

Policy Document

Water Charges Policy

Location	Operations NSW/ACT
Policy Type	Social and Affordable Housing
Version	2.3
Issue Date	March 2021
National Regulatory Code	Performance Outcome 1 Tenant and Housing Services

1. OBJECTIVE

- 1.1. This policy applies to all tenants in Argyle Community Housing (Argyle Housing) properties, except crisis accommodation, in regard to water usage charges. Argyle Housing will charge tenants for water usage in a manner which is fair and consistent.

2. BACKGROUND AND SCOPE

- 2.1. Argyle Housing promotes and respects the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all persons with a disability and provides a service to tenants in line with the principles of the NSW Disability Inclusion Act 2014, Disability ACT and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).
- 2.2. Argyle Housing supports and encourages a person-centered and culturally sensitive approach to service delivery.
- 2.3. Argyle Housing promotes and respects the rights and freedoms of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- 2.4. Argyle Housing will:
 - Charge tenants for water usage in accordance with the NSW Residential Tenancies Act 2010, the NSW Ministerial Guidelines for Community Housing Water Charging July 2012 and the ACT Residential Tenancies Act 1997 (RTA)
 - Advise tenants of any changes to this policy which may occur.

3. DEFINITIONS

Appeal	Occurs when a service user asks for a decision made by Argyle Housing to be formally reviewed.
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4. POLICY DETAIL

Water service fee

4.1. Argyle Housing will pay for water service fees as required by applicable legislation.

Methods of charging water usage

4.2. The method applied to a particular property for water charging will be dependent on the presence or absence of a separate water meter for that property.

4.3. **Properties with a separate water meter:** Tenants will be charged for water usage as per the invoice received from the Water Authority. Water charges will be billed within forty (40) days of Argyle Housing receiving an invoice from the respective Water Authority.

4.4. Where an individual water meter is present and an individual account is NOT generated by the Water Authority, Argyle Housing will calculate the water usage based on the individual meter reading and current market rates as per the local Water Authority.

4.5. **Properties with a shared water meter (NSW tenants only) :** Tenants will be charged a portion of the Water Authority Tax Invoice according to the following formula:
'Water Authority Tax invoice minus deduction for common area (as specified below) divided by the number of people living in each unit and proportioned accordingly.'

Tenants moving properties or exiting Argyle Housing

4.6. If a tenant is transferring to another property or exiting Argyle Housing services, Argyle Housing will charge for water usage up to the end of the Residential Tenancy Agreement at that property.

4.7. At the end of tenancy inspection the water meter reading will be taken and usage calculated based on current Water Authority rates relevant to that council area. Wherever possible this account will be applied to the tenant account within 7 days of the end of tenancy.

4.8. No bond will be refunded to the tenant until water charges have been applied to the tenants account.

Common area water usage

4.9. Where a common area exists, Argyle Housing will pay the water usage for the common areas.

4.10. In properties with a shared water meter, Argyle Housing will make an allowance for the common area water usage by applying the following method:

Where there are less than 10 properties

Argyle Housing will pay 10% of the bill.

Where there are more than 10 properties

Argyle Housing will treat the common area as 1 unit of accommodation.



Where there is more than 1 common area – e.g. a unit complex with 10 units & 2 designated common areas Argyle Housing will count the total accommodation units as 12 for the purpose of charging water usage.

Argyle Housing will treat each common area as 1 unit of accommodation.

Information provided to Tenants

4.9 Tenants will be provided the following information at the time of water billing dependent on the presence or absence of a separate water meter for that property –

Properties with a separate water meter:

- a. Letter explaining the charges, methods of payments, and notice that payment is due within 21 days
- b. Copy of the water authority notice
- c. Copy of the debit note indicating charge against the non-rent account

Properties without a separate water meter:

- a. Letter explaining the charges, methods of payments, and notice that payment is due within 21 days
- b. Copy of the debit note indicating charge against the non-rent account

Payment of water usage charges

4.11. Tenants can pay their water usage in a lump sum payment or by instalments. Any payments for water must be specified as water payments. All water usage charges fall due 21 days of receiving the water usage account.

4.12. If this invoice is not paid in full by the 22nd day, Argyle Housing will attempt to conciliate a repayment plan with the tenant and register this with NCAT.

4.13. If a conciliation agreement is unable to be made then an application to NCAT/ACAT for a Compensation Order will be made within 60 days of the invoice date.

4.14. Tenancy Officers will work with tenants at the commencement of their tenancy to estimate future water charges consistent with their household size and encourage them to enter into an early repayment arrangement to prevent bill shock and minimization of water debt.

Hardship

4.15. Argyle Housing will assist tenants who are experiencing financial hardship on a case by case basis.

4.16. To be considered for hardship the tenants must provide documented evidence to support their request.

Appeals and Reviews

4.17. Tenants can appeal decisions relating to water charging in community housing in accordance with Argyle Housings Appeals Policy.



5. RELATED POLICIES AND DOCUMENTS

- 5.1. Delegation of Authority Schedule
- 5.2. Appeals Policy
- 5.3. Ainslie Village Utility Charges
- 5.4. NSW Ministerial Guidelines for Community Housing Water Charging
- 5.5. National Community Housing Standards Reference - 1.2 Establishing and maintaining tenancies

Version Control

Version No	Date	Author	Position	Next Review Date
1.0	10/03/2014	J. Irwin		
2.0	20/05/2015	M. Ward	Operations Manager NSW	19/05/2016
2.1	01/05/2016	M. Ward	GM Operations	01/05/2017
2.2	07/09/2018	C. Doherty	Housing Services Manager	06/07/2019
2.3	27/5/2019	C. Doherty	Housing Services Manager	27/05/2021
2.4	13/01/2021	C. Doherty	Housing Services Manager	13/01/2023

