



# SHIRE OF COOLGARDIE

## **Customer Service Charter for Wastewater Service**

November 2008

## **1.0 Introduction**

### **1.1 The role of this charter**

This charter sets out the broad philosophy of the Shire of Coolgardie in supplying sewerage services to the town of Coolgardie in accordance with the Licence issued to Shire of Coolgardie by the Economic Regulation Authority under the Water Services Licensing Act 1995.

The charter informs you, the customers of the Shire of Coolgardie, of your rights in accordance with the provisions of the licence, including service interruptions, levels of service, complaints procedures. If you would like a copy of the operating licence contact the Shire of Coolgardie at the number below or the Economic Regulation Authority on (08) 9213 1900.

### **1.2 Our commitment to service**

The Shire of Coolgardie will provide its services in a manner which is fair, courteous and, timely - with a focus on consultation with our customers, respecting your rights, and meeting your reasonable expectations.

### **1.3 Services we provide**

The Shire of Coolgardie will use its best endeavours to provide a service to collect treat and dispose of domestic sewage discharged from each customers' property to the Shire of Coolgardie's sewer system. In addition, the Shire of Coolgardie shall provide other services on terms agreed upon between the customer and the Shire of Coolgardie.

The areas of operation of the Shire of Coolgardie are as follows: Coolgardie Sewer District

### **1.4 How to contact us**

Postal address:	PO Box 7, Coolgardie WA 6429
Office Address:	Bayley Street, Coolgardie WA 6429 & Irish Mulga Drive, Kambalda WA 6442
Office hours:	8.00am - 5.00pm, Monday to Friday
Facsimile number:	(08) 9026 6266
Telephone number:	(08) 9025 0300 Coolgardie, (08) 9080 2111 Kambalda

**Contact officers:**

CEO	-	Tony Nottle	Coolgardie Office
Connection Requests	-	Geoff Benson	Kambalda Office
Maintenance	-	John Teasdale	Coolgardie Office
Technical Services	-	Hank Elscott	Coolgardie Office
Corporate Services	-	Stephen Carstairs	Coolgardie Office
Rating	-	Annika Reid	Kambalda Office

## **1.5 Emergency assistance**

In case of an 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

## **2.0 Your Basic Rights**

### **2.1 Your rights to wastewater services**

Subject to the Health Act, the Shire of Coolgardie shall provide for the removal, treatment and disposal of wastewater under the terms set out in this Charter and the Operating Licence. In certain circumstances, the Shire of Coolgardie may supply water for other than drinking purposes (eg, treated effluent) in a manner agreed with the customer.

The Shire of Coolgardie shall treat and dispose of wastewater in an environmentally responsible manner. All wastewater treatment plants shall operate in accordance with the licence conditions set by, and or agreements with, the Department of Environment and Conservation.

Occasionally some odours occur in treatment plants, and these may affect nearby residents. The Shire of Coolgardie shall respond to complaints of odours by investigating the report and advising the customer of the outcome within one day.

### **2.2 Your rights to industrial and commercial wastewater services**

Industrial and commercial wastewater may be accepted for discharge to the Shire of Coolgardie's wastewater system subject to compliance with the Shire of Coolgardie's requirements. An agreement with a customer for industrial and wastewater services to be provided by the Shire of Coolgardie shall be documented in an industrial waste permit issued by the Shire of Coolgardie.

### **2.3 Yours rights in relation to sewage spills**

If a sewer overflow occurs on your property due to failure of the Shire of Coolgardie's assets, representatives of the Shire of Coolgardie shall be on site as soon as possible, but within two hours of being notified. Action shall be taken to restore the service, clean up the affected area and minimise any damage or inconvenience.

## **2.4 Your rights to consultation and information**

The Shire of Coolgardie is committed to involving its customers on issues relating to its programmes and services. Community involvement in the Shire of Coolgardie's service planning and decision making processes will be sought through forums such as focus groups, customer surveys, and displays at local functions. The Shire of Coolgardie will use local media bulletins to advise customers of any system change that may result in significant variation in its service levels.

