




ANNEX D - Proposed amendments to the *Water Industry Standard – Rural Customer Service*

This table summarises the proposed changes made between the *Customer Service Code – Rural Water Businesses* and the Draft *Water Industry Standard – Rural Customer Service*.

Minor proposed changes to terminology are not identified in this table (for example ‘code’ to ‘industry standard’ and ‘water law’ to *Water Act 1989 (Vic)* and the *Water Industry Act 1994 (Vic)* or ‘*Water Act 1989 (Vic)*’).

In order to better reflect a customer’s journey, we have included new elements and proposed some minor movements to clauses and sub-clauses. This will be indicated in the table below as ‘Moved to’.

The following icons indicate the status of each clause and sub-clause. If you wish to provide feedback on a specific clause, please refer to the proposed clause number.

	Change	We have proposed amendments to the content, or created a new clause
	No change	We have not proposed any amendments to content.
	No substantive change	We have proposed to update a clause to ensure it is in plain English, or updated terminology to reflect amendments to other clauses, but there is no substantive change to the obligations.

Proposed contents of Draft Water Industry Standard – Rural Customer Service

Part A – Introduction

Part B – Quality and reliability of service and supply (clauses 1 to 5)

Part C – Billing (clause 6)

Part D – Payments (clause 7)

Part E – Customer Support and Assistance (clauses 8 to 11)




Part F – Complaints and disputes (clause 12)



Part G – Actions for non-payment (Clauses 13 and 14)

Part H – Customer Charters (Clauses 15 to 17)


Part I – Definitions

Schedule 1 – Service Standards

Current Clause	Proposed clause	Status	Proposed amendment
Part A	Part A		Part A – Introduction. Change: we are proposing to update the commencement paragraph
1	5		Moved to Clause 5 – Charges (Part B - Quality and Reliability of Services and Supply) No change
1	5.1		Moved to Sub-clause 5.1 – Charges (Part B - Quality and Reliability of Services and Supply) Change: Wording and requirements have been updated to be consistent with the requirements of the Urban Water Customer Service – Industry Standard

2	12		Moved to Clause 12 – Complaints and Disputes (Part F – Complaints and Disputes) No change
2.1	12.1		Moved to Sub-clause 12.1 - Complaints and disputes policy (Part F – Complaints and Disputes) No change
2.2	12.2		Moved to Sub-clause 12.2 - Resolution of disputes (Part F – Complaints and Disputes) Change: Change of wording from “endeavour” to “use reasonable endeavours” to resolve in good faith any dispute directly with its customers and other affected by its operations.
3.1	6.1		Moved to Sub-clause 6.1 - Billing frequency (Part C - Billing) No change
3.2	4		Moved to Clause 4 - Water reading (Part B Quality and Reliability of Service and Supply) No change
-	4.1		This is a new in Sub-clause 5.1 - Customer self-reads (Part B - Quality and Reliability of Service and Supply) Change: We are proposing outlining the requirements for customer-self reads.
3.3	4.2		Moved to Sub-clause 4.2 - Special meter readings (Part B Quality and Reliability of Service and Supply)

Change: We are proposing that a water business must not charge a fee for a special meter reading; customer self-read or a digital meter.

- 4.3 


This is a new Sub-clause clause 4.3 - Data and digital water metering (Part B - Quality and Reliability of Services and Supply)

Change: we are proposing to specify that a water business with digital metering in its network has a policy clearly explaining how data collected from digital water meters is managed and used.

3.4 6.2 


Moved to Sub-clause 6.2 - Issue of bills (Part C – Billing)

Change: we are proposing to remove the requirement for a customer to request a bill be sent to their agent or representative in writing.

3.5 6.3 


Moved to Sub-clause 6.3 - Content of bills (Part C – Billing)

Change: we are proposing to clearly specify a water business display the customer's water usage on a bill (as applicable) and ensure bills have a link to where a customer charter can be found.







3.6 6.4 

Moved to Sub-clause 6.4 - Explanation of charges (Part C – Billing)


Change: Inclusion of charges which must be separately itemised including service charges to the property, usage charges and an rates or other charges.

- 6.5 


This is a new Sub-clause 6.5 - E-bill (Part C – Billing)

			<p>Change: we are proposing to introduce minimum requirements for an E-bill.</p>
3.7	6.6		<p>Moved to Sub-clause 6.6 - Adjustment of bills (Part C – Billing)</p> <p>Change: we are proposing to reduce the undercharged period to four months and also ensure water businesses do not charge interest on undercharged amounts.</p>
4.1	7.1		<p>Moved to Sub-clause 7.1 - Payment methods (Part D – Payments)</p> <p>Change: No substantive changes</p>
-	8		<p>This is a new Clause 8 - Proactive engagement (Part E – Customer Assistance and Support)</p> <p>Change: we are proposing to introduce an obligation on water businesses to proactively contact customers experiencing payment difficulties and offer them information and assistance.</p>
4.2	9.1		<p>Moved to Sub-clause 9.1 - Payment assistance (Part E – Customer Support and Assistance)</p> <p>Change: we are proposing to expand the support that should be made available to customers experiencing payment difficulties.</p>
4.3	7.2		<p>Moved to Sub-clause 7.2 Flexible payment plans (Part D – Payments)</p> <p>Change: We are proposing the clearly detail the requirements of a flexible payment plan.</p>
-	13.1		<p>This is a new Sub-clause 13.1 - Appropriate communication (Part G – Actions for non-payment)</p>


