
WATER METER READING AND BILLING POLICY

APPROVALS

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POLICY OWNER	Water and Waste		
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OBJECTIVE

The objective of this policy is to define how Isaac Regional Council (Council) reads, calculates and applies charges relevant to the consumption of water in the Isaac Region.

Council's water supply charges have been established in accordance with the *Water Act 2000* and Sections 92 and 94 of the *Local Government Act 2009*.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all customers who have a Council water meter connected to their property and who receive a water notice for water consumption.

DEFINITIONS

TERM / ACRONYM	MEANING
AMR	Automatic Meter Reader. This is the device attached to each individual meter that allows the water usage to be automatically uploaded to Council's system.
Authorised Person	An Authorised Person means any person appointed by the Council under: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Chapter 8, Part 2A, section 973, of the <i>Water Act 2000</i>;• Chapter 6, Part 6, section 202, of the <i>Local Government Act 2009</i>; or• Chapter 2, Part 3, section 45, of the <i>Water Supply (Safety and Reliability) Act 2008</i>
Council	Isaac Regional Council.
Customer	A customer is any consumer of Council's products or services whom receives a water notice for water consumption .
Consumption	The amount of water consumed during a given period which is measured in kilolitres (kL) to calculate water usage.
Consumption Charge	The basis for charging for each kilolitre (kL) of water used, as set out in Council's Revenue Statement each year.
Property End Use	The type of property being serviced by Council, which may include residential house, multiple occupancy, commercial, industrial or mixed use.
Property Attributes	Unique characteristics that form the basis for applying charges to an individual premise, e.g. the number of dwellings, the type of commercial activity.
Sundry Debtors	Debtors invoiced for the supply of miscellaneous products and services.

Water Meter	A device, including an AMR or any equipment related to the device, for measuring the volume of water supplied to a property and installed on infrastructure that supplies retail water services at that property.
Water Notice	A summary statement providing a list of charges for services provided by Council that are due and payable.

POLICY STATEMENT

Accessing the Meter

An authorised person may enter a customer's property at any reasonable time (section 37 of the *Water Supply (Safety and Reliability) Act 2008*) without prior notice to carry out any of the following activities:

- Read a meter.
- Check the accuracy of a meter.
- Maintain or replace a meter.

To assist in accessing and reading the meter, customers are required to ensure that:

- A clear space of at least 300 millimetres horizontally and 1,200 millimetres vertically is maintained, around any of Council's meters on the customer's premises.
- There is easy and safe access to the meter at all times.
- A branch or fitting to a property water supply connection is not connected within one metre of Council's meters, except with Council's approval.
- They notify Council of damaged or malfunctioning meters.
- They notify Council if they have a dog that may hinder the ability to access the meter.

Routine Meter Reads

Where possible, all water notices for consumption are calculated based on the information supplied through an AMR or a manual/physical meter reading in order to determine the water usage over a given period. For customers who do not have an AMR installed, Council will take all reasonable steps to manually read the water meter at each customer's property every six months.

It is the responsibility of the property owner to ensure the water meter is accessible for reading, or if not possible, when requested, will make arrangements with Council to supply a reading to enable accurate billing.

In accordance with Section 102 of the *Local Government Regulation 2012*, water meters are taken to have been read during the period that starts two (2) weeks before, and ends two (2) weeks after, the day on which the water meters are actually read.

Estimated Water Use

While Council will use its best endeavours to ensure metering data is obtained, occasionally Council may be required to estimate the reading. A customer's water notice will clearly indicate whether the billed water consumption has been based on an estimate of water used rather than a meter reading and provide the reason for the estimate.

Council will base the customer's consumption charge on a reasonable estimate by using one of the following approaches:

- Referring to an average consumption in a previous period.
- Referring to the consumption for the same time period of the previous year for the premise.
- The town average for properties in the same category/tariff type.
- On a basis agreed with the customer.

Customers can contact Council for further information on the basis of the estimate and the reason for the estimate.

Council will provide customers with a revised consumption total if it is found that the estimate was not reasonable having regard to a subsequent and accurate meter reading.

Council will ensure that an estimation of water use does not happen in two (2) or more consecutive billing cycles, without reasonable justification, such as access to the meter not being available at the property.

If the customer believes that their consumption charge is inaccurate due to a faulty meter or unreasonable estimation, they may request a special meter reading or meter test to verify the consumption charged on their water notice.

Special Meter Reading

A customer, their agent or the property manager may ask Council to carry out a special meter reading at any time to calculate the amount of water used since the last meter reading was completed. The Special Water Meter Reading fee is included in the current financial year Schedule of Fees and Charges.

For customers who have an AMR installed on their meter, the customer, their agent or the property manager may ask Council to carry out a special meter reading to confirm the AMR is functioning correctly, and the consumption information uploaded to the system reconciles with the consumption recorded on the meter. In these cases, the customer will be charged for the cost of conducting a special meter reading unless there is a discrepancy between the manual read and the system data.

