



Forbes Shire Council Water Service Administration Policy

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FORBES SHIRE COUNCIL – WATER SERVICE ADMINISTRATION POLICY

Revision History

Version	Date	Amended	Approved by	Revision Date
V1.0	21/09/06	Director Corporate Services	Council	21/09/08
V1.1	16/11/06	Director Corporate Services	Council	16/11/08

Change History

Version	Change Details
V1.0	Initial Policy

Related Documents

Document Title	Location
File reference	W05/011 – Water Excess Charges – Forbes Supply

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1. OBJECTIVES:

1. To provide for a transparent, objective and consistent process for the levy and recovery of water service charges.
2. Ensure clear understanding of the responsibilities of users and management.
3. Provide clear guidelines for both staff and users to ensure consistency in the application of water service charges.

2. ADMINISTRATION & IMPLEMENTATION:

2.1 SETTING OF THE ANNUAL WATER CHARGE:

Charges shall be set annually by way of the Management Plan and comprise a two part structure:

1. An access charge determined by the size of the connection to the property prescribed under Section 552 (LGA). This charge is included on the annual Rates and Charges Notice and;
2. A water usage charge per kilolitre for all water consumed (or estimated to have been consumed) through a water meter.

2.2 WATER CHARGE PERIOD:

1. Water consumption charges will apply to a Water Charge Period - as far as practicable the frequency of account billing will be quarterly;
2. The relevant water charge period for the calculation of a bill is deemed to extend from the date of the last closing meter reading from which an account was calculated, to the closing current periods reading. This reading is then multiplied by the relevant kilolitre charge as set within the current years management plan;
3. The bill for the financial year spanning mid June to mid September will be calculated at the new rate within the new financial years management plan.

2.3 AVERAGING OF USER CHARGE:

1. Where it is obvious that that the water meter is not working, Council will advise the property owner that the usage bill will be calculated using the average daily consumption from the previous corresponding period as per the Local Government Act 1993;
2. Council will make every effort to replace the meter as soon as practicable.

2.4 RECOVERY OF WATER CONSUMPTION ACCOUNTS:

1. After 14 days (from the due date) a Final Notice will be issued by mail to the property owner;
2. If the amount is not paid or a payment agreement not made by the due date of the final notice of which is 7 days from the date of issue, a Restriction Notice will be issued with an additional service fee levied.

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3. Non payment after expiration of a Restriction Notice will result in restriction of the water supply. Any restrictions incur an additional fee as prescribed within the current management plan with full payment of the account including all fees required prior to reinstatement.

2.5 RESTRICTION NOTICE PROCESS:

1. After expiration of the date nominated for payment on a Final Notice a Restriction Notice will be issued;
2. After expiration of the date nominated for payment on a Restriction Notice, a Water Supply Restricted fee will be raised and instruction given to the relevant staff member to restrict supply;
3. Restriction will be made by the fitting of a restriction device but so as to make available a nominal supply (approximately 8-10 litres per hour);
4. To reinstate the water supply, payment must be made directly to Council and before 3:00pm where same day restoration of supply is required;
5. It is an offence to tamper with a meter or any device attached to a meter, legal action may proceed as appropriate.

2.6 CHECKING RESTRICTED OR DISCONNECTED PROPERTIES:

Restricted or disconnected services are to be inspected regularly to ensure that supply has not been illegally restored.

2.7 ACCOUNTING ADJUSTMENTS - DEFECTIVE SERVICES:

1. Once water has passed through any meter it becomes the responsibility of the rateable person.
2. Where a leak is present at the landowners property it is the responsibility of the landowner to correct the problem. Where the landowner makes a request to Council for an adjustment to the relevant water account affected by an undetectable leak the following criteria must be addressed and satisfied beyond reasonable doubt:
 - (a). It can be proven that the defect was such that it was not readily visible or apparent to the resident during the billing period;
 - (b). Council must be satisfied that there has been immediate and effective action to make repairs upon alert of any irregularities;
 - (c). The applicant is the owner of the property;
 - (d). The application for adjustment of the account must be received within 30 days of the owner becoming aware of the undetectable leak or within 30 days of the issue of the water and sewer account, whichever is first;
 - (e). The consumption indicated on the water bill for the period of the leak must be at least 75% more than the reading from the previous corresponding meter reading period of the previous year, and;

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The leak must not have occurred from appliances, fixtures, or fittings including air-conditioners, dishwashers, swimming pools, hot water systems and toilet cisterns.

The leak must be repaired by a Licensed Plumber.

The leak must not have arisen on garden reticulation.

Plumbing must be compliant with Plumbing Standards.

That the pipes are not low grade PE pipe; must be Blue Line 8B grade or equivalent.

3. Where a test of water meter is conducted, either at the request of the owner or as a result of suspicions of Council, and if found to be in error the following procedure is followed. If the meter is found to be reading low the meter is removed and replaced with a new meter, and no back charges are levied. If the meter is found to be reading high (over 3% error) the meter is replaced with a new meter and the faulty meter is sent to a registered testing laboratory to determine the "weighted flow rate error" is used to calculate the amount of over charging and hence the rebate to be paid. An assessment for the past quarters usages is then made to determine when the meter error was likely to have first occurred. If it is not possible to determine when the error was most likely to have occurred the usages of the past 4 quarters is used and a rebate based on those usages is calculated and credited to the customer where applicable.

