WATER** 10

**5. GWMWATER’S METER READINGS** 10

5.1 **Customer self-reads** 10

5.2 **Special meter readings** 10

5.3 **Data and digital water metering** 11

**6. BILLING** 11

6.1 **Billing cycle** 11

6.2 **Issue of bills** 11

6.3 **Content of bills** 11

6.4 **Explanation of charges** 12

6.5 **E-bill** 12

6.6 **Presentation of customer water usage** 12

6.7 **Adjustment of bills** 12

**7. PAYMENTS** 13

7.1 **Payment methods** 13

---

7.2	Flexible payment plans	14
7.3	Customer Portal	14
<b>Part C - Customer assistance and support</b>		<b>14</b>
8.	<b>PROACTIVE CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT</b>	<b>14</b>
9.	<b>CUSTOMER'S CHOSEN REPRESENTATIVE OR SUPPORT PERSON</b>	<b>15</b>
10.	<b>PAYMENT ASSISTANCE</b>	<b>15</b>
10.1	Payment Assistance	15
10.2	Customer Support Policy	16
11.	<b>FAMILY VIOLENCE</b>	<b>17</b>
12.	<b>SPECIAL NEEDS</b>	<b>18</b>
13.	<b>INFORMATION</b>	<b>18</b>
13.1	Enquiries	18
13.2	Fees for information or advice	18
13.3	Water reuse	18
13.4	Billing history	18
13.5	Regulatory information	19
13.6	Communication assistance	19
13.7	Written Communication	19
13.8	Customer obligations	19
13.9	Privacy	20
14.	<b>COMPLAINTS AND DISPUTES</b>	<b>20</b>
14.1	Complaints and disputes policy	20
14.2	Resolution of disputes	20
<b>Part D - Actions for non-payment</b>		<b>21</b>
15.	<b>COLLECTION</b>	<b>21</b>
15.1	Appropriate communication	21
15.2	Reminder notices	21
15.3	Final Notices	21
15.4	Communication requirements	22

---

15.5	Interest on unrecovered amounts	23
15.6	Maximum rate of interest that may be charged	23
15.7	Charges over property	23
15.8	Dishonoured payment	24
<b>16.</b>	<b>ACTIONS FOR NON-PAYMENT</b>	<b>24</b>
16.1	Restriction and legal action to be a measure of last resort	24
16.2	Limits on restriction and legal action	24
16.3	Additional limits on restriction	24
16.4	Life support and other special circumstances	25
16.5	Restriction and legal action	25
16.6	Removal of restrictions	25
<b>Part E -</b>	<b>Quality and Reliability of Supply and Services</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>17.</b>	<b>QUALITY OF SERVICES</b>	<b>25</b>
17.1	Product quality	25
17.2	Water Supply (flow rate)	25
17.3	Water Supply Testing	26
17.4	Water supply rectification	26
<b>18.</b>	<b>RELIABILITY OF SERVICES</b>	<b>26</b>
18.1	Obligation to provide reliable services	26
18.2	Service standards	26
18.3	Unplanned interruptions	26
18.4	Planned interruptions	27
18.5	Bursts, leaks, blockages and spills	27
<b>19.</b>	<b>RECONNECTION</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>20.</b>	<b>GUARANTEED SERVICE LEVELS</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>21.</b>	<b>WORKS AND MAINTENANCE</b>	<b>28</b>
21.1	Worker identification	28
21.2	Keys held by GWMWater	28
	<b>Definitions</b>	<b>29</b>
	<b>Approved Service Standards</b>	<b>32</b>
	<b>Guaranteed Service Levels</b>	<b>32</b>

## **Introduction**

The Essential Services Commission (ESC) Water Industry Standard for Urban Water Businesses is made under Section 4F of the *Water Industry Act 1994* (Vic) and in accordance with the Water Industry Regulatory Order, made pursuant to section 4D of the *Water Industry Act 1994* (Vic).

## **Purpose**

The purpose of this Customer Charter is to inform urban customers about the standards and conditions of service and supply that GWMWater (and our agents) will comply with in providing certain regulated services to customers. It applies to GWMWater's basic urban water services (including drinking water and regulated (non-potable) water), recycled water services (unless specifically exempted by this Customer Charter or by a decision of the ESC) and sewerage services.

This Customer Charter does not apply to diversion services (including groundwater), irrigation and stock and domestic services which are covered by GWMWater's Rural Customer Charter. This Customer Charter does not apply to bulk services provided to other regional water corporations.

Supply-by-Agreement customers should refer to their individual agreements for terms and conditions that may override the provisions of this Urban Customer Charter.

## **About us**

The Grampians Wimmera Mallee water supply system covers an area of approximately three million hectares, one of the largest rural water supply systems in the world. The total region serviced by GWMWater is approximately 6.2 million hectares.

We provide water supply services to approximately 33,000 urban properties in 71 towns. Wastewater services are provided to 28 of these towns.

Domestic and stock water services are provided to 11,000 rural customers. A bulk water supply is also available to our rural customers, typically for intensive agricultural activities such as poultry farms, piggeries and commercial feedlots.

Rural services include groundwater management, river diversions and support of key regional catchment and environmental management strategies. We also manage eight bulk water supply reservoirs, including recreational access to these reservoirs.

### **Amendment to the Customer Charter**

This Customer Charter may be amended to reflect any changes in the Water Industry Standard – Urban or GWMWater’s approved service standards. GWMWater will ensure customers are informed of any changes made to the charter through its quarterly customer newsletter ‘Tapping In’.

### **Separate written agreements**

Separate written agreements for the provision of services made before 1 November 2004 need not comply with the Water Industry Standard - Urban.

A separate written agreement made after 1 November 2004 need not comply with the Water Industry Standard – Urban 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 the Water Industry Standard – Urban unless GWMWater can demonstrate that satisfying the Water Industry Standard – Urban requirements is not practical and GWMWater expressly identifies any material departures from the Water Industry Standard – Urban to the customer in writing.

