

## **5.5. SUB METERING (WATER) POLICY**

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### **RECOMMENDATION**

**That Council adopts the sub-metering (water) policy.**

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### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Council is continuing the rollout of a smart water meter network across the Shire which is due for completion this financial year. Following community feedback, it is suggested that Council adopt a consistent approach to the installation of sub-meters on multi-dwelling properties.

Where the existing water infrastructure permits, this will assist in allowing individuals to monitor and manage their own water usage. Therefore, it is essential that Council has a clear policy in place that defines the responsibilities of the parties involved in the process. This policy provides a clear delineation of responsibilities regarding the installation of sub meters on private property.

### **BACKGROUND**

Historically, Council has adopted an inconsistent approach to the ownership, installation, reading and billing of sub-meters across the Shire.

The result is that Council has assumed responsibility for reading and billing sub-meters at some multi-dwelling properties which has the potential to blur the responsibility and ownership of the assets that lie within private property beyond the master meter.

### **COMMENTS**

The rollout of smart meters across the Shire presents an opportunity to consolidate Council's approach to sub-metering of multi-dwelling properties. A significant number of smart- metered premises are multi-dwelling properties.

There is a growing awareness within the community of water usage and a desire to personally monitor and manage water consumption and to contribute to Council's water conservation efforts.

For residents of multi-dwelling premises, this is not something they can do as the majority of water bills are split on a proportional basis.

## PROPOSAL

The purpose of the new sub-metering policy is to:

- Enable Council to directly charge the owners of separate lots in new buildings for their actual water consumption within strata-titled properties.
- Provide a framework for Council employees and customers in relation to the sub-metering of individual units/ lots for new developments and existing developments if the management of the complex decides to install submeters, including the eligibility requirements for connection to Council's smart water meter network online portal, MiWater.
- Provide a clear delineation of responsibility for the customer and Council where a sub-meter is installed or is intended to be installed.
- Raise customer awareness of water consumption and the contribution of individual customers to their overall water consumption.

The policy relates to the following scenarios:

- New developments within a declared water service area
- Existing developments within a declared water service area with no sub-meters installed
- Existing developments within a declared water service area with mechanical sub-meters already installed

It clearly defines ownership responsibilities for the sub-meters. It should be noted that some multi dwelling properties contain aging water infrastructure that will not support the installation of sub-meters. It is also the responsibility of the relevant body corporate to determine how water bills for common use areas will be attributed to individual dwellings.

## FINANCIAL/RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

There should be no direct financial implications for Council. All associated fees and charges will be detailed on Council's schedule of fees and charges.

Where a smart sub-meter is installed and connected to the smart network, a small annual fee will be charged to the customer's account to cover costs associated with this additional work.

The fee is a cost-recovery fee and is determined in accordance with s 97 of the *Local Government Act 2009*.

## RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

The risk of not adopting this policy will see continued confusion from community members regarding the metering and allocation of water bills.

## SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

- Economic:** Both Council and customers will have an improved system for identifying water leaks, which will reduce non-revenue water losses across the Shire. Automatic meter reads will improve billing accuracy and efficiency.
- Environmental:** Customers will benefit from the ability to access near real-time water usage data. This will contribute to water security through reduced water usage which will reduce energy and chemical usage by treating and supplying less water.
- Social:** Smart water meters will modernise current water infrastructure to be in line with emerging standards and benefit the community with water usage awareness and confidence of accurate billing.

## CORPORATE/OPERATIONAL PLAN, POLICY REFERENCE

This report has been prepared in accordance with the following:

### Corporate Plan 2019-2024 Initiatives:

#### Theme 3 - Leading Environmental Stewardship

Our visitors and residents deeply value the unparalleled environment in which we live. We recognise our responsibility in protecting and preserving our natural world for generations to come. We understand the strong link between the environment and the economy: they are interdependent. Douglas Shire will be at the forefront of environmental protection by developing strategies, setting policies, and working with all stakeholders to become the envy of and to inspire locations across Australia and the World.

*Goal 1 - We will protect our sensitive environment and plan for the impact of climate change.*

*Goal 3 - We will continue to build water infrastructure so that the Douglas Shire may enjoy water security and water quality.*

*Goal 4 - We will partner with the community to educate and monitor.*

#### Theme 4 - Inclusive Engagement, Planning and Partnerships

In delivering for our communities, economy and environment, Douglas Shire will ensure open and transparent engagement and communication. We will develop robust strategic plans and we will partner with our community and key stakeholders.

*Goal 3 - We will recognise the critical role that our partners play in planning and delivering vital programs and services.*

#### Theme 5 - Robust Governance and Efficient Service Delivery

Strong governance and financial management are the foundations of the way in which Council will conduct its business and implement the initiatives of the Corporate Plan.

*Goal 2 - We will put the customer at the centre of our service delivery and process improvement as we deliver efficient and appropriate services based on community expectations.*

## Operational Plan 2022-2023 Actions:

**Implement Stage 2 of the Smart Water Meter Project** - Continue the rollout of smart water meters to move beyond Port Douglas to include Mossman and the surrounding areas – forms part of the Douglas Shire water security strategy.

