STANDARD
FOR HANDLING CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS

Referred to in Part 6 Section 30 Hunter Water Operating Licence

OCTOBER 2025

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DOCUMENT INFORMATION

Version history

Document review date is as per the Integrated Management System Standard (HW2013-421/22.002).

Version	Author	Changes	Approved By	Date Approved
1.0	E. Carr D. Lucas	Amendments made to the role of Case Handlers regarding the use of Fact Sheers for common matters	Group Manager Customer Contact	29/09/15
1.1	D. Lucas B. Tisdell	Converted from Guideline to Internal Standard.	Group Manager Customer Contact & Process	01/11/16
2.0	R. Cade	Update Operating Licence content and AS/NZS10002-2014 Guidelines. Update Standard to incorporate organisational restructure outcomes and Preventative Complaint Analysts strategy.	Group Manager Customer Experience	18/03/18
3.0	D. Lucas E. Carr	Amendments to 4.2, 4.5 and Related Documents Section.	Group Manager Customer Experience	25/09/19
4.0	E. Carr	Amendments to all with AS/NZS 10001:2014 Guiding Principles and support audit requirements	Group Manager Customer Experience	26/05/21
5.0	E. Carr	Amendments to sections 1 (Purpose), 3 (Definitions), 4.1 (Enabling Complaints), 4.3 (Managing the Parties), 4.4 (Accountability and Learning and Prevention), 5 (Related Docs to align with working in AS/NZS 10002:2022	Group Manager Customer Experience Executive Manager Customer Services	10/08/22
6	E. Carr C. McEntyre	Template update. Plain English review on language has been completed and updated across all sections.	Group Manager Customer Experience Strategy & Operation Executive Manager Customer Services	01/10/25

Document control

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Approved By	Executive Manager Customer Services	TRIM No	HW2015-1469/7/4.001
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1 Purpose

This Standard sets out Hunter Water's commitment to effectively managing and resolving customer complaints.

It explains how we make sure our approach follows regulatory requirements and aligns with the Australian/New Zealand Standard AS / NZS 10002 - 2022 Guidelines for Complaint Management in Organisations.

Our aim is to handle every complaint in a consistent, fair, efficient and timely way, in line with Hunter Water's Complaint and Enquiry Policy.

This document explains how we:

- Make it easy for customers to lodge a complaint and track its progress
- Acknowledge and respond to com
- Assess and investigate complaints
- Support customers and staff through the process
- Work towards fair and timely resolution
- Prioritise the safety and wellbeing of customers and staff
- Use complaints as opportunities to improve our services

2 Scope

This Standard applies to all Hunter Water staff who receive or manage customer complaints. Complaints may be about our products, services, staff (including contractors and vendors) or our processes.

It does not cover staff grievances or code of conduct matters, which are managed through separate processes.

This Standard should also be read alongside Hunter Water's other related policies, standards, as well as requirements set out by Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART), the Customer Contract and the Operating Licence.

3 The Complaints Process

3.1 Making it easy for customers to lodge a complaint and track its progress

Hunter Water takes a people focused approach to complaints. We aim to make it simple for customers to lodge a complaint, provide information and track progress.

Anyone can make a complaint through the following feedback channels:

- Phone
- Email (direct or via our general enquiries email)
- Website (general enquiry online form or complaint form)
- In person
- Mai
- Feedback in our customer surveys and systems

Where possible, we try to resolve complaints at the first point of contact. If this isn't possible, the complaint is recorded in our complaints management system, which tracks the process from start to finish. Customer data is handled in line with Hunter Water's Privacy Policy and Privacy Management Plan.

3.2 Acknowledging and responding to complaints

When a complaint is logged, we send an acknowledgement to the customers preferred contact method, within 3 business days.

This includes:

- A Complaint Case Identification (ID) Number
- When the customer can expect to hear from us next
- Whether the next update will be a resolution or an update on progress
- Key contact details to follow-up

If a complaint is made by phone or in person, the Case ID is given immediately.

3.3 Assess and investigate complaints

All complaints are assessed and investigated to understand what happened and decide what action is needed.

We consider:

- How serious, urgent or complex the complaint is
- Any risks to health and safety
- The impact on the customer
- Any reputational risks
- Risks of delaying resolution
- Whether multiple internal stakeholders or other organisations are involved

The level of investigation will depend on the circumstances of each case and any relevant statutory requirements that may apply.

3.4 Support customers and staff through the process

We aim to act fairly, respectfully, and reasonably in every complaint. For complex complaints involving multiple internal stakeholders our organisation, we coordinate communication, so customers receive clear and consistent updates.

We aim to:

- Keep customers informed at every stage
- Provide realistic timelines and explain any delays
- Set clear expectations on next steps and outcomes
- Proactively update customers on significant changes throughout the journey of the complaint, even if there's no immediate resolution.

3.5 Work towards fair and timely resolution

At the end of the investigation, we contact the customer with the outcome using the appropriate or preferred method of contact.

We will:

- Explain the decision and any actions taken (or why full details can't be shared, e.g. privacy reasons).
- Give reasons for our decision
- Outline any remedies of resolutions offered

Not all outcomes may be able to be resolved to the customers satisfaction. If a customer is not satisfied, they can request an internal review. If they still believe their complaint hasn't been handled fairly, they may contact external independent resolution from the Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW (EWON) for independent review.

3.6 Prioritise the safety and wellbeing of customers and staff

We do not tolerate aggressive, threatening, or disrespectful behaviour. If a customer's behaviour is aggressive, threatening, or repeatedly disrespectful, and it affects people's safety, wellbeing, or fairness, we may treat it as unreasonable conduct.

If behaviour is unreasonable, we may:

- Call out the behaviour and ask for respectful communication
- End a call if abuse continues
- Stop working on a complaint received through other channels if behaviour remains unacceptable

3.7 Use complaints as opportunities to keep improving our services

Complaints help us identify areas to improve. We encourage staff to suggest improvements to how complaints are managed.

We continuously monitor and learn from complaints by:

- Tracking performance and customer satisfaction
- Using surveys and online listening tools
- Reviewing complaint data to identify trends and present repeat issues
- Recognising and rewarding good complaint handling
- Encouraging innovation and improvement ideas

All opportunities are reviewed through structured continuous improvement process.

4 Definitions, Acronyms and Abbreviations

For this standard, the following terms and definitions will apply:

Term	Definition
Customer	A person who interacts or uses Hunter Water's products or services
Complaint	An expression of dissatisfaction from a customer where they feel that their expectations have not been met, and they expect redress
Complainant	Any person, organisation or their representative (including clients, consumers, service users) making the complaint
Complaint Management System	System that records the complaint information shared from and with the customer, tracks the investigation process and reports on the outcomes reached.
EWON	Energy Water Ombudsman of NSW. They are Hunter Water's elected independent external dispute resolution service for customers.
Complaint Identification Number (ID)	The unique identification number provided by Hunter Water to the customer.

5 Associated Regulations and Standards

Document ID	Document Title
Policy	Privacy
Plan	Privacy Management (Hunter Water)
Licence	Operating Licence (Hunter Water)
Indicators	IPART Operating Licence Performance Indicators