

Family and Domestic Violence Policy



Purpose

We recognise that all forms of family and domestic violence have a serious and widespread impact on our community, representing a danger to the safety, wellbeing, and financial security of individuals and households.

This policy embeds TasWater's commitment to help protect our customers from family and domestic and violence harms by:

- Implementing robust systems and processes that prioritise customer safety and security
- Partnering with community sector family violence service providers, and
- Delivering respectful, confidential, and compassionate service and support to affected customers.

Our aim is to reduce the burden on affected customers by ensuring our services are delivered safely and providing practical assistance to safeguard privacy. This ensures our affected customers can maintain safety and access to water: an essential service and human right.

Scope

This policy outlines how TasWater supports residential and small business customers experiencing or affected by family and domestic violence.

It informs our decisions and actions when supporting customers experiencing or affected by family and domestic violence.

This policy governs all our people: Board members, people leaders, team members and contractors working for TasWater.

We will apply this policy to customers who are experiencing or affected by family and domestic violence, noting that:

- Some affected customers may choose to be identified. This may be initiated by the customer, TasWater, an independent financial counsellor or case worker, or any another professional acting on behalf of (and with valid consent from) the customer.
- Some affected customers may prefer not to be identified. To ensure their safety, we will implement a robust framework of protective systems and processes applicable to all customers.

Policy

TasWater condemns family and domestic violence in all its forms and recognises its serious short and long-term impacts on all victim-survivors, their families, and our community.

TasWater understands the unique role essential services play in supporting victim-survivors of family and domestic violence. In line with our values, we commit to leading a strong and supportive response for our affected customers.

Commitments

Awareness

1. We will invest in an ongoing awareness campaign and ensure safe and ready access to supportive resources are available on our website and provide a copy of this policy at the request of any customer.

Early intervention

2. We will implement direct early intervention strategies in our customer service and debt collection processes, to identify affected customers as early as possible. We will proactively assist identified customers to gain safe and confidential access to our TasWater Assist program.

Continuous improvement

3. Continually reviewing and improving our account and information security systems and processes, and being prepared to challenge our status quo, ensuring we never disclose or provide access to confidential information about an affected customer to any other person (including a joint account holder) without the consent of the affected customer.

Safety and support for customers who disclose family and domestic violence

4. For those customers who choose to disclose their experiences of family and domestic violence to us, we will provide direct access to TasWater Assist: a personalised framework of case management and support that is accessible without the need for documentary evidence requirements. We will consult with affected customers on their specific needs and allow them agency on decisions about their safety and support. Supports offered include:
 - a. Dedicated case management by a small team specialising in family and domestic violence support, accessible directly and confidentially via email or a dedicated phone number. This ensures customers need only tell their story once.
 - b. Referrals to family and domestic violence support services, to ensure customers can access effective safety planning and support for their recovery and healing.
 - c. Referrals to support services for intersecting vulnerabilities, for example:
 - i. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
 - ii. LGBTIQ+ communities
 - iii. Women with a disability
 - iv. Older women

- v. Culturally and linguistically diverse communities
- d. Account security and risk reviews, to ensure customers are aware and consulted about the additional layers of account security available to them. Additional controls may assist with strengthening the confidential and safe handling of high-risk personal information and records of sensitive disclosures. Options may include:
 - i. Account flags visible to all staff
 - ii. Secure verbal passwords
 - iii. Increased identification requirements for flagged or password-locked accounts
 - iv. Special security arrangements for joint accounts
 - v. Storing high-risk personal information or records of sensitive disclosures in a separate, access-limited, and auditable information system
 - vi. Masking sensitive information in general access account systems
- e. Access to financial hardship information and support in line with our Financial Hardship Policy, including:
 - i. Relief from debt collection activity
 - ii. Access to special security and debt arrangements for joint accounts
 - iii. Account reviews including consideration of applicable concessions, remissions, and incentives

Debt recovery

- 5. We will not take debt recovery against an affected customer unless exceptional circumstances of non-payment apply. We will always consider the impact of this action on affected customers and provide options for support and diversion from debt collection activity. Where another person is jointly or severally responsible for the water usage or charges that resulted in an affected customer's arrears, we will advise the customer of any debt relief options that may be available in the circumstances.

Emergency notifications

- 6. In the event of a serious concern for the life or immediate safety of a person affected by family violence, including any serious mental health concerns for an affected customer, we will contact emergency services to request welfare outreach and support.