Change: we are proposing to introduce a principle for water businesses to ensure collection notices are delivered in language and style that is sensitive and appropriate, with a focus on the support available and encouraging customers contact the water business

5.1 13.2  Moved to Sub-clause 13.2 - Reminder notices (Part G – Actions for non-payment)


Change: we are proposing to clearly specify the minimum requirements of a reminder notice.

5.2 13.3  Moved to Sub-clause 13.3 - Final notices (Part G – Actions for non-payment)


Change: we are proposing to replace the word ‘warning’ with ‘final’ and clearly specify the minimum requirements of a final notice.

5.3 -  This has been removed as no longer relevant


Change: content has been incorporated into Sub-clauses 13.2 and 13.3 (Part G – Actions for non-payment).







5.4 13.4  Moved to Sub-clause 13.4 - Interest on unrecovered amounts (Part G – Actions for non-payment)

No substantive change








5.5 13.5  Moved to Sub-clause 13.5 - Maximum rate of interest that may be charged (Part G – Actions for non-payment)





No substantive change









5.6 13.6  Moved to Sub-clause 13.6 - Other charges (Part G – Actions for non-payment)







			No change
5.7	13.7		Moved to Sub-clause 13.7 - Application of funds (Part G – Actions for non-payment)
			No change
5.8	13.8		Moved to Sub-clause 13.8 - Dishonoured payment (Part G – Actions for non-payment)
			No substantive change
6.1	14.1		Moved to Sub-clause 14.1 – Suspension (Part G – Actions for non-payment)
			No change
-	14.2		This is a new Sub-clause 14.2 - Restriction to be a measure of last resort (Part G – Actions for non-payment)
			Change: we are proposing to introduce overarching principle that restrictions should be a measure of last resort.
6.2	14.5		Moved to Sub-clause 14.5 - Restriction and legal action (Part G – Actions for non-payment)
			Change: we are proposing to update the conditions that must be met by a water business before it restricts a customer’s water supply or takes legal action.
6.3	14.3		Moved to Sub-clause 14.3 - Limits on suspension, restriction and legal action (Part G – Actions for non-payment)
			Change: we are proposing to increase the amount owed before a restriction or legal action can be taken to \$300 and to clearly state that a customer receiving any

form of assistance for payment difficulties under the *Water Industry Standard – Rural Customer Service* is exempt from restriction and legal action.

6.4	14.4		Moved to Sub-clause 14.4 - Additional limits on restriction (Part G – Actions for non-payment) No substantive changes
6.5	14.6		Moved to Sub-clause 14.6 - Removal of restrictions (Part G – Actions for non-payment) No substantive changes
7.1	-		Maintenance obligations Change: This has been removed as no longer relevant
7.2	3.1		Moved to Sub-clause 3.1 - Worker identification (Part B - Quality and Reliability of Services and Supply) No change
7.3	3.2		Moved to Sub-clause 3.2 - Keys held by water business (Part B - Quality and Reliability of Services and Supply) No change
8.1	1.1		Moved to Sub-clause 1.1 - Water supply quality (Part B - Quality and Reliability of Services and Supply) Change: Change of wording from “endeavour” to “use reasonable endeavours”.
8.2	1.2		Moved to Sub-clause 1.2 - Delivery of water and access to drainage services (Part B - Quality and Reliability of Services and Supply) No substantive change


8.3	1.3		<p>Moved to Sub-clause 1.3 - Rectification (Part B - Quality and Reliability of Services and Supply)</p> <p>No substantive change</p>
8.4	1.4		<p>Moved to Sub-clause 1.4 - Obligation to provide reliable services (Part B - Quality and Reliability of Services and Supply)</p> <p>Change: We are proposing to insert the words 'programs' and 'and maintain'.</p> <p>The requirement to comply with approved service standards has been deleted and replaced by clause 1.5 (below)</p> <p>Requirement that a water business must use reasonable endeavours to minimise the impact of unplanned interruptions to supply services has been deleted and has been replaced by clause 1.6 (below).</p>
-	1.5		<p>This is a new Sub-clause 1.5 - Service standards (Part B – Quality and Reliability of Services and Supply)</p> <p>Change: We have added a new clause in relation to service standards.</p>
-	1.6		<p>This is a new Sub-clause 1.6 - Unplanned interruptions (Part B – Quality and Reliability of Services and Supply)</p> <p>Change: We have added a new clause in relation to unplanned interruptions.</p>
8.5	1.7		<p>Moved to Sub-clause 1.7 - Planned interruptions (Part B - Quality and Reliability of Services and Supply)</p> <p>Change: we are proposing to add a specific reference to notifying affected customers by their preferred method of communication and if possible, by SMS.</p>

