



Aboriginal Housing Office

Water Usage Charging

Ministerial Guidelines for Aboriginal Community Housing Providers

Frequently Asked Questions for Providers



Family &
Community Services
Aboriginal Housing Office

WATER USAGE CHARGING MINISTERIAL GUIDELINES FOR ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY HOUSING PROVIDERS

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS FOR PROVIDERS

1. What are water usage charges and how do they work?

Water usage charges are applied to a tenant for using water on the property which they rent. It does not include water *related* charges such as water connection, and sewerage charges.

If the provider chooses to apply water usage charges they are to calculate the actual water usage for separate metered properties, or a method is to be developed by the provider to divide the costs in shared meter properties.

2. Do providers need to apply water usage charges to the properties they manage?

It is not compulsory for Providers to apply water usage.

3. Why should Aboriginal Community Housing Providers apply water usage charges?

By charging tenants for water usage, Providers can make better use of the money they would otherwise spend on water usage charges. This allows Aboriginal community housing providers the flexibility to manage their businesses in ways that achieve long term sustainability.

4. How will the water usage charges be implemented by providers?

The AHO has released Water Usage Charging Ministerial Guidelines for Aboriginal Community Housing Providers. If providers are to apply water usage charges to their tenants, they will be expected to develop, document and maintain their own water usage charging policy.

5. How do providers calculate water usage charges in properties with separate meters?

Providers are to calculate charges based on actual water usage.

6. How are water usage charges calculated in properties with shared meters?

The calculation of water usage charges can be made with the following methods:

- Estimated use (taking into account property configuration and household type)
- The income of the tenant
- Rent payable by the tenant (with or without the rebate)

7. Do current tenants who have signed a Tenancy Agreement need to sign a new agreement if the provider decides to apply water usage charges?

No, current tenants are not required to sign a new agreement.

Section 139 of the Residential Tenancy Act makes provision for the Minister to issue Water Usage Charging Guidelines that cover Aboriginal community housing tenancies provided by Aboriginal community housing providers registered under the AHO act. The guidelines override the wording that applies in the standard Residential Tenancy Act.

8. Is GST included in water usage charges?

GST is not applied to water usage charges.

9. Do water usage charges affect the provider's cost recovery?

If providers have not accounted for the water usage charges within their managing portfolio, it will affect their cost recovery forecasts.

10. If providers apply water usage charges, will this have any impact on Commonwealth Rent Assistance for their tenants?

No. The water usage charges will not affect the Commonwealth Rent Assistance received by tenants as this is separate charge from the rent.

11. When do exemptions apply when implementing water usage charges?

In the instance where a provider is managing a property for the purposes of crisis accommodation, it is defined as short-term accommodation and is exempt from water usage charges.

12. Can providers apply an allowance in certain circumstances?

Yes. Where households are required to use considerably higher amounts of water than similar sized households, a provider may apply an allowance (for example a tenant who has a medical condition and requires use of a dialysis machine). This is will be determined by the provider.

13. Can a provider still charge a tenant water usage charges when the tenant is away from their property temporarily?

Yes, providers will be expected to still charge the tenant whether the tenant is at the property or away for a short period of time. As water charges are generally based on usage, where the property has a separate meter, the tenant will only pay for the water they have used.

14. Do providers need to have appropriate appeals and review mechanisms in place for their tenants?

Yes, there should be an internal and external complaints and appeals mechanism for any water usage charging complaints from tenants.