

	COUNCIL POLICY	
	WATER CHARGE RELIEF COUNCIL POLICY	
	Policy Number	CP032
	Directorate	Organisational Services
	Owner	Ken Diehm, Chief Executive Officer
	Last Approved	28/06/2023
	Review Due	28/06/2024

## 1. PURPOSE

The objective of this policy is to establish guidelines for the provision of relief from certain water consumption charges.

## 2. SCOPE

The policy applies to:

- residents who require mechanical devices for long term medical conditions (e.g. haemodialysis patients),
- properties with a concealed water leak,
- properties that have been affected by flooding where large volumes of metered potable water is used at the recovery stage,
- properties with a failed or stopped meter.

## 3. HEAD OF POWER

*Local Government Regulation 2012*

*Local Government Act 2009*

## 4. POLICY STATEMENT

### 4.1. Principles

Council's aim in establishing this policy is to support customers by providing a water charge relief framework consistent with the following principles:

- equity - ensuring the fair and consistent application of lawful granting of relief, without bias, taking account of all relevant considerations;
- transparency - openness in the processes involved;
- simplicity – making processes which are simple and cost effective to administer;
- consistency - by treating ratepayers with similar circumstances in the same manner;
- fiscal responsibility – ensuring Council meets its budgetary responsibilities;
- clarity - by providing meaningful information to enable ratepayers to clearly understand their responsibilities;
- flexibility - responding where possible to unforeseen changes in the local economy and providing a wide range of payment options;
- sustainability - revenue decisions support the financial strategies for the delivery of infrastructure and services identified in Council's long term plan and corporate plan; and

- compassion - having regard to individual's circumstances, particularly if experiencing hardship.

#### **4.2. Policy**

The policy applies to:

- residents who require medical mechanical devices for long term medical conditions (e.g. haemodialysis patients),
- properties with a concealed water leak
- properties that have been affected by flooding where large volumes of metered potable water is used at the recovery stage.
- properties with a failed or stopped meter.

#### **4.3. Medical Mechanical Device**

This section applies to residents of the Fraser Coast local government area that experience a long term medical condition requiring treatment using a home based mechanical device that consumes water (e.g. haemodialysis).

Water charge relief will only be available to freehold land owned and occupied by the resident who meets the eligibility criteria in this policy or where there is evidence that a tenant meets the eligibility criteria of this policy, or for properties identified in Council's Community Groups Concession Policy that are eligible for a fifty percent or greater concession on water access charges. Council acknowledges that excess water charges due to being required to use a home based mechanical device may cause hardship and, in accordance with the *Local Government Regulation 2012* section 120 (1) (c), property owners in that circumstance may be granted a concession.

A part rebate of water consumption will be applied subject to the following criteria:

- 1) The person requiring the medical mechanical device resides permanently at an address within the Fraser Coast water service area.
- 2) The person requiring the mechanical device receives their regular medical treatment on the device at home, and not through a hospital or other haemodialysis centre.
- 3) An application for relief is made to Council in writing and supported by a medical certificate or letter from Queensland Health, detailing the person requiring treatment using a home based medical mechanical device and includes the property address that the mechanical device is used.
- 4) The application defines the date that the mechanical device commenced use at the property.
- 5) That the water is used by the mechanical device.

An approved application will be granted a rebate of water consumption charges for water consumed up to 201kL per annum applied equally across billing periods during the financial year (67kL per rates notice) from the date that the application is approved until the mechanical device ceases to be used at the property.

If total water consumption is below 67kL in any rating period, the applied rebate will be half of the actual water consumption.

## Supporting Information

Customers who cease to use a home medical mechanical device/haemodialysis must notify Council as soon as practicable to ensure the rebate is removed from the property. Council will contact the Renal Unit annually to confirm it has up to date haemodialysis property details.

Haemodialysis patients need to ensure that they have been suitably trained by their dialysis care providers on how to manage interruptions to their water supply.

### **4.4. Concealed Water Leak**

Council acknowledges that excess water charges due to an undetected and concealed leak may cause hardship and, in accordance with the *Local Government Regulation 2012* section 120 (1) (c), property owners that experience an undetected and concealed water leak may be granted a concession.

Council supports customers in managing their water consumption through the implementation of a proactive program of education and by contacting customers, where possible, to notify them of significant increases in consumption that may be a result of a leak. Property owners are responsible for all consumption on their property and should therefore not rely solely on Council to advise them of increase in consumption through the meter.

Only 1 claim per property under this policy be considered in a 3 year period.

For the purpose of this policy, a concealed leak is defined as water escaping on the customer's side of the meter, which is hidden from view, be it underground or within concrete, underneath a building or within the walls of a building and where an owner or occupant could not reasonably be expected to know of its existence, as determined by Council.

Above ground water leaks are visible to the property owner and not considered concealed or undetectable so are not included in the scope of this concession.

