



Fact Sheet

Water charges

What are the rules?

The Residential Tenancies Act 2010 No.42 was amended in July 2012. Section 139 of the Act states a tenant under a social housing tenancy agreement must pay to the landlord any charges in respect of water usage.

Charges for water usage must be determined in accordance with the approved Minister's guidelines - 'Guidelines for Water Charging in Community Housing'.

Pacific Link Housing Water Charging Policy

Community housing providers can charge for water usage under the Residential Tenancies Act 2010 (s139). Pacific Link Housing (PLH) has a Water Charging Policy, which aligns with the Act and the Ministerial Guidelines. All water charges are implemented in accordance with the Pacific Link Housing Water Charging Policy.

As a social housing provider, PLH charges for water usage under s139 of the Act, and Section 39 (clause 11 of the Residential Tenancy Agreement) does not apply.

How do water charges affect me?

Your charges for water usage depend on whether you are living in a property with a separate water meter (e.g. house), or in a property with a shared water meter (e.g. apartment/unit in a block of units).

Properties with a separate water meter

Tenants in properties with a separate water meter are billed for the actual water usage on a quarterly basis. PLH invoices tenants upon receipt of the water usage bill from the relevant Water Authority.

Properties with a shared water meter

A small number of properties have shared water meters. This means that one water meter measures the entire amount of water that has been used by more than one unit. Under the NSW Residential Act 2010 and the Community Housing Water Charging Guidelines, tenants with shared meters will be charged a proportion of the total property water bill according to the household type. There is no exemption from water charges for tenants temporarily away from their dwelling. Common area water usage will be determined and deducted from all tenant water charges.

How will I pay for water usage charges?

Each tenant has a water charging account attached to their tenancy. It is advisable that tenants pay an amount each week or fortnight towards their water usage. Alternatively, tenants can pay for water usage in a lump sum. If a water charge remains unpaid for more than 21 days from the date it is charged to the tenant's account then PLH may take action through the Consumer, Trader and Tenancy Tribunal (CTTT) to recover the unpaid water usage charges. Tenants should contact PLH if they are having difficulty making payments to discuss payment plan options. See PLH's Rent and Water Arrears Factsheet.

Are there any allowances?

PLH may consider granting allowances to tenants with separate water meters if the tenant or a household member:

- is on a home based dialysis machine and/or;
- has a medical condition or disability that requires them to use significantly more water than usual.

All applications for water charging allowances must be approved based on documented evidence to support your claim.

What if I am not happy with the new Water Charging Policy?

Tenants cannot appeal the decision to charge for water usage in community housing properties. Tenants can, however, lodge an appeal in the following instances:

1. If they think that their water charges have not been assessed properly and in accordance with the Water Charging Policy (only applies to properties with shared water meters).
2. If they disagree with a decision in relation to the water usage allowance.

All appeals can be lodged through the Housing Appeals Committee, but it will not hear appeals relating to the actual water usage charges for tenants in properties with separate water meters. For appeals to the HAC contact 1800 629 794, or refer to their website www.hac.nsw.gov.au

More information:

For further information please refer to the Water Charging Policy, available from our website, www.pacificlink.org.au or your PLH Housing Manager.