A recycled water contract need not comply with the Water Industry Standard – Urban if it does not provide for domestic reticulated recycled water or if the ESC expressly decides otherwise.

### **Trade Waste**

GWMWater will comply with the requirements in the Water Industry Standard -Trade Waste Customer Service in relation to the provision of information to trade waste customers.

---

## Part B – Service and supply

### 1. CONNECTION AND SERVICE PROVISION

#### 1.1 Obligation to provide service

If a customer's property is connected to its system, GWMWater will provide the relevant service in accordance with the ESC industry standard for urban customer service.

#### 1.2 Obligation to connect

Subject to the *Water Act 1989* (Vic) and the *Water Industry Act 1994* (Vic), where a person requests connection to a service that is available, GWMWater will connect or approve connection to the person's property within 10 business days, or such later date as agreed, if the customer has:

- (a) Paid or agreed to pay all applicable connection fees.
- (b) Complied with all reasonable terms and conditions of connection imposed by GWMWater.

#### 1.3 Limits on recycled water services

GWMWater may refuse to provide a recycled water service if the customer has not entered into a recycled water agreement in a form acceptable to GWMWater or otherwise received the consent of GWMWater. GWMWater may discontinue a recycled water service if the customer breaches the applicable permitted use rules. GWMWater will advise customers of the standards and requirements necessary for entering a recycled water agreement or obtaining consent. Further information can be obtained by contacting GWMWater on 1300 659 961 or visiting [gwmwater.org.au](http://gwmwater.org.au)

### 2. CHARGES

#### 2.1 Variation

Subject to the *Water Act 1989* (Vic) and the *Water Industry Act 1994* (Vic), approved service standards and any relevant determination of the ESC, GWMWater may vary charges to customers. GWMWater will 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.

GWMWater 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

GWMWater will publish its schedule of approved fees and charges on its website [gwmwater.org.au](http://gwmwater.org.au) and provide a copy to customers upon request. Requests can be made by contacting GWMWater on 1300 659 961.

### 3. PERMITTED USE

GWMWater will regularly inform relevant customers of its required limits on the permitted use of recycled water, non-potable water and its sewerage service which at least reflect:

- (a) Health and environmental regulations.
- (b) Clause 1.3 in respect of recycled water.

#### 4. SUSTAINABLE USE OF WATER

GWMWater will provide information to customers about the sustainable use of Victoria's water resources and how customers may conserve water. Details on the sustainable use of water can be obtained by contacting GWMWater on 1300 659 961 or visiting [gwmwater.org.au](http://gwmwater.org.au)

#### 5. GWMWATER'S METER READINGS

GWMWater will use reasonable endeavours to ensure that all customers have an actual meter reading each billing cycle or otherwise at least once every 12 months.

##### 5.1 Customer self-reads

- (a) GWMWater will accept a customer self-read, in a method that is approved by the GWMWater, after the customer has received a bill based on an estimated read.
- (b) GWMWater will not charge a customer for a self-read.
- (c) GWMWater will inform customers in writing:
  - (i) that a self-read is an option, if the customer has received a bill based on an estimated read;
  - (ii) that the customer may request an adjusted bill, if the customer has received a bill based on an estimated read;
  - (iii) of any changes to the customer's payment obligations if the customer requests an adjusted bill; and
  - (iv) of the business' approved methods of the customer self-read.
- (d) Where a customer requests an adjusted bill, GWMWater will, promptly and at no extra charge, provide the customer with an adjusted bill based on the customer self-read.

Details on how to provide a self-read can be found on the customer's bill.

##### 5.2 Special meter readings

GWMWater may charge a customer an additional fee for a special meter reading outside of the normal billing cycle.

GWMWater will not charge a fee to a customer for a special meter reading:

- (a) If that is a self-read under Clause 5.1.
- (b) If the property has a digital meter.
- (c) If the customer is receiving assistance under GWMWater's customer support policy (pursuant to the policy in Clause 10.2).

Upon request by the customer, GWMWater will determine a customer's outstanding charges outside of the normal billing cycle.

GWMWater may calculate the outstanding charges by:

- (a) accepting a self-read under Clause 5.1.
- (b) arranging for a special meter reading at a reasonable charge payable by the customer.
- (c) where permitted by the *Water Act 1989* (Vic) and the industry standard providing an estimated bill at no cost to the customer.

### 5.3 Data and digital water metering

GWMWater uses digital metering, our Privacy Policy explains how the data collected is managed and used.

## 6. BILLING

### 6.1 Billing cycle

GWMWater's billing cycle is every three months unless more frequent accounts have been agreed with the customer. Customers will have a minimum of 28 days to pay their bill.

GWMWater may bill commercial customers or other customers with high water or recycled water usage, or high trade waste or sewage disposal monthly.

### 6.2 Issue of bills

GWMWater may issue a bill to:

- (a) A customer at the physical or electronic address specified by the customer.
- (b) A customer's agent at the physical or electronic address specified by the customer if the customer has made a written request to GWMWater.
- (c) Any person authorised to act on behalf of the customer at the physical or electronic address specified by that person.
- (d) A customer's banking institution for the purposes of receiving their account through BPay View via their online banking portal.

If no address has been specified, GWMWater 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.

### 6.3 Content of bills

A bill issued by GWMWater will 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 customer's water usage.
- (f) The amount the customer is required to pay.
- (g) An explanation of charges.
- (h) The date by which the customer is required to pay.
- (i) The ways in which the customer can pay the bill.
- (j) Information about help that is available if the customer is experiencing difficulties paying.
- (k) Details of GWMWater's enquiry facility, including a 24-hour emergency telephone service number.
- (l) Referral to interpreter services offered by GWMWater.
- (m) Any outstanding credit or debit from previous bills.
- (n) The total of any payments made by the customer since the last bill was issued.
- (o) Information on concessions available and any concession to which the customer may be entitled.

- (p) The average daily rate of water or recycled water use at the property for the current billing period.
- (q) If GWMWater 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.

#### 6.4 Explanation of charges

A bill issued by GWMWater will 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.
- (e) Any rates and other charges.

