

Tenancy Management: Water Charges Procedure

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Related policies and documents	Rent Management		

Scope

This procedure sets out how Amélie Housing complies with the Residential Tenancy Act in each state and territory to accurately charge tenants for water usage.

Procedure Statement

This procedure guides Amélie Housing when dealing with issues of Invoicing tenants and ex-tenants for their water usage.

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

Compliance

This procedure 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

Recording the Water Meter

The Residential Tenancy Act in NSW requires the Condition Report to include the water meter reading at the commencement and end of each tenancy.

Knowing the location of the water meter

Accessing the water meter and recording the usage is therefore essential for compliance. Housing Officers need to know the location of the relevant tenancies water meter for each property

The Housing Officer should be prepared to complete the reading/ recording action by referring to the Premises record. This will give the water meter's location before visiting the premises.

The water meter number should also be noted, and a photograph should be taken using a date and time stamp on the camera or phone camera to ensure the correct water meter is being read, recoded and documented at all stages of the property tenancy cycle.

At the end of a tenancy

Housing Officers are to attend the premises upon termination of any lease to complete the end of tenancy exit inspection. This is to take place a maximum of two (2) days following the tenant's vacation date.

During the exit inspection, the Housing Officer is to take a clear photograph of the water meter reading and record the water meter reading on the Condition Report. The same reading can be used for the subsequent tenant ingoing condition report provided significant work has not been completed, which would have required the usage of a large amount of water, such as plumbing.

Tenants who are away from their dwelling

There is no exemption from water usage charges for tenants temporarily away from their dwelling.

Methods for charging water usage

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 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 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 receipt of 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 are 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.

Charging of Tenants

Finance is to prepare the water usage invoice and attach the relevant water assessment notice. Water assessment notices are to be scanned in bulk and filed by date.

Transparent Process

Amélie Housing should always account for the basis of the water levy when requested to do so, following the Water Charges Policy.

An annual audit of the actual water usage across the portfolio is to be completed to substantiate the water levy charged and the water usage to justify a cost recovery practice.

Using the results of the annual water usage audit, tenants are to be advised annually of movement in the cost of water usage and the applicable water levy with increases effective from the first week in March.

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.