

**SA WATER CORPORATION**

**CUSTOMER COUNCIL**

**CHARTER**



## **The Role of the Corporate Customer Council**

SA Water's Customer Council will provide a mechanism for SA Water to obtain the views of customers about the services it provides, to better understand the needs of its customers and consumers while also serving as a useful mechanism for the release of information from the Corporation.

Its primary role may be best described as advice, feedback and assessment. The Customer Council is intended to be an advisory body without management responsibility.

*Other roles include:*

- providing SA Water with input on the types of services and high quality advice on the interests of customers and consumers of SA Water.
- providing input to the standards of delivery of services which are acceptable to customers.
- providing advice on the Customer Contract and other such key issues related to SA Water's planning and operations.
- reviewing the development of policies that affect SA Water's consumers and customers.
- assessing ongoing performance.
- being proactive in assisting in the development of policies with SA Water introducing protocols for Customer Council involvement at an early stage of policy development.

## **Operation of the Corporate Customer Council meetings**

Council members will receive an agenda and supporting material for the meeting ten working days prior to each meeting. The agenda must list at least two major issues for discussion, allow question time for members at the beginning of the meeting, and update decisions made from the previous meeting.

Each meeting will be scheduled for approximately 3 hours.

Minutes will be recorded and issued to members within 3 weeks of the conclusion of each meeting. Follow up of actions will be carried out by SA Water and an update reported to the next meeting.

Members are encouraged to participate in all debates and offer suggestions to SA Water on issues such as the Customer Contract and any other key issue pertaining to SA Water's planning and operations.

The Chairperson will, at the request of the Council, alter the agenda to incorporate any key issue that the Council proclaims needs urgent or immediate discussion. Alternatively, the Chairperson may request the Council to add late matter items to the agenda.

## **Strategies**

*Strategies for the Customer Council include:*

- Assisting in the development of quality assurance procedures
- Identification of appropriate performance indicators
- Ongoing performance assessment
- Research about the basic needs of local communities
- Providing input to policy development

## **Agenda items for discussion and analysis**

The agenda for each customer Council will allow question time at the beginning of the meeting. Questions which cannot be immediately responded to will be communicated to the member by SA Water as soon as possible.

Issues for discussion at Corporate Customer Council meetings may be identified by either:

- being nominated by SA Water through the Chairperson, or
- being nominated by an individual member of the Council, or
- being requested by the Council from a previous Council meeting

Where individual members request an item on the agenda, the request must be in writing to the Chairperson or his/her nominee or requested at a Council meeting. In either method, at least one month's notice is necessary before the next Council meeting.

To allow for ample discussion time, unless otherwise agreed to by the Council, only two major issues should be placed on each meeting agenda. Presentation of each issue should allow time for questions and discussion within allotted time.

## **Recurring issues**

The Customer Council will, on a regular basis, review recurring issues they wish to discuss. A recurring issue is deemed to be an issue, which the Customer Council has determined, needs to be reviewed on a regular basis. These items will be reported on by SA Water and distributed to members "out-of-session".

Members may comment or discuss the issue during the following meeting. Recurring issues will be listed on the agenda for discussion and the Council will decide if they wish to discuss each or any item at the following meeting.

## **Membership and selection criteria**

Membership of Customer Councils is to include representatives from various segments of the community, which reflect a broad range of SA Water's customers. A total of twelve members are to provide representation from the following types of organisations:

- Community groups
- Consumer and business organisations
- Environment groups
- Industry associations
- Senior citizen and superannuants groups
- Welfare and low income groups
- Local government

Non metropolitan based representation on the Council is required to ensure appropriate representation of SA Water's customers.

The appointment to the Council is for the organisation chosen by SA Water to represent one of the various segments listed above. SA Water reserves the right to alter the representation at the conclusion of the set term. It is the prerogative of the member organisation to nominate a representative to the Council.

Appointment of members to the Customer Council is at the discretion of the Chief Executive of SA Water or his/her nominee.

On an annual basis, SA Water will consult with the organisations represented on the Customer Council requesting confirmation of the continuation of their existing representative. If an alternative representative is recommended by the organisation, the length of appointment will be as arranged for the replaced representative.

### **Length of appointment**

SA Water will determine the organisation that will represent the various segments of the community and reserves the right to alter the representation at the conclusion of the set term. Members of the Customer Council are the representatives for those selected organisations. The terms of appointment for representative members of the Customer Council will comply

The term of a member of a Customer Council will be for two years, and able to accept appointment for a further two years.

Previous representative members may be considered for re-appointment to further terms if their organisation desires.

If a member's place becomes vacant before the expiration of their term, SA Water may appoint a suitable replacement for the remainder of that member's term.

