

# 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 St George Community Housing (SGCH) and its subsidiaries (**we, our and us**), except crisis and transitional accommodation, and properties managed on behalf of the Aboriginal Housing Office. Crisis and transitional properties are exempt from paying water charges. Properties managed on behalf of the Aboriginal Housing Office are charged water as per the Water Usage Charging – Ministerial Guidelines for Aboriginal Community Housing Providers.

## 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 per the individual water meter reading on the account from the water authority. If a property does not generate an individual water meter reading on the account from the water authority, the tenant will be charged as per the shared water meter method below.

Water usage charges will be added to the tenant's account when we receive the water bill from the water authority.

If an account has been overcharged because of problems with faulty water meters or other billing problems, we may adjust the tenant's water account.

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## 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 for water usage. 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 on a weekly basis.

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

We will review the amounts paid to make sure that tenants are not paying more than we are charged.

## Northern Region

Tenant's 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 for water usage). 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 the water usage for all common areas.

## Payment of water usage charges

Any payments for water must be specified as water payments at the time of payment at the bank or 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 Tribunal to recover the unpaid 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

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- 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 are charged as per the shared water meter method
- If they could receive an allowance directly from the water authority

Tenants who want to apply for a water 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 allowance is granted, the allowance will be provided for a 12-month period. After the 12-month period has ended, the tenant must re-apply for an allowance.

Tenants who are approved for a water allowance will not be charged for the first 100 kilolitres of water used per quarter.

## Tenants transferring properties or exiting our housing

If a tenant is transferring to another property with us or exiting our housing, we will charge for water usage up to the end of the tenancy.

## Hardship

We will assist tenants who are experiencing financial hardship – refer to our Financial Hardship policy for more information.

## Appeals and complaints

If a tenant has a concern about water usage charges, they should contact us.

Tenants cannot appeal our decision to charge them for water. However, if a tenant thinks they are being charged incorrectly or we are not applying this policy correctly, they can appeal to us - refer to our [Appeals policy](#) for more information.

A tenant may also contact the Energy and Water Ombudsman NSW (EWON) if they have a complaint about the services provided by the local water authority and the water authority is a member of EWON (e.g issues with the quality and reliability of the water supply or disputing the accuracy of a water meter reading).

Concerns about the fairness and transparency of this policy in compliance with the Regulatory Code can be referred to the Registrar of Community Housing.

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## Related documents/resources

- [Residential Tenancies Act 2010 \(NSW\)](#)
- [Ministerial Guidelines for Community Housing Water Charging](#)
- [Appeals, Complaints and Feedback Policy](#)
- [Financial Hardship Policy](#)

## Policy information

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