The Shire of Coolgardie will publish and make available at its premises information on matters relating to its wastewater services and on other aspects such as charging and complaints handling. Information regarding these matters can be obtained from the Shire of Coolgardie's business office.

The Shire of Coolgardie representatives will provide identification, their name and section when engaged in business discussions with customers.

## **2.5 Your rights to assistance, redress and compensation**

If the Shire of Coolgardie's activities have caused damage to your property or disruption to you, such as a sewer overflow, the Shire of Coolgardie shall deal with the matter in a fair and business-like manner, whether or not a complaint is received. The Shire of Coolgardie may rectify damage and, as necessary and reasonable, compensate you subject to the Health Act.

## **2.6 Charges and accounts**

If an error is made resulting in the customer paying more than the correct amount, the excess amount shall be held in credit for a future charge, or refunded, at the discretion of the customer.

The Shire of Coolgardie has the discretion to make refunds, adjustments and waive or defer payments.

The Shire of Coolgardie can make special financial arrangements to assist customers experiencing hardship in the payment of their accounts. Information on these options is available from the Shire of Coolgardie's offices or by calling the telephone number on your account.

Statements of account for outstanding charges are issued on a regular basis. In addition, the Shire of Coolgardie shall supply additional statements of accounts on request. A fee applies for this service.

Utility service availability and other charges are made against the owner of the land to which services are available or supplied and are the responsibility of the property owner. A property owner is responsible for payment of the charges set by the Shire of Coolgardie as applicable to the property.

An account shall be regarded as having been delivered when it is transmitted to a property owner at the address notified to the Shire of Coolgardie by the property owner or the property owner's agent. It is the property owner's responsibility to notify the Shire of Coolgardie of any change of address.

The Shire of Coolgardie may charge interest on overdue accounts as prescribed in the Local Government Act 1995. Also, if a customer's cheque is not honoured for any reason the Shire of Coolgardie may pass on any costs incurred.

If an error is made in the charges which results in the customer paying less than the correct amount, the customer may be required to pay the correct amount upon request.

## **2.7 Connecting our services**

Applications for wastewater service connections should be made at the Shire of Coolgardie's business office together with the appropriate fee. These applications must be accompanied by the related building plans. Single applications for approval shall be processed on receipt at the Shire of Coolgardie business office. Multiple applications shall be processed with 7 business days of receipt.

Where a Shire of Coolgardie wastewater reticulation main is available to your land and has the capacity for the required service, the Shire of Coolgardie shall, on application by you, approve connection to the wastewater system, under the terms and conditions set out in this Charter, the Licence, the Water Services Licensing Act 1995 and the Health Act 1911.

Where a junction to an available sewer does not exist, a junction will be provided by the Shire of Coolgardie, by arrangement with the licensed plumber installing the property sewer. No fee applies where a service availability charge has been applied to a property, except for those subject to redevelopment.

If the Shire of Coolgardie's wastewater system is available to a property, which produces or has capacity to produce wastewater, it is a requirement for the property owner to connect to the system subject to the provision of Section 72 of the Health Act as amended.

## **2.8 Disconnection**

If the wastewater service is no longer required by you, a disconnection from the Shire of Coolgardie's services may be approved provided that:

- the Shire of Coolgardie is first notified of the intention, and
- a fee is paid to the Shire of Coolgardie which shall arrange the disconnection, and
- the property has no further wastewater disposal requirement.

In most circumstances disconnection of a wastewater service does not terminate this Charter. The Shire of Coolgardie is required under the Health Act and Licence to levy a service availability charge to the owner of land (including vacant land) where wastewater services are available for connection. The Charter is void if there were no services available and no charges levied.

The Shire of Coolgardie shall reconnect its services at your request and on compliance with the terms and conditions of this Charter. A reconnection fee shall apply.

