

# **Interim Standards of Customer Service**

**Ben Lomond Water**

**July 2009**



## **Who is Ben Lomond Water?**

Ben Lomond Water was formed when the state government established the organisation as one of three new water corporations under the *Water and Sewerage Corporations Act 2008*. It is owned by the eight northern Tasmanian councils:

- Break O'Day Council
- Dorset Council
- George Town Council
- Launceston City Council
- Meander Valley Council
- Northern Midlands Council
- Flinders Council
- West Tamar Council

Commencing on 1 July 2009, water and wastewater assets and liabilities, activities and employees will be transferred to Ben Lomond Water by the owner councils. All proceeds from any profits, income tax equivalents and guarantee fees generated by Ben Lomond Water are to be distributed to the councils.

Ben Lomond Water will deliver water and wastewater services including:

- Sourcing raw water from catchment areas;
- Treating and monitoring water quality;
- Storing drinking water in dams and reservoirs ;
- Delivering drinking water to homes and businesses;
- Collecting wastewater (used water and sewage that goes down sinks, toilets and outside drains);
- Treating and discharging wastewater;
- Managing and maintaining assets;
- Connecting customers to water and sewerage services; and
- Providing emergency water and sewerage solutions.

Ben Lomond Water and Sewerage Service area

# Ben Lomond Water Infrastructure

**LEGEND**

- Bore
- ▲ Water only
- ✕ Sewerage only
- Within 25 miles. Traveling time of coloured city/town
- Within 50 miles. Traveling time of coloured city/town

Note: coloured circles are possible locations for depots.



## **How to contact Ben Lomond Water**

Accounts and Enquiries: 13MYWATER or 13 6992

24-hour Emergency Service: 13MYWATER or 13 6992

Office Address: 36-42 Charles Street  
**LAUNCESTON TAS 7250**

Postal Address: PO Box 745  
**LAUNCESTON TAS 7250**

Fax: (03) 6336 2567

Email: [enquiries@blwater.com.au](mailto:enquiries@blwater.com.au)

Internet: [www.benlomondwater.com.au](http://www.benlomondwater.com.au)

## **What are the Interim Standards of Customer Service?**

The *Interim Standards of Customer Service* have been prepared to outline the commitments, responsibilities and standards of service that Ben Lomond Water will provide to its customers.

It sets out our obligations to customers as outlined by the *Water and Sewerage Industry Act 2008 Interim Price Order* clause 10 "Customer Service Procedures and Interim Standards of Customer Service".

The initiatives outlined are our guarantee that we will work to understand your needs and meet your expectations.

The "How to contact us" information is provided to ensure that you are able to contact us with your concerns, including water quality issues, pipe bursts and leakages, sewer blockages in our systems, location of pipes and sewers, general enquiries and feedback.

We have also provided information about ways we can assist you to access support and entitlements such as concessions or assistance during periods of financial difficulty.

We aim to make the transition to the new water business as seamless as possible for customers.

## **When are the standards effective from?**

The *Interim Standards of Customer Service* became effective from 1 July 2009 and will stay in place until the Customer Service Code for the water industry comes into effect and requires alternative arrangements.

## **Getting connected**

Where, immediately prior to 1 July 2009, a customer of a council or bulk water authority was connected to water or wastewater infrastructure that, from 1 July 2009, will be owned by Ben Lomond Water, we will continue to provide that water or wastewater service, unless varied by a customer contract.

## **New connections, relocations and adjustments**

For a new connection to one of our services, please contact our customer service team. They will provide you with the appropriate forms and any assistance you need to complete your form.

They will also advise you on the applicable connection charges and any special requirements under the *Water and Sewerage Industry Act 2008*. (Please note connection charges may vary according to municipal area.)

Upon receipt of the applicable connection fee and completed forms we will assess your application and provide a written response within 10 working days.

Extensions to the water or wastewater reticulation system will be in accordance with the existing local council policy as it applied immediately prior to 1 July 2009.