## **Attendance**

Council members should arrange alternative representation whenever they are unavailable for a meeting. The alternative representative should be recommended and supported by the organisation they represent. The alternative will have full member status for that meeting and be reimbursed for attendance at that meeting.

## **Frequency of meetings**

The Customer Council will meet for a minimum of four meetings annually for approximately three hours at SA Water's Head Office or a venue to be determined in advance of the next meeting. The Council will determine meeting dates at least three meetings in advance.

The Council may at any time request a change to the arrangements that will be considered by SA Water. Special meetings or workshops can be called by either SA Water or by at least three Council members (see Special Meetings).

## **Conflict of Interest by Council members**

As the aim of the Council is to represent a diversity of viewpoints and customer concerns, it is not a requirement that consensus be reached among Council members on issues of discussion. Given the diversity of issues addressed at meetings, Council members may need to consider a wider customer perspective rather than be limited to the views of the organisation that the Council member represents.

If a member of the Council believes they may have a conflict of interest in relation to a particular issue or item of discussion, the Council member should make this position clear to the Chairperson and the other Council members. This Council member will not be excluded from discussion on this issue.

## **Termination of membership**

Termination of members will be at the expiry of the term. Membership of the Council may be terminated prior to the expiry of the term at the discretion of the chairperson or after 3 consecutive absences from meetings without an apology being tendered.

Whenever the membership of the Customer Council is increased or diminished, SA Water must make provision for the vacation of places of members it considers necessary to ensure consistency of representation.

## **Open Council meetings**

The Customer Council may give consideration, from time to time, to having open Council meetings. Consideration will need to be given to the venue for such

meetings, as current venues normally do not allow for unrestricted access to SA Water's premises.

### **Confidentiality**

From time to time, Customer Council members may be given confidential material. These materials are shown in good faith and Council members will ensure that confidentiality is strictly maintained. Documents that are confidential will be marked accordingly.

### **Reimbursement of Expenses**

Membership of the Customer Council is intended to be voluntary, however members should be reimbursed for out-of-pocket expenses and will be paid a sitting fee of \$140.00 for each meeting attended. Special meetings and workshops are included, with members receiving reimbursement at the same rate as for scheduled meetings.

Reimbursement can be paid direct to the Council member or to the organisation they represent. Members must nominate the preference of payment to SA Water.

### **Member Information**

Members who require information etc. from SA Water out-of-session should contact the Council Executive Support Officer in the first instance for assistance. If the information required is of a complex nature, a written response will be submitted to the member at the earliest possible time.

Members are to be provided with issues of SA Water publications on a regular basis.

### **Funding and resourcing of the Council**

The Corporate Customer Council, a voluntary body without management responsibility, has a vital and fundamental role in providing a direct link between SA Water and the community.

The Council will be fully resourced by SA Water, providing administrative support, meeting venue and arrangements, additional tours when requested or recommended and any other support needed to ensure efficient and effective use of the Council members' expertise. Other support required from time to time will be assessed by SA Water.

### **Feedback to Council members**

SA Water staff are aware of the importance of giving Council members clear feedback on the way the Council suggestions assisted to contribute to the decision making process.

SA Water should endeavour to give written feedback to Council explaining how each suggestion or idea was factored into the decision making process.

### **Feedback from the Corporate Customer Council to the wider community**

Council members are encouraged to discuss issues with the wider community and particularly to that section of the community whom they represent. SA Water will provide two copies of all papers distributed to members to enable distribution to the community.

### **Chairperson and Executive support**

The Chairperson will chair meetings of the Corporate Customer Council. Administrative support will be provided to the Chairperson by SA Water.

### **Special Meetings**

Should a member seek to have an additional meeting of the Customer Council the support of three of the attending members will be required. The request should be tendered during a meeting or in writing to the Chairperson stating the issue to be discussed and the reason for requesting a special meeting.

At least one-month notice is required for an intended meeting unless otherwise agreed to by the Chairperson. Reimbursement of expenses will apply to special meetings along with all administrative matters being managed by SA Water.

### **Site Visits**

If so desired, members of the Customer Council may request visits to various SA Water sites including sewerage treatment plants, water filtration plants, reservoirs etc. Generally, site inspections for Council members will be for group inspections, however, inspections for individual members can be arranged on request. Contact should be made through the Executive Support Officer to the Customer Council.

It is intended that at least one meeting per annum will be held at a SA Water site other than its Head Office.

### **Review of the Charter**

A formal review of the Charter will be carried out every two years or as deemed necessary. The document is also open to review and improvement at other times at the request of either members of the Corporate Customer Council or SA Water.