

Approval of Shire of Victoria Plains Customer Service Charter

24 September 2008



DECISION

The Economic Regulation Authority (**Authority**) has approved the Shire of Victoria Plains Customer Service Charter (charter) on 24 September 2008.

REASONS

The Authority has reviewed the charter against the requirements of the Shire of Victoria Plains' licence and notes the following:

Existence

Clause 19(a) of the Shire of Victoria Plains licence states that the licensee must produce a charter outlining the principles, terms and conditions upon which the licensee intends to provide water services to its customers. Clause 19(e) of the licence requires that the Shire of Victoria Plains undertake a review of the charter at least once every 36 months.

The previous charter was approved by the Authority in February 2005.

The Shire of Victoria Plains originally submitted its reviewed charter to the Authority for approval on 22 April 2008. The Secretariat of the Authority provided feedback to the Shire regarding the charter. Upon request by the Shire, the Authority agreed to extend the due date for submission of the revised charter to 31 August 2008. The Shire submitted a revised version of the charter on 26 August 2008. The Secretariat of the Authority required two minor amendments to be made to the revised charter. The Shire of Victoria Plains submitted the final version of the charter on 15 September 2008.

The Authority finds that the Shire of Victoria Plains has submitted its new charter for approval within an acceptable timeframe.

Accuracy

Clause 19(a) states that the Shire of Victoria Plains must set out in writing the principles, terms and conditions upon which it intends to provide water services to its customers.

The Authority finds that the principles, terms and conditions, as set out in the charter, are generally consistent with relevant legislation and licence requirements.

Consultation

Clause 19(c)(ii) of the Shire of Victoria Plains' licence states that the charter "should address all of the service issues that are reasonably likely to be of concern to its customers".

In order to determine the service issues that are reasonably likely to be of concern to its customers, it is generally expected that a licensee would establish a process to determine all relevant service issues that should be addressed in its charter. An example of such a process is consulting with its customers and/or their representatives. The Authority's *Customer Service Charter Guidelines* recognise this as part of its criteria for assessing customer service charter reviews (clause 6.3).

The Shire of Victoria Plains has advised that a copy of the charter was forwarded to all of the Council's wastewater service customers with an invitation for public comment within fourteen days. At the end of the fourteen day advertising period no comments had been received. In addition, Council reviewed the charter at their Ordinary Meeting held on 18 March 2008.

The Authority finds that, on the basis of the information provided, the Shire of Victoria Plains undertook a reasonable level of public consultation with regard to this review.

Accessibility

Clause 19(c) of the Shire of Victoria Plains' licence requires that the charter be developed in 'plain English' and that it should address all of the service issues likely to be of concern to its customers.

'Plain English'

The Authority finds that the accessibility of the charter is generally sound, however, it could be further improved through the simplification of some technical and legalistic language.

Issues likely to be of concern

The Authority finds that the charter is generally consistent with the licence provision in covering all of the service issues likely to be of concern to the Shire of Victoria Plains' customers.

LYNDON ROWE
CHAIRMAN

For further information, contact:

Economic Regulation Authority
Perth, Western Australia
Phone: (08) 9213 1900