### COUNCIL'S ROLE

Council can play a number of different roles in certain circumstances and it is important to be clear about which role is appropriate for a specific purpose or circumstance. The implementation of actions will be a collective effort and Council's involvement will vary from information only through to full responsibility for delivery.

The following areas outline where Council has a clear responsibility to act:

<b>Regulator</b>	Council has a number of statutory obligations detailed in numerous regulations and legislative Acts. Council also makes local laws to ensure that the Shire is well governed. In fulfilling its role as regulator, Council will utilise an outcomes-based approach that balances the needs of the community with social and natural justice.
<b>Service Provider</b>	Council provides many services to the community from roads and waste services to libraries and recreational facilities. Services evolve over time and it is the Council's mission to ensure that these services are appropriate, delivered efficiently, and designed with the customer at the centre.

### CONSULTATION

**Internal:** Water and wastewater, water billing, plumbing and drainage

**External:** Nil

### COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

No direct community engagement has been undertaken in relation to this policy.

However, feedback from members of the public currently unable to monitor and manage their own personal water consumption, as they live on multi-dwelling premises where the bill is split on a proportional basis based on the master meter reading, suggests that there should be a large future take-up of smart sub-metered premises.

### ATTACHMENTS

1. No 90 Sub metering Water Policy (2) [5.5.1 - 6 pages]

## No. 90 SUB-METERING (WATER) POLICY

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### Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Enable Council to directly charge the owners of separate lots in new buildings for their actual water consumption within strata-titled properties.
- Provide a framework for Council employees and customers in relation to the sub-metering of individual units/ lots for new developments and existing developments if the management of the complex decides to install submeters, including the eligibility requirements for connection to Council's smart water meter network online portal, MiWater.
- Provide a clear delineation of responsibility for the customer and Council where a sub-meter is installed or is intended to be installed.
- Raise customer awareness of water consumption and the contribution of individual customers to their overall water consumption.

### Scope

This policy is applicable to all eligible properties within a declared water service area, including non-residential properties, within the Douglas Shire Council area to which the Queensland Plumbing and Wastewater Code (QPW Code) applies.

### Applicable Legislation

This policy relates to the Queensland Plumbing and Wastewater Code (QPW Code) which was introduced on 1 January 2008.

### Policy Statement

The QPW Code is the primary tool for the introduction of sub-meters. The QPW Code specifically deals with water meters for new premises throughout the Douglas Shire Council area.

The QPW Code requires that any premises constructed after 1 January 2008 drawing water from a registered service provider's supply shall install sub-meters for meterable premises. In consideration of the QPW Code requirements, and to clarify the requirements for a sub-meter installation at a property, the following applicable and relevant criteria must be met:

#### New developments within a declared water service area

- Each individual unit or lot must be fitted with a smart sub-meter to measure the volume of water supplied to each individual premises – no mechanical meters will be approved for installation.
- Only smart sub-meters supplied by, and purchased from, Council will be considered for approval to install at a property.
- Each individual unit or lot with a smart sub-meter installed must be connected to Council's smart network to enable meter reading to occur.
- A community statement endorsed by the relevant body corporate for the scheme where the individual unit or lot is situated must be provided to Council to confirm how billing will occur.

- All water meters must be approved by Council prior to installation works commencing and a Council representative must be on-site at the time of installation and commissioning to the smart network.
- It is the responsibility of the developer to install, at their own cost, any additional transmission infrastructure that may be required to ensure that data can be accessed by Council's smart network.

#### **Existing developments within a declared water service area with no sub-meters installed**

- Each individual unit or lot owner wishing to install a smart sub-meter at an existing property must provide consent from all owners within the scheme, and all properties must install a sub-meter at their own cost. Where consent from all owners is not provided, the sub-meter installation will not be approved by Council.
- Only smart sub-meters supplied by, and purchased from, Council will be considered for approval to install at a property – mechanical meters will not be approved.
- All water meters must be approved by Council prior to installation works commencing and a Council representative must be on-site at the time of installation and commissioning to the smart network.
- Each individual unit or lot with a smart sub-meter installed must be connected to Council's smart network to enable meter reading to occur.
- It is the responsibility of the developer to install, at their own cost, any additional transmission infrastructure that may be required to ensure data can be accessed by Council's smart network.

#### **Existing developments within a declared water service area with mechanical sub-meters already installed**

- Where an existing mechanical sub-meter is installed, a unit or lot owner may engage a private contractor to upgrade the mechanical sub-meter to a smart sub-meter. If the intent of installing a smart sub-meter is to obtain a meter read for the property, all owners within the scheme must upgrade their mechanical meters to smart meters. Any changes to billing arrangements must be endorsed by the body corporate for the scheme and be provided to Council.
- Only smart sub-meters supplied by, and purchased from, Council are to be installed at a property.
- Where an existing sub-meter is being upgraded to a smart sub-meter, the plumber contracted to do the works on behalf of the owner must contact Council before any works commence, to arrange attendance of Council's authorised officer, who will commission the smart device at the time of the works occurring.
- Only fully-integrated smart meter units are approved for use as sub-meters – retrofit devices to existing mechanical meters are not permitted.
- Council will continue to read existing mechanical sub-meters that are currently being read until such time that the smart water meter network is fully commissioned. Council will, by official notice and within 30 days from the commissioning of the network, advise all mechanical sub-metered property owners of the date of cessation for the reading of their sub-meters.
- Where a smart sub-meter is installed and connected to Council's smart network, a small annual fee will be charged to the water utility charges account to cover costs associated with this additional work. The fee is a cost-recovery fee and is determined in accordance with s97 of the Local Government Act 2009.

