



**BIRRIBEE  
HOUSING**



# Water Charging Policy

**Birribee Housing**

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# 1. About this document

This policy explains when tenants pay for water, how charges are calculated, and what to do if you need an exemption or want to appeal.

## 1.1 Purpose of this policy

Birribee Housing's water charging policy has been developed to ensure that staff and tenants have the information they need about how tenants are expected to meet their obligation to pay for water usage.

## 1.2 Scope and context of the policy

This policy applies to tenants of Birribee Housing, exceptions to the application of this to a portfolio of houses is based on agreement between Birribee Housing and the property owner (i.e. a Local Aboriginal Land Council).

## 1.3 Terms and definitions

These definitions apply to the interpretation of the terms used in this document.

Term	Meaning
Residential Tenancy Agreement	An agreement between a landlord and tenant whereby the tenant agrees to live in a property in return for rent. It is legal contract (lease) that sets out the terms and conditions of the arrangement.
Water Authority	The body/agency authorised to hold, issue and charge for water usage.
Tenant	The person who signed the Residential Tenancy Agreement

## 1.4 Relevant legislation, regulations or standards

- [Residential Tenancies Act 2010](#)
- [Homes NSW – Ministerial Guidelines for Water Usage Charging 2025-2026](#)
- [Community Housing Water Charging Guidelines 2021](#)

## 2. Water charging policy details

### 2.1 Principles

The following principles will apply:

- Tenants are responsible for water usage charges to their property;
- Birribee Housing will charge tenants for water usage under s139 of the Residential Tenancies Act 2010 and applies the Ministerial Guidelines for Water Usage Charging
- Tenants will be charged for their water usage in a manner which is consistent and transparent
- Crisis/Emergency Housing will not be charged water usage
- Transitional Housing may be charged water usage depending on the property depending,

### 2.2 Water charging methods

Birribee Housing will calculate water charges as follows:

#### 2.2.1 Properties with separate water meters

We will charge tenants the actual water usage cost, as per the invoice received from the Water Authority. A separate water meter must be readily accessible for reading by the Water Authority and generate an individual water account. Water usage is separately itemised in the invoice from the Water Authority and the on-charging of this to tenants is not to include costs for connection, sewerage or other costs not deemed to be water usage.

New incoming tenants that have been in the property for less than the entire water authority billing cycle will have the water usage charges apportioned based on the period of tenancy. The quarterly invoice will be divided by 13 (the number of weeks in quarterly billing cycle), and the weekly amount will be charged to the tenant based on number of weeks tenanted.

Water usage example for 6 weeks tenancy with a \$150 water usage charge from the water authority

$$\$150 \div 13 = \$11.54^*(\text{rounded up})$$

$$\$11.54 \times 6 = \$69.24$$

\$69.24 would be charged to the tenant

The same apportionment process will be applied to outgoing tenants.

Birribee will hold on file the invoice issued from the water authority and on request can supply this to tenants.

If in the instance there is no separately identifiable water meter for the property or the property has two (or more) tenancies on the single water meter it will be treated as a shared water meter.

#### 2.2.2 Properties with shared water meters

Birribee Housing will charge a percentage of the tenant's rent for water usage in properties with shared water meters where Birribee Housing pays the water usage account. From 1 January 2026 the water usage charge for shared meter properties shall be 5.5% of the rent a tenant pays i.e. the tenant's net rent. The maximum water charge for social housing properties shall be capped at \$11 per week, this cap does not apply to Affordable Housing.

This percentage can be amended and such amendments will be publicly available on the Birribee Housing website notified to affected tenants.

Since it is not possible to determine an individual usage charge for shared meters, the water charge is considered the tenant's contributions towards water usage costs. Water charges will be added to the tenant's account each week.

Each quarter, Birribee Housing will ensure that the charges for all of the tenants combined do not exceed the total water bill received from the Water Authority for that period. If the total amount paid by all tenants exceeds the total bill received by Birribee Housing from the Water Authority, Birribee Housing will reimburse tenants the amount that was overpaid.

### 2.2.3 Common area water usage

Birribee Housing will pay the water usage for all common areas. In properties with a shared water meter, Birribee Housing will ensure that a portion of the water bill is allocated against the common area usage.

## 2.3 Payment of water usage charges

Tenants can pay their water usage in a lump sum payment or set up an agreement to pay an amount each week/fortnight. This optional apportionment method of having the water usage divided by a preferred payment cycle of weekly or fortnightly payments will require regular review as the costs for water usage fluctuate based on household activity and charges by the water authority. Adjustments will be required to rectify any over or under charging.

Any payments for water must be specified as water payments. If a water charge remains unpaid for more than 14 days from the date it is charged to the tenant's account, Birribee Housing may take action to recover unpaid charges.