Any claim for adjustment, under these circumstances must be accompanied by a completed Forbes Shire Council's Leak Allowance Form (Appendix 2), which must be completed by a licensed plumber. -

Should relief not be granted from payment of the original water and sewer account, the applicant will be advised in writing, and given a further 30 days from the date of the advice to pay the account.

Where payment relief is granted, the applicant will be advised that the request has been granted subject to the payment of the amended account being received within the prescribed time.

At any point in time the maximum possible adjustment will be 50% of the difference between the affected account and the average consumption for that period using historical usage patterns.

Where the basis of average is, wholly or in part, deemed unsuitable an alternate basis may be determined. The Director Corporate Services must approve any adjustment with any determination as to the suitability and alternate basis of average with relevant explanation documented.

This policy may also apply to a billing period immediately after the one that initiated the adjustment. However, the adjustment will be only from the start of the next period to the date of the repair.

Adjustment under this policy cannot be made for a period prior to the quarter that initiated the adjustment.

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APPENDIX 1

Flowchart of actions required when entering into a water payment arrangement with a ratepayer:

1. Ratepayer requests a payment arrangement as a means of retiring outstanding debts to Forbes Shire Council.
2. The relevant authorised Officer* evaluates the payment amount required to repay any debts within a maximum period confined within that year. This amount is then communicated to the ratepayer explaining the consequences of making payments outside the statutory timeframes ie. Interest levied per the management plan on a daily basis . Where the ratepayer is unable to make repayments to this minimum level the officer may enter into an arrangement (restricted to a duration of 8 months) acceptable to the ratepayers capacity on the understanding that on default legal action may proceed to debt recovery. Prior to the expiry of this eight month agreement a letter will be sent to the ratepayer requesting that a new arrangement be entered, suggesting the required weekly payments to settle the debt within that year. The ratepayer will have four weeks to enter into a new arrangement with Council similar to the prior conditions.
3. Where the arrangement is agreed between Council and a third party ie. Not the owner of the property, this will be subject to the condition that on default all accountability and responsibility is maintained by the property owner. This condition will form part of the arrangement agreement to be copied and sent to the property owner.

*authorised officers restricted to the, Water Billing Officer, Director Corporate Services, General Manager, Senior Finance Officer and Finance Officer.

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WATER LEAK ALLOWANCE APPLICATION

APPENDIX 2

Please see the back of the form for information where an allowance will **NOT** be considered.

DETAILS OF PROPERTY WHERE THE LEAK WAS REPAIRED.

Owners Name: _____ Phone: _____

Property Address: _____

Agent: _____ Tenant: _____

TO BE COMPLETED BY LICENSED PLUMBER:

Date of repair: ____/____/____ (meter reading **MUST** be supplied at time of repair)

Meter Number: _____ Meter Reading: _____

Estimated duration of leak: _____

Leak location: Pipe Valve Fitting Other (Appliance) _____

Was the leak located on? Internal service – mains supply Garden Reticulation
 on/before the reticulation manual isolation valve Other – specify _____

What Repairs were made? _____

If pipe – what type of pipe was the leak on? (eg. material): _____

Size: (Diameter) _____ Grade: _____ Wall Thickness (mm): _____

Does existing plumbing meet Australian Standards Yes/No

Cause of Leak: (e.g. Wear, tree roots, break, faulty) _____

Was the leaking or burst pipe obvious and visible to the customer? Yes/No _____

If the leaking pipe is in a wall or underground this is NOT considered visible

Water wastage dispersed to: Ground Sewer Wall cavity other _____

I certify that the plumbing work at the above address has been completed in compliance with the "Water Services Licensing (Plumbers Licensing and Plumbing Standards) Regulations 2000" AS/NZS 3500:2003. I understand that the repairs may be subject to verification.

Licensed Plumber – Name _____ Contact Phone No. _____

Plumbing Contractor Licence No. _____ Compliance Certificate No. _____

Licensed Plumber signature: _____ Date: _____

Address all Correspondence to:

The General Manager PO Box 333 **FORBES.** 2871.

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The leak that was repaired at your property may have had an effect on the water use recorded.

If this is the case we may consider granting a special allowance (maximum of 50% of excess) to offset a portion of the water lost, provided that the repair work was undertaken by a Licensed Plumber and the necessary certificates are completed and returned to Forbes Shire Council.

Please provide the **completed Water Leak Allowance Application** together with a **copy of the licensed plumber's invoice** within 14 days of the date of repair of the address.

An allowance will **NOT** be considered for:

- Hidden leaks and/or bursts on internal appliances, fixtures or fittings including air conditioners, dish washers, swimming pools, hot water systems, toilet cisterns, valves
- Leaks on or due to internal or external taps
- Situations where the leak is visible
- Situations where the leak is not repaired by a licensed plumber
- Situations where the internal plumbing is open ended (i.e. not connected to anything)
- Leaks on mains reticulation (the manual isolation valve must be installed by a licensed plumber, if a leak is repaired at this point an allowance may be considered)
- Plumbing that is not compliant with government regulations
- Leaks in low grade PE pipe; must be Blue Line 8B Grade or equivalent.

If you engage the services of a Licensed Plumber to check or make repairs, Forbes Shire Council will not reimburse you for the Plumbers costs.

Plumbers must hold a valid plumbing contractor's licence and be registered with The Department of Fair Trading.