

Approval of Shire of Coolgardie Customer Service Charter

29 June 2009

Economic Regulation Authority



WESTERN AUSTRALIA

DECISION

The Economic Regulation Authority (**Authority**) approved the Shire of Coolgardie's Customer Service Charter (**charter**) for non-potable water supply and sewerage services on 29 June 2009.

REASONS

The Authority has reviewed the charter against the requirements of the Shire of Coolgardie's Operating Licence 13 (**licence**) and notes the following:

Existence

Schedule 3, clause 2.1 of the licence states that the licensee must have in place a charter that accords with the Authority's Customer Service Charter Guidelines (**review guidelines**).

Schedule 3, clause 2.6 of the licence requires that the Shire of Coolgardie undertake a review of the charter at least once in every three year period. Furthermore, clause 6.1 of the review guidelines requires the licensee to undertake a review process, at regular intervals and within the required timeframe.

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

The charter was due for review by 30 June 2008. The Authority granted a request by the Shire of Coolgardie for an extension of the submission due date until 30 September 2008. A second extension was granted until 12 December 2008. The Shire of Coolgardie submitted the first draft of its charter to the Authority for approval on 4 March 2009. The Secretariat of the Authority provided feedback to the Shire regarding the draft charter.

The Shire submitted the final version of its charter on 22 June 2009.

Although the Authority has approved the charter, the Authority finds that the timeframe within which the Shire of Coolgardie has submitted its charter has been unduly long. The Authority expects future reviews to be undertaken within the required timeframe.

Accuracy

Under clause 6.2 of the review guidelines, the charter must comply with all relevant legislative, code or regulatory requirements and be in line with the standard form contract and/or the licence requirements.

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 6.3 of the review guidelines requires that the licensee engage with customers and/or their representatives in the review process.

The Shire of Coolgardie has advised that public comment was sought by placing an advertisement in the local newspaper, Kalgoorlie Miner, and making copies of the charter available at the Kambalda and Coolgardie Shire offices and libraries for 4 weeks. No comments were received from the public either during this time or after.

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

Accessibility

Schedule 3, clause 2.2 of the licence states that the charter should be developed in 'plain English' and that it should address all of the service issues likely to be of concern to the 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

Schedule 4, clause 1.1 of the licence requires that the Shire of Coolgardie provide an emergency telephone advice system such that customers need to make only one telephone call to report an emergency.

Paragraph 1.5 of the charter states that:

1.5 Emergency Assistance

In case of emergency such as an overflow from a sewer. Contact the Shire of Coolgardie, Coolgardie office telephone (08) 9025 0300 during business hours or after hours..

Contact Details for non emergency purposes after hours

Hank Elscott	0427 980 679	
John Teasdale	(08) 9026 6312	0427 081 074
Geoff Benson	(08) 9027 3464	0417 983 266

The Authority notes that the paragraph may confuse some customers as to which telephone number is the relevant emergency telephone number, particularly as the paragraph (titled Emergency Assistance) also contains five telephone numbers for non emergency purposes.

The Shire of Coolgardie has advised that customers who experience an emergency may contact the Shire office number at all hours. If a customer contacts the number after hours, the customer's telephone call will be automatically redirected to the relevant officer. As required under the licence, customers will need to make only one call to report an emergency.

LYNDON ROWE
CHAIRMAN

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