Safety for all customers

- 7. We will work to protect all customers from harm, including those who may not choose to disclose their experiences of domestic and family violence, by:
 - a. Leading and championing family and domestic violence safety for our customers through action and innovation.
 - b. Building a work culture that rejects domestic and family violence, supports affected customers and our people, and contributes to prevention.
 - c. Identify safe methods of communication by offering opportunities for all customers to nominate a preferred method of communication and offering alternative methods of communication if their preferred method is not practicable. We will further ensure these preferences are implemented, by:

- i. Ensuring a customer's preferred method always takes precedence over any other customer entitlement or Code requirement that would otherwise require TasWater to communicate or provide information to a customer in a particular way, and
 - ii. Keeping records of any arrangements reached about a customer's preferred method of communication.
 - d. Maintaining strong risk management controls that ensure sufficient records are kept to ensure effective implementation of this Policy and compliance with the family violence provisions of the Code.
 - e. Regularly reviewing and updating this policy and all associated procedures and programs in line with TasWater's policy review framework, with an inaugural review to occur before 30 June 2026.
 - f. Provide future consultation opportunities to affected customers who may wish to draw from their lived experiences to help shape the direction of this important work.
 - g. Providing an online resource on the TasWater website including this Policy, and a support directory listing government assistance programs, no-cost independent financial counsellors, and specialist family and domestic violence and intersectional support services.
 - h. Inducting and training our people in family and domestic violence, in line with contemporary practice and covering the following foundational elements:
 - i. The nature and consequences of family and domestic violence,
 - ii. The application of this Policy,
 - iii. How to identify affected customers, and
 - iv. How to engage appropriately and effectively with affected customers.
 - i. Ensuring appropriate training reaches our people if they:
 - i. may directly engage with, or manage any of our people who may engage with affected customers by any means of communication, or
 - ii. are responsible for systems and processes that guide interactions with customers.
 - j. Maintaining customer privacy and confidentiality in line with our Privacy Policy to ensure secure handling of customer information.
 - k. Helping affected customers manage the impacts of debt by providing information and support for reducing water use, improving water efficiency, and access to relevant government water efficiency information and resources.

Support for our people

8. Support all employees and contractors working with customers who may be affected by family and domestic violence to deal compassionately and sensitively with customers, through:
 - a. Access to supervision, counselling and support for employees providing support services directly to affected customers.
 - b. Implementation of our Family and Domestic Violence Standard. The Standard delivers a framework of safety and support for those of our people who may themselves be affected by family and domestic violence.

Partnership and engagement

9. We will partner with the community and government sectors, and victim-survivors with lived experience, to continually strengthen our leadership and overall response to domestic and family violence over time. We will respond meaningfully to customer feedback about our approach to this important issue.
 - a. Where appropriate, we will apply our Complaints, Enquiries and Disputes Management Policy, which outlines our commitment to addressing complaints fairly, promptly, and professionally.
 - b. We recognise that customers also have the right to lodge a complaint with the Tasmanian Ombudsman or other dispute resolution forum if they are not satisfied with our services.

Framework and implementation

This policy is implemented through our existing frameworks of risk and assurance systems and activities, ensuring that we monitor policies, identify areas of risk for action, and establish resourcing requirements and timeframes for delivery. It guides our Customer Strategic Blueprint, TasWater Assist program, our business processes and system design, and related management processes.

All relevant employees will be trained in the Family and Domestic Violence Policy and related processes during induction, supplemented by refresher training and coaching to ensure customers are treated with sensitivity and respect.

Training will be provided to any person (including employees, agents, and contractors) acting on TasWater's behalf who:

- a) may engage with customers by any means of communication, or
- b) is a manager of a person identified in clause (a), or
- c) is responsible for systems and processes that guide interactions with customers.

We will ensure the training provided addresses:

- a) the nature and consequences of family violence
- b) the application of this policy
- c) how to identify affected customers, and
- d) how to engage appropriately and effectively with affected customers.

The policy is published on the TasWater website, and every effort will be made to translate resources into an accessible format suited for diverse audiences. A copy will be emailed or posted to our customers on request.

This Policy will be fully reviewed by 30 June of each year and updated to reflect the ever-changing landscape of contemporary domestic and family violence prevention and support.

Roles and Responsibilities

Executive Leaders are responsible for incorporating our responsibilities under this policy into our business planning activities.

The General Manager of Customer and Community is responsible for directing, reviewing, and reporting on the implementation and ongoing management of the Family and Domestic Violence Policy for our customers.

People leaders are responsible for ensuring relevant staff are trained in the Family and Domestic Violence Policy (including related programs) and can sensitively engage with customers when called upon to do so.

All our people are responsible for complying with this Policy, the Code and all relevant TasWater policies, guidelines and processes related to this Policy. Our people must also take responsibility for developing their own understanding of how their work functions and our customers may be affected by this Policy.

Definition of family and domestic violence

Family and domestic violence occurs when a current or former intimate partner or family member enacts behaviours to exert fear, power, control, and harm to another within an intimate or family relationship. Family and domestic violence is considered a criminal act in Tasmania.

