



STANDARD

CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS HANDLING

(INTERNAL COMPLAINT MANAGEMENT GUIDELINE REFERRED TO IN THE OPERATING LICENCE)

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1 PURPOSE

This Standard is Hunter Water's commitment to the effective management and resolution of customer complaints, enquiries and claims.

It ensures that associated strategies and initiatives are supported, implemented and compliant with regulatory requirements and in line with the guiding principles of the Australian/New Zealand Standard AS / NZS 10002 – 2014 Guidelines for Complaint Management in Organisations. Hunter Water is committed to:

- Enabling complaints
- Managing complaints efficiently and effectively
- Managing the parties throughout the complaint journey
- Accountability, learning and prevention of complaints

2 SCOPE

This Standard applies to all employees and workers of Hunter Water Corporation.

Where relevant, this Standard operates in conjunction with Hunter Water's other related policies, standards and guidelines in addition to determinations by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) and set out in the Customer Contract and the Operating Licence.

Hunter Water reserves the right to review and amend this Standard as is considered necessary.

3 DEFINITIONS

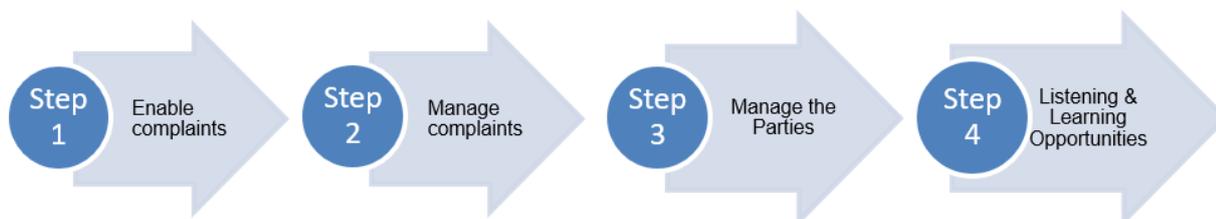
Complainant	Person, organisation or their representative (including clients, consumers, service users, customers, etc) making the complaint.
Complaint	An "expression of dissatisfaction made to or about an organisation, relating to its products, services, staff or the handling of a complaint, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required" (AS / NZS 10002-2014 Guidelines for Complaint Management in organisations).
Case	A customer enquiry, claim or complaint that is unable to be resolved at the first point of contact and that requires detailed information to be provided to the customer or where further investigation may be required to progress or resolve the matter.
Complaint Management System	The Complaint Management System records the case information shared from and with the customer, tracks the investigation process, and reports on the outcomes reached.
EWON	The Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW (EWON) provides a free, fair and independent external dispute resolution service for all electricity and gas customers in New South Wales and some water customers where they may feel that the resolution of their complaint has not been managed and responded to fairly and reasonably in accordance with the Customer Contract. This service is provided to Hunter Water customers.



4 KEY ELEMENTS / COMPONENTS OF THE STANDARD

The following key elements provide guidance for effective and efficient complaint management. Hunter Water has adopted these elements in line with the Australian and New Zealand Standard Guidelines for complaint handling in organisations AS/NZS 10002:2014, and expect our workforce at all levels to be committed to fair, effective and efficient complaint handling.

The key elements presented in the graphic are detailed below.



4.1 Enabling Complaints

Hunter Water adopts a proactive people focused approach to complaints providing ease of service for the complainant to lodge, receive, provide information and liaise with in relation to their complaint.

Hunter Water provides accessibility for the complainant to choose their preferred method for communication to lodge their complaint including email, online (e.g. website, webchat, social media) telephone, written communication, and face to face at Hunter Water Customer Support Centre/s.

Complainants are regularly surveyed about their experience in relation to their complaint resolution. This ensures an ongoing listening and learning practice is employed, and important customer feedback is used to prevent complaints and to develop continuous improvement opportunities.

Hunter Water strives to treat customers with respect and fairness and take all reasonable steps to ensure that people making complaints are not adversely affected because a complaint has been made by them or on their behalf.

4.2 Managing Complaints



All complaints are to be addressed and responded to in an objective, unbiased, fair and equitable manner. Information about how Hunter Water manage complaints is available publicly on our website <https://www.hunterwater.com.au/contact-us/feedback-complaints>.

Complaints that may contain information considered to be of a personal, sensitive or health related nature will be managed in accordance with Hunter Water's Privacy Management Framework.

