

# **District Council of Coober Pedy**



## **Customer Charter**

### **Water and Wastewater Customers**

**JULY 2016**

## Customer Charter

The District Council of Coober Pedy is the local government authority for the area surrounding the town of Coober Pedy. It is located in the far north of South Australia, 850km north of Adelaide and 680km south of Alice Springs. The Council is focused on providing essential services to support growth and economic development throughout the District.

The aim of our Charter is to provide our water and sewerage customers with a clear understanding of the standards of service they can expect from us and their rights and responsibilities.

The *Water Retail Code-Minor & Intermediate Retailers*, developed by Essential Services Commission of SA (ESCOSA), contains a detailed description of your rights and our responsibilities in providing you with water and sewerage retail services and can be found at ([www.escosa.sa.gov.au](http://www.escosa.sa.gov.au)).

### Retail services provided

We provide customers with drinking water and wastewater services.

#### DRINKING WATER (QUALITY)

We will:

- provide you with drinking water that is safe for drinking and food preparation and in accordance with all relevant health and environmental regulatory requirements
- use our best endeavours to minimise the frequency and duration of interruptions or limitations to your water service
- provide you with information on any planned interruptions to your water service at least 4 business days prior to us undertaking any works or maintenance
- provide an emergency telephone number on our website for you to call in the event of an emergency or interruption to the supply of your water service
- in the case of an unplanned interruption or emergency, provide you with information about any impact to your water service as soon as possible

You will:

- report any leaks, bursts or quality issues to us as soon as possible by calling the emergency telephone number displayed on our website
- provide safe access to the water meter so that we can ascertain your water consumption for billing purposes
- be responsible for arranging and covering the costs of any additional onsite water infrastructure necessary to maintain your required flow rate, which must be installed by an appropriately licensed plumber

#### SEWAGE REMOVAL (QUALITY)

We will:

- remove sewage and wastewater from your property in accordance with all relevant health and environmental regulatory requirements
- use our best endeavours to minimise the frequency and duration of interruptions or limitations to your sewerage service
- provide you with information on any planned interruptions to your sewerage service at least 4 business days prior to us undertaking any works or maintenance
- provide an emergency telephone number on our website for you to call in the event of an emergency or interruption to the supply of your sewerage service

You:

- will report any blockages, bursts or leaks to us as soon as possible by calling the emergency telephone number displayed on our website
- will not discharge restricted wastewater into our sewerage infrastructure
- may be liable to pay us for a proportion of the costs reasonably attributable to you for a blockage, burst or leak. Will we advise you of the reasons for cost recovery in these circumstances and any amounts payable will be subject to the payment assistance and financial hardship provisions
- will contact us to discuss our requirements for disposal of industrial or non-domestic waste into our sewerage infrastructure

### Our prices

#### PRICE LIST

We will:

- publish our Price List, which sets out all of the fees and charges associated with the sale and supply of your retail service, each year by 1 July on our website at <https://www.cooberpedy.sa.gov.au> We will also make this available at our office at **Hutchison Street, Coober Pedy, South Australia.**
- publish our Pricing Policy Statement, which outlines how our fees and charges are compliant with ESCOSA's pricing principles set out in its Price Determination, each year by [insert date] on our website at <https://www.cooberpedy.sa.gov.au>. We will also make this available at our office at **Hutchison Street, Coober Pedy, South Australia.**
- in the case that any fees and charges set out in the Price List change, publish these on our website 7 days prior to these fees and charges taking effect, and make these available at our office

- calculate your bill on a pro-rata basis if a tariff rate or charge changes during a billing cycle so that the old tariff rate or charge applies up to and including the date of change and the new tariff rate or charge applies from the date of the change to the end of the billing cycle

### **SERVICE AVAILABILITY CHARGE**

The Local Government Act 1999 allows us to recover a “service availability charge” from you where our water/sewerage infrastructure runs adjacent to your property. We will require you to pay our “service availability charge” regardless of whether you choose to connect to the service.

### **WATER AND SEWERAGE CONCESSIONS**

Water and sewerage concessions are administered by the Department for Communities and Social Inclusion. To check your eligibility for current water and sewerage concessions, assistance or advice visit [www.dcsi.sa.gov.au/concessions](http://www.dcsi.sa.gov.au/concessions), phone the Concessions Hotline on 1800 307 758 or email [concessions@dcsl.sa.gov.au](mailto:concessions@dcsl.sa.gov.au).

