

Water Charges Policy

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to outline how the Housing Trust will charge tenants for water usage.

Policy

This policy applies to all Housing Trust tenancies, with the exception of:

- crisis and
- transitional accommodation

All tenants are responsible for water usage charges at their property in accordance with the Residential Tenancies Act 2010 and the Community Housing Water Charging Guidelines.

Water Service Fee and Common Area Water

Housing Trust will meet the costs of service fees associated with water provision including connection, sewerage and common area water usage.

Water Usage Calculation Method

The water usage charge is separate to any other charge including rent. The charge for water will be added to the tenant's account each water billing cycle (generally on a quarterly basis) and is due when billed. Water usage charges may be paid in full at the time of billing or as an instalment alongside rental payments.

Housing Trust utilises two (2) water usage calculation methodologies:

1. for properties where a separate water meter exists
2. for properties where a shared water meter exists

Properties with Separate Water Metres

Where tenants reside in a dwelling with separate water meters Housing Trust will charge water usage at the actual usage charge as levied by the relevant authority.

Properties with Shared Water Metres

Where tenants reside in a dwelling with a shared water meter Housing Trust will calculate water usage charges based on the following formula:

- 20% of total building water usage paid by Housing Trust to cover common area water usage
- 80% of total water usage charges apportioned between tenants at a percentage rate equal to that of each tenancies percentage of total building rent (see example below)

| Example Water Usage calculation - single meter | |
|---|-------------|
| Total building rent per week | \$ 2,000.00 |
| Example tenancy rent per week | \$ 150.00 |
| Example tenancy rent per week (as % of total building rent) | 7.5% |
| | |
| Total water usage charge per quarter | \$ 1,000.00 |
| Less 20% common area allowance paid by Housing Trust | \$ 200.00 |
| 80% of total usage (to be apportioned amongst tenancies) | \$ 800.00 |
| Example tenancy water usage contribution (7.5%) per quarter | \$ 60.00 |

Reviewing Water Usage Charges/Part Billing

Tenants who are leaving their current dwelling or are transferring to another Housing Trust social or affordable housing dwelling are required to pay any water charges outstanding at the end of their tenancy, adjusted to reflect actual use at the termination date. In these instances water usage will be calculated at a daily rate, based on average usage established from the previous quarter water bill, with the difference credited or debited to the tenants water account.

Tenants commencing a new tenancy with Housing Trust will only be liable for water usage charges from the date the lease commences.

In all instances of new tenancies, end of tenancies and transfers water will be adjusted based on an average daily charge as follows:

| Example adjustment water charge (for new tenancies, end of tenancies and transfers) | |
|--|-----------|
| Total quarterly water charge (calculated using single or separate meter calculation) | \$ 105.00 |
| Total days billed per quarter | 90 |
| Water usage charge per day | \$ 1.17 |
| Adjusted rate billable to tenant (based on 25 days occupancy during the period) | \$ 29.17 |

Housing Trust will also adjust water charges on tenant accounts in cases of under / over-charging from the water authority arising from problems with faulty water meters or other billing problems.

Exemptions

This policy does not apply to crisis or transitional accommodation.

Financial Hardship

Housing Trust will manage debts including arrears, tenant charges, and other charges promptly and fairly. Housing Trust will work with the tenant to provide affordable repayment options, taking into account the size of the debt and a tenant's capacity to repay. Housing Trust will also ensure that tenants are referred to appropriate support services, including financial counselling.

Right of Appeal

If a tenant believes Housing Trust has made a wrong decision in relation to water charges a formal review of the decision should be requested. To do this, the applicant or tenant is required to complete a Housing Trust Appeals Form stating why they disagree with the decision. Housing Trust's Appeals Policy and form is available by contacting the Housing Trust office or alternatively, may be downloaded from our website: www.housingtrust.org.au

If the appellant is not satisfied with the outcome of the internal appeal they can make an appeal to the Independent Housing Appeals Committee (HAC). HAC is an independent appeals agency for all NSW Social Housing clients.

Housing Trust will advise the appellant on how to lodge an appeal with HAC. Alternatively HAC may be contacted directly by visiting www.hac.nsw.gov.au or by calling 1800 629 794.

Reference or Related Documents

Internal Documents

1. Appeals Policy
2. Form 106001 Review of decision and 1st tier appeal

External Documents

1. Residential Tenancies Act 2010
2. Ministerial Community Housing Water Charging Guidelines

Policy Version Control

| Version | Details of Improvements | Release Date | Approval/Release Details |
|----------|---|--------------|---|
| V 1.0 | New Policy | 01.07.2016 | Approved for release by GM:C&C |
| V 2.0 | Reviewed and updated in line with current business practice | 23.08.2018 | Approved for release by Amanda Winks Chief Housing Officer |
| V 3.0 | Policy independently reviewed by Colin Biggers and Paisley Lawyers in relation to recent changes to the Act. Review confirms policy is compliant with current legislation and the Ministerial Guidelines ** | 03.06.2020 | Approved for release by Amanda Winks Chief Housing Officer |
| Notation | <i>** Policy reviewed 21/02/2020 with reference to forthcoming changes to the Residential Tenancies Act 2010. Housing Trust investigations confirm that social housing tenancies are exempt from the changes to the Act in relation to water charges. HT will continue to charge water in accordance with the Act (https://www.legislation.nsw.gov.au/#/view/act/2010/42/part7) and Ministerial Guidelines for Community Housing Water Charging (https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/housing/community-housing-policies/water-charging-guidelines) across its portfolio. Policy wording unchanged.</i> | | |