#### 6.5 E-bill

GWMWater may send an E-bill to a customer in any digital format. An E-bill will include:

- (a) A clear and accessible link to the full bill or instructions about how to access the full bill.
- (b) The amount payable and the due date.
- (c) The methods by which the bill can be paid.
- (d) The customer's current water usage.
- (e) Information about assistance that is available if a customer is experiencing difficulties paying and how to access this assistance.
- (f) Information about GWMWater's customer support policy.

GWMWater may include any additional information on the E-bill it considers necessary.

#### 6.6 Presentation of customer water usage

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

- (a) Current water usage.
- (b) The customer's water usage for each billing period over the past 12 months.
- (c) A comparison of the customer's usage with the customer's usage for the same period of the previous year.

#### 6.7 Adjustment of bills

GWMWater may recover from a customer an amount undercharged if:

- (a) Except in the case of illegal use, the amount is limited to the amount undercharged in the four months prior to GWMWater notifying the customer that undercharging has occurred.
- (b) The amount to be recovered is listed as a separate item and is explained on or with the customer's bill.
- (c) It allows the customer to pay the amount to be recovered in instalments over four months or through GWMWater's flexible payment plan in accordance with Clause 7.2.

GWMWater will not charge interest on undercharged amounts.

GWMWater may identify an amount undercharged as a result of a customer's illegal use of water or recycled water by estimating, in accordance with the *Water Act 1989* (Vic), the usage for which the customer has not paid. In respect of this amount, GWMWater may exercise other rights available to it, including rights under Clause 15.

If GWMWater overcharges a customer, it will:

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

## **7. PAYMENTS**

### **7.1 Payment methods**

Accounts must be paid within 28 days from the date of issue. Full details of how to pay your account are detailed on the bottom section of each account. Options include:

- (a) In person at GWMWater's office, 11 McLachlan Street, Horsham.
- (b) At a licensed Australia Post Office.
- (c) By mail with cheque, money order or credit card number addressed to PO Box 481, Horsham, Victoria 3402.
- (d) By BPay.
- (e) By Direct Debit.
- (f) By credit card phone 13 18 16 or visit [postbillpay.com.au](http://postbillpay.com.au)
- (g) By Centrepay via Centrelink.

Payment plans are available for customers wishing to pay by instalments.

GWMWater does not require customers to agree to direct debit as a condition of service.

You may be eligible for a government-funded concession if you hold a:

- (a) Pensioner Concession Card.
- (b) Health Care Card.
- (c) Health Benefits Card.
- (d) Dependent Treatment Entitlement Card (for War Widows).
- (e) Personal Treatment Entitlement Card including the TPI category.

Not-for-profit organisations required to pay service charges may be eligible for a State Revenue Office Rebate.

For further information about concession entitlements or further details on payment options, contact GWMWater on 1300 659 961.

## 7.2 Flexible payment plans

GWMWater will make flexible payment plans available to customers in accordance with the customer's capacity to pay. A flexible payment plan will:

- (a) State how the amount of the payments has been calculated.
- (b) State the period over which the customer will pay the agreed amounts.
- (c) Specify an amount to be paid in each period.
- (d) Be able to be modified, at the request of a customer, to accommodate change in their circumstances, in accordance with GWMWater's customer support policy.

On establishing a flexible payment plan or a revised plan, the water business must give the customer a schedule of payments in writing, showing:

- (a) The total number of payments to be made.
- (b) The period over which the payments are to be made.
- (c) The date by which each payment must be made.
- (d) The amount of each payment.

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

## 7.3 Customer Portal

GWMWater will make available a Customer Portal to urban customers to assist them with monitoring and managing their water use at no cost to the customer.

## Part C – Customer assistance and support

### 8. PROACTIVE CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT

GWMWater has policies and procedures that enable us to identify, contact and engage when residential customers, who may be experiencing payment difficulties, need information or assistance.

- (a) The information provided may include, but need not be limited to, the following:
  - (i) Interruptions and assistance that is available during interruptions.
  - (ii) Customer obligations in line with Clause 13.8.
  - (iii) Concession entitlements.
  - (iv) Sustainable use of water in line with Clause 4.
  - (v) Accessibility requirements for communication in line with Clause 13.6.
- (b) The assistance provided may include, but need not be limited to, the following:
  - (i) Payment difficulties assistance in line with Clause 10.1.
  - (ii) Customer support program in line with Clause 10.2.
  - (iii) Family violence assistance in line with Clause 11.
  - (iv) Billing history in line with Clause 13.4.

## 9. CUSTOMER'S CHOSEN REPRESENTATIVE OR SUPPORT PERSON

GWMWater has policies and procedures in place to communicate with a customer's chosen support person or other representative.

Details are available in our Customer Support Policy.

## 10. PAYMENT ASSISTANCE

### 10.1 Payment Assistance

GWMWater will provide assistance that is appropriate to that customer's circumstances on a case-by-case basis in accordance with a customer's capacity to pay.

- (a) GWMWater will offer a customer experiencing payment difficulties the following:
- (b) Flexible payment plans in line with Clause 7.2.
- (c) No additional debt recovery costs, including no interest on overdue amounts while payments are made to the water business according to a flexible payment plan.
- (d) The option to extend the due date for some or all of an amount owed.
- (e) Redirection of a bill to another person for payment if the person agrees in writing.
- (f) More frequent billing or payment options.
- (g) Information on how to reduce water usage, improve water efficiency and referral to relevant government water efficiency programs.
- (h) Where appropriate and available, referring customers to:
  - (i) Government funded assistance programs (including the Utility Relief Grant Scheme).
  - (ii) An independent financial counsellor at no cost to the customer.

Application assistance for a customer that may be eligible for a Utility Relief Grant, including by:

- (a) Completing the online application form over the phone and lodging the form online on behalf of the residential customer, unless the customer requests otherwise; or
- (b) If the water business is unable to complete and lodge a Utility Relief Grant application form over the phone, the water business completing the application form to the extent possible and sending to the residential customer with instructions on how to complete the remainder of the form and lodge that form.

