

Complaints and disputes policy

1.0 Purpose

We're committed to treating all customers with understanding, empathy and respect regardless of their circumstances. We aim to get the basics right and provide great customer service and support. This policy outlines our approach to helping customers voice their concerns and how we will resolve complaints and disputes.

We recognise that raising a complaint can be stressful, but we want to ensure you feel comfortable letting us know about any issues. If you're ever dissatisfied with any interaction with us, we encourage you to contact us so we can work together to find a solution. It is important to us that we use reasonable endeavours to resolve any complaints in good faith directly with customers or others affected by our operations. We aim to resolve your problem the first time you contact us.

This policy applies to all of our customers (except if you are a Trade Waste customer) and anyone else who is impacted by our operations.

Our Trade Waste customers can refer to the Trade Waste Customer Charter and their Trade Waste business contacts for more information.

1.1 Definitions

Complaint	A complaint is a written or verbal expression of dissatisfaction about an action, proposed action or failure to act by South East Water, its employees or contractors which requires a resolution.
Enquiry	An enquiry is a written or verbal approach by a customer which can be satisfied by the water business providing written or verbal information, advice, assistance, clarification, explanation or referral about a matter.
EWOV	EWOV means the Energy and Water Ombudsman Victoria. EWOV is a free and independent service that resolves disputes between Victorians and their energy and water companies.

1.2 How to contact us to provide your feedback

Phone	You can call us on 13 18 51
Email	You can email us at support@sew.com.au
Website	You can submit an e-form on our website
Mail	You can write to us at PO Box 2268, Seaford, VIC, 3198

To help us understand what has happened, we need some important details from you including:

- a description of the action you're dissatisfied with;
- any documentation you think is important to your complaint;
- any explanations you think are important;
- what outcome you're seeking from us; and
- if you'd like a response, how we can get in touch with you.

We understand that sometimes people prefer to remain anonymous when making a complaint. We accept and investigate anonymous complaints, provided you give us enough detail to allow us to do so. If you don't give us your contact details we won't be able to tell you the outcome.

1.3 What happens when you contact us with a complaint or enquiry

Acknowledging your concerns as quickly as possible and listening without judgement is a priority for us. If you raise an issue with us, we will acknowledge your concerns over the phone or in writing, and try our best to resolve the matter there and then.

If we're unable to resolve your issue when you first call us, or if you request a response in writing, we will get back to you with a response to your complaint or enquiry within 10 business days. Additionally, if you contact us in writing, we will respond to you within 10 business days.

Sometimes complaints and enquiries can be complex, and we might need more time to investigate your concerns. If we do, we will let you know when you can expect to hear back from us.

Complaints and enquiries may be considered complex and require some more time to investigate if they:

- include multiple issues
- require investigation or input from multiple departments or our external partners, or
- relate to property damage

We will always do our best to resolve your matter as quickly as possible, and when we do need some more time to investigate, we will let you know and keep you updated.

When we respond to you, we will make sure we provide you with:

- The outcome of your complaint or enquiry and any reasons for this outcome
- Any relevant legislation or policy that we may have based our decision on, if it's appropriate
- Information about your right to escalate the matter if you are unhappy with the complaint outcome

- Information about the Energy and Water Ombudsman (EWOV) who are a free dispute resolution service you can access on 1800 500 509.

We will also keep an accurate record of the complaint or enquiry and upon request we can provide you with your case number.

1.4 If you're not happy with our response

If you contact us with a complaint by phone and you're not satisfied with the outcome, you can request to speak to a manager for a review. Alternatively, you can ask for your complaint to be formally reviewed by our Customer Resolutions team.

If your complaint has already been reviewed by the Customer Resolutions team and you are still not satisfied, you can request for a senior staff member or manager to review the circumstances of your complaint and the outcome we have provided.

If you can't resolve the matter with us, you may contact the Energy and Water Ombudsman Victoria (EWOV) who are a free, independent industry dispute resolution body <https://www.ewov.com.au/> on 1800 500 509 or by mail to GPO Box 469D, Melbourne 3001. 1800 500 509 or by mail to GPO Box 469D, Melbourne 3001.

Depending on the type of problem you may contact Consumer Affairs Victoria <https://www.consumer.vic.gov.au/> and/or commence a claim at the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) <https://www.vcat.vic.gov.au/>.

1.5 Disputes about non-payment

If your complaint is a dispute about non-payment, we won't do any of the following to recover the amount in dispute until we have resolved your complaint:

- restrict your service
- take debt recovery action
- take legal action.

It's our priority to work with you directly until we reach a resolution, and we'll consider a complaint about non-payment resolved if we've provided you with our complaint outcome and you have not escalated your complaint internally, or to EWOV or another external dispute resolution forum within 10 business days.

If you choose to escalate your complaint to EWOV or another external dispute resolution forum, we will not consider the complaint resolved until that process has been finalised.

1.6 Payment assistance

Anyone can experience financial pressures from time to time and staying on top of household bills isn't always easy. We offer a range of support options to help you manage these costs.

For more information about the support we can provide, please refer to our [Customer Support policy](#).

1.7 Domestic and family violence

Family violence impacts all areas of our community. We recognise the role we can play in providing account solutions and/or facilitating access to support services for customers that doesn't limit their access to an essential service.

Our [Domestic and Family Violence policy](#) details the options, initiatives and support we can offer you if you're experiencing family violence.

2.0 Privacy

Our customers count on us to get the basics right, always; and that includes protecting your privacy. We recognise the trust placed in us when you provide us with personal information about your circumstances.

We'll only ever ask you what we need to know to help us understand what has happened. We use your information to investigate the matter and respond to you. We may also analyse the information you have provided for the purpose of improving the services that relate to your complaint or enquiry.

We'll handle any personal information you provide in line with the Information Privacy Principles under the *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014* (Vic). Refer to our [Privacy charter](#) for more details.

3.0 Accessibility

We understand that you may need help when submitting a complaint and interacting with us.

If you need assistance to communicate with us:

- If you would like to communicate in a language other than English, you can access free interpreting services by contacting the [National Translating and Interpreting Service \(TIS\)](#) on [1800 131 450](#).
- If you are deaf, hard of hearing or have a speech impairment, the [National Relay Service](#) provides free assistance
- If you need an Auslan interpreter, visit [National Auslan Interpreter Booking and Payment System](#)

If you contact us we can assist in connecting you with these services.

You may nominate a representative or support person to submit a complaint or communicate with us on your behalf. To protect your privacy, we'll ask for your representative or support person's name, contact details and evidence of authorisation before we speak with them.

4.0 Related policies

BS 2485 Customer Charter [Customer Charter | South East Water](#)

MC 1783 Trade Waste Customer Charter [Trade Waste Customer Charter | South East Water](#)

BS 1055 Privacy Charter [Privacy charter | South East Water](#)

BS 2144 Customer Support Policy [Customer Support Policy | South East Water](#)

BS 2792 Domestic and Family Violence Policy [Domestic and Family Violence policy | South East Water](#)

5.0 Legislative Compliance

Water Industry Standard – Urban Customer Service
Water Act 1989
Water Industry Act 1994

6.0 Related Documents

Not applicable

7.0 Approval

Approved by: Executive
Approved on: 26/07/2024
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Implementation: Group Manager, Customer Solutions
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