

Water Charges

Overview

This policy explains how we will charge for water and meet our legal duties.

Scope

This policy applies to all tenancies managed by Muslim Care, except crisis and transitional accommodation. Crisis and transitional properties are exempt from paying water charges.

Guiding principles

We will:

- Follow the rules in the Residential Tenancies Act 2010 (NSW) and the relevant Ministerial Guidelines for Water Charging in Community Housing.
- Make sure that water usage charges are fair and consistent.
- Advise tenants of any changes to this policy that will impact what they pay.

Properties with separate water meters

We will charge tenants who live in properties with separate water meters for the water they use, as shown on the invoice from the water authority.

A separate water meter must be readily accessible for reading by the water authority and generate an individual water meter reading on the property's water account. If a water meter is not accessible for reading by the water authority and does not generate an individual water meter reading on the property's water account, we will charge the tenants using the shared meter dwelling method.

Actual water charges will be added to the tenant's account when we receive a water bill.

We may make adjustments to water accounts if an account has been overcharged because of problems with faulty water meters or other billing problems.

Properties with shared water meters

We will charge 4.5% of the household rent (including CRA) for water usage in properties with shared water meters where we pay a water usage account. The maximum water usage charge for social housing tenancies with shared meters will be \$8.50 per household per week. There will be no maximum charge for affordable housing tenancies.

Shared water charges will be added to the tenants account each rent billing cycle.

We will review the percentage and maximum amount from time to time to make sure it is consistent with actual water charges and may adjust the percentage and maximum amount.

We will check that the tenants in each building are not paying more than the water charges for that building each year. If the total amount paid by all tenants in a building is more than the total bill from the water authority for that period, we will credit each tenant's account for the overpaid amount.

Northern Region

Tenants living in the Northern Region will be charged 5.2% of the household rent (excluding CRA) for water usage in properties with shared water meters where we pay a water usage account. The maximum water usage charge for social housing tenancies with shared meters in the Northern Region will be \$9.40 per household per week.

Common area water usage

We will pay for the water usage for all common areas.

In properties with a shared water meter, we will make sure that we allocate 10% of the total water bill for common area usage. This amount will be deducted from the total water bill for the building each year before we determine if the tenants have paid too much.

Payment of water usage charges

Tenants can pay their water usage in a lump sum payment or pay an amount each week/fortnight. Any payments for water must be specified as water payments at the time of payment at the bank or must be made using our Centrepay code for water payments.

If a water charge remains unpaid for more than 21 days from the date it is charged to the tenant's account, we may take action through the NSW Civil and Administrative Appeals Tribunal for payment of the unpaid water usage charges.

Allowances

We may consider granting allowances to tenants in properties with separate water meters if:

- the tenant or household member has a medical need to use 25 kilolitres of water or more above the normal use for a household of the same size (e.g. the tenant or household member is undergoing home-based dialysis); and
- the local water authority does not provide an allowance for such circumstances.

We will not provide water allowances:

- To tenants who are temporarily away from their properties
- To households who pay a shared meter water payment
- Where a local water authority provides an allowance

Where a local water authority provides an allowance, we will assist the tenant to obtain an allowance from the water authority.

Tenants who want to apply for a water usage allowance, must complete the Water Allowance Application form and provide documented evidence to support their application. We will advise the tenant of the outcome of their application in writing within 28 business days. If an exemption is granted, the exemption will be provided for a 12-month period. After the 12-month period has ended, the tenant must re-apply for an exemption.

Where a tenant is approved for a water allowance, we will provide an allowance of 100 kilolitres of water per quarter.

Tenants moving properties or exiting the housing

If a tenant is transferring to another property or exiting our services, we will charge for water usage up to the end of the Residential Tenancy Agreement they are moving away from.

Hardship

We will assist tenants who are experiencing financial hardship as per our Financial Hardship policy.

Appeals and complaints

Tenants can appeal decisions relating to water charging. In particular, the following appeal mechanisms exist:

- Appeals to us about how we apply this policy. For further information about appeals refer to our Appeals policy.
- Appeals to the Housing Appeals Committee (HAC) about how we charge shared water usage or a decision to grant a water usage allowance.

The Housing Appeals Committee will not hear appeals relating to the actual water usage charges for tenants in properties with a separate water meter.

Concerns about this policy and to compliance with the Regulatory Code can be referred to the NSW Office of the Registrar Community Housing.

Policy information

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