GWMWater may offer a residential customer experiencing payment difficulties the following, without limitation:

- (a) Waiver of late fees or any other fees.
- (b) Waiver of any interest accrued.
- (c) Suspension of the accrual of interest.
- (d) Conducting regular meter readings and frequently reporting to customers on consumption.

- (e) Suspension of collection of arrears to allow for a usage only payment plan for a period negotiated with the customer.
- (f) A payment matching arrangement.
- (g) Waiver of debt.

GWMWater may offer a small business customer experiencing payment difficulties the following, without limitation:

- (a) Waiver of late fees or any other fees.
- (b) Waiver of interest accrued.
- (c) Suspension of the accrual of interest.
- (d) Information of any circumstances in which it will waive or suspend interest payments on outstanding accounts.
- (e) Waiver of debt.

## 10.2 Customer Support Policy

GWMWater has a Customer Support Policy for assisting residential customers and small businesses who are identified by themselves, GWMWater or an independent accredited financial counsellor or a qualified accountant as experiencing payment difficulties.

A copy of the Customer Support Policy can be obtained by contacting GWMWater on 1300 659 961 or visiting [gwmwater.org.au](http://gwmwater.org.au)

Subject to Clause 10.2 (c), GWMWater will:

- (a) Publish its customer support policy on its website and must make it available to a customer upon request.
- (b) Keep a copy of its customer support policy at its offices for inspection upon request
- (c) provide its customer support policy in a different language upon a reasonable request to do so.
- (d) Assess each customer on a case-by-case basis.

The GWMWater customer support policy will:

- (a) Include policies and procedures for:
  - (i) Early identification of a customer's payment difficulty.
  - (ii) Determining the internal responsibilities for the management, development, communication and monitoring of the customer support policy.
- (b) Provide for staff training about GWMWater's policies and procedures:
  - (i) staff training must be designed to ensure customers experiencing payment difficulty are treated with sensitivity and respect by water business staff.
- (c) state when it will exempt customers experiencing payment difficulties from supply restriction, legal action, and additional debt recovery costs, including:
  - (ii) By waiving any interest accrued prior to the customer being identified as experiencing payment difficulties.
  - (iii) Exempting the debt from the accrual of interest on overdue amounts whilst a customer is receiving assistance under this policy.

- (d) State any circumstances in which it will waive or suspend interest payments on outstanding amounts:
  - (i) State any circumstances in which it will suspend the sale of debt.
  - (ii) Offer a range of payment options in accordance with Clause 7.
  - (iii) Offer information and assistance in accordance with Clause 10.1.
  - (iv) 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.
  - (v) Detail the circumstances in which the policy will cease to apply to customers.
  - (vi) Provide for a review mechanism of the policy and its associated procedures.

## 11. FAMILY VIOLENCE

GWMWater has a Family Violence Policy for assisting customers who may be experiencing family violence. The policy:

- (a) Provides that all relevant staff have ongoing training to:
  - (i) Identify customers affected by family violence.
  - (ii) Deal appropriately with customers affected by family violence.
  - (iii) Apply the policy and related policies and procedures to customers affected by family violence.
- (b) Identifies the support GWMWater will provide to staff affected by family violence, including any training, leave, external referrals and counselling available.
- (c) Promotes 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) Specifies the approach to debt management and recovery where a customer is affected by family violence, including but not limited to:
  - (i) The recovery of debt from customers with joint accounts.
  - (ii) The circumstances in which debt will be suspended or waived.
- (e) Recognises family violence as a potential cause of payment difficulties and as an eligibility criterion for access to the water business's customer support policy under Clause 10.2, 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.
- (g) Provides a means for referring customers who may be affected by family violence to specialist family violence services.

GWMWater will:

- (a) 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.
- (b) Provide a copy of the family violence policy to a customer upon request.
- (c) Provide for a periodic review mechanism of the policy and its associated procedures.

## 12. SPECIAL NEEDS

GWMWater keeps an up to date register of customers who require water for:

- (a) The operation of a life-support machine.
- (b) Other special needs that may be affected by planned and unplanned outages which must be assessed on a case-by-case basis by GWMWater.

GWMWater will contact customers registered under this Clause:

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

In all cases GWMWater will endeavour to minimise inconvenience to these customers.

Please contact GWMWater on 1300 659 961 if you wish to register as a special needs customer.

## 13. INFORMATION

### 13.1 Enquiries

Upon request, GWMWater will provide the following information to customers:

- (a) Account information.
- (b) Bill payment options.
- (c) Concession entitlements.
- (d) Programs available to customers who are having payment difficulties, including GWMWater's Customer Support Policy.
- (e) Information about GWMWater's complaint handling procedures.
- (f) Information about EWOV.

Charges apply for the provision of Information Statements in accordance with GWMWater's Schedule of Tariffs, Miscellaneous and Other Charges as approved by the ESC.

### 13.2 Fees for information or advice

Unless stated otherwise in this Customer Charter, GWMWater will not charge a fee for the provision of information or advice required under this Customer Charter to customers or others affected by its operations.

### 13.3 Water reuse

GWMWater will provide information to customers upon request about lawful and practical possibilities for the reuse of water.

### 13.4 Billing history

Upon request by a customer, GWMWater will provide the customer's account and usage history for the preceding three years within 10 business days, or other period by agreement.

GWMWater 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 our family violence policy and the refusal is not in breach of law.

GWMWater 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 Corporations.

### 13.5 Regulatory information

GWMWater will provide to customers upon request any regulatory instruments other than primary legislation under which it operates, including a copy of the Water Industry Standard – Urban Customer Service.

### 13.6 Communication assistance

GWMWater will:

- (a) Use reasonable endeavours to determine a customer's preferred method of communication and use it where reasonable.
- (b) Use reasonable endeavours to meet the discrete communications needs of its customers as required on a case-by-case basis.
- (c) Provide, or provide access to, an interpreter service and a TTY service for speech and hearing-impaired customers on 133 677 and customers that do not speak English through TIS on 131 450.