Hunter Water has a mechanism in place within our Complaints Management System to limit customer information to organisational roles and responsibilities.

Receive

Where possible, Hunter Water will strive to resolve complaints at the first point of contact. Where unable to do so, and where complaints may require further investigation to provide a response, a complaint will be logged into the Complaints Management System as a Case, and a unique Case Identification Number will be provided for the complainant to be used for further communication.

Acknowledge

Hunter Water will promptly provide acknowledgement to complainants that their complaint has been received. We strive to acknowledge receipt of all complaints within three business days in accordance with Customer Contract requirements. Complaints are reviewed, assessed and given appropriate priority in accordance with the urgency of the issues raised.

Assess, Investigate and Resolve

Hunter Water advises complainants of the expected time frame they should expect for their complaint to be investigated and when they may be provided with a response. Hunter Water will seek to continue engagement throughout the complaint journey, providing updates (where possible), sharing information and gathering information, and providing the outcome/resolution of the complaint at the completion of the investigation process.

4.3 Managing the Parties

Hunter Water's workforce is provided with appropriate access to knowledge resources, policies, procedures, training and coaching in relation to complaint management processes and systems. Our number one priority is the safety of our workforce and our community in line with WH&S policies and standards. We foster and encourage understanding and respect between our customers and our people, acting fairly and reasonably in all our dealings with our customers.

Where a complaint involves multiple areas/people within our organisation, responsibility for communicating with the person making the complaint and/or their representative will also be coordinated. Where a complaint involves multiple organisations, we will work with the other organisation/s where possible, to ensure that communication with the person making a complaint and/or their representative is clear and coordinated.

When people behave unreasonably in their dealings with us, their conduct can significantly affect the progress and efficiency of our work. Where customer conduct may be considered to be of an aggressive, threatening or disrespectful nature, we may respectfully advise customers of their behaviour so that we may continue our interactions appropriately to progress the investigation or outcome of the complaint.



4.4 Accountability, Learning & Prevention

Hunter Water will ensure that complaints are recorded systematically so that information can be easily retrieved for reporting and analysis.

Complaint performance is continuously monitored to:

- ensure that effective and efficient responses are provided when resolving complaints
- include the use of audits, complaint satisfaction surveys and online listening tools and alerts.
- support the appropriate resolution of complaints
- implement best practice for complaint handling
- recognise and reward exemplary complaint handling by our workforce
- regularly review our complaint data for the proactive prevention of complaints and identify trends.

The implementation of the Complaints Management Standard is supported by:

- internal business performance measures for complaints
- external stakeholder performance measures for complaints
- reporting and monitoring processes
- policies, procedures, guidelines, learner resources and work instructions
- complaint escalation processes which include the role of the Electricity and Water Ombudsman of NSW (EWON) where customers are not satisfied with the outcome or management of their complaint

5 RELATED DOCUMENTS

Associated Regulations, Standards and Guidelines:

- Hunter Water Operating Licence;
- Hunter Water Customer Contract
- IPART Operating Licence - Performance Indicators;
- AS/ NZS 10002-2014 - Guidelines for Complaint Management in organisations;
- Hunter Water Privacy Management Framework





6 DOCUMENT CONTROL

Document Owner: Manager Customer Care
Required Reviewers: Group Manager Customer Experience
Document Approver: Group Manager Customer Experience
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Version	Authors Name	Details of change	Approval Date	Approved by	Next Scheduled Review
1.0	D. Lucas E. Carr	Amendments made to the role of Case Handlers regarding the use of Fact Sheets for common matters	29 Sept 15	Group Manager Customer Contact	Sept 2017
1.1	D. Lucas B Tisdell	Converted from Guideline to Internal Standard	1 Nov 16	Group Manager Customer Contact and Process	1 Nov 2018
2.0	R Cade	Update Operating Licence content and AS/NZS 10002-2014 Guidelines. Update Standard to incorporate organisational restructure outcomes and Preventative Complaint Analysis strategy.	18 Jul 2017 – March 2018	Group Manager Customer Experience	March 2020
3.0	D Lucas E Carr	Amendments to 4.2, 4.5 and Related Documents Section	25 Sept 19	Group Manager Customer Experience	25 Sept 2021
4.0	E Carr	Amended all sections to align with AS/NZS 1002:2014 Guiding Principles and support audit requirements	26 May 2021	Group Manager Customer Experience	26 May 2023

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