Testing the Meter

In cases where water charges have been levied when the meter is suspected by the customer of being faulty, Council will test the meter, at the customer's request and at a time suitable to all parties. A meter is considered to be faulty if the test shows it is outside the margin specified in the Meter Test Fee included in the current financial year Schedule of Fees and Charges.

The customer is required to pay the Meter Test Fee as per the current financial year Schedule of Fees and Charges prior to the meter test being carried out.

If on test the meter is found to be faulty to the detriment of the customer, Council will:

1. Refund to the customer the charge levied for testing the meter.
2. Write off the overcharged proportion of the customer's current water consumption account and issue a corrected water account (up to twelve (12) months retrospectively).
3. Remove the faulty meter and replace it with a new meter.

If the meter is found, on test, to be faulty to the detriment of Council (e.g. the meter is reading lower than it should and the customer has been undercharged for their consumption), the water notice originally supplied will stand for that billing period. Council will not seek to collect any undercharged amounts incurred during this billing cycle from the customer. The Meter Test Fee will be refunded to the customer and the faulty meter will be removed and replaced with a new meter at no cost to the customer.

The customer or a representative of the customer will be required to sign the meter test form as an acknowledgement of the test results.

The customer will be advised of the outcome of a water meter test within ten (10) working days from the date Council receives a completed application and payment from the customer.

Meter Replacement

Council will replace a meter at no cost to the customer if the meter is:

- found to be faulty (if it is registering outside the prescribed margin and unable to be repaired), or
- is part of a meter replacement program.

Damaged Water Meters

If a water meter is damaged, the customer must notify Council immediately. While the water meter remains the property of Council, property owners/customers are responsible for the water meter and if damaged in any way and by any cause regardless of intent, the customer will incur a fee for repair or replacement as outlined in the current financial year Schedule of Fees and Charges.

Theft of Water or the Meter

Water mains, fire hydrants and water meters belong to Council. It is illegal to:

- Use an unauthorised connection to Council's water supply.
- Use an unmetered water supply without Council approval.
- Remove the locking pin on a locked and tagged water pipe.
- Use a fire service for anything other than testing, a fire drill or fighting a fire.
- Tamper with a meter.
- Steal a meter.

Theft of water from one property to another property is a civil matter and is not covered under this policy.

Water Billing

Council is committed to:

- Issuing timely and accurate water notices.
- Ensuring customers have a range of convenient options to make their payment and these options are listed on the water notice.
- Ensuring disputed amounts are promptly investigated and that no debt recovery action is taken against a customer until an outcome is reached.
- Adjusting an account from a billing period when the customer has notified us that a change to property end-use or connections has occurred. Undercharged amounts due to information not being promptly supplied will be back billed to the customer.

Council's water supply service customers are required to:

- Pay the account on or before the payment term of thirty (30) days after the water notice has been issued or notify Council if there is any dispute or financial difficulty affecting the customer's capacity to pay.
- Ensure that the customer contact information is up to date.
- Advise Council immediately if there are any changes to the property end-use or type of connections, ensuring relevant service applications have been made with Council.

To calculate an accurate water notice relevant to each property, Council requires the following information:

- The property's end-use description to be provided by the customer (e.g. standalone residential house, strata units, multiple occupancy, industrial, commercial, vacant land, etc.).
- The type/number of connections to the water supply, including the correct metering to the individual property.
- The application of attributes which are unique to each property subject to their location or type of end-use (e.g. the number of dwellings in a multiple occupancy property, allocation of chargeable units applied to tier bandings).
- The application of prices for water infrastructure and consumption, as determined by Council, which are used to calculate the charges for each property based on the relevant property end-use, connection types and relevant property attributes as per Council's current financial year Revenue Statement.
- The consumption recorded on the water meter(s) to calculate water usage.

Water usage will be calculated for each individual meter twice per financial year and consumption charges will be retrospectively charged on the water bill based on the billing periods end dates within each financial years Revenue Statement.

LEGISLATIONS AND RELATED GUIDELINES

- *Water Act 2000*
- *Water Supply (Safety and Reliability) Act 2008*
- *Local Government Regulation 2012*
- *Local Government Act 2009*
- *Isaac Regional Council Schedule of Fees and Charges*
- *Isaac Regional Council Revenue Statement*
- *Isaac Regional Council Water and Wastewater Customer Service Standards*

REFERENCES

ID	NAME
WW-POL-046	Concealed Leak Remission Policy
WW-PRO-004	Concealed Leak Remission Procedure
CORP-POL-085	Water and Sewerage Connections and Disconnections Policy
WW-PRO-049	Temporary Appointment of Contract Water Meter Readers Procedure
WW-FRM-272	Application for Water Connection/Disconnection Form
WW-FRM-305	Water Meter Test Form