### 13.7 Written Communication

Any written communication from GWMWater will be expressed in plain language, legible and presented clearly and appropriate with regard to its nature.

### 13.8 Customer obligations

Customers have several material obligations under the *Water Act 1989* (Vic) and the *Water Industry Act 1994* (Vic). Some of these obligations include but are not limited to:

- (a) Pay charges incurred after vacating a property unless GWMWater is given at least 48-hours notice of the customer vacating the property.
- (b) Ensure that each water meter is accessible by GWMWater.
- (c) Maintain the property owner's infrastructure upon notice by GWMWater.
- (d) Remove trees upon request of GWMWater.
- (e) Seek the consent of GWMWater for any building or construction work which might interfere with a service or system.
- (f) Not alter any works connected to GWMWater's works without GWMWater's consent.
- (g) Observe restrictions imposed by GWMWater in accordance with *Water Act 1989* (Vic) and the *Water Industry Act 1994* (Vic).
- (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.

GWMWater will use reasonable endeavours to keep customers informed of their obligations under *Water Act 1989* (Vic) and the *Water Industry Act 1994* (Vic).

### 13.9 Privacy

GWMWater will not disclose information about you without your consent, unless we are required by law or to reduce a serious or immediate threat to life or health. Full details of GWMWater's Privacy Policy will be made available on request and can be viewed on our website at [gwmwater.org.au](http://gwmwater.org.au)

Request for further information can be made by contacting GWMWater on 1300 659 961 or visiting [gwmwater.org.au](http://gwmwater.org.au)

## 14. COMPLAINTS AND DISPUTES

### 14.1 Complaints and disputes policy

GWMWater has a Complaint Policy for the handling of complaints from customers and others affected by GWMWater's operations. The policy provides that:

- (a) If a written reply is requested, GWMWater will take no more than 10 business days to respond to an enquiry or complaint.
- (b) A reply to a customer's enquiry or complaint will 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.
- (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.
- (d) A complaint escalation process that gives a customer:
  - i) The opportunity to raise the complaint up to the level of a senior manager within GWMWater's management structure.
  - ii) 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 GWMWater's response.
- (e) GWMWater is restricted in its ability to recover an amount of money which is in dispute, until the dispute has been resolved.
- (f) A complainant is informed of the matters in paragraphs (a) to (e) above.

A copy of the Complaint Policy can be obtained by contacting GWMWater on 1300 659 961 or visiting [gwmwater.org.au](http://gwmwater.org.au) In the unlikely event that we cannot resolve an issue, you may choose to call EWOV on 1800 500 509.

### 14.2 Resolution of disputes

GWMWater will endeavour to resolve in good faith any dispute directly with its customers and others affected by its operations.

For the purposes of Clause 14.1(e), GWMWater 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.
- (b) Ten (10) business days have passed since the complainant was informed.
- (c) The complainant has not:
  - (i) Sought a further review under this Clause.
  - (ii) Lodged a claim with EWOV or another external dispute resolution forum.

GWMWater will not consider a dispute resolved until any claim lodged with EWOV or another external dispute resolution forum has been finalised.

## Part D – Actions for non-payment

### 15. COLLECTION

#### 15.1 Appropriate communication

All communication relating to collection will be delivered in language and style that is sensitive and appropriate, with a focus on the support available and encouraging customers to contact GWMWater for assistance.

#### 15.2 Reminder notices

If a customer fails to pay by the required date stated in the account, GWMWater will send a reminder notice no earlier than two business days after the due date (in the same manner in which it sent the account).

GWMWater may commence the process set out at Clause 15.4 if no response is received by the customer within seven business days of the reminder notice being sent.

A reminder notice will include:

- (a) The overdue amount.
- (b) The date of issue.
- (c) An explanation in plain language of the notice and of why it is being issued.
- (d) The date by which payment must be made, which must not be earlier than six business days from the issue date of the reminder notice.
- (e) A statement that payment of the overdue bill is required to be made by the due date that is specified under Clause 15.2 (c).
- (f) Payment options.
- (g) Information about payment difficulty assistance available.
- (h) A warning of the further action that GWMWater may take, including (if relevant) referral of any outstanding amount to an external debt collection company for collection.
- (i) Details of how to contact GWMWater.

GWMWater may include any additional information in the notice it considers necessary.

#### 15.3 Final Notices

If the reminder notice remains unpaid, GWMWater will send a customer a final notice within 15 business days of the issue date of a reminder notice.

The final notice will include:

- (a) The overdue amount.
- (b) The date of issue.
- (c) An explanation in plain language of the notice and of why it is being issued.

- (d) The date by which payment of the final notice must be made to avoid further action, which must not be earlier than six business days after the issue of the final notice.
- (e) A statement that payment of the overdue bill is required to be made by the date that is specified under Clause 15.3(b).
- (f) A statement that, legal action or restriction may be taken, and the customer may incur additional costs in relation to those actions.
- (g) Clear and unambiguous advice about what the customer needs to do to avoid legal action or being restricted from their water supply.
- (h) Information about any assistance that is available to the customer, including information about EWOFV (including EWOFV's telephone number), concessions, government assistance programs and the water business's customer support policy.
- (i) The date from which interest (if any) may be applied on outstanding amounts, and the percentage interest rate that may be applied.
- (j) A statement 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).
- (k) Details of how to contact GWMWater.
- (l) Information about the applicable fees to remove a restrictor.

#### 15.4 Communication requirements

- (a) GWMWater will use reasonable endeavours to contact a customer and to offer payment assistance before we seek to restrict water supply or take legal action to collect the debt.
- (b) The reasonable endeavours will be carried out within a period of 90 calendar days commencing on the due date of the bill that has led to it seeking restriction or taking legal action.
- (c) The reasonable endeavours will include (but are not limited to):
  - (i) One attempt of personal contact using one of the following methods:
    - Phone call inside business hours.
    - Phone call outside business hours.
    - Site visit to the service address.
  - (ii) Unless any attempt results in a complete conversation, at least three additional attempts to contact the customer, using two or more additional methods, including but not limited to the following types:
    - Phone call inside business hours.
    - Phone call outside business hours.
    - Site visit to the service address.
    - Regular mail.
    - Registered mail.
    - Email.
    - SMS.
  - (iii) Sending a final notice.
- (d) At least one of the attempts in Clauses 15.4 (c)(i) and (ii) will be made after the final notice is sent.

