



Code of Practice and Procedure on Debt and Disconnection

Hunter Water aims to prevent customers accruing debt on their water bills and will provide assistance to customers in financial hardship.



The aim of this procedure is to prevent customers from accruing debts in relation to billed charges for water and wastewater. It explains Hunter Water and the customer's obligations and responsibilities in ensuring timely payment of the bill.

Hunter Water understands that some customers may experience financial difficulty from time to time which affects their capacity to pay their bill. Hunter Water's Procedure for Payment Difficulties is available for these customers.

What is Hunter Water's Responsibility in Debt Recovery?

Hunter Water complies with requirements as set out in the Customer Contract for debt recovery and hardship. This means:

- Treating customers fairly and in an equitable manner
- Providing information to customers in regards to debt recovery requirements
- Setting aside debts that are in dispute, including holding interest penalties for the duration of the investigation and notification of the outcome to the customer, and
- Providing information to the customer regarding the external dispute mechanism (The Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW).

What is the Customer's Responsibility in Paying their Bill?

The registered property owner is solely responsible for payment of the accounts in accordance with Hunter Water's Customer Contract. All customers are expected to pay their account within 21 days of date of issue. If a customer fails to pay the account or negotiate alternative payment arrangements,

Hunter Water will commence action to pursue the debt.

It is the responsibility of customers experiencing financial difficulties to notify Hunter Water of their circumstances so that appropriate assistance can be provided.

The customer is responsible to notify Hunter Water of any changes to their contact details including postal address, phone contacts and email (where relevant) for accurate billing of the account.

Hunter Water does not negotiate credit terms with tenants or non-owners regarding payment of the account. Any recovery action taken will be taken against the registered owner of the property.

What is the Process for Tenants?

Hunter Water does not recognise tenants as a customer. Hunter Water expects that the owner or managing agent will pay the account within the payment terms and manage their own arrangements with the tenant.

In circumstances where a tenant is unable to contact an owner or management agent to pay an account and would be adversely affected by the debt recovery action (i.e. restriction), the tenant may under Section 41 of the Hunter Water Act pay the account and legally deduct the amount from their rent payable to the owner.



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What Happens if a Customer does not Pay the Bill by the Due Date?

Hunter Water may take a series of actions to recover the debt where payment of the account by the due date has not occurred, or no alternative payment arrangement has been made by the customer. The debt collection process is based on Hunter Water's Customer Contract.

Interest charges are applied to overdue accounts in line with Hunter Water's Customer Contract. Interest may be held for customers in financial hardship as assessed under the Account Assistance Program.

What are Hunter Water's Debt Recovery Actions?

Hunter Water will action a series of steps as part of the debt recovery process based on the customer's past payment history. Recovery actions may include referral to a debt recovery agency, legal action, restriction and/or disconnection of your water supply. Fees and charges will apply. For more information please consult the Customer Contract (clause 6).

What happens if the Customer Disputes the Account?

If a customer makes a formal complaint in regards to their account being incorrect, Hunter Water will investigate the matter in line with corporate policies. The amount in dispute will be set aside without interest for the duration of the investigation. The customer is required to pay any remaining charges in full as per the standard payment terms.

Once the investigation is completed the customer will be notified of the outcome and requested to pay any outstanding balance within 14 days. At the end of the 14 days, if a debt is still outstanding then further debt recovery steps including interest accrual will commence.

What Happens if the Customer Cannot Pay their Bill?

A residential customer who faces difficulty in paying their account should contact Hunter Water immediately. Hunter Water provides a service for residential customers in genuine financial hardship as per the Procedure for Payment Difficulties.

For more information contact Hunter Water

Telephone: 1300 657 657
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Website: www.hunterwater.com.au
Translator services: 131 450