

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 guides Amélie Housing when dealing with Invoicing tenants and ex-tenants for their water usage in a fair, transparent, and equitable way.

- This policy complies with all laws, funding agreements, and Government and Ministerial guidelines regarding water invoicing.
- This policy aligns 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 of invoicing for water usage in minimising water wastage, thus working towards Amélie's environmental goals.

Compliance

This policy assists Amélie Housing in complying 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.

South Australia charges water 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 non-water usage costs, such as connection fees, wastewater, 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:

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

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

The tenant's billing will occur no greater than 3 months after receiving the assessment notice. The tenant will have at least 21 days to pay for 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 actual consumption cost determined 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 daily for the period of their tenancy.

Failure to pay the assessed water levy breaches 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 they fall into arrears with their water payments.

If a suitable repayment plan cannot be reached or the tenant fails to make timely 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 are responsible for reporting to their landlord any defects in their home as soon as reasonably possible. Suppose there is a water leakage that should 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. In that case, the tenant should report this to Amélie Housing, and only if Amélie cannot stop the leakage following 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 its decision, they can ask for a formal review. To do this, the tenant can complete a **review of the 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 appeal Housing Appeals Committee. The Housing Appeals Committee is an independent agency that reviews certain decisions made by Community Housing organisations and Housing NSW staff. For information on the Housing Appeals Committee, call 1800 629 794 or go to www.hac.nsw.gov.au.