

South East Water commitment to improve protections for customers experiencing family violence

Date: 20 June 2023

The Essential Services Commission (ESC) has accepted an Enforceable Undertaking offered by South East Water.

Following an investigation that commenced in 2022, South East Water has developed and implemented an improvement action plan to address concerns identified with South East Water's compliance with its obligations regarding:

- the adequacy of information available to customers experiencing family violence in its policy and on its website
- the handling of information relating to customers experiencing family violence
- South East Water's ability to detect non-compliance with its domestic and family violence policy.

"We sincerely apologise to the 2 customers whose privacy was breached due to the failure in our processes and to our broader customer base. We have taken steps to minimise the risk of this happening again. We have also updated our Domestic and Family Violence policy and website so that it contains the required information." said Lara Olsen, South East Water Managing Director.

At the time of becoming aware of the privacy breaches, South East Water notified the Office of the Victorian Information Commissioner.

South East Water understands the importance of protecting customer information and ensuring we provide the information that our customers need and that is required. To address this South East Water has committed to the improvement activities outlined in the Enforceable Undertaking.

"We have learnt from our mistakes – and our customers can be confident that South East Water will provide protections to any customer that may be affected by family violence. We encourage any customer experiencing vulnerability to reach out to South East Water for assistance and we commit to making sure we reflect on and continually improve the way in which we provide protections to our customers" said Lara Olsen.

In addition, the ESC has indicated that it will hold a forum on the topic, and South East Water has committed to present at that forum and share its learnings for the benefit of the broader community.