The concession does not apply to water lost from:

- Leaking taps, toilet cisterns, hot water systems or other water appliances
- Faulty plumbing or human error resulting in the filling or overflow of a rainwater tank or other vessel.
- Swimming pools, spas, ponds and other outdoor feature, or their related fittings.
- Property sprinklers or irrigation systems
- Leaks caused through the negligence of the property owner
- The normal operation of the plumbing i.e, water lost from taps, hoses, or any fixture connected to the plumbing whether such operation is accidental, inadvertent or malicious.

Ratepayers that meet the qualifying conditions may be eligible to have a concession in the form of a rebate applied to the water consumption charge amount of the water lost as calculated in accordance with this policy.

### Qualifying Conditions

To be granted a concession under this policy the water leak must have been repaired and the following conditions met:

- The ratepayer must make a written application to Council.
- Council is satisfied that the consumer could not reasonably have been aware of the water leak.
- The leak must be repaired within 30 Days of identification or notification of a suspected leak (whichever is sooner), or as otherwise approved on a case by case basis, by Council's Billing and Metering Coordinator.
- The requested documentation is submitted to Council prior to the due date of the Rate Notice in which the water consumption charges for the applicable concession/relief is to be applied.
- Proof of the repair in the form of an account or report from a licensed plumber is provided to Council.
- The Ratepayer applying for the concession must be responsible for the payment of the water consumption charges.
- Where a tenant is responsible for paying the water use charge, the ratepayer for the property must make the application on behalf of the tenant.

### Concession calculation

The amount of the concession will be calculated on the volume of water lost using one of two methods below:

1. Where hourly water consumption data is available, Council will estimate the water lost and the concession will be 50% of the value of water lost from the date of the meter reading from the previous reading cycle until the date of repair.

2. If no hourly water consumption data is available, the concession will be determined by calculating 50% of the difference between the usual average water consumption for the property, and the water consumption during the period from the meter reading date of the previous reading cycle up until the date of repair. The average water consumption is calculated from:

- the average water consumption after the leak is repaired; or
- the previous one (1) year's meter readings prorated.

## **4.5. Properties Impacted by Flooding**

Council recognises that recovery from a flood event can cause hardship and in accordance with the *Local Government Regulation 2012* section 120 (1) (c) the following concession contributes towards Councils broader natural disaster support program.

### Qualifying Conditions

To be granted a concession under this policy the following conditions must be met:

- The Ratepayer must make a written application to Council, specifying the dates of increased usage due to the flood event
- Council is satisfied, through the provision of photos and other evidence to support an application, that the consumer's property was impacted by the flood event and the concessional support would assist them to recover from the event.
- The requested documentation is submitted to Council prior to the due date of the rate notice in which the water consumption charges for the applicable concession/relief is to be applied.
- The Ratepayer applying for the concession must be responsible for the payment of the water consumption charges.
- Where a tenant is responsible for paying the water use charge, the ratepayer for the property must make the application on behalf of the tenant.
- The concession is only applicable for flood events caused by an overflow of water generated from a severe weather condition.

#### Concession calculation

- The rebate will be applied, where hourly water consumption data is available to properties with Automatic Read Meters, by calculating the difference between the average pre-flood usage and the increased usage during the recovery period. For properties without Automatic Read Metering technology an offset of up to 20KL will apply.

#### **4.6. Faulty or Stopped Meters**

When a water meter or any associated totaling devices i.e., an external display ceases to register water consumption, the deemed water usage for the periods from the commencement of the water billing period to the date on which the water meter was replaced, shall be calculated using previous average consumption for the property.

A check meter may be installed or used to test the accuracy of an installed water meter.

#### **4.7. Financial Hardship**

If a ratepayer is experiencing financial hardship and does not qualify for relief under this policy they may be eligible to apply for assistance under Council's Financial Hardship policies

### **5. ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS**

Revenue Policy– DOCS #876741

Financial Hardship Policy – DOCS# 3574233

### **6. REVIEW**

This Policy will be reviewed when related legislation/documents are amended or replaced, other circumstances as determined from time to time by Council or at intervals of no more than one year.

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#### **Version Control**

Version Number	Key Changes	Approval Authority	Approval Date	Document Number
1	New Policy	Council	25/07/2018	3584934
1A	Amendment – WBW&W inclusion		13/07/2018	3584934
2	Amendment – Administrative corrections		10/07/2019	3584934

3	Amendment – Ordinary Meeting No 08/19	Council	28/08/2019	3584934
4	Direct copy		28/10/2019	3584934
5	Amendment – Ordinary Meeting No 6/20	Council	24/06/2020	3584934
6	Amendment – Ordinary Meeting No 6/21	Council	24/06/2021	3584934
7	Amendment - Ordinary Meeting No 6/22	Council	15/06/2022	3584934
8	Amendment - Ordinary Meeting No 6/23	Council	28/06/2023	3584934