

## 1 Background

In November 2016, the Victorian Government, in response to the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Family Violence, released its updated water policy. The updated government water policy required all water businesses to continue to develop “good practice in dealing with hardship, including actions to accommodate situations where domestic violence has created financial insecurity”.

The Essential Services Commission (ESC) subsequently amended the water industry’s “Customer Service Code” on 10 April 2017, to enshrine new obligations for water businesses to assist customers experiencing family violence.

South Gippsland Water (SGW) recognises family violence as a serious and widespread issue that poses substantial risk to the health and wellbeing of local communities. As an essential service provider, South Gippsland Water actively endorses measures to support customers and employees experiencing family violence, with their safety being paramount.

## 2 Purpose

South Gippsland Water recognises its responsibility and role in working together with the community to support those experiencing family violence, promote the health and safety of employees experiencing family violence to be able to continue to participate in the workplace, and to create a supportive work environment where employees and customers are comfortable in requesting assistance for family violence related concerns and issues.

This policy ensures the Corporation fulfils its roles and responsibilities to its customers and employees.

## 3 Definitions

For the purpose of this policy only, the following shall mean:

### Family Violence:

- a) Behaviour by a person towards a family member of that person if that behaviour:
  - i. is physically or sexually abusive; or
  - ii. is emotionally or psychologically abusive; or
  - iii. is economically abusive; or
  - iv. is threatening; or
  - v. is coercive; or
  - vi. in any other way controls or dominates the family member and caused that family member to feel fear for the safety or wellbeing of that family member or another person; or
- b) Behaviour by a person that causes a child to hear or witness, or otherwise be exposed to the effects of, behaviour referred to in paragraph (a).

**SGW:** South Gippsland Water

**ESC:** Essential Services Commission

## 4 Policy

South Gippsland Water must:

- a) Recognise that family violence is unacceptable in any relationship;
- b) Ensure that customers and employees impacted by family violence are treated with dignity, respect and compassion with sensitivity to age, culture, ethnicity and sexual orientation;
- c) Regard the safety of victims and their children as a priority;
- d) Provide all relevant employees ongoing training at the minimum in line with policy and procedures to identify and engage appropriately with customers and employees affected by family violence, and apply SGW's family violence policy and related policies and procedures, to customers affected by family violence;
- e) Ensure management are trained in how to support staff who are at risk of being affected by vicarious trauma relating to calls or contacts where family violence has been disclosed;
- f) Identify the support that SGW will provide to their employees affected by family violence, including any training, leave, external referrals and counselling available;
- g) Ensure customer and employee safety by providing for the secure handling of information about customers or employees who are affected by family violence, including in a manner that maintains confidentiality;
- h) Establish processes to avoid customers having to repeat disclosure of their family violence and provide for continuity of service;
- i) Specify the approach to debt management and recovery where a customer is affected by family violence, including but not limited to:
  - o The recovery of debt from customers with joint accounts;
  - o The circumstances in which debt will be suspended or waived.
- j) Recognise family violence as a potential cause of payment difficulties and as an eligibility criterion for [PCS-003 Residential Hardship Policy](#) addressing what assistance is available to customers affected by family violence;
- k) Provide a means for referring a customer who may be affected by family violence to appropriate services/assistance and how customers may access such assistance.

South Gippsland Water must:

- a) Maintain up to date information on the website stating assistance and referral services available to customers affected by family violence and how customers may access such assistance;
- b) Advise customers of amendments to the Customer Charter to include recognition of family violence issues;
- c) Provide a copy of the policy and/or Customer Charter to a customer upon request;
- d) Periodically review its Family Violence Policy and associated procedures.

# Family Violence Policy



## 5 Responsibilities

**Board:** is responsible for maintaining a Family Violence Policy consistent with the Customer Service Code.

**General Manager People, Culture & Customer:** is responsible for:

- ensuring all employees receive regular up to date training and information enabling them to identify and appropriately engage with customers and/or employees affected by family violence;
- maintaining procedures that support effective application of policy.

**Line Managers:** are responsible for ensuring employees are aware of policy and supporting procedures and are enabled to operate consistent with them.

**SGW Employees:** are responsible for ensuring they operate consistent with policy and supporting procedures.

## 6 References

- Essential Services Commission - Customer Service Code April 2017
- PCS-003 Residential Hardship Policy
- SCS-028 Family Violence Customer Program and Procedure (to be written)
- SCS-028a Family Violence Employee Program and Procedure (to be written)

This document is to be reviewed in **January 2020** or earlier as required.  
 This document must not be released to external parties without approval by the Managing Director.

DOCUMENT APPROVAL		
Board Approval:	Meeting No.: 268	Date: 25/01/2018
E&P Committee Approval:	Meeting No.: 01	Date: 22/11/2017
Senior Management Approval:	Meeting No.: 561	Date: 13/11/2017
Managing Director Signature:		