- Water supply services will be provided only where the property is currently within a serviced area and where the property can be effectively serviced from the existing system. In general, this means within 30 meters, by the shortest practicable route, to any main or other water supply owned by Ben Lomond Water; and the usual pressure of water within the serviced area can be consistently provided to the newly connected property.
- Please note: a customer may be required to connect to Ben Lomond Water's wastewater services if they are within 30 metres of, and capable of being drained into, a common sewer of the system within the serviced area. Such connections are made at the customer's expense.

Relocation of your current service and adjustment to the size of an existing service will require approval by Ben Lomond Water. Please contact the customer service team for more information. Charges may apply.

## **Limits on wastewater re-use services**

Wastewater re-use services will be provided to customers on the basis of need and system capability. The re-use service standards are the subject of a separate customer code.

## Help if you are experiencing payment difficulties

### Residential Hardship Policy

Ben Lomond Water's *Residential Hardship Policy* affirms our commitment to helping customers who have the intent, but not the capacity to make payments in accordance with the terms outlined on water and wastewater accounts.

This policy is supported by a *Customer Assistance Program* providing a range of payment and assistance options so customers may stay connected to their water and wastewater services. This includes:

- Payment options;
- Concessions and support for customers with special needs;
- Water conservation advice to lower water accounts; and
- A referral service so that customers may access further help.

### Payment options

- Flexible Payment Options - An agreed, affordable payment plan worked out in conjunction with the customer service team allows customers to spread out payment of the water account over a 12-month period to suit individual needs;
- Installment plans - Customers may negotiate to pay an account by affordable installments. Options include Centrepay or a direct debit arrangement from a bank account that allows convenient payment on an account in full or by installments;
- Payment extension - Customers may apply for a payment extension of an agreed amount of time before the payment-in-full falls due;
- Deferment – Deferment of the due date for account payment is an option available when a customer has a short-term financial problem, that may be resolved in the near future but the customer is considered to be in necessitous circumstances e.g. where the customer is unemployed but will be returning to the workforce shortly;
- Waivers and incentives – a waiver may be made in special cases. Any relief through waiving tariffs and charges either in full or in part, when a household is suffering financial hardship, must be in the interest of the reasonable financial management of the household and to enable the household to meet the Corporation's charges in the future. Waivers of arrears may be applied as:
  - A single amount usually a one-off waiver, or
  - As an incentive in smaller amounts to match payment/s made by the customer e.g. if a payment arrangement is in place and five installment payments are received by the agreed due dates then the amount of one installment will be waived from the outstanding amount;
- Reductions – a reduction within financial delegation limits may be made in certain circumstances. A reduction is a one-off situation for a defined period; and
- High unexpected volume charges due to hard to detect leaks – where a high unexpected volume charge is the result of a bona fide hard to detect leak or occasions of civil emergency, a waiver of a portion of the variable charge may be made in accordance with the provisions within the Corporation's financial delegation limits.

## **Concessions**

The proposed, new concessions legislation, part of the water and sewerage reforms to provide guaranteed support to low income customers, has not been passed by Government at this time. Ben Lomond Water is preparing procedures and systems to ensure that it is able to deliver concessions to eligible customers when the legislative change occurs.

### **Supporting customers with special needs**

We will honor existing reductions in water usage charges for customers using home dialysis machines and for other approved medical purposes.

For new customers requiring this level of support, the amount of the reduction will be determined on a case by case basis under the following regime:

- An initial notification made by Department of Health and Human Services identifying the likely volume of water to be used by the treatment.
- In subsequent years, you will need to provide written advice confirming that the treatment is still ongoing under the same basis.
- The amount of the reduction is not to result in a credit account if the consumption remains under the initial allocation.

Please note that any reduction in water usage charge applies from the day on which the Department of Health and Human Services advises that there are special treatment considerations required and is applied in a pro-rata manner for the current billing period. It cannot be provided prior to 1 July 2009.

