



# Water Usage Charging: Ministerial Guidelines for ACHPs - FAQs

## What are the Water Usage Charging Ministerial Guidelines?

The Water Usage Charging Ministerial Guidelines outline the principles to be followed should water charges be levied for social housing tenants.

Under the Ministerial Guidelines, ACHPs are mandated to charge water usage to dwellings with separate water meters. ACHPs however have the discretion to charge water usage for dwellings with shared meters. Where an ACHP chooses to bill tenants for water usage, it will only do so in accordance with these guidelines.

## Why were the Guidelines reviewed?

The Guidelines were last published in June 2015 and have not been updated since.

The need to review and update the Guidelines was triggered by Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW (EWON) through the Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) as a result of the increasing number of complaints received from AHO tenants managed by ACHPs in the Far and Central Wests region of NSW.

The Guidelines have been updated to ensure they are relevant and effective in managing water charging both for tenants and ACHPs.

## When will the change occur?

The updated Guidelines were approved by the Minister in September 2022 and will be published on AHO's and ACHIA's websites.

ACHPs will need to adhere to the updated Guidelines once they are launched and made available to all ACHPs.

## How will ACHPs be informed of these changes?

The updated Guidelines are published on AHO and ACHIA websites.

AHO will send an email advising all ACHPs of the update. The email contains a link to AHO and ACHIA websites.

AHO will host a webinar to inform ACHPs of the update. AHO Sector Development and Regional Teams will provide ongoing support to ACHPs to implement the guidelines.

## What are the main changes in the revised Guidelines?

- Actual water usage will be charged for separately metered dwellings
- For dwellings with shared water meters, tenants will be advised on how their water usage is calculated
- Water bills will be issued separately from the tenant's rent
- There will be a new section on bore water usage charging
- There will also be a new section on dwellings fitted with hydropanel
- There will be better clarity on tenants' rights to seek appeal or review, and an improved explanation of the process

## What do ACHPs need to do?

- ACHPs are required to:
  - charge actual water usage for separately metered dwellings
  - provide copies of the water bill issued by the local water authority when sending the water bill to tenants with separate water meter
  - advise tenants on how their water usage is calculated
  - pass on the tenants usage costs where dwellings are supplied with bore water and are separately metered

## How will these changes impact ACHPs?

- The clearer process for appeals and review in the revised Guidelines will allow ACHPs to better manage complaints from tenants
- There will be better tenant satisfaction especially for those in the Far and Central West of NSW leading to a decrease in complaints received by EWON

## How will these changes impact tenants?

- Tenants will be able to better understand how their water usage is calculated

## Who can I talk to about this change?

- Contact your regional AHO Office

**Western Region: (02) 8836 0090**

**Northern Region: (02) 4927 3268**

**Sydney South East Region: (02) 8836 9407**