

Affordable Housing: Water Charges

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Related policies and documents	Rent Management		

Scope

This policy applies to all tenants, household members, applicants and staff of Amélie Housing in affordable housing properties and programs.

Policy Statement

This Policy is to provide guidance for Amélie Housing when dealing with issues of Invoicing tenants and ex tenants for their water usage.

- This policy complies with all laws, funding agreements, Government and Ministerial guidelines regarding water invoicing.
- This policy is in line with the visions, values and goals of Amélie Housing.
- This policy applies to all Amélie Housing tenants who are subject to payment of water usage
- This policy also recognises the role that invoicing for water usage plays in minimising water wastage and working towards Amélie's environmental goals.

Compliance

This policy assists Amélie Housing to comply with:

Compliance Document	Section/Number	Area
National Community Housing Standards	1.2	Tenancy Management – establishing and maintaining tenancies
National Regulatory Code Evidence Guidelines	1b	Tenancy and Housing services – Determining and managing rents
	5	Probity- detecting, managing and responding to fraud

Tenant water charges

In NSW, Amélie Housing will collect water usage charges for operational purposes. Water costs are charged under The NSW Residential Tenancy Act 2010, and NSW Ministerial Guidelines for Community Housing Water Charges July 2012.

Only the water usage charges can be charged to an eligible tenant or ex-tenant. An eligible tenant is a tenant of Amélie Housing who has a current signed tenancy agreement with Amélie Housing for a dwelling that is independently metered for water, or where water can be charged on a flat fee of \$5.00 per week.

In South Australia, water is charged under the SA Government Water Usage policy. If a property has a separate meter, you will be charged for the water you use.

Landlord water charges

Amélie Housing is responsible for all non-water usage costs, such as connection fees, waste water fees and service fees.

Commencing a tenancy

When a Tenancy with Amélie Housing is commenced we will encourage the new tenant to commence payment of water charges immediately. The purpose of this is to decrease any financial burden the first water charge might have for the tenant.

For a new tenancy in a home with a separate water meter, the commencing water usage payment is 5.0% of the weekly subsidised rent. If the tenants commencing rent is \$150.00 per week the water payment is \$7.50pw.

At the commencement of the tenancy the Water Meter will be read by a staff member so that the appropriate water charges are applied to the new tenancy.

For a new tenancy in a home with a shared water meter, the new tenant will be encouraged to pay the flat fee of \$5.00.

Procedure for invoicing for water usage

Separate Water Meter Properties

Where a property has an individual metre to record its usage, the exact usage costs will be invoiced to the tenant.

Within 10 working days of receipt of the Water Account by Amélie for each property, Amélie Housing will raise an invoice for the amount of the water usage in the Rent System and will send a photocopy of the original invoice from the Water Board together with the Amélie Housing Invoice showing the outstanding amount (if any) due to be paid to the tenant.

Shared Water Meter Properties

Where a property has a shared water meter, a flat fee of \$5.00 per week will be applied to each tenancy attached to that water meter.

Payment of water charges

Tenants are encouraged to pay the water invoice in advance by fortnightly instalments at a rate appropriate to their water usage.

If a tenant chooses to pay their water usage in a single bulk payment, the payment must be made within 21 days of receipt of the invoice.

Water arrears

Amélie Housing will always work with the tenant to find a suitable repayment plan when the tenant falls into arrears with their water payments.

The tenant's responsibility to report water leaks

All tenants have a responsibility to report to their landlord any defects on their home as soon as reasonably possible. In the event that there is a water leakage that should be able to be seen by the tenant, i.e. water surfacing in the garden, water appearing under or near the Hot Water Service, or a dripping/running tap, the tenant should report this to Amélie Housing, and only in the event that Amélie is unable to stop the leakage in accordance with their Maintenance Policy, will the Tenant be eligible for a reduction in their water usage charge.

Ending a tenancy

At the end of the tenancy, the water meter will be read to ensure the appropriate water usage is applied to the tenancy.

Complaints and Appeals

If a tenant is not satisfied with a service provided by Amélie Housing or does not agree with a decision it has made, they can ask for a formal review. To do this, the tenant can complete a **review of decision** form.

Details on how to make a complaint, provide feedback or lodge an appeal are found in Amélie Housing Complaints and Appeals policy.

Additional Information for tenants in NSW

If a tenant is unhappy with the outcome of an appeal to Amélie Housing, they can lodge an appeal Housing Appeals Committee. The Housing Appeals Committee is an independent agency that reviews certain decisions made by staff of Community Housing organisations and Housing NSW. For information on the Housing Appeals Committee call 1800 629 794 or go to www.hac.nsw.gov.au.