### *Connections*

#### **EXISTING CONNECTIONS - WHERE YOUR PROPERTY IS CURRENTLY CONNECTED TO OUR INFRASTRUCTURE**

We will:

- connect you to our water/sewerage service within 14 days of you providing us with information required by us and paying the relevant connection and account establishment fees as set out in our Price List

You will:

- provide us with the following information about your supply address:
  - name and address of the account holder
  - name and address of the property owner
  - authorisation of the property owner for connection to proceed
  - proof of identification of the account holder
- pay the relevant connection, account establishment fees and security deposits as set out in our Price List

#### **CONNECTIONS – WHERE YOUR PROPERTY IS NOT CURRENTLY CONNECTED TO OUR INFRASTRUCTURE**

Applications for a water or sewer service are assessed on the basis of a range of things including, but not limited to, the property’s proximity to a water or sewer main, capacity of the system and any constraints on installation. This assists us in determining what connection type is required

We will:

- inform you within 14 days whether or not you can be connected to our infrastructure
- If you can be connected we will advise you of the type of connection available to you and provide you with an invoice for the cost of the connection.
- Once you have paid the invoice we’ll do our best to connect you within 28 days of you providing us with the information required by us.

You will:

- provide us with the following information about your supply address
  - name and address of the account holder
  - name and address of the property owner
  - authorisation of the property owner for connection to proceed
  - proof of identification of the account holder
- pay the relevant connection, account establishment fees and security deposits as set out in our Price List

### *Billing and payments*

We will:

- issue you with monthly bills for Commercial and Umoona Community customers, and bi-monthly bills for Residential customers for water use.
- charge your water access fees to your rates notice on a quarterly basis.
- charge your sewerage rates to your rates notice on a quarterly basis.
- ensure your water consumption bill is based on an actual meter reading at least once within a 12 month period
- provide you with consumption or estimated consumption of water services and meter readings, metering data or estimates of consumption
- provide you with a detailed bill and give you at least 12 business days to pay your bill
- offer you the ability to pay your bills through a range of channels including online at the Council website, by phone, in person at the Council office at Hutchison Street, Coober Pedy, by cheque or money order via post, or Centrepay for Centrelink customers.

You will:

- pay our bill by the payment due date unless we have agreed on a flexible payment arrangement
- pay any fee we incur if any of your payment methods are dishonoured

## PAYMENT ASSISTANCE AND FINANCIAL HARDSHIP

We will:

- provide you with the ability to pay your bills by instalments or enter into a flexible payment arrangement
- offer you the ability to make payments towards future bills, grant payment extensions and agree to have your bill redirected to another person (where that person agrees)
- inform you about, and assess your eligibility for, our Hardship Program if requested

You will:

- inform us if you are having difficulty paying your bills prior to the due date

Further details on our Hardship Policy are available on our website at <https://www.cooberpedy.sa.gov.au> or by visiting our office at **Hutchison Street, Coober Pedy, South Australia**. We will provide you with a copy of our Hardship Policy upon request.

## REVIEWING YOUR BILL/BILLING DISPUTES

We will:

- not commence our debt collection processes where a bill (or part of a bill) is in dispute
- review your bill and inform you of the outcome of our review within 30 business days of your request
- inform you about our independent external dispute resolution body where you remain dissatisfied following our review

You will:

- pay any portion of your bill that is not in dispute while your bill is being reviewed or any future bills that become due

## Overcharging

We will:

- inform you within 10 business days of becoming aware of you being overcharged as a result of an act or omission by us and credit the overcharged amount to your next bill
- pay the overcharged amount directly to you within 10 business days if you have ceased to purchase a retail service from us

## Undercharging

We will:

- in relation to a retail service which is metered, limit the amount we recover from you to the amount undercharged in the 12 months prior to the meter reading date on the last bill sent to you
- in relation to unmetered services, limit the amount we recover from you to the amount undercharged

in the 12 months prior to the error being advised to you in writing

- list the undercharged amount as a separate item in a special bill or in your next bill with an explanation of that amount and, if requested, offer you an extended time to pay the amount
- not charge you interest on the undercharged amount

## DEBT RECOVERY

We will:

- only commence debt collection/recovery action where you have failed to pay your bill(s) by the due date and you have not contacted us to discuss a payment extension or other flexible payment arrangements (including eligibility for our Hardship Program)
- not undertake debt collection activity where we have installed a flow restriction device

You will:

- contact us if you are having difficulty paying your bills prior to the due date

## Customers with special medical needs

You will:

- inform us and provide evidence from a registered medical practitioner or a hospital that someone residing at your supply address requires the ongoing use of a dialysis machine
- inform us when the dialysis machine is no longer required at your supply address

We will:

