



Water Usage Charges Relief

Business Unit: Financial Services
Responsible Position: Chief Financial Officer
Contact Position: Revenue Supervisor

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Date of Expiry:

1 DOCUMENT VERSION HISTORY AND CONTROL

Version Number	Date	Brief Description	Council Minute Number
1.0	30/01/2013	Initial Adoption	09.003/13
2.0	03/05/2017	Draft – Revised Policy	056/17

2 PURPOSE

To establish and clarify all terms, conditions and processes associated with customer requests for water account adjustments due to concealed water service leaks.

3 SCOPE

This Policy is to provide relief to water customers who have been charged water usage fees where the cause can be proven to be due to an unapparent plumbing failure.

4 DEFINITIONS

- (a) Water Account – an account issued by Council for water related usage charges. Non-Residential properties are also charged for sewer and trade waste usage charges via the Water Account where these services are applicable.
- (b) AS 3500 - Australian Standards 3500.1: Plumbing and Drainage

5 POLICY STATEMENT

1. Once water has passed through any water meter, it becomes the responsibility of the property owner.
2. Council has no obligation to adjust water accounts affected by leaks in private plumbing and will only consider applications for water account adjustments due to concealed water service leaks under the following circumstances:
 - 2.1. The property is not currently under water restriction for the non-payment of previous water accounts.
 - 2.2. The concealed water service leak was in a location that was not readily visible or apparent (e.g. below ground, under a concrete slab, in a wall cavity, etc.).
 - 2.3. The property was occupied at the time the leak occurred.
 - 2.4. The concealed water service leak was repaired by a **licensed plumber** in a timely and effective manner to minimise water loss. Repairs must be completed **within 14 days of a water account being issued** or the customer becoming aware of a possible water leak via Council notification.
 - 2.5. A customer is deemed to be notified by Council of a possible water leak:
 - On the day a Council Officer leaves a “High Water Usage Advice” card or similar notification at the property, or
 - On the day a Council Officer telephones the property owner (or managing agent).
 - 2.6. The concealed water service leak must cause an increase of 100% or more to the property’s average water usage (average water use will generally be determined using three (3) previous equivalent billing periods).
 - 2.7. Residential properties will be eligible for one (1) water account adjustment per ownership over a five (5) year period.
 - 2.8. Non-residential properties will be eligible for one (1) account adjustment per ownership over a ten (10) year period.
3. Applications for water account adjustment must be made using Councils’ ‘Application for Water Account Adjustment’ with a licensed plumber certifying:
 - 3.1. The date the water service leak was repaired.

- 3.2. The location of the concealed water leak and the reason why the leak was not readily detectable (providing photographic evidence to Council if requested).
- 3.3. The repair was completed to meet AS 3500 standards.
- 3.4. The entire water service at the property was inspected and meets AS 3500 standards. Specifically, this means that a pressure test was conducted on the water service with no further leaks found at the property, as per AS 3500.1 (16.3.1) "Water services shall not show any leakage when subjected to hydrostatic pressure of 1500 kPa for a period of not less than 30 minutes".
- 3.5. The likely cause of the water leak.
- 3.6. The water meter reading immediately after the repair had been completed.
4. Customers must lodge a completed 'Application for Water Account Adjustment' to Council on or before the water account due date, stating:
 - 4.1. The date the occupier (or property owner/managing agent) of the property became aware, or was notified, of a possible water leak at the property.
 - 4.2. The date a licensed plumber was engaged to locate and repair the leak.
 - 4.3. The applicant understands and accepts that no further requests for account adjustment will be considered for the property for a minimum period of either five (5) years (if the property is residential) or ten (10) years (if the property is non-residential).
 - 4.4. The applicant grants permission for Council Officers to conduct an inspection of the property to verify that the water service leak was of a concealed nature and that repairs meet required standards (if Council requests such an inspection)
5. If an application for water account adjustment is not approved, the customer will be advised in writing and granted a further 30 days from the date of this advice to either pay the account in full or enter into a suitable payment arrangement. Should the application not be approved interest will be deferred for the additional 30 days.
6. If an application for water account adjustment is approved, the customer will be advised in writing that payment of the adjusted account is required in full within 30 days of this advice.
7. Approved water account adjustments will be calculated using the following provisions:
 - 7.1. 50% of the difference between the water usage recorded on the water account issued immediately prior to the concealed water service leak being repaired and the average water usage for the property (average water usage will generally be determined using three (3) previous equivalent billing periods).
 - 7.2. For non-residential properties where a concealed water leak has also increased sewer and trade waste usage charges, but where the water loss was not deemed to be entering Council's sewer system, the

adjustment to sewer and trade waste usage charges will be 100% of the difference between the charges recorded on the water account issued immediately prior to the concealed water leak being repaired and the average of these charges (average sewer and trade waste usage will generally be determined using three (3) previous equivalent billing periods).

- 7.3. For non-residential properties where a concealed water leak has also increased sewer and trade waste usage charges and the water loss was deemed to be entering Council's sewer system, the adjustment to sewer and trade waste usage charges will be 50% of the difference between these charges recorded on the water account issued immediately prior to the concealed water leak being repaired and the average of these charges (average sewer and trade waste usage will generally be determined using three (3) previous equivalent billing periods).
8. No water account adjustment will be considered if the 'Application for Water Account Adjustment' or any other required documentation is found to be incomplete or false.
9. No water account adjustment will be considered for leaking fixtures or water using appliances. For example: taps, toilets, hot water systems (including solar), irrigation systems, rainwater tanks or associated valves, air conditioners, dishwashers, washing machines, fridges, water features, swimming pools or spas
10. No water account adjustments will be considered for a leak caused by wilful, accidental or negligent damage to a water service.
11. Council will not reimburse or make any contribution towards associated plumbing costs for either the location or repair of a concealed water service leak.
12. Full discretionary decision-making authority to approve a water account adjustment which does not meet the requirements of this policy remains with the General Manager.

6 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Responsibilities for implementing this policy are shared between the General Manager and relevant staff as follows:

General Manager

- Approval/Disapproval of applications.
- Approve resources to develop, implement and review this policy.

Chief Financial Officer

- Provide advice and assistance to Council and the General Manager in relation to this policy.

Revenue Supervisor

- Manage application process and ensure each application complies with this policy.
- Maintain a register for each of the approved applications.

7 LEGAL PARAMETERS

- Local Government Act 1993;
- Local Government (General) Regulation 2005;