

# Concealed Water Leaks Policy

## Policy Approval and Distribution

Approved by	Council resolution
Responsible Officer	Manager Finance and Customer Service
Section/Service Unit	Finance
Next Review Date	01-September-2022

## Version Control

Ref	Date	Description	Resolution Number
0.1	27-10-2020	Presented to Council.	318/2020

## Purpose

To establish clear guidelines and procedures in relation to the write-off of water consumption in the instance of a concealed water leak.

## Policy Provision

1. For the purposes of this policy, a “concealed water leak” is defined as water escaping from a private water service that is hidden from view (usually below ground or under concrete). The interpretation of the customer being unaware of a leaking service and the leak being concealed from view is to be taken that there is no visible evidence of soaking or dampness. Damp walls, lush grass or damp soil does not constitute being concealed from view. Running toilets, leaking taps or unmonitored automated sprinkler systems (as examples only) are not concealed water leaks.
2. Council is not responsible for leaking internal property pipes beyond the water meter. Any repairs to the internal property pipes will need to be arranged and payable by the property owner. This includes (but is not limited to) any damage which may be resultant from tree roots or aging pipework.
3. Section 607 of the *Local Government Act 1993* refers to the write-off of rates, charges or interest. Section 131 of the *Local Government (General) Regulation 2005* determines that a write-off of rates or charges may be undertaken if there is an error in the assessment, if the amount is not lawfully recoverable, as a result of a decision of a court, or if the council or general manager believes on reasonable grounds that an attempt to recover the amount would not be cost effective.
4. The write-off of water consumption charges will be a ‘one-off’ provision which will be provided on the grounds that:
  - The customer was unaware of the leak and the leak was concealed from view.

- The leak was not due to the neglect of obvious defects in the private water service. The customer is responsible for the maintenance and repair of their private water service and evidence found of negligence or carelessness will result in the application being denied.
  - The private water service is repaired to Council's satisfaction. The customer must engage the services of a licensed plumber to repair the concealed leak in a timely fashion.
  - The water supply is turned off as soon as the leak has been identified in order to reduce further wastage.
- 5.** The amount of the write-off of water consumption charges will be determined by Council. The average water consumption for the preceding year, as well as the consumption during the period immediately prior to the leak will be used to estimate what the consumption would have been for the period in question if the leak had not been present. Council will write-off 50% of the consumption costs incurred above that of the average consumption determined for the period. If the balance of the account payable is determined to be excessive and is likely to be a financial burden on the ratepayer that cannot be reconciled with payment arrangements or other such agreement, the matter will be referred to Council for determination of the write-off amount under the Local Government Act 1993 and Local Government (General) Regulation 2005.
- 6.** If the property has been charged for sewer usage charges based on the consumption recorded by the water meter (ie. non-residential properties), the consumption that has been granted as the water consumption write-off will also be granted for sewer usage charges.
- 7.** Under the circumstances of this policy, no write-offs will be granted for water access or sewer access charges, or the consumption associated with other meter(s) at the property.
- 8.** The amount of the write-off will be determined by the Revenue Officer which shall then be authorised by council or the general manager in accordance with the delegations register.
- 9.** Claims for a write-off of water consumption or sewer usage under this policy must be made in writing. The customer is required to advise:
- How they became aware of the leak
  - The date they became aware of the leak
  - The details of the repair via a Plumber's Statement (as below)
- 10.** Before any write-off will be considered or granted, the leak must be repaired by a licensed plumber who must supply a written report to advise:
- The date the leak was detected
  - Where the leak was situated
  - The estimated rate of the leak
  - The date the leak was repaired
  - The meter reading at the time the leak was repaired (if available)
  - Possible cause
  - Copy of the plumber's invoice

It will be the responsibility of the ratepayer to make arrangements for this report to be supplied to the Council office.

- 11.** Ratepayers who are not considered eligible for a concealed leak write-off will be liable for all consumption of water that has passed through the meter.