## **2.9 Enquiries, suggestion, complaints and disputes**

The Shire of Coolgardie values your enquiries and suggestions on ways it can improve its services. If you have an enquiry you can telephone the Shire of Coolgardie on (08) 9025 0300 during business hours. You will receive prompt, courteous and helpful replies and will be told who is handling your enquiry.

Telephone calls to the emergency numbers shall be answered promptly and advice of action to be taken and timing given within one hour of your call. General written correspondence will be replied to as soon as possible within 14 business days. Over the counter and telephone enquiries will be responded to within 2 hours.

When you lodge a complaint, (either in writing, or verbally), the Shire of Coolgardie shall address the issue in a timely and efficient manner. A representative of the Shire of Coolgardie shall respond in person within 2 business days of a complaint being lodged. Where this response advises the need for further assessment you shall receive a written reply within 14 business days.

If you are not satisfied with a solution offered or action taken on a complaint, you may seek referral to the Shire of Coolgardie's Chief Executive Officer, who shall investigate the complaint, assess the appropriateness of the Shire of Coolgardie's response and either confirm or amend the Shire of Coolgardie's proposed solution or action.

If the matter has not been resolved to your satisfaction within 15 business days, you may refer the matter to the Department of Water, which will seek a detailed explanation of the nature of the complaint, the solutions or actions offered by the Shire of Coolgardie and the reasons why these are not acceptable to you. The Department of Water will respond with its opinion on the matter and suggest a solution to the parties involved.

If you remain dissatisfied with the outcome, you may submit the matter to arbitration by an Arbitrator selected by the customer from a list prepared by the Department of Water. The Arbitrator's decision, including award of costs shall be binding on both parties and will preclude further action on the matter. You may elect to bypass the arbitration process and take legal action to resolve the matter.

**Department of Water, Industry Support Branch**

Postal Address PO Box K822, Perth, 6842

Email customer complaints: [WISBcomplaints@water.wa.gov.au](mailto:WISBcomplaints@water.wa.gov.au)

## **3.0 Our Powers**

### **3.1 Entry to your property**

The circumstances, in which the Shire of Coolgardie representatives may enter your property to carry out investigations and/or work on the Shire of Coolgardie's wastewater system, are set out in the Health Act 1911 and Local Government Act 1995. Any such entry shall normally occur during business hours, except in cases of emergency. For planned work within a property, the Shire of Coolgardie shall advise the occupier in advance. In cases of emergency, the occupier, if present, shall be informed of the repairs to be undertaken and the anticipated length of time for the work.

### **3.2 Rectifying defective work**

If the Shire of Coolgardie becomes aware of the presence of any defective or improper work forming part of your wastewater pipes and fittings which may impair the effective operation of the Shire of Coolgardie's system, it may serve a notice requiring you to remedy any such defect or improper work within a specified time.

If the terms of the notice are not followed, the Shire of Coolgardie may enter the customer's property to remedy the defective or improper work. This action, if taken shall be in accordance with the relevant Acts and the full cost of any remedial work shall be charged to the customer.



### **3.3 Service interruptions**

The Shire of Coolgardie's wastewater services are designed to be available 24 hours a day. However, the Shire of Coolgardie may interrupt, postpone or limit its wastewater services to customers:

- if any part of works are damaged, for example, by bursting, blockages or breakdowns; or
- if it is necessary to inspect, maintain, repair or replace any part of works; or
- for connection of new works or services; or
- if an event occurs beyond the Shire of Coolgardie's control, including acts by others, sabotage, flood, earthquake, power or water shortage or industrial action.

Except in emergencies, the Shire of Coolgardie shall give notice to you of its intention to interrupt, postpone or limit the supply of services for the purpose of regular maintenance or works programs. Unless interruptions are limited to a few minutes, notification shall be given to domestic customers - at least 24 hours prior, and for commercial and industrial customers - at least 2 days prior or by agreement.

### **3.4 Maintenance**

The Shire of Coolgardie's wastewater services are provided from the point where the pipes serving your property connect to the Shire of Coolgardie's wastewater reticulation main.

