

# Paying water charges

## Information for tenants

Your landlord can only ask you to pay water usage charges if all the minimum criteria have been met.

### Minimum criteria

The minimum criteria for passing on water usage charges is:

- the rental premises must be individually metered (or water is delivered by vehicle, such as those with water tanks on rural properties), and
- the charges must not exceed the amount billed for water usage by the water supplier, and
- the rental premises must meet required 'water efficiency' standards.

### Water efficiency standards

A rental property is only considered water efficient if it meets these standards.

Water efficiency devices	Minimum standard required
Internal cold water taps and single mixer taps for kitchen sinks and bathroom hand basins	A maximum flow rate of 9 litres per minute
Showerheads	A maximum flow rate of 9 litres per minute
No leaking taps	No leaking taps anywhere on the premises at the start of the tenancy or when the other water efficiency measures are installed

The requirement for sink and basin taps to have a maximum flow rate of 9 litres per minute does not apply to other taps in the premises such as bathtub taps, laundry taps, outside taps for the garden, or taps which supply washing machines and dishwashers.

The landlord does not necessarily need to change the showerheads and tap fittings. The water efficiency measures can be achieved simply by installing aerators or regulators to existing taps and showerheads and fixing any leaking taps on the premises.

### Proving water efficiency

It is important to note the presence of the water efficiency measures on the condition report for the premises.

If you are unsure if the taps and showerheads in your property meet the required standards ask the landlord or agent to provide some evidence. You could carry out a simple bucket and stop watch test to see if, when fully turned on, the flow rate is less than 9 litres in a minute.

### Charges limited to water usage

You are only responsible to pay water usage charges. A water usage charge is based on the volume of water supplied to the residential premise.

Water can be supplied to the premise in different ways depending on which services are available to the area. For example, some areas may also supply water that is recycled. If this is the case, you will be responsible to pay any usage charges.

Some local water supply authorities may also provide a breakdown of the water usage component on your bill which may separately itemise water usage and sewerage usage charges. The total water usage charge is the same as if there were no separately itemised usage charges, which you will be responsible to pay.

Other costs (fixed) on the water bill such as water service or sewerage services are payable by the landlord. These costs are charged regardless of whether the property is occupied or not and you cannot be asked to pay them.

The landlord or agent cannot charge you an administration fee for passing on the bill, late fees or other additional amounts.

## Time to pay

You only have to pay if the landlord or agent gives you a copy of the part of the water bill setting out the water usage charges payable, or some other evidence showing how your usage was calculated, within 3 months of getting the bill. You must be given 21 days to pay the amount owing. So long as they request your payment within the 3 months, if you don't pay they can still take action to recover the money later on (eg. making a claim against your bond or getting an order from the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal).

## Things to know

Some important points to remember include:

- If you remove or tamper with the water efficiency devices you still have to pay for water usage and you may have to pay to replace them.
- If you think your water bill is too high, it may be helpful to contact your local water provider about average water usage. A large increase in water usage may indicate a water leak on the property. You should let the agent or landlord know as soon as possible.
- Water billing periods are unlikely to align with tenancy agreements. It is important that the water meter reading be noted on the condition report at the start and end of each tenancy to ensure you are not paying for another tenant's water usage.
- Social housing tenants may have a different system applied for calculating and paying water usage. Contact Housing NSW for further information.
- These provisions apply to all tenancies, regardless of the terms of any existing leases.
- If you have agreed to pay for water usage, the landlord or agent is not allowed to deduct the charge from rent you have paid; it must be made as a separate payment in addition to the rent.