

Tharawal Housing Aboriginal Corporation

Water Charge Policy

Version Number:	2
Applies to:	Tharawal Housing Aboriginal Corporation Water Charge Policy
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Scope:

This policy outlines the way in which Tharawal Housing Aboriginal Corporation will assess and charge tenants water. The policy complies with legal obligations as set out in the *Residential Tenancies Act 2010* and the Community Housing Charging Water Guidelines.

Purpose:

- Apply water charges in accordance with the *Residential Tenancies Act 2010* and the relevant Ministerial Guidelines for Water Charging in Community Housing
- Charge water usage in a fair and transparent manner
- Provide all tenants with updates on any policy changes

Charging Water:

Tenancies managed by Tharawal Housing Aboriginal Corporation are required to pay water usage expected Employment Related Accommodation tenancies.

Water charges are applied to tenants' water accounts at the start of each water billing cycle. Tenants will have 30 days from the date the bill is issued to finalise their water accounts.

Tenants are not responsible for paying associate water costs such as: water connection charges, sewerage and other charges, including common area water usage.

Properties with Water Meters:

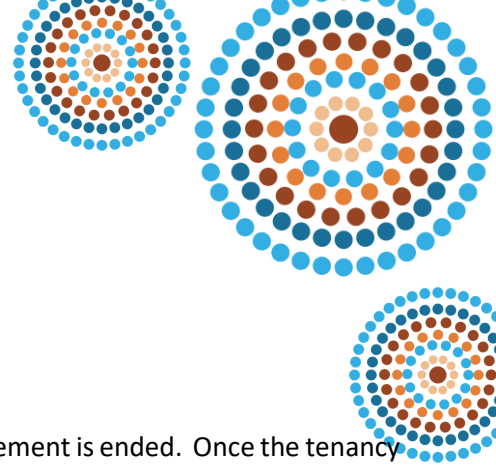
Tenants residing in properties with separate water meters are charged actual water usage. The relevant water authority calculates the actual water usage charges, these charges are passed onto the tenant to pay each water billing cycle.

It is the responsibility of the tenant to advise Tharawal Housing Aboriginal Corporation if access to their water meter is an issue, to avoid estimated water usage charges.

For new tenants, water charges are estimated at the commencement of their tenancy to avoid any future arrears.

Properties without Individual Water Meters:

If a property does not have an individual water meter, the tenant will not be charge water usage.



Determining water charges for tenants at the end of a tenancy:

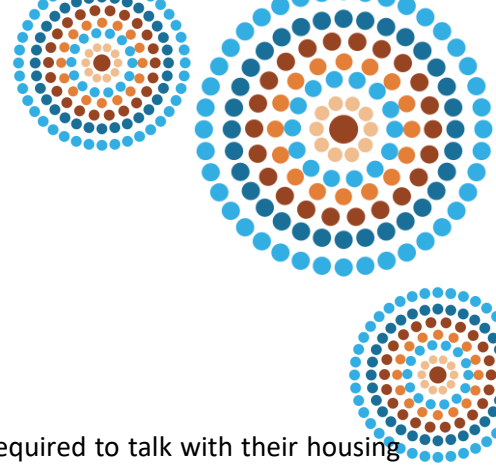
Tenants are expected to pay their water charges up until the date their tenancy agreement is ended. Once the tenancy agreement is ended, no further water charges or adjustments will be made to a tenants water account.

Water Usage Allowances:

Tharawal Housing Aboriginal Corporation grants water allowances to tenants who pay actual water usage only in the following situations only:

Situation	Criteria
Kidney dialysis	<p>To be eligible, a tenant or household member must be paying an actual water usage charge and be undergoing kidney dialysis at home.</p> <p>Sydney Water grants an allowance of 400kL a year for customers undergoing dialysis. For tenants who receive their water supply from Sydney Water, Tharawal Housing Aboriginal Corporation will assist tenants/household members to apply for the allowance. The allowance is then directly applied to water bills every quarter 100kL. Tharawal Housing Aboriginal Corporation will not grant an additional allowance if Sydney Water has already applied the allowance to the water bill.</p> <p>In circumstances where the local water authority does not grant tenants/household members a water allowance, Tharawal Housing Aboriginal Corporation will grant an allowance of 100kL at the start of each billing cycle.</p> <p>If in the circumstance the allowance is greater than the actual water usage charge, a nil water charge will be applied to the water account.</p>
Health and disability	<p>To be eligible, the tenant or household member must have a health condition or disability that necessitates the use of significant higher than a similar sized household does.</p> <p>A significant higher water amount is considered a minimum of 25kL of water above normal household use.</p> <p>In the event a tenant or household member is granted an allowance for health or disability, the adjustment will be based on the calculation of the cost of the kL allowance granted, applying the current water usage charge from the local water authority.</p> <p>Tharawal Housing Aboriginal Corporation will adjust the tenant’s water usage account at the start of each quarter.</p>
Large households	<p>To be eligible, the household compliment must consist of 6 or more approved household members.</p> <p>Tharawal Housing Aboriginal Corporation acknowledges that larger family may use more water than smaller families. To assist larger household families, Tharawal Aboriginal Housing will grant a household allowance of \$10.00 per quarter to water accounts.</p>

Tharawal Housing Aboriginal Corporation reviews all water usage allowance annually. Tenants may be required to supply supporting documentation annually if requested.