- (e) GWMWater will maintain records that are sufficient to evidence:
  - (i) the time and date of attempted contacts;
  - (ii) the type of contact attempted;
  - (iii) which customer service staff attempted contacts; and
  - (iv) whether attempt at contacts were successful and if so a short summary of discussions with customer including verification that information on payment assistance was provided by the business and the nature of commitments given by either party.

#### 15.5 Interest on unrecovered amounts

- (a) GWMWater may charge interest on the unpaid amount if:
  - (i) GWMWater fixes and gives notice (of at least 10 business days) of the due date of payment (Due Date);
  - (ii) the notification referred to in paragraph (i) indicated that interest will accrue from the Due Date; and
  - (iii) any part of the amount payable by the customer is not paid by the Due Date.
- (b) GWMWater will not charge a residential customer interest on unrecovered amounts while that customer:
  - (i) is the holder of an eligible concession card;
  - (ii) is on a payment plan; or
  - (iii) is receiving assistance under GWMWater's customer support policy.
- (c) If any event in Clause 15.5(b) no longer applies to a residential customer, GWMWater may charge that residential customer interest on unrecovered amounts on and from the date that the event in Clause 15.5(b) ceased to apply to that customer. Interest applied in accordance with this Clause cannot be applied retrospectively.

#### 15.6 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* (Vic):

- (a) The maximum rate of interest that may be charged on unrecovered amounts is an annual rate and is set by the ESC each May based on the 10-year Australian Commonwealth Government Bond Report plus a margin to be determined by the ESC.
- (b) The interest starts accruing on the day the amount is due and ends on the date all unpaid amounts of a charge are paid in full, both days inclusive.

#### 15.7 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) if a customer owns a property and receives services from a water business to that property, an amount unpaid to the water business is a charge on the property; and
- (b) subject to *Water Act 1989* (Vic) and the *Water Industry Act 1994* (Vic), 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.

**15.8 Dishonoured payment**

- (a) GWMWater may recover from a customer an amount charged by GWMWater's financial institution due to a:
  - (i) Customer's cheque being dishonoured.
  - (ii) Customer having insufficient funds available when paying by direct debit.
- (b) GWMWater will not charge a residential customer the costs incurred by GWMWater under 15.8(a), if that customer:
  - (i) Is the holder of an eligible concession card
  - (ii) Is receiving assistance under GWMWater's customer support policy.

**16. ACTIONS FOR NON-PAYMENT****16.1 Restriction and legal action to be a measure of last resort**

The restriction of a customer's water supply for non-payment and legal action for non-payment will be measures of last resort.

**16.2 Limits on restriction and legal action**

GWMWater will not commence legal action or take steps to restrict a customer's service due to non-payment if:

- (a) Fifteen (15) business days have not elapsed since GWMWater has sent its most recent Final Notice to which the debt relates.
- (b) The customer is receiving any form of assistance for payment difficulties under this customer charter.
- (c) The amount owed by the customer is less than \$300.
- (d) The customer is eligible for and has lodged an application for an eligible concession card and the application is outstanding.
- (e) The customer has made an application under the Utility Relief Grant Scheme and the application is outstanding.
- (f) The customer is a tenant and:
  - (i) The amount unpaid is owed by the landlord.
  - (ii) The tenant has a claim against the landlord in respect of a water bill pending at the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal.
- (g) The amount in dispute is subject to an unresolved complaint procedure in accordance with GWMWater's complaints policy.

This Clause does not restrict GWMWater's rights under the *Water Act 1989* (Vic) and the *Water Industry Act 1994* (Vic) to pursue a debt owed to it by a person who is no longer a customer.

**16.3 Additional limits on restriction**

GWMWater will 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 3pm.
- (b) The customer is registered as a special needs customer under Clause 12.
- (c) GWMWater believes or has reason to believe that the restriction will cause a health hazard having taken into consideration any customer concerns.

- (d) It is a day of total fire ban declared by the Country Fire Authority in the area in which the property is located or the fire danger rating in the area is 'Severe', 'Extreme' or 'Code Red'.

A restriction under Clause 16 may reduce the supply of water, recycled water or non-potable water to no less than two litres per minute at the tap nearest the meter.

#### **16.4 Life support and other special circumstances**

- (a) GWMWater will not restrict the water supply to the property of a customer if GWMWater knows that the customer, or a person ordinarily resident at the customer's residence, is on any form of life support.
- (b) GWMWater has policies and procedures in place to enable us to take proactive steps to identify those customers in accordance with Clause 16.4.

#### **16.5 Restriction and legal action**

GWMWater will only take legal action or restrict a customer's water or recycled water services for non-payment where the following conditions are met:

- (a) GWMWater has completed the communication requirements outlined at 15.4.
- (b) The customer has been notified of the proposed restriction or legal action in accordance with Clauses 15.2 and 15.3 and the associated costs, including the cost of removing a restrictor.
- (c) The customer has:
- (i) Been offered a flexible payment plan under Clause 7.2 and the customer has refused or has failed to respond.
  - (ii) Agreed to a flexible payment plan and has failed to comply with the arrangement.

#### **16.6 Removal of restrictions**

GWMWater will restore a service restricted under Clause 16 within 24 hours of becoming aware that the reason for restriction no longer exists.

## **Part E - Quality and Reliability of Supply and Services**

### **17. QUALITY OF SERVICES**

#### **17.1 Product quality**

In addition to complying with applicable requirements of health and environmental regulation, GWMWater will provide a service in accordance with service standards approved by the ESC (refer Clause 18.2).