Wastewater reticulation mains (sewers) and associated fittings remain the property of the Shire of Coolgardie whether or not they are located within private property. The location of these structures can be obtained from the Shire of Coolgardie's office. You are required to ensure that the Shire of Coolgardie's pipelines and structures are reasonably accessible, are not interfered with, covered, built close to, built over, or damaged.

Prior to undertaking building or construction activity on land connected or capable of being connected, it is a requirement to gain the Shire of Coolgardie's approval. In the first instance, you should contact the Shire of Coolgardie's office. Unauthorised property improvements which interfere with the Shire of Coolgardie's assets may be required to be removed at your cost.

The Shire of Coolgardie is responsible for the maintenance of sewer property connections where they are unable to be cleared or repaired from the inspection shaft - provided that the depth of the repair job is 2.5 metres or more, and/or the fault in the property connection is outside the property concerned.

You are responsible for all plumbing, pipes and fixtures on or serving your property to the point where pipes connect to the Shire of Coolgardie's sewer property connection. Where the sewer property connection is a depth of less than 2.5 metres and is situated

within the property boundary, you are responsible for maintenance of the property sewer connection.

### **3.5 Discharge of unauthorised substances**

It is your responsibility to ensure that stormwater (including roof runoff) and other unauthorised substances are not discharged into the Shire of Coolgardie's sewers. Certain waste products are not suitable for disposal in the Shire of Coolgardie's wastewater system because of their nature and ability to pollute. Specialised procedures for disposal are required for substances such as:

- cooking oil and grease - these should be placed in a container or wrapped and placed in the rubbish bin;
- paint, paint thinners, dry cleaning fluids, engine oil, solvents, acids, alkalis, laboratory chemicals, kerosene, garden poisons, polishes or cleaning products; and
- products like disposable nappies, panty hose, sanitary napkins, tampons, cotton buds, syringes, toilet deodorant packs and razors - these should be wrapped and placed in the rubbish bin.

### **3.6 Limitation or withdrawal of services**

The Shire of Coolgardie may discontinue its wastewater services in the following circumstances:

- if you do not comply with the terms and conditions of this Charter;
- if there is a public health, environmental and/or safety risk to the Shire of Coolgardie's services from your service connection (eg backflow risk or unauthorised industrial waste discharge);
- if you do not pay, or meet and make arrangements to pay, overdue charges for the services.

If there is a health and safety risk the Shire of Coolgardie shall discontinue service immediately. In all other cases, the Shire of Coolgardie shall provide 48 hours notice in writing of its intention to refuse or alter or restrict its services.

The Shire of Coolgardie shall reinstate its supply of services at your request and on compliance with the terms and conditions of the Charter. A fee applies for this service.

### **3.7 Liability**

The Shire of Coolgardie is liable for any loss or damage that you may suffer:

- as a result of a breach of the Charter by the Shire of Coolgardie, its servants or agents; and
- as the result of a negligent act or omission by the Shire of Coolgardie, its servants or agents;
- as a result of the failure to meet standards prescribed by its Operating Licence or regulations (if any).

The Shire of Coolgardie's liability is limited as follows:

Section 35 of the Water Services Licensing Act allows the Shire of Coolgardie to interrupt, suspend or restrict the provision of a water service if, in the Shire of Coolgardie's opinion it is necessary to do so because of an accident, emergency potential danger or other unavoidable danger or other unavoidable cause. The Shire of Coolgardie is not liable for any loss or damage that arises from any such interruption, suspension or restriction unless the customer has an agreement with the Shire of Coolgardie which expressly states that the Shire of Coolgardie is, to the extent that the agreement states, liable in those circumstances.

The Shire of Coolgardie's liability under breach of Charter is limited to the rights of compensation and redress set out in this Charter. The Shire of Coolgardie's liability for failure to meet prescribed standards is limited to the amount prescribed as a penalty in its Operating Licence or regulations.