Hardship/financial difficulties:

If a tenant is unable to pay their water bill within the 30 days required, they are required to talk with their housing officer to arrange a formal payment plan.

Refer to Tharawal Housing Aboriginal Corporation Hardship Policy for information on how Tharawal Housing Aboriginal Corporation can support tenants.

Water Adjustment Charges:

Tharawal Housing Aboriginal Corporation will make any adjustment to water accounts in the event of problems with faulty water meters, high water charges due to leaks, fault or other billing problems.

In the event of a visible water leak left unattended by a tenant/household member, Tharawal Housing Aboriginal Corporation reserves the right to make any adjustment to water accounts.

Tharawal Housing Aboriginal Corporation will not make exemptions or adjustments to water accounts for tenants who are temporarily absent from their property.

Reviewing Water Usage Charges:

Tenants have the right to dispute water charges applied to their accounts. Reviews are lodged by completing the Review Water Charges form. It is the tenant's responsibility to clearly identify why they believe their water charges were incorrect. Tenants will need to lodge supporting evidence with their form. Water reviews will be undertaken within 21 days of receipt. During the process of water charges being reviewed, tenants will need to continue to pay their current water charge.

How to Pay Water:

- Centrelink deductions
- Bank deposits
- Internet banking

Tharawal Housing Aboriginal Corporation does not accept cash payments.

Appeals and Complaints:

In the event a tenant does not agree with the outcome of the internal water usage review by Tharawal Housing Aboriginal Corporation, the tenant has the right to access the following appeal mechanisms:

- Appeals can be lodged with the Housing Appeals Committee for any issue relating to the incorrect application of the water charging method for tenants with shared meters.
- Appeals can be lodged with the Housing Appeals Committee regarding decisions to grant a water usage allowance in accordance with the water allowances listed in this policy.
- Appeals cannot be lodged with the Housing Appeals Committee in relation to actual water usage charges for tenants with separate water meters.

If a tenant has an issue directly relating to their water authority, Tharawal Housing Aboriginal Corporation will refer tenants to the Energy and Water Ombudsman for any disputes regarding the metered service.

If a tenant believes the decision made by Tharawal Housing Aboriginal Corporation was incorrect, they should first discuss their concerns with their local office. If the tenant still believes, the decision is wrong the tenant has the right to ask for a formal review as per Tharawal Housing Aboriginal Corporation Appeals and Review decision.



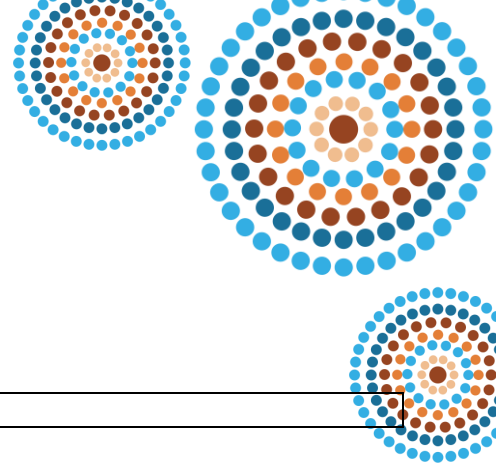
The tenant cannot ask for a formal review for debt or charges imposed by the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal. The role of the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal is to resolve disputes between tenants and landlords.

Responsibility:

Housing Officer	<p>Assess water bill and issue water invoices to tenants.</p> <p>Enter water bills into housing system. Monitor and review water payments and report any water arrears monthly.</p> <p>Ensure all tenants are advised of their water chargers.</p> <p>Report any issues or irregular patterns to management.</p>
Housing and Compliance Project Officer	<p>Approval and ensure any water allowances are allied to tenants accounts.</p> <p>Review any irregular patterns and report to senior management.</p> <p>Conduct annual review of water policy to ensure any amendments are made in line with legislations and external policies.</p> <p>Ensure staff are adhering to policies and procedures and provide necessary training.</p>
Housing Manager	<p>Review decision in line with THAC Policies and Procedures.</p> <p>Ensure all staff understand THAC policies and procedures, provide necessary training where required.</p> <p>Coordinate any major issues with Sydney Water.</p> <p>Review and approve water adjustment where applicable.</p>
CEO	<p>Review recommendations to policies and procedures before submission to board.</p>
Board	<p>Monitor the policies efficiency and effectiveness to ensure improve practice and positive outcomes for Aboriginal people.</p> <p>Report any findings and recommendation within its annual report.</p>

Reference:

Legislation:	Related Policy
<i>Residential Tenancies Act 2010</i>	Community Housing Water Charging Guidelines –
<i>Residential Tenancies Regulation 2010</i>	



Aboriginal Housing Act 1998

Tharawal Housing Aboriginal Corporation staff must always adhere to the Confidentially and Privacy Policy.