#### **17.2 Water Supply (flow rate)**

GWMWater will ensure that a customer's water supply and recycled water supply is at least equal to minimum supply flow rates specified in GWMWater's approved service standards (refer Schedule 1), 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 GWMWater's permitted use rules.
- (h) Supply is restricted or disconnected in accordance with this Customer Charter.
- (i) The *Water Act 1989* (Vic) and the *Water Industry Act 1994* (Vic) provides.

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

### **17.3 Water Supply Testing**

GWMWater will test flow rates and water quality for compliance with Clauses 17.1 and 17.2 upon request by the customer. GWMWater:

- (a) Will advise the customer prior to the test that a reasonable charge (see schedule of approved fees and charges) may be imposed if the test demonstrates compliance with Clauses 17.1 or 17.2.
- (b) Will pay the cost of a test if the test demonstrates that GWMWater is not complying with Clauses 17.1 or 17.2.
- (c) May impose a reasonable charge on the customer in the event the test demonstrates compliance with Clauses 17.1 and 17.2.

A copy of GWMWater's Schedule of Tariffs, Miscellaneous and Other Charges may be obtained by contacting GWMWater on 1300 659 961 or by visiting [gwmwater.org.au](http://gwmwater.org.au)

### **17.4 Water supply rectification**

GWMWater will rectify any deficiency in satisfying Clauses 17.1 to 17.3 as soon as possible, or within a time agreed with the customer.

## **18. RELIABILITY OF SERVICES**

### **18.1 Obligation to provide reliable services**

Subject to its Statement of Obligations, GWMWater will develop and implement plans, systems and processes to manage its assets to provide reliable services.

### **18.2 Service standards**

Service standards are specified service levels a typical customer can expect to receive from GWMWater.

Schedule 1 of this Customer Charter sets out GWMWater's services standards and associated targets.

GWMWater periodically reviews our service standard targets with our customers.

### **18.3 Unplanned interruptions**

GWMWater aims to comply with the standards and targets for unplanned interruptions as outlined in the approved service standards section of this Charter. GWMWater has policies, practices and procedures:

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

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

GWMWater's approved service standards can be viewed in Schedule 1.

#### **18.4 Planned interruptions**

GWMWater will inform affected customers by their preferred method of communication and, if possible, by SMS, of the time and duration of any planned interruption to a service at least two business days in advance.

Upon request, GWMWater will provide customers with access to emergency supplies of drinking water in the event of a planned interruption to water services.

#### **18.5 Bursts, leaks, blockages and spills**

In the event of a burst, leak or blockage on its system, GWMWater will:

- (a) Promptly attend the site upon notification.
- (b) Take action to rectify the situation taking into account the potential or actual impact on:
  - (i) Customers.
  - (ii) Others affected by the failure.
  - (iii) Property.
  - (iv) 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.
- (e) Ensure that a sewage spill is promptly cleaned up and the affected area disinfected.

#### **19. RECONNECTION**

GWMWater will promptly reconnect a customer's property that has been disconnected upon:

- (a) The reason for disconnection no longer persisting.
- (b) Receipt of a written undertaking as to compliance by the customer in a form acceptable to GWMWater.
- (c) Payment by the customer of any reasonable charge imposed by GWMWater.

#### **20. GUARANTEED SERVICE LEVELS**

GWMWater has implemented an ESC approved guaranteed service level scheme, where GWMWater pays (or rebates) a pre-determined amount to affected customers when it breaches specified service level obligations.

- (a) Any payment (or rebate) available to customers under the guaranteed service level scheme must be:
  - (i) Applied automatically in the event that customer entitlement to the rebate arises.
  - (ii) Applied as soon as practicable after a customer entitlement to the rebate arises.
  - (iii) GWMWater's guaranteed service level scheme includes the following:
  - (iv) Not restricting the water supply of, or taking legal action against, a

- residential customer prior to taking reasonable endeavours (as defined by Clause 15.4) to contact the customer and provide information about help that is available if the customer is experiencing difficulties paying.
- (v) If GWMWater does not meet this service level obligation, the water business must make a minimum payment of \$300 to the customer.
  - (b) GWMWater is not required to make a payment where the failure to attain the service level obligation arises because of the action or inaction of the customer or a third party. For the avoidance of doubt, a third party does not include any person or firm acting on behalf of the water business.
  - (c) Guaranteed service level schemes approved by the ESC are set out in Schedule 2 and are updated from time to time.

GWMWater's approved GSLs can be viewed in Schedule 2.

## **21. WORKS AND MAINTENANCE**

### **21.1 Worker identification**

A representative of GWMWater will not enter a customer's property without appropriate identification.

A representative of GWMWater entering a property except for the purpose of reading an accessible meter will either:

- (a) Notify any occupant present of the representative's purpose for entry.
- (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.

### **21.2 Keys held by GWMWater**

If GWMWater holds keys to a customer's premises, the keys will 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.

## Definitions

<b>Available</b>	means that the property is a declared property in respect of that service under section 144 of the <i>Water Act 1989</i> .
<b>Billing period</b>	means any period for which a customer's bill is calculated.
<b>Business day</b>	means a day that is not: (a) a Saturday or Sunday; or (b) a public holiday appointed under the <i>Public Holidays Act 1993</i> (Vic)
<b>Commission</b>	means the Essential Services Commission established under the <i>Essential Services Commission Act 2001</i> (Vic).
<b>Complaint</b>	means a written or verbal expression of dissatisfaction about an action, proposed action or failure to act by GWMWater, its employees or contractors, requiring a resolution (as per AS/NZS 10002:2014).
<b>Customer</b>	means a person who is: (a) an owner and occupier of a property connected to GWMWater's system; (b) an owner of a property which is connected to a GWMWater's system but is not an occupier; (c) an occupier of a property that is connected to a GWMWater'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 GWMWater and GWMWater imposes a service charge.
<b>Digital format</b>	means a digital communication method that is provided by GWMWater for the purpose of the sending of bills and other service related communications with the agreement of the customer.
<b>Disconnect</b>	means to physically prevent the flow of water, recycled water or sewerage.
<b>Drinking water</b>	has the same meaning as in the <i>Safe Drinking Water Act 2003</i> .
<b>E-bill</b>	means a bill that meets the requirements of clause 6.5 of the industry standard.
<b>Electronic address</b>	means an email or internet address supplied by a customer to GWMWater for the purpose of the receipt of bills and other service related communications.
<b>Eligible concession card</b>	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).
<b>Enquiry</b>	means a written or verbal approach by a customer which can be satisfied by GWMWater providing written or verbal information, advice, assistance, clarification, explanation or referral about a matter.
<b>Enquiry facility</b>	means a telephone call centre, a SMS or MMS service, an on-line information facility or an over-the-counter information service.