## 2.4 Exemptions and allowances

Birribee Housing will consider exemptions/reduction to the water charging policy for tenants with separate water meters if:

- The tenant or a household member is on a home-based dialysis and/or;
- The tenant or a household member has a medical condition or disability that requires them to use significantly more water than usual.
- A tenant with a separate meter lives in a large household of six or more people.

To be considered for a water usage exemption or reduction, tenants should speak to their Housing Officer or call Birribee Housing. If the application is based on medical condition or disability, the tenant must be asked to provide documented evidence to support their application.

Allowances will be credited to the tenant's account at the end of each quarterly billing cycle.

There are no exemptions or allowances for tenants who are temporarily away from their property.

## 2.5 Tenants moving properties or exiting Birribee Housing

If a tenant is transferring to another property or exiting Birribee Housing services, Birribee Housing will charge for water usage up to the end of the Residential Tenancy Agreement. In the case of tenants with separate water meters, this will be a pro rata estimate based upon the previous quarter's actual water bill.

## 2.6 Complaints and appeals

Tenants cannot appeal the decision to charge for water usage but they can appeal Birribee Housing decisions relating to water charging for tenants with shared meters or to Birribee Housing decisions about exemptions or allowances.

Tenants should, in the first instance, contact Birribee Housing and request a review of the water charges.

If unsatisfied with Birribee Housing's decision, tenants are entitled to lodge an appeal to the Housing Appeals Committee (HAC). The HAC is an independent agency that can review certain decisions made by community housing providers, including decisions in relation to water charges. For more information about the HAC call 1800 629 794 or go to [www.hac.nsw.gov.au](http://www.hac.nsw.gov.au).

More information about making an appeal is available in the Birribee Housing policy on Complaints and Appeals.

## Document information

Version	2.0
Drafted by	Tenancy
Approved by	Chief Executive Officer
Date approved	January 2026
Replaces existing policies or procedures	Version 1.0
Review date	24 months

## Notice of liability

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2026

# Water - Separate Meter

Water has since time immemorial been a central component of our existence, the rivers that crisscross our country hold our stories and we are eternally responsible for their care.

We experience water differently today as it is made available to households at a cost.



## Household Water Usage

Individual water authorities across NSW set rates for water usage. Households have experienced increased costs of living including water.

Water authorities (e.g. Sydney Water) bill for water 4 times a year. This bill includes a mixture of charges such as:

- Wastewater (sewers)
- Water Service
- Environmental Charges
- and Water Usage.

Birribee Housing gets the bill from the water authority and pays the entire bill on behalf of households.

The water usage charge is the responsibility of the tenants and will be charged by Birribee to the tenant's account.

**We know that large bills are hard for households to manage. Birribee Housing has set up a payment arrangement that helps you by spreading this cost out over several weeks.**



### How we work out your water:

- Household's water account balance with Birribee and the water usage of the new bill are identified.
- Any credit with Birribee is deducted from the water usage
- Remaining water usage is then divided by number of weeks in the upcoming quarter (13) and charged to households

### Aunty Sandra



Aunty Sandra lives on her own and doesn't use too much water except when the tribe of nephews and nieces turn up during the school holidays. Between the extra showers and more washing her usage increases. Aunty Sandra has a water account balance of \$10 credit, and the new water bill has \$190 for usage.

$$\$190 - \$10 = \$180$$

$$\$180/13 \text{ weeks} = \$13.85 \text{ per week}$$

Aunty Sandra arranges with Birribee Housing to pay \$13.85 each week towards her water as she finds this easier than a large payment of \$180.



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Water Factsheet 2026 – Shared Meter

2026

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## Household Water Usage

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Water authorities (e.g. Sydney Water) bill for water 4 times a year. This bill includes a mixture of charges such as:

- Wastewater (sewers)
- Water Service
- Environmental Charges
- and Water Usage.

Birribee Housing gets the bill from the water authority and pays the entire bill on behalf of households. For some households they are on a shared meter and aren't separately metered.

A fair and reasonable water payment arrangement is created with the household, at 5.5% of weekly rent up to \$11 per week.

The water usage charge is the responsibility of the tenants and will be charged by Birribee to the tenant's account.



### How we work out your water:

- We assess water charges based on weekly rent up to the \$11 per week cap.
- The water charge is applied to the tenancy weekly.
- Birribee receives the shared meter water charge from the water authority and pays this.
- In the event that Birribee has charged more to shared metered households than Birribee was charged by the water authority, Birribee will reimburse the affected households.

### Mary



Mary lives in a unit complex which has a shared water meter. Birribee has calculated Mary's water usage charge based on her weekly rental charge.

Mary's rent is \$200 per week.  
 $\$200 \times 5.5\% = \$11$

Mary's weekly water usage charge is \$11.  
Mary pays \$11 to Birribee every week for water usage.



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