- register your supply address as an address with special medical needs
- provide you with at least 4 business days' notice of any planned outages that will affect the supply of water to your property
- provide you with an emergency telephone contact number in the event of an interruption

Registration as a customer with special medical needs does not ensure you will be provided with drinking water at all times, for example, in the circumstances of an unplanned interruption outside of our control. Accordingly, you must ensure that you have a contingency plan in place to protect yourself in the event of an unplanned interruption to your supply

## Entry to your property

We will:

- provide you with at least 24 hours notice if we need to enter your supply address for the purposes of connecting, disconnecting, restricting, inspecting, repairing or testing your retail service

You will:

- ensure safe access to our infrastructure (including but not limited to the meter) located at your supply address

### *Water flow restrictions for non-payment*

We will only restrict the flow of water to your property if:

- you have not paid your bill or bills by the due date and you have not contacted us to arrange an alternative payment arrangement
- you do not adhere to our previously agreed payment arrangement and you have not contacted us to discuss any further payment options
- you do not adhere to the terms of our agreement under our Hardship Policy
- you refuse our employees or contractors entry to your property, including but not limited to, where you deny our meter readers access to your property for three consecutive billing cycles and you do not contact us to arrange reasonable alternative access arrangements
- you are using water services illegally

Before restricting your water supply, we will:

- use our best endeavours to contact you in person, by telephone, by mail and/or email
- provide you with information about our flexible payment arrangements, Government-funded concessions and assess your eligibility for participation in our Hardship Program
- issue you with a reminder notice
- issue you a restriction notice informing you that we intend to restrict your supply in 5 business days if you do not contact us

You will:

- contact us as soon as possible to discuss the reasons for your possible restriction and how the issue can be resolved

### *Disconnections*

Subject to any applicable regulatory requirements that prohibit disconnection, we will only disconnect your retail service if:

- you request the disconnection
- there is a public health, environment or safety risk to our services from your connection point (e.g. backflow risk or unauthorised industrial waste discharge)
- you are found to be using the services illegally or have refused entry to person authorised to read your meter or undertake maintenance or repairs in accordance with relevant regulatory instruments

Where you request a disconnection (and it is not prohibited), we will use our best endeavours to issue you with a final account in accordance with your request. We will inform you if you are still required to pay our “service availability charge” when you request the disconnection.

### *Reinstatement of water supply*

We will:

- use our best endeavours to reinstate your supply within a time agreed with you subject to the reasons for disconnection or restriction being rectified and you paying our reinstatement fee
- waive the reinstatement fee if you are eligible for and agree to participate in our Hardship Program

You will:

- contact us to discuss how the issue that led to the flow restriction or disconnection can be rectified
- pay our reinstatement fee unless it is waived

### *Termination of contract for retail services*

We will:

- confer on you the right to terminate your contract with us for the supply of a retail services
- inform you of any relevant fees or charges payable as a result of your termination

You will:

- provide at least 3 business days’ notice of your intention to terminate your contract with us for the supply of a retail service
- pay any relevant fees or charges

### *Complaints and dispute resolution*

We will:

- respond or acknowledge your complaint or enquiry within 5 business days
- refer you to our Corporate Services Manager if you are not satisfied with our initial response or resolution or, if required, escalate your complaint to the Director of Community and Corporate Services or Chief Executive Officer
- advise you of your option to escalate your complaint to our independent dispute resolution body and provide you with the details of that organisation

Further details on our Enquiry, Complaint & Dispute Resolution Procedures are available on our website at <https://www.cooberpedy.sa.gov.au> or by visiting our office at **Hutchison Street, Coober Pedy, South Australia**. We will provide you with a copy of our procedures upon request.

## *Contacting Us*

If you need to know more about us or the content of this Charter, please contact us on the details below

District Council of Coober Pedy faults, service difficulties and emergencies

Water supply, water quality, leaking or faulty water meters, sewer blockage or overflow

24 hours / 7 days

0417 811 470

District Council of Coober Pedy customer service, billing, general queries and payment difficulties

8.30am – 5pm Monday - Friday

08 8672 4600

[dccp@cpcouncil.sa.gov.au](mailto:dccp@cpcouncil.sa.gov.au)

District Council of Coober Pedy connections – applications for connections, availability of service

8.30am – 5pm Monday – Friday

08 8672 4600

[dccp@cpcouncil.sa.gov.au](mailto:dccp@cpcouncil.sa.gov.au)

Council website: [www.cooberpedy.sa.gov.au](http://www.cooberpedy.sa.gov.au)

Postal address: PO Box 425. Coober Pedy, SA, 5723