



CONCEALED WATER LEAK POLICY

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Department: Engineering Services

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1. BACKGROUND

Goondiwindi Regional Council periodically receives requests for assistance in relation to the cost of increased water consumption charges as a result of concealed water leaks on private property. The leak usually becomes apparent to the property owner when Council advises of an unusually high water meter reading or issues a Water Consumption Notice.

Council has adopted the principles of a Two Part Water Tariff system that allows all property owners to be levied for all water consumption recorded by the water meter installed on their property.

Council maintains that responsibility rests with the property owner for all charges for water passing through the water meter and for the maintenance and repair of the internal water service (ie on the property owner's side of the water meter). However, it is acknowledged that a case exists for a remission of water charges in the event of concealed water leaks.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to establish application guidelines and processes to ensure consistency in the assessment of written requests to adjust water consumption charges due to concealed water leaks on private property.

3. INTENT

To facilitate an effective and efficient means for Council to provide relief to ratepayers that request assistance for high water consumption due to a concealed water leak, by partially remitting water consumption charges that meet the requirements under this policy.

4. POLICY STATEMENT

- The purpose of this policy is to establish application guidelines and processes to ensure consistency in the assessment of written requests to adjust water consumption charges due to concealed water leaks on private property.
- Property Owners are responsible for the installation, repair, maintenance, and replacement of all the pipes, fixtures, fittings, and mains connected water tanks on their property up to the water meter. If a leak is detected it is the responsibility of the customer to have the leak detected and repaired by a licensed plumber as soon as possible.
- This policy shall only apply to concealed water leaks on properties that are within the defined water area.
- A Concealed Leak Application Form must be submitted to Council within the specified timeframes.

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- For an application to be approved under this policy, the applicant must supply all relevant information as set out within this policy.
- Restrictions on water consumption charge adjustment requests shall apply within the specified timeframes.
- Approved applicants shall be authorised in accordance with Table 1.
- Any reimbursements will be applied as a credit against the Rate Assessments.

5. DEFINITIONS

Authorised Persons – A person authorised by the property owner to act on his/her behalf.

Commercial Customer – Property rated with a differential rating category commercial/industrial as per Council Revenue Statement.

Concealed Leak – Water escaping on the customer's side of the water meter from the property's main internal water pipe supplying water to the property. For the water leak to be considered concealed it must be difficult to locate and there must be no visual or audible evidence of a leak.

Council – Goondiwindi Regional Council

Internal Water Supply - Any plumbing installation on the property owners' side of the water meter.

Leakage – Is the difference between water consumed during the leakage period and water consumed during periods of normal consumption in a comparable billing period for the property. Normal consumption may be determined by analysing previous comparable billing periods, average daily consumption (particularly where the property has had a change of ownership), or other reasonable methodology as determined by Council.

Ratepayer – A person or organisation that has a direct billing relationship with Council.

6. APPLICATION GUIDELINES

Where the applicant (being the ratepayer or authorised person) is seeking financial assistance for a concealed leak, a Concealed Leak Application Form must be submitted to Council within 30 days from either the date of issue of the Water Notice, or the leak being detected and subsequently repaired.

The Water Notice is to be paid in full or an approved payment commitment is to be entered into prior to the due date of the water notice.

7. ELIGIBILITY POLICY CRITERIA

All the following eligibility criteria must be met for an application for a financial adjustment due to a concealed leak to be considered:

- The ratepayer applying for relief from water consumption charges must be responsible for the payment of the water consumption charges.
- For the water leak to be considered concealed it must be difficult to locate and there must be no visual or audible evidence of the leak and the leak must be in the internal main water pipe supplying water to the property.
- A ratepayer must have a water leak repaired by a licenced plumber, within fourteen (14) working days of the ratepayer becoming aware of the leak or of being advised by Council of a potential water leak.
- The request (on the approved form) must be accompanied by a licensed plumber's invoice as proof that the leak has been detected and repaired.
- Ratepayers must apply to Council for water leak relief by completing Council's prescribed application form, within thirty (30) days of having the leak repaired, unless there are compelling reasons why this timeframe cannot be achieved. The application must be accompanied by an account from a licensed plumber as well as a statutory declaration from the licensed plumber providing details of the water leak that was repaired.
- Evidence from the ratepayer and a licensed plumber that the leak was concealed and has been repaired. This shall include photographs of the site and surrounding area of the leak and the damaged section of pipe.
- Details of the water meter reading immediately after repairs is compulsory and is to be entered on the Application Form 'Water Consumption Adjustment' form.