<b>Environmental regulation</b>	includes applicable requirements of the Environment Protection Authority Victoria and (in so far as they relate to planning and environment matters) of local councils.
<b>EWOV</b>	means the Energy and Water Ombudsman (Victoria).
<b>External dispute resolution forum</b>	includes Consumer Affairs Victoria and the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal.
<b>Flexible payment plan</b>	means a plan agreed between GWMWater and a customer in relation to amounts owing to GWMWater, which complies with the requirements of clause 7.2.
<b>Financial year</b>	means a year ending 30 June.
<b>Health regulation</b>	includes the <i>Safe Drinking Water Act 2003</i> , the <i>Food Act 1984</i> , the <i>Health (Fluoridation) Act 1973</i> and other applicable requirements of the Department of Health (or any successor).
<b>Interruption</b>	means in the case of a customer's water or recycled water supply, a total water supply due to any cause, but does not include those caused by bursts or leaks in the property service connection (mains to meter) unless the burst or leak requires the mains to be shut down for repair. For clarity, an interruption includes a loss of recycled water supply to a residential property where toilet flushes and laundry are not possible.
<b>Meter assembly</b>	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.
<b>Non-potable water</b>	means water that is the subject of a declaration made by the Minister under section 6 of the <i>Safe Water Drinking Act 2003</i> , known under that Act as 'regulated water'.
<b>Occupier</b>	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 GWMWater, for the period of such registration. (b) the property owner.
<b>Permitted use rules</b>	means GWMWater's requirements under clause 12.3.
<b>Planned interruption</b>	means an interruption for which GWMWater has provided the required notification to the customer of at least two business days in advance.
<b>Property owner's infrastructure</b>	includes the customer's pipes, backflow prevention devices and other equipment of the customer connected to a system.
<b>Reasonable charge</b>	means a fee or charge that is approved or specified by the Commission in accordance with Clause 10 and 11 of the Water Industry Regulatory Order.
<b>Restriction</b>	means GWMWater's installation of a device to limit the flow of water from the meter to a customer's property due to non-payment by a customer.
<b>Sanitary drain</b>	means a line of pipes including all fittings, conveying or intended to convey sewage or trade waste from a building or structure on a serviced property to the sewer main of a water corporation

<b>Self-read</b>	means a reliable method of water meter reading selected and undertaken by a customer for their property that is approved by GWMWater.
<b>Service</b>	means a water supply service including a reticulated non-potable water supply service, a recycled water supply service or a sewerage service.
<b>Small business customer</b>	means a non-employing business (including sole proprietorships and partnerships without employees) or a business employing fewer than 20 people which has an active Australian Business Number.
<b>Statement of Obligations</b>	means obligations for GWMWater issued by the Minister for Water under section 4I of the <i>Water Industry Act 1994</i> , in relation to the performance of GWMWater's functions and the exercise of its powers.
<b>System</b>	means GWMWater's physical infrastructure for providing a water supply service, a recycled water service or a trade waste or sewerage service.
<b>Trade waste</b>	has the meaning given to that term in the <i>Water Act 1989</i> (Vic) and the <i>Water Industry Act 1994</i> (Vic).
<b>TTY service</b>	means a facility to enable a deaf or hearing-impaired person to communicate by telephone through the use of a telephone typewriter.
<b>Unplanned interruption</b>	means an interruption where the customer has not received notification from GWMWater or where a planned interruption exceeds the duration estimated.
<b>Usage only payment plan</b>	means a payment plan where the customer only pays for usage charges over a period agreed by both the GWMWater and the customer and that suspends or waives the other charges during and/or before that period.
<b>Utility Relief Grant Scheme</b>	means the grant by that name administered by the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (or any successor).
<b>Water Industry Standard - Trade Waste Customer Service Code</b>	refers to the Commission's Water Industry Standard - Trade Waste Customer Service which places additional obligations on GWMWater specific to the management of trade waste services.

**Schedule 1**

**Approved Service Standards**

2023/24 2024/25 2025/26 2026/27 2027/28

<b>Water</b>					
Minimum water pressure or flow rate a customer should receive (litres per minute)	20	20	20	20	20
Maximum number of unplanned water supply interruptions a customer should experience in any 12-month period	5	5	5	5	5
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)	200	200	200	200	200

**Sewerage**

Maximum number of sewer blockages a customer should experience in any 12-month period	3	3	3	3	3
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
Maximum time taken to contain a sewer spill (minutes)	300	300	300	300	300

<b>Priority</b>	<b>Definition</b>
1	Leaks that have the potential to cause substantial damage or harm
2	Leaks that have the potential to cause minor damage or harm
3	Leaks that cause no discernible impacts on customers, property or the environment

**Schedule 2**

**Guaranteed Service Levels**

**Payment**

Notification to customer advising drinking water not suitable for drinking	\$100
More than five (5) unplanned water interruptions in a year	\$80
Unplanned water interruptions not restored within five (5) hours of notification	\$50
Planned interruption longer than notification	\$50
Sewer interruption not restored within five (5) hours of notification	\$50
More than three (3) sewer blockages in a year	\$80
Sewer spill within a house caused by failure of system not contained within one (1) 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

**Minimum Flow Rates**

**Size of meters**

	<b>20 mm</b>	<b>25 mm</b>	<b>32 mm</b>	<b>40 mm</b>	<b>50 mm</b>
Flow rate (litres per minute)	10	25	40	60	100