



Northern Areas Council

Customer Complaints and Dispute Resolution Process for CWMS (Sewerage) services

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1. Definitions

Acronym	Definition
business day	a day that is not a Saturday, a Sunday or a public holiday in the State of South Australia
complaint	An expression of dissatisfaction made to an organisation, related to its products, services, staff or the handling of a complaint, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required
customer	The beneficiary of a product or service supplied by the licensee. A Beneficiary can be an organisation or a person
ESCOSA	Essential Services Commission of South Australia
first point of contact	The employee, company contractor or agent who first received the customer complaint, compliment or suggestion
investigation	An investigation is required if: a) A response cannot be provided to a customer based on information that is available to us at the time b) An inspection of the property is required c) A complaint is received about the behaviour of a staff member or a complaint about a contractor
regulatory service standards	Timeframes for response to complaints as determined by ESCOSA from time to time
suggestion	Advice, recommendation or comment from a customer that proposes to lead to some improvement in [Licensee's] ability to deliver a higher level of customer service

2. Introduction

Northern Areas Council was issued with a water retail licence for the supply of water and/or wastewater services in January 2013. The Water Retail Code – Minor and Intermediate Retailers sets out requirements we must comply with in relation to the provision of our water and/or wastewater services.

More information on these requirements can be found in our Customer Charter at www.nacouncil.sa.gov.au

3. Purpose

This document outlines our customer complaints and dispute resolution processes detailing the requirements for recording, managing and responding to complaints received and the escalation process. This document should be read in conjunction with our Customer Charter and other policies where specified.

This process applies to all complaints received from external customers and consumers via telephone, in writing, in person or electronically.

The process ensures that customers are fully aware of the channels available to them to raise complaints about our services. It also ensures that accurate information is collected and can be used to analyse trends and areas for improvement.

This document is reviewed periodically and may be subject to change.

4. Complaints and dispute resolution

Northern Areas Council welcomes feedback including the lodgement of any complaints you may have as a customer (either property owner or tenant) with our service. It provides us with an opportunity to maintain your confidence and trust as well as improve our customer service.

We consider complaints as an opportunity to better understand dissatisfaction with our service, and provide you with a response in order to arrive at a resolution. It may be related to our products, services, or the complaints handling process itself. If you are dissatisfied with any aspect of our services or products, please contact us so that we can resolve your concerns.

Northern Areas Council will:

1. Ensure enquiries, complaints and dispute resolution is available to our customers via:
 - a. telephone
 - b. e-mail
 - c. written correspondence
 - d. website

- e. in person
2. Provide a source of customer-related information as directed by the Water Retail Code including our Customer Charter and Standard Customer Contract
3. Provide early resolution of customer complaints and resolve matters at the first point of contact where possible
4. Ensure customer complaints are dealt with in a fair reasonable and timely manner
5. Assist customers who may require an interpreter service by referral to the relevant body

4.1. Northern Areas Council's commitment to complaints and dispute resolution

Northern Areas Council will ensure our staff are equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to provide quality service to customers. We will address customer concerns with a view to resolving issues in a friendly, timely and efficient manner. We will:

- Listen to your concerns
- Identify ourselves
- Ensure that our correspondence has a contact name and telephone number
- Respect your right to privacy
- Provide you with high quality information and advice
- Make an accurate record of the contact so the matter can be tracked, monitored and reported
- Provide information and guidelines in plain language

When contacting us with a complaint we ask our customers to:

- Treat us with courtesy
- Be honest in all your dealings with us
- Provide us with information when requested to help us address the issue

4.1.1. Complaints Management Guiding Principles

We are committed to following the complaints management guiding principles when handling your complaints:

1. *People focus* – We are people-focused and have a proactive approach to seeking and receiving feedback and complaints, and demonstrate a strong commitment to addressing any issues raised within a reasonable timeframe.
2. *Ensuring no detriment to complainant* – All reasonable steps should be taken to ensure that complainants are not adversely affected because of a complaint made by them or on their behalf.
3. *Visibility and transparency* – We will ensure that information about how and where a complaint may be made to or about us is well-publicised.
4. *Accessibility* – Complainants can easily access the complaints management process and the methods of making complaints will be flexible.
5. *No charges* – A complainant will not be charged a fee to complain.

4.2. How to make a complaint

There are two ways to contact and lodge a complaint with us:

1. *Speak to our Customer Service staff*

If you are dissatisfied with any of our products or services, please contact us on 8664 1139 and discuss your concern with our Customer Service staff. Alternatively, you can speak to us in person at one of our Council offices.

Our Customer Service Centre staff are able to resolve most of your concerns over the telephone at the first point of contact. If you remain dissatisfied with the outcome, you may request to have your complaint reviewed by a Supervisor or Manager who will further investigate this matter.

2. *Write to us*

If you prefer, write to us at the following address with the details of your complaint:

Northern Areas Council
PO Box 120
Jamestown SA 5491

Alternatively you can send an email to admin@nacouncil.sa.gov.au

Upon receipt of your letter or email, we will provide you with a written acknowledgement of your complaint as well as the contact details of the staff member who will be managing your complaint.

4.3. Method of response

We endeavour to resolve all complaints at the first point of contact. However, there are some instances where this is not possible and further investigation may be required. In these instances, we will acknowledge receipt of your complaint within five business days and aim to provide you with a resolution within twenty business days.

Should we be unable to meet the timeframes, we will advise you of our suggested course of action and timeframe, as well as the name of a contact person for any further queries regarding this matter.

As a general rule, we will respond via the same channel as the complaint is received unless advised otherwise.

4.4. Complaint escalation

If you have attempted to resolve your concerns through the above process without resolution, you may escalate your complaint to the Chief Executive Officer for further review.

If the matter still cannot be resolved, you will be advised of your option to escalate your grievances to an external dispute resolution body [State Ombudsman for Councils] - an independent, free service available to residential and business customers.

Ombudsman SA can assist with concerns regarding Northern Areas Council's processes used to make decisions and determine if they are fair, reasonable and lawful.

Contact details are:

Ombudsman SA

Street address: Level 8, 95 Grenfell Street, ADELAIDE SA 5000

Postal address: PO Box 3651, RUNDLE MALL SA 5000

Telephone: 08 8226 8699

Toll free: 1800 182 150 (outside metro SA only)

Email: ombudsman@ombudsman.sa.gov.au

4.5. Complaint recording

Northern Areas Council will record and monitor all complaints received from customers for the purposes of monitoring compliance with regulatory service standards but also to assist in improving the experience of our customers.

5. Northern Areas Council Customer Charter

Customers requiring more information on the following should refer to our Customer Charter, available on our website:

- Financial hardship information
- Translation and Interpreting Services
- Large print requirements

6. Privacy

All personal information that is supplied by a customer will be treated in confidence. Personal information shall only be collected from a customer where it is necessary to assist Northern Areas Council with the investigation and resolution of a complaint.

7. References

1. Australian Standard AS/NZS 10002:2014
2. Northern Areas Council Customer Charter
3. Water Industry Act 2012
4. Water Industry Guideline No. 2 (WG2/01)
5. Water Industry Regulations 2012
6. Water Retail Code – Minor and Intermediate Retailers