

This policy was developed in response to the number of amendments made to the *Residential Tenancies Act 2010* including to *Section 139 – Social housing tenants to pay charges to water* commencing on the 6th July 2012. Customers residing in properties which are part of a complex/building with shared water meters will be charged for water usage, as of 1st December 2014. Section 39 of the Act (clause 11 of the agreement) no longer applies to Hume Housing.

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 To outline how charges are calculated for water usage for customers with a shared and individual water meters residing in Hume Housing properties.
- 1.2 To provide a clear, administrable fair and transparent policy regarding water usage charges for shared meters.

2.0 Scope

This policy applies to all customers residing in Hume Housing properties.

2.1 Strategic Alignment

Goal 3 - Supporting Customers, Maximising Individual Potential.

Goal 6 - Reaching our Potential through and Efficient and Effective Organisation.

3.0 References

- 3.1 Residential Tenancies Act, 2010, Sections 39, 137, 139
- 3.2 Residential Tenancies Regulations, 2010.
- 3.3 Ministerial Guidelines for Community Housing Water charging, September 2012.

4.0 Policy

- 4.1 Hume Housing will give customers a notice period of 3 months prior to this policy and procedure taking effect.
- 4.2 Hume Housing will give customers 1 month notice of any minor change to this policy which does not affect customer's liability to pay.
- 4.3 Hume Housing may use its discretion in dealing with any variation within this policy.
- 4.4 Hume Housing will only charge water usage on properties where water efficiency devices have been installed.

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- 4.5 All water usage charges will be charged quarterly in advance. (See Section 5.2 i.v).
- 4.6 Hume Housing will not charge customers more than the water usage bill received from Sydney Water. Hume Housing will provide a copy of the Water Usage bill from Sydney Water for customer's reference.
- 4.7 Customers are encouraged to pay for their water usage in lump sum or in equal instalments over a billing period. All outstanding invoices for water usage must be paid within 21 days of customer receiving a water usage bill. Any amount outstanding on the customer's water usage account for more than 21 days from receipt of the water usage bill will action Hume Housing's debt recovery process.
- 4.8 Customers experiencing difficulty paying water usage bill are encouraged to contact Hume Housing's Customer Service Officers.
- 4.9 There is no exemption from water usage charges for customers temporarily away from their property.
- 4.10 Hume Housing at its discretion, may offer a customer an allowance/rebate in the water usage charges under the following circumstances:
 - i. The customer or a household member permanently residing with the tenant requires home based dialysis OR
 - ii. The customer or a household member permanently residing with the tenant has a medical condition or disability which requires high water usage AND
 - iii. Customer provides documentation and evidence confirming the medical condition.
- 4.11 Hume Housing will not charge water usage for customers in, short term, crisis accommodation, temporary accommodation, transitional housing or on very low income.
- 4.12 Tenancies commencing or terminated part way through a billing period will be liable for their portion of their bill. This will be determined by the individual water reading or daily proportion with shared meters.
- 4.13 Special Conditions under the Social Housing Management Transfer Program:
 - i. Customers who get transferred to Hume Housing under the Social Housing Management Transfer Program will not see any immediate changes to their income after rent and water.

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- ii. Hume Community Housing will adopt the Department of Family & Community Services water charges structure until such period that a new subsidy is assessed.
- iii. The Department of Family & Community Services water charge structure can be found at Appendix 2 of this document.

5.0 Procedure

5.1 Individual Meters

Hume Housing will not charge customers more than the water usage bill received from Sydney Water. Hume Housing will provide a copy of the Water Usage bill to the customer from Sydney Water for customer's reference.

5.2 Shared Meters

- i. Customers residing in properties which are part of a complex/building with shared water meters will now be charged for their water usage.
- ii. Hume Housing encourages customers to make weekly payments in advance towards their quarterly water bill. The weekly payments should at minimum be equal to 4% of the customers weekly rent amount
- iii. Hume Housing will bill customers once the Sydney Water bill is received every quarter. Hume will provide a copy of the Water Usage bill to the customer from Sydney Water for customer's reference.
- iv. The shared water usage will be calculated based on the number of days the customer lived in the property and the number of tenants residing in the property.
- v. Water meters are read by Sydney Water every quarter. If the water usage charges paid by customer exceed the actual charge from Sydney Water, the excess will be reimbursed to the customer by; credit into customer's bank account or credit into customer's rent account. This can be decided by the customer.
- vi. Customers who have under-contributed to water usage, must pay within 21 days of receiving a water usage bill.
- vii. It is Hume Housing's responsibility to pay for common area water usage in unit complexes, duplexes or shared properties.

5.3 Communication

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- i. Hume Housing will attach an explanatory note referring to clause 11 of the Residential Tenancy Agreement and Hume Housing water charging Policy and Procedure to all new tenancy applications (Appendix 1).
- ii. Hume Housing will ensure that current Policies and Procedures regarding water usage charges including the *Ministerial Guidelines* will be available on Hume Housing's website and hard copies can be obtained at any Hume Housing Office.

5.4 Complaints and Appeals

- i. Hume Housing encourages customers who wish to make a complaint or appeal an internal decision made by Hume Housing, to refer to Policy and Procedure – Complaints or Policy and Procedure – Appeals.
- ii. Customers still dissatisfied with a decision made by Hume Housing, have the right to refer the matter to The Housing Appeal Committee (HAC will not hear appeals where properties are separately metered) or The Energy and Water Ombudsman.

6.0 Responsibilities

- 6.1 Board is responsible for approving this Policy and Procedure.
- 6.2 CEO is responsible for ensuring that this policy is implemented.
- 6.3 CFO is responsible for ensuring this policy is regularly reviewed.
- 6.4 Managers and Staff are responsible for ensure they comply with this procedure.

7.0 Relevant Documents

- 7.1 Policy and Procedure – Complaints
- 7.2 Policy and Procedure – Appeals
- 7.3 Residential Tenancy Agreement

8.0 Summary of Changes

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Version Nr.	Date:	Details of Changes
V001	18/11/2014	Initial Issue
V002	22/06/2017	Revision and Inclusion of Special Conditions under the Social Housing Management Transfer Program Point 5.2 changes to the wordings Old wording – “Hume Housing encourages customers to pay a minimum of 4% of customer’s assessed rent towards their water bills” New Wording – “ Hume housing encourages customers to make weekly payments in advance towards their quarterly water bill. The weekly payments should at minimum be equal to 4% of the customers weekly rent amount”

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Appendix 1.

Explanatory Note refers to clause 11 of the Residential Tenancy Agreement

As a social housing provider, Section 39 of the Residential Tenancies Act 2010 Act (clause 11 of the agreement) no longer applies to Hume Housing. Hume Housing charges for water usage under section 139 of the Residential Tenancies Regulation 2010. Hume Housing Policy and Procedure – Water Usage Charges follows the Ministerial Guidelines as required by the Act. Hume Housing Policies and Procedures regarding water usage charges including the Ministerial Guidelines is available on Hume Housing’s website and hard copies can be obtained at any of the Hume Housing Offices.

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Appendix 2

[Department of Family & Community Services – Water Usage Charges](#) (see attached PDF Document)

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