



# Customer Family Violence Policy Statement

## Purpose

This policy outlines Aqwest Bunbury Water Corporation's approach to addressing family violence, as required by the *Water Services Code of Practice (Family Violence) 2020*.

## Policy Statement

This policy applies to customers of Aqwest who have been, or are being, affected by family violence.

## Legislation

The *Water Services Code of Practice (Family Violence) 2020* requires water service providers to have and implement a family violence policy and stipulates the minimum requirements that the policy must address.

This policy meets these requirements and has been informed by the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation's Guidance for water service providers in addressing family violence.

## Context

Family violence is the intentional and systematic use of violence and abuse to control, coerce and create fear. It can be physical, emotional/ psychological, sexual, financial, spiritual or social in nature. Further information on what is considered family violence is available [here](#).

Perpetrators of family violence can use control over their victims as a form of economic abuse, such as incurring debt in the victim's name, refusing to contribute to costs, refusing to pay bills or having the service restricted when they leave the family home.

Victims of family violence may suffer significant psychological and emotional impacts while attempting to resolve debts at the same time as ensuring their personal safety. In addition, perpetrators may gain access to the victims' confidential information such as their whereabouts, for example, through their knowledge of the personal details of the victim.

## Our Role in Addressing Family Violence

At Aqwest, we have zero tolerance for family violence and will do everything we can (within our control) to support customers affected by family violence.

We have implemented systems and staff training so that customers who disclose to us that they have been, or are being affected by family violence:

- Are heard and need only make this disclosure once. To ensure this, we add a staff alert to the customer account.
- Have confidential and respectful interactions with our staff.
- Can be certain their personal information is kept confidential and safe. We add extra privacy settings on the customers contact details so only authorised personnel can access them.
- Are provided with information about financial support and assistance available, including specialised support networks.
- Are provided with time and information to help them consider their options and make informed decisions.
- Can enter into Aqwest's Financial Hardship program and be supported by our family violence process.

## Support Available

Following the customer disclosure, Aqwest will advise customers experiencing family violence of external support networks and resources including:

Organisation	Phone	Freecall	Website
National Sexual Assault Domestic Family Violence Counselling services	1800respect	1800 737 732	<a href="#">Home   1800RESPECT</a>
Men's Domestic Violence Helpline	(08) 9223 1199	1800 000 599	<a href="#">Department for Child Protection - Western Australia - Men's Domestic Violence Helpline (dcp.wa.gov.au)</a>
Women's Domestic Violence Helpline	(08) 9223 1188	1800 007 339	<a href="#">Department for Child Protection - Western Australia - Women's Domestic Violence Helpline (dcp.wa.gov.au)</a>
Crisis Care		1800 199 008	<a href="#">Department for Child Protection - Western Australia - Crisis Care (dcp.wa.gov.au)</a>

## Support Available (Cont.)

Organisation	Phone	Freecall	Website
MensLine Australia		1300 789 978	<a href="#">Free help, support, referrals &amp; counselling: Contact MensLine Australia</a>
Sexual Assault Resource Centre	(08) 6458 1828	1800 199 888	<a href="#">Sexual Assault Resource Centre (SARC) (health.wa.gov.au)</a>
South West Refuge	(08) 9791 2894		<a href="#">South West Refuge Inc (swrefuge.com.au)</a>
Waratah	(08) 9791 2884	1800 017 303	<a href="#">Home - Waratah</a>

Up-to-date information about support networks and resources from the [Department of Communities' website](#).

## Useful Information

### ***Payment difficulties and financial hardship***

We will discuss with you if your situation has resulted in payment difficulties or financial hardship. If you are having difficulties paying a bill, Aqwest can arrange a payment plan to help you catch up. You will also be eligible for consideration under our Financial Hardship Policy.

Financial hardship applies if paying your water bill will affect your ability to meet your basic living needs – in short, if you have the intention but not the financial capacity to pay.

Residential tenants who have agreed with the landowner to receive a water bill are also covered by the policy.

If you are a commercial customer, we encourage you to still talk to us. We are committed to working with you to find an appropriate payment arrangement that works for both you and us.

### ***Redirection of Water Bill***

We will advise you of your right to have your water bill redirected to another person free of charge if you are absent or ill.

### ***Payment Options***

You may pay your water bill by BPAY, BPOINT, Centrepay, Direct Debit, at Australia Post, or in person. Centrepay is only available to customers who receive Centrelink payments.

Paying by Direct Debit or Centrepay may help you manage your bills more easily, as your bills will be paid through regular deductions.

For more information on your payment options, please contact us or visit our website.

### **Concessions and Other Financial Relief and Assistance**

You may be eligible for Pensioner and Senior Concession(s).

Financial relief (HUGS -Hardship Utilities Grant Scheme), if you are an owner/occupier, we may assess you for a Hardship Utilities Grant.

### **Managing debts to Aqwest**

Aqwest will not commence or continue proceedings to recover debt if you are:

- Complying with a payment plan.
- We are assessing whether or not you are experiencing payment difficulties or financial hardship.
- We are resolving a complaint from you about a water service charge related to the debt.

## **Complaints Handling**

If you have a complaint, please contact us first. Our contact details are included below.

Our complaints handling process is available at [www.aqwest.com.au](http://www.aqwest.com.au)

If you are not satisfied with the way we handle your complaint, you may refer your complaint to the Energy and Water Ombudsman. The Energy and Water Ombudsman will investigate your complaint and may mediate the dispute between you and us.

The Energy and Water Ombudsman's contact details are:

Energy and Water Ombudsman WA

Phone: 9220 7588

Freecall: 1800 754 004

Email: [energyandwater@ombudsman.wa.gov.au](mailto:energyandwater@ombudsman.wa.gov.au)

Website: [www.ombudsman.wa.gov.au](http://www.ombudsman.wa.gov.au)

## **Approval and Review**

Our policy was approved by the Department of Water & Environmental Regulation (DWER) in accordance with the *Water Services Code of Practice (Family Violence) 2020*. We will review our policy at least every five years to ensure it remains up-to-date and relevant.

## **Our Contact Details**

You can contact us at:

2 Hayes Street, Bunbury, WA, 6230

Our normal business hours are 9:00am to 4:00pm, Monday to Friday.

Tel: (08) 9780 9500 / TTY: 133 677 / TIS: 131 450

Web: <http://www.aqwest.com.au>

Email: [accounts@aqwest.com.au](mailto:accounts@aqwest.com.au)