9.1	11.1		Moved to Sub-clause 11.1 – Enquiries (Part E – Customer Support and Assistance) No substantive change
9.2	11.2		Moved to Sub-clause 11.2 - Fees for information or advice (Part E – Customer Support and Assistance) No substantive change
9.3	5.2		Moved to Sub-clause 5.2 - Schedule of charges (Part B - Quality and Reliability of Services and Supply) No substantive change
9.4	11.3		Moved to Sub-clause 11.3 - Water allocation policy (Part E – Customer Support and Assistance) No change
9.5	11.4		Moved to Sub-clause 11.4 - Unauthorised use policy (Part E – Customer Support and Assistance) Change: Change of name from Overuse policy to unauthorised use policy
9.6	11.5		Moved to Sub-clause 11.5 - Efficient and responsible use of water (Part E – Customer Support and Assistance) No change
9.7	11.6		Moved to Sub-clause 11.6 - Billing history (Part E – Customer Support and Assistance) No change
9.8	11.7		Moved to Sub-clause 11.7 - Regulatory information (Part E – Customer Support and Assistance)


No change			
9.9	11.8		<p>Moved to Sub-clause 11.8 - Communication Assistance (Part E – Customer Support and Assistance)</p> <p>Change – we are proposing to clearly specify that a water business needs to meet the communication needs of its customers.</p>
-	11.9		<p>This is a new Sub-clause 11.9 - Written communication (Part E – Customer Support and Assistance)</p> <p>Change: we are proposing to include minimum requirements that written communication is in plain language, legible and presented clearly and appropriately having regard to its nature.</p>
9.10	11.10		<p>Moved to Sub-clause 11.10 - Customer obligations (Part E – Customer Support and Assistance)</p> <p>No change</p>
9.11	11.11		<p>Moved to sub-clause 11.11 – Privacy (Part E – Customer Support and Assistance)</p> <p>No change</p>
10	2		<p>Moved to clause 2 - Guaranteed service levels</p> <p>Change: We are proposing to clearly define the Guaranteed Services Level (GSL) scheme.</p>
11	10		<p>Moved to clause 10 - Family violence (Part E – Customer Support and Assistance)</p> <p>No substantive change</p>
12	-		<p>This has been removed as it is no longer relevant</p>

13.1	15.1		Moved to Sub-clause 15.1 - Purpose of Charter (Part H – Customer Charters) No substantive change
13.2	15.2		Moved to Sub-clause 15.2 - Multiple Charters (Part H – Customer Charters) No change
13.3	15.3		Moved to Sub-clause 15.3 - Consultation (Part H – Customer Charters) No change
13.4	15.4		Moved to Sub-clause 15.4 - Submission for assessment (Part H – Customer Charters) No change
13.5	-		Review of Charter Change: This has been removed
13.6	15.5		Moved to Sub-clause 15.5 - Required amendment (Part H – Customer Charters) No change
14	16		Moved to Sub-clause 16 - Content of Charter (Part H – Customer Charters) Change: inclusion of requirement to provide information about how services may be affected and any penalties that may apply under applicable drought, emergency, or permanent water saving plans; and
15	17		Moved to Clause 17 - Publication of Charter (Part H – Customer Charters)


Change: we are proposing to change the title to better reflect the content of the entire clause.

15.1 **17.1**  Moved to Sub-clause 17.1 - Availability of charter (Part H – Customer Charters)

Change: we are proposing to change the title to better reflect the intent of this sub-clause.

15.2 **17.2**  Moved to Sub-clause 17.2 - Summary of charter (Part H – Customer Charters)

No change

15.3 **17.3**  Moved to Sub-clause 17.3 - Provision of charter or summary (Part H – Customer Charters)

Change: Inclusion of requirement that the summary of the charter must be in a form that is easy to understand for all customers and the requirement that a water business publish and provide its customer charters in languages other than English.

Part D **Part I**  Moved to Part I – Definitions

Change:

We have removed the following definitions as they are no longer applicable – ‘approved service standard’; ‘ESC Act’; ‘GSL rebate’ and ‘water law’.

We have updated the following definitions – ‘business day’; ‘complaint’; ‘enquiry facility’; ‘interruption’; ‘planned interruption’; ‘restriction’, ‘unplanned interruption’ and ‘water business’.

We have added the following definitions – ‘billing period’; ‘digital format’; ‘E-bill’; ‘industry standard’; ‘self –

read'; 'small business customer'; 'Statement of Obligations'; and 'unplanned outage'.