

	<h2>Water and Sewer Charges Refund Policy</h2>		

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Policy Custodian	Manager Water, Waste & Sewerage Services
Superseded Documents	Not applicable
Related Documents	Not applicable
Record Number	

Purpose and Scope

This policy provides the means for Council to grant relief from water, and sewer charges for residential urban customers, resulting from a leak in the private water service of a property. This policy will apply to all metered customer types which are provided with a Council water service. The Policy allows for one claim per property every ten years.

This policy at all times must be applied in line with S607 of the Local Government Act 1993 and S131 of the Local Government Regulation 2005.

Legislation, Standards and Guidelines

- *NSW Local Government Act 1993*
- *Local Government (General) Regulation 2005*
- *Uralla Shire Community Strategic Plan*
- *Uralla Shire Council Operating Policies*

Definitions

Leak: water leaking from a private water service.

Reasonable period of time: the amount of time which is considered necessary to notice and fix a leak.

Sewer Charge: A sewer charge is levied on commercial/industrial properties that have a water meter; in addition these properties are liable for a volumetric charge based on the volume of water discharged into the sewerage system. The applicable fee is listed in the Fees and Charges of the relevant Operational Plan.

Water Consumption Charge: A charge for the consumption of water. Charged per kL and specified in the Fees and Charges of the relevant Operational Plan.

Water Service: all pipes, fixtures and fittings on the customers side of the meter (outlet side).

Policy Statement

- 1 Eligibility criteria and limits
 - a) The allowance applies to all customer types and is property based.
 - b) Responsibility for plumbing on the customer side of the water meter rests with the owner of each property.
 - c) Council will grant an allowance on water consumption charges for water lost through leak in the private water service of a customer provided:
 - i. The property owner notifies Council as soon as they become aware of the leak.
 - ii. The property owner demonstrates repairs of the leak within a reasonable period of time.
 - iii. The leak was not due to the neglect or obvious defects in the customer's water service.
 - iv. The service has been repaired to Council's satisfaction.
 - v. A new water meter reading has been taken within a reasonable period of time following repair of the leak.
 - d) The allowance will be determined by calculating the difference between the leak billing period and the average of the same period in the previous three (3) years.
 - e) A maximum claim of 300 kL for each property will be considered.
 - f) Where a sewer charge is involved a 100% allowance up to 300 kL, will be given for the increase in that charge due to a leak for the current billing quarter only. All other conditions of the policy are to be met before consideration of a further allowance is granted.
 - g) A customer may either repair the service themselves or engage the services of a licensed plumber.
 - h) The customer may claim an allowance for a leak detected and repaired within an earlier billing period. The allowance will be granted provided the above conditions are met and a submission is made in writing as per conditions outlined in Part 3.
 - i) Each property will be eligible for one claim every ten (10) years.
- 2 Making a Claim
 - a) A customer can request a re-read of their water meter.
 - b) If the meter is not faulty, water meter test fees and charges will be applied as per the fees and charges given in the relevant Operational Plan.
 - c) If the meter is faulty, Council will replace the faulty meter and charge as per the fees and Charges given in the relevant Operational Plan

- d) Where excessive charges have been applied due to an incorrect water meter reading, Council will reissue the account and waive the meter test fee.
- e) Claims for a refund of water/sewer charges due to a leak must be submitted in writing. The customer will need to advise:
 - The name of the owner and property address.
 - Property type.
 - How and when (the date) they became aware of the leak.
 - Possible cause of the leak.
 - The date the leak was repaired.
 - A copy of the plumbers invoice or a Statutory Declaration stating that the repairs have been undertaken.

3 Exceptional Financial Circumstances

- a) A residential property owner whose bill exceeds the limits set out in Clause 1 can request a review of their case based on Exceptional Financial Circumstances.
- b) Consideration of Exceptional Financial Circumstances will be given where financial hardship due to the burden associated with paying the additional water charges can be established.
- c) Issuing a refund or waiver of water charges under 'Exceptional Financial Circumstances' will require a resolution of Council.
- d) Any refund or waiver will be capped at 85% of the additional charges and a payment plan may be established for the balance of the bill.
- e) If granted the refund or waiver will be a 'one-off' exception for the property owner.

4 Review

This policy will be reviewed as required or once every four (4) years at a minimum.

5 Annual Report

Details of the amount of water/sewer charges refunded during the Financial Year will be included in the Annual Report.

Responsibility

The Revenue Coordinator and Manager Waste, Water and Sewer Services are responsible for the day to day management of the Water Charges Refund Policy and its Annual Review.

Full discretionary decision-making authority to approve a water account adjustment remains with the Director of Infrastructure and Regulation.

Accountability, Roles and Responsibility

The Water Charges Refund Policy provides for the transparent, consistent and equitable treatment of requests for a refund on water charges. It supports Council in ensuring that Council meets relevant Act, Regulations, standards and community expectations of probity, accountability and openness in local government.

Attachments

Nil