Family and domestic violence often involves a pattern of behaviours used to intimidate, control and abuse another in an intimate partner or family relationship. These behaviours rarely occur in isolation but are simultaneously employed by the abuser to maintain control across all domains of the victim-survivor's life.

TasWater recognises that family and domestic violence is a gendered issue. While both men and women can experience violence, it is most often perpetrated against women by their current or former intimate partners in the home.

Family and domestic violence can occur in many forms including:

Term	Definition
Coercive Control	Coercive control is the core dynamic of family and domestic violence, involving a pattern of behaviours used by an abuser to manipulate, dominate, and control every aspect of an intimate partner or family member's life. It erodes their autonomy, sense of identity, and independence, while creating barriers that prevent them from accessing safety and support.
Physical Abuse	Any actual or threatened harm to an intimate partner or family member's physical safety, including threats or violence towards pets or possessions. This encompasses actions like assault, pushing, shoving, choking, hair-pulling, property destruction, using threatening body language, stalking, and intimidation to instil fear and control.

Emotional/ Psychological Abuse	Behaviour that shows a lack of respect for an intimate partner or family member's feelings, opinions, and experiences, aiming to undermine their self-worth, confidence, and independence. This includes name-calling, insults, belittling, ridicule, shaming, making threats and gaslighting. It can also include threats or violence against third parties or animals.
Sexual Abuse	Any actual or threatened sexual contact without consent. Acts of sexual abuse may include rape, sexual coercion, unwanted sexual touching, and the sharing or threatened sharing of intimate information, such as photographs, intimate details, or one's gender identity and/or sexuality.
Financial Abuse	Behaviours that restrict access to financial resources and decision-making to maintain control and power over an intimate partner or family member. Examples include controlling household spending, denying access to money, accruing debt in another's name, selling possessions without consent, making major financial decisions unilaterally, and limiting employment opportunities.
Social Abuse	Any behaviour that limits, controls, or interferes with someone's social activities or relationships. Examples include monitoring social interactions and communications, preventing contact with family and friends, damaging one's reputation, excessive questioning, or jealousy during interactions with others, and prohibiting socialising without supervision.
Technology Facilitated Abuse	Using technology to coerce, stalk, harass, or threaten an intimate partner or family member. Examples include threatening emails, texts, social media messages, accessing personal accounts, and using tracking devices or apps.
Spiritual/ Cultural Abuse	Behaviours that restrict an intimate partner or family member's right to practice their chosen religion, forcing them to adopt beliefs and practices against their will, and enforcing harmful traditions such as female genital mutilation, child marriage, or dowry abuse.
Elder Abuse	Elder abuse is any harm or mistreatment of an older person (60+ or 45+ in Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander communities) that is committed by someone with whom the older person has a relationship of trust, including intimate partners, adult children, unpaid carers, or extended family members.

Other definitions

Affected customer: any accountholder or stakeholder whose personal information is held by TasWater for any business purpose, and against whom a perpetrator directs their

coercive or violent acts of domestic and family violence (whether or not this is disclosed to TasWater).

Code: The Tasmanian Economic Regulator’s Tasmanian Water and Sewerage Industry Customer Service Code (refer to associated documents).

Confidential information: any information that may be used to identify or locate an affected customer, including information about their whereabouts, contact details, or financial or personal circumstances.

Contractors: any external party acting on behalf of TasWater who is not a direct employee. This includes labour hire staff, secondees, consultants, contracted specialist advisors, mercantile debt collectors, agents, or any other form of externally contracted service (or their employees).

Executive leaders: refers to Executive Leaders within TasWater who are directly accountable to the Board of Directors. This includes the CEO, Chief Financial Officer, General Counsel and Company Secretary and General Managers.

Our people: refers to TasWater’s team members and contractors combined.

Perpetrator/person using violence: A person who carries out a pattern of coercive tactics against an intimate partner, spouse, or family member (the victim-survivor).

People leader: refers to a TasWater employee who leads one or more employees or contractors.

Team member: refers to a TasWater employee.

Victim-survivor: A person against whom a perpetrator directs their coercive and violent acts.

Associated Documents

Other relevant TasWater Policies, Procedures and Guidelines include:

- Tasmanian Water and Sewerage Industry Customer Service Code (Version 9)
- Customer Charter
- Complaints, Enquiries and Disputes Management Policy
- Financial Hardship Policy
- Privacy Policy
- Risk Management Policy
- Right to Information Policy
- Code of Conduct (Employees)
- Family and Domestic Violence Standard (Employees)

Title	Family and Domestic Violence Policy
Approved By	General Manager Customer & Community
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