### **Water conservation advice**

Ben Lomond Water is able to provide you with advice on ways to save water – free advice to help customers achieve a more water efficient home and garden so they may achieve a saving on their account.

Water audits conducted on site, for assisting in your payment difficulties, are also available on request free of charge.

### **Referral Assistance**

Access to further help includes:

- Ben Lomond Water can provide customers with a confidential and independent financial counselling service if needed at no cost; and
- Access to a free interpreter service is also available.

### **Promotion of the *Residential Hardship Policy* and the *Customer Assistance Program***

To ensure you are aware of the *Residential Hardship Policy* and how to access the *Customer Assistance Program*, details of the policy and contact details will appear on all accounts, reminders and final notices.

It will be a regular feature in *our* newsletters to customers, appear on our website [www.benlomondwater.com.au](http://www.benlomondwater.com.au) and a brochure promoting the *Customer Assistance Program* will be provided to all new customers as part of a new customer pack.

Please do not hesitate to contact our customer service team on 13MYWATER or 13 6992 for a copy of the *Residential Hardship Policy* and information on our *Customer Assistance Program*.

## **Enquiries, Complaints or Service Difficulty**

Our friendly customer service team aims to offer a one-stop approach to providing advice, information or addressing a concern such as a service difficulty. You may contact us in a number of ways:

Accounts and Enquiries:	13MYWATER or 13 6992
24-hour Emergency Service:	13MYWATER or 13 6992
Office Address:	36-42 Charles Street <b>LAUNCESTON TAS 7250</b>
Postal Address:	PO Box 745 <b>LAUNCESTON TAS 7250</b>
Fax:	(03) 6336 2567
Email:	enquiries@blwater.com.au
Internet:	www.benlomondwater.com.au

As well as being knowledgeable about customer related matters such as assisting in arranging connections, accounts, tariffs and charges and payment options, our customer service team is the link between you and any other member of the Ben Lomond team who may be involved in fixing a service issue such as a leaking water main. Please do not hesitate to contact us.

## **Feedback and Complaints**

Ben Lomond Water is serious about delivering high quality customer service to you. As such, we welcome feedback including complaints. Your feedback is essential. We will use it to review our practices or policies, improve our performance or explain things more clearly in the future.

The customer service team is committed to resolving complaints directly with you and to reach a fair and reasonable resolution in a timely manner. We will acknowledge your complaint within two (2) business days. We aim to resolve your complaint within ten (10) business days.

In the case of a complex enquiry or complaint, where we recognise we may need to take a little longer to investigate your concern, we will provide an initial response including the proposed date for responding to the substance of the query.

All responses will outline the details of the complaint, our proposed actions, timelines and reasons for the decision made, including any details of the legislative or policy basis for the decision (as appropriate).

If you are not satisfied with the way your complaint has been handled and you would like us to review our decision, we will escalate this matter to a senior manager. We will also provide you with information about external dispute resolution forums such as the Ombudsman Tasmania.

Please rest assured that if your complaint involves money you owe to Ben Lomond Water, we will not seek payment of that amount until the dispute has been resolved.

**How will we know that you consider the complaint resolved?**

We will consider a dispute resolved if you do not contact us for a further review or lodge a claim with an external dispute resolution forum within ten (10) working days of us providing you with our decision.

Please do not hesitate to contact our customer service team on 13MYWATER or 13 6992 for a copy of the customer *Complaints Policy*.

## Reliability of Services

We will develop and implement plans, systems and processes to manage our assets to provide you with reliable services that are no less in standard than the services provided before 1 July 2009.

