

# Affordable Housing: Water Charges

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<b>Related policies and documents</b>	Rent Management		

## Scope

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

## 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 in a way that is fair, transparent, and equitable.

- 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 thus 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 2018.

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. If a property has a shared water meter, Housing SA pays 30% of the bill and the remainder is shared equally amongst the tenants in the complex.

## Landlord water charges

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

## How water charges are calculated and charged

For existing tenancies there are two methods of charging for water usage.

1. Tenancies **with a separate water meter** for the premises where prescribed water efficiency measures are installed, and
2. Tenancies **without a separate water meter** e.g. a shared tenancy or room.

### Charging the tenant under Method 1

The tenant will be charged during their period of occupancy calculated as follows:

<b>For the first water usage charge:</b>	<p>The amount of the meter reading noted on the first water assessment notice received after the commencement of the tenancy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Less</li> <li>• The meter reading noted at the commencement of the tenancy</li> <li>• Multiplied by the stated cost per water unit (e.g. \$/kL)</li> </ul>
<b>For subsequent water charges during the tenancy:</b>	<p>The amount of the water consumption noted on the water assessment notice</p>
<b>As finalisation of the tenancy:</b>	<p>The meter reading noted at the end of the tenancy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Less</li> <li>• The amount of the meter reading noted on the most recent water assessment notice</li> <li>• Multiplied by the stated cost per water unit (e.g. \$/kL)</li> </ul>

During the tenancy the tenant will be invoiced for water usage when a water assessment notice is received. A copy of the water assessment notice showing the cost of and amount of the water used is to be provided. This may mean providing a copy of both sides of the water assessment notice.

Billing of the tenant will occur no greater than 3 months after receipt of the assessment notice. The tenant will be given at least 21 days to pay the water usage.

To assist with managing household finances, very low to low income tenants are to be charged a regular water charge of \$5 per week from the commencement of their tenancy. The accrued payments will be used to offset the cost of the actual consumption determined as above.

Adjustments to a tenant's water usage is to be required when the Housing Officer is aware there has been a faulty water meter or other billing problems.

### Charging the Tenant Under Method 2

Under Method 2, tenants will be charged a regular water levy of \$5 per week from the commencement of their tenancy.

Upon termination the water levy will be adjusted, on a daily basis, for the period of their tenancy. Failure to pay the assessed water levy is a breach of the tenancy agreement.

Outstanding water levies at the end of a tenancy will be recovered from the tenant following fair, transparent and equitable debt management procedures.

## 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.

If a suitable repayment plan cannot be reached or the tenant fails to make suitable payments, an application can be made to the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal to resolve the matter

## 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](http://www.hac.nsw.gov.au).