

Customer Support Policy

Purpose

This policy outlines how Greater Western Water (GWW)'s employees and contractors support residential and small business customers experiencing payment difficulties. It informs our decisions and actions in providing this support, and ensures we meet the obligations outlined in the Essential Services Commission Water Industry Standard - Urban Customer Service and Rural Customer Service Version 3, incorporating amendments as at 1 April 2024 (Water Industry Standards).

Objectives

The objective of this policy is to support our people to provide customers who are experiencing financial difficulty with access to the help they need to manage their bills in a responsible and sustainable way. Through this policy we commit to supporting our people to understand our customers' situations, work with them to develop solutions and deliver a sensitive respectful and helpful customer experience.

In meeting our objectives for Customer Experience, GWW supports our vision and strategic objectives:

- Our vision is for thriving people and Country.¹
- Improving customer experience – by understanding what matters most to our customers and communities. We will continue to:
 - implement our Community Engagement Framework to ensure customer and community voice is heard and used in decision making
 - support customers experiencing payment difficulties in the face of cost of living pressures
 - expand our customer support programs to include small businesses
 - improve our customer service to ensure customers feel supported raising issues and are confident in our ability to resolve them.

[1]

Commitment

To achieve our vision, we commit to the following:

- We will provide personalised assistance to residential and small business customers who are experiencing or are affected by payment difficulties, either short or long-term.

We understand that sometimes things do not go to plan and unexpected expenses and household pressures require some adjustments to household

¹ GWW 2030 Corporate Strategy

Document Owner position title: Manager, Customer Assist

Endorser position title: General Manager, Customer Experience

Classification: EXTERNAL USE (This document is uncontrolled when printed or saved locally)

Ref: POL1007604 | Version Number: 1

budgets. Customers might be experiencing difficulties for various reasons and under different circumstances, including experiencing family violence. This means their needs, and the way GWW can help, will be considered when discussing support options.

We are here to help and we encourage customers to contact us as early as they feel comfortable or when it is safe for them to do so. Our Community and Care team can work with them on the best support for their unique situation and help them manage their water bills in a responsible and sustainable way.

- In cases where family violence is identified or disclosed, we will refer the customer directly to our Community and Care team for specialised support. All their details and information will be kept strictly confidential. For specific information, see GWW's [Family and Domestic Violence Policy](#)

To achieve our strategic objectives, we commit to the following:

- We will recognise that some residential and small business customers may from time-to-time experience payment difficulties that will vary in degree and duration, depending on individual and family circumstances.
- When advised by a customer, their financial advisor, accountant or other third-party (with the consent of the customer) that they are impacted by payment difficulties, we will offer the opportunity to have their account managed by our Community and Care team to determine where we can help.
- We will take the following actions and approaches, assessed on a case-by-case basis with sensitivity and respect, when supporting those who are experiencing difficulties:
 - be proactive in our customer engagement to identify, contact and engage with customers who may be experiencing payment difficulties and provide them with information and assistance before debt begins to accumulate. We will do this by:
 - providing an exemption from further recovery action or restriction of supply, including waiving any prior interest accrued and exempting from further accrual of interest while being managed by the Community and Care team
 - providing information on our suite of support programs - including flexible payment options, grants, government-funded concessions, extensions or in certain circumstances waiving or suspending late fees and interest payments on outstanding amounts or suspending the sale of debt to an external debt collection agency
 - providing advice on water efficiency programs
 - referring relevant customers to a qualified accountant or an independent accredited financial counsellor

- implementing the Essential Services Commission’s Hardship Guaranteed Service Level (GSL) program for relevant customers
 - referring relevant customers for a Utility Relief Grant (URG) from the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing or providing application support for eligible residential customers.
- Our employees from any area of the business will know how to refer customers to the Community and Care team.

This policy will cease to apply when:

- all payments are made or there’s been improved payment history
- a customer fails to make scheduled payments as agreed in their payment plan and fails to contact us to engage with the Community and Care team. We ask that customers stay in touch in a way that is safe for them to do so and keep us informed of any changes in circumstances so we can adjust the plan if necessary.

While GWW strives to provide exceptional customer service, we understand that some customers may not be satisfied. Our Complaints Resolution Policy outlines our commitment to addressing complaints fairly, promptly and professionally. Customers have the right to lodge a complaint with the Energy and Water Ombudsman Victoria or other dispute resolution forum if they are not satisfied.

Implementation

This policy is implemented through our annual business planning cycle which monitors our policies, identifies areas for action, resourcing requirements, and timeframes for delivery. It guides our Residential and Non-Residential Customer Charters, Customer Support Program, Customer Service employee behaviours and related management processes.

All Customer Experience employees will be trained in the Customer Support Policy and related processes during induction, supplemented by refresher training and coaching to ensure customers are treated with sensitivity and respect.

The policy is published on our GWW website and every effort will be made to provide resources in different languages. A copy can be emailed or posted to our customers upon request.

Roles and responsibilities

The Executive Leadership Team is responsible for incorporating our responsibilities under this policy into our business planning activities.

The General Manager, Customer Experience is responsible for directing, reviewing, and reporting upon the implementation and ongoing management of the Customer Support Policy for our customers.

Senior Leadership Team and Team Leaders are responsible for ensuring Customer Experience employees are trained in the Customer Support Policy (including related programs) and can sensitively engage with customers.

Customer Experience employees are responsible for understanding and adhering to the requirements listed in the Customer Support Policy.

References and related documents

Other relevant GWW Policies, Procedures and Guidelines include:

- The Residential Customer Charter 2021-2024
- The Non-Residential Customer Charter 2021-2024
- Essential Services Commission Water Industry Standard - Urban Customer Service and Rural Customer Service Version 3 incorporating amendments as at 1 April 2024
- Essential Services Commission Amendment to the Water Industry Standards: Final decision 20 February 2024
- POL-14 GWW Privacy Policy
- PRO-236 GWW Public Interest Disclosure Procedure
- POL-1007606 GWW Family and Domestic Violence Policy
- POL-1005431 GWW Complaints Resolution Policy
- POL-1006483 GWW Social Media Policy
- POL-20 GWW Risk Management Policy

Review process

The policy will be reviewed annually or more frequently as required.

Approved by the ELT on 5 April 2024

Next due for review by the ELT in April 2025

Version control

Version Number <i>Vx-0</i>	Document Owner's Position Title <i>Insert Document Owner's Position Title</i>	Purpose/Change <i>Outline purpose of the change or summary of changes in 1-2 lines. You can also mention section names or numbers that have changed</i>	Date <i>DD/MM/YYYY</i>
1	Manager, Customer Assist	Required as per Essential Services Commission Water Industry Standard - Urban Customer Service and Rural Customer Service Version 3 incorporating amendments as at 1 April 2024	05/04/2024