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- Where a leak has occurred with a Community Titles Scheme (CTS), the application for an adjustment must be submitted as follows:
 - Where the CTS is individually sub-metered and the sub-meters have been approved to be read and billed by Council, and the leak occurred within a lot forming part of the CTS (ie not within the common property), the lot owner must submit the required documentation.
 - Where the CTS is individually sub-metered and the sub-meters have been approved to be read and billed by Council, and the leak occurred within the common property, the body corporate must submit the required documentation.
 - Where the CTS is not individually sub-metered, or the sub-meters have not been approved to be read and billed by Council, and the leak occurred elsewhere within the CTS, the body corporate acting on behalf of all lot owners in the CTS must submit the required documentation.

8. SPECIFIC EXCLUSIONS

Relief will not be provided for leaks that occur in the following circumstances, as they are considered accessible and able to be actively monitored by the ratepayer:

- The leak occurring in a water fitting or appliance including taps, toilets, hot water systems, and other water appliances.
- Leaks in sprinklers and irrigation systems.
- Leaks in swimming pools, spas, ponds and other water features and the related fittings and pipe work supplying them.
- Leaks caused due to construction, excavation, building, renovation or other similar activity on the property.
- Leaks in hoses, hose pipes, external taps and fittings.
- Leaks in solar panels, evaporative coolers or the pipe work supplying them.
- Faulty plumbing or human error.
- The applicant did not take any action to repair or report the leak within 30 days from either the date of issue of the Water Consumption Notice, or the leak being detected.
- The leak was not repaired by a Queensland licenced plumber.
- The leak was caused by wilful, accidental or negligent damage.
- The application is found to be incomplete.
- Residential customers must have experienced a minimum water loss of 100 kilolitres as a result of the concealed leak.
- Commercial customers must have experienced a minimum water loss of 200 kilolitres as a result of the concealed leak.

9. GENERAL CONDITIONS

Customers are responsible for the installation, repair, maintenance, and replacement of all the pipes, fixtures, fittings, and mains connected to water tanks on their property up to the water meter. If a leak is detected it is the responsibility of the customer to have the leak detected and repaired by a licensed plumber as soon as possible.

An inspection of the property may be required by Council to verify the repair and establish the severity of the leakage before the application can be assessed. Further, before acting upon the request for relief from water consumption charge due to leakage, Council may need to seek additional clarifying information from the owner/agent of the property that repaired the leakage.

Council endeavours to notify customers of a potential leak based on the consumption higher than previous meter readings. There may be other reasons for higher water use than a concealed leak, it is therefore recommended that customers first conduct their own assessment of water use (including meter read and leak test) prior to outlaying the cost of a licensed plumber for leak detection.

10. APPROVED APPLICATIONS

Approved applications for water consumption charge adjustments will be calculated using the following provisions:

- An estimated amount of usage based on the average of the past three (3) Water Consumption Notices. This average amount will then be converted to the current reading period, generally six (6) months.
- A maximum adjustment of 50% of the difference between the charged water usage and the estimated water usage. The estimated usage must be calculated up to the date of repair, not just the current reading date. This is necessary so that any water usage recorded on the meter, (as a result of the leak) but not yet billed, can be included in the one claim.

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- If the current owner has not owned the property for a period of three (3) rating periods, an average usage will be calculated based on the period of time the current owner has owned the property.

No further requests for water consumption charge adjustments will be considered for the property for a period of one (1) year. In the instance where the property changes ownership, this period shall be renewed.

10.1. Approved Adjustment Authorisation Level

The amount of the water consumption charge adjustment will determine the level of authorisation required as detailed in below.

Table 1

Value of Adjustment	Authorised by
Up to \$1000	Director of Engineering
Greater than \$1000	Chief Executive Officer

11. LEGISLATION

*Chapter 4, Part 7, Section 102(3) Local Government Regulation 2012;
Plumbing and Drainage Act 2002 (Section 87) Standard Plumbing; and Drainage Regulation 2003
Section 7 Part 1.*

12. REVIEW DATE

August 2021

13. ATTACHMENTS

Nil