	Customer Charter				Response Times		
	Defined service standards	Published Charter	Web	Copy held	Priority based	Response time Water	Response time Sewer
Launceston	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	✓	✓	✓	✓	As determined by Works Manager and Works Staff	As determined by Works Manager and Works Staff
Dorset	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	✓	✓	✓	✓	As determined by Works Manager and Works Staff	As determined by Works Manager and Works Staff
Break O'Day	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	✓	✓	✓	✓	As determined by Works Manager and Works Staff	As determined by Works Manager and Works Staff
Northern Midlands	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	✓	✓	✓	✓	As determined by Works Manager and Works Staff	As determined by Works Manager and Works Staff
Meander Valley	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	✓	✓	✓	✓	As determined by Works Manager and Works Staff	As determined by Works Manager and Works Staff
Flinders Island	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	✓	✓	✓	✓	As determined by Works Manager and Works Staff	As determined by Works Manager and Works Staff
West Tamar	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	✓	✓	✓	✓	As determined by Works Manager and Works Staff	As determined by Works Manager and Works Staff
George Town	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	✓	✓	✓	✓	As determined by Works Manager and Works Staff	As determined by Works Manager and Works Staff

## Interim Customer Service Standards

We will comply with the following interim service standards as a demonstration of our commitment to quality customer service.

<b>WATER</b>		
<b>Service Standard</b>	<b>Service Standard – Metropolitan 30 Minutes Travel Time</b>	<b>Service Standard – Regional/Rural 60 Minutes Travel Time</b>
Water customers	Increasing trend	
Number of systems with boiled water notices	6	11
Number of systems with unknown compliance	0	0
Number of compliant fluoride systems	13	
Water main breaks per 100km	Create baseline	Create baseline
Unplanned water supply interruptions restored within 5 hours	Create baseline	Create baseline
Planned water supply interruptions restored within 5 hours	Create baseline	Create baseline
Average unplanned customer minutes off water supply	Create baseline	Create baseline
Average planned customer minutes off water supply	Create baseline	Create baseline
Average frequency of unplanned water supply interruptions	Create baseline	Create baseline
Average frequency of planned water supply interruptions	Create baseline	Create baseline
Average duration of unplanned water supply interruptions	240min	300min
Average duration of planned water supply interruptions	Create baseline	Create baseline
Numbers of customers experiencing at least 1 unplanned interruption	Create baseline	Create baseline
Unaccounted for water	Create baseline	Create baseline
Average time to attend Priority 1 bursts and leaks from notification	30min	60min
Average time to attend Priority 2 bursts and leaks from notification	75min	100min
Average time to attend Priority 3 bursts and leaks from notification	300min	330min

<b>WASTEWATER</b>		
<b>Service Standard</b>	<b>Service Standard – Metropolitan 30 Minutes Travel Time</b>	<b>Service Standard – Regional/Rural 60 Minutes Travel Time</b>
Wastewater customers	Increasing trend	
Number of level 2 wastewater treatment plants achieving discharge limits	Increasing trend	
Customers receiving more than 3 sewer blockages in the year	Create baseline	Create baseline
Sewer blockages per 100km	Create baseline	Create baseline
Average time to attend sewer spills & blockages from notification	30min	45min
Average time to rectify a sewer blockage in our pipe	240min	255min
Hours for containment of sewer spills	Create baseline	Create baseline
Spills contained within 5 hours	90%	90%

<b>CUSTOMER SERVICE</b>		
<b>Service Standard</b>	<b>Service Standard – Metropolitan 30 Minutes Travel Time</b>	<b>Service Standard – Regional/Rural 60 Minutes Travel Time</b>
Customer satisfaction	Create baseline	
Complaints to Ombudsman Tasmania (per 1,000 customers)	0.5 pa	
Telephone call answered within 30 seconds (per cent)	90%	
No. of Customers Connections approved within 10 working days.	90%	90%

<b>OTHER</b>		
<b>Service Standard</b>		
Capital works expenditure (2009-10)	\$29 million	
CO2 emissions	Create baseline	
Employee satisfaction	Create baseline	

In addition we will:

- Minimise the impact of unplanned interruptions to services by restoring services as soon as possible and having frontline personnel who will provide information on the anticipated time remaining to restore supply when asked; and
- Provide customers who require access to emergency supplies of drinking water in the event of an unplanned interruption to water services with a temporary supply.