#### **Application and Approval Process**

- For new sub-meter installations, an application for a compliance assessment approval under the Plumbing and Drainage Regulation 2019 must be submitted to Council and must include drawings and hydraulic plans that provide details for the proposed sub-meter installation location/s, and any related infrastructure proposed to be installed. Application fees and charges apply.

- For existing mechanical sub-meter installations being upgraded to smart sub-meters, the approved form available on Council's website must be completed, and the applicable fee must be paid prior to any replacement works commencing at the property. Application fees and charges apply.
- The responsible person contracted to undertake the sub-meter installations, for either new or replacement works, must contact Council at least 2 business days prior to the planned date of performing the works.
- Council's authorised officer must be in attendance at the time of works occurring to complete an inspection for permitted work, and/or to commission a smart sub-meter where a smart network connection is involved.

### **Ownership and responsibilities**

- All sub-meters must be situated so that they can be easily maintained by the owner.
- Sub-meters must be situated in a location that can transmit data to Council's smart network.
- All sub-meters installed on private common property will remain the property of the owner.
- Council's obligations for maintenance cease at the master meter.

### **Access to MiWater**

- It is the owner's responsibility to monitor their water consumption data' if connected to Council's smart water meter network.
- Property owner's/agents should register with MiWater to ensure they have access to information that would assist in identifying potential leaks. Early detection and repair works should assist in reducing water losses and bill values.
- Properties connected to the smart network are not eligible for financial assistance for leaks occurring within private property. Refer to Council's Concealed Leak Financial Assistance Policy for further information.

### **Faulty Meters**

- Faulty meters should be reported to Council in the first instance.
- If the meter is determined to be a faulty and falls within the manufacturer's warranty conditions, a referral to Council's smart water meter operator will occur.
- Any faults that do not fall within the manufacturer's warranty criteria will not be handled by Council.
- Faults that are deemed to be outside of the manufacturer's warranty criteria will be deemed to be a private matter for the owner to resolve. Fees and charges may apply.

### **Fees and Charges**

- For all relevant fees and charges, refer to Council's website for the current utility charges, and schedule of fees and charges.
- Where POA is listed, refer to Council's Water and Wastewater Department to request a quote for the works involved.

This policy is not retrospective and will apply from the date of adoption.

## Definitions

TERM	DEFINITION
<b>Authorised Officer</b>	Means an authorised person of a water service provider under the Water Supply (Safety and Reliability) Act 2008
<b>Body Corporate</b>	Shall mean a corporate or body of persons or even an individual, with a legal existence distinct from the individual person(s) making up the corporate entity. The purpose of the body corporate is to manage the common property.
<b>Council</b>	Refers to the Douglas Shire Council
<b>Declared Water Service Area</b>	Means the relevant area for the provision of a reticulated potable water supply as declared by Council resolution.
<b>Developer</b>	Shall mean a corporation or body of persons or even an individual, who builds a development in which the houses/units form part of a complex and can be sold to individual owners.
<b>Existing Developments</b>	Shall mean any development whereby the development has a plumbing compliance certificate, dated prior to 1 January 2008.
<b>Master Meter</b>	Shall mean the main device, and related equipment, for measuring the volume of water supplied to a property as a whole.
<b>Meterable Premises</b>	Shall mean: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• all class 1 buildings</li> <li>• each lot within a community title scheme, including the common property, in a water service provider's area</li> <li>• the sole-occupancy unit of a class 2, 4, 5, 6, 7 or 8 building in a water service provider's area</li> <li>• each storey of a class 5 building in a water service provider's area where the building consists of more than one storey and sole-occupancy units are not identified at the time of the building's plumbing compliance assessment.</li> </ul>
<b>New Developments</b>	Any complex submitting a request for a Plumbing Compliance Permit after 1 January 2008.
<b>Owner/s</b>	Shall mean an owner of a house, unit, flat or an apartment within a complex.
<b>QPW Code</b>	Shall mean the Queensland Plumbing and Wastewater Code as adopted from time to time.
<b>Smart Water Meter</b>	Means a device with smart technology capabilities for measuring the volume of water supplied to a premises and which transmits data electronically to the water service provider.
<b>Sub-meter/s</b>	Is a term used to describe individual water meters within a multi-dwelling property. The term also differentiates from 'master meter' that measures the supply of water to a property as a whole.
<b>Sub-metering</b>	Shall mean the installation of individual water meters to measure water consumption to individual houses, units, flats or apartments that form part of a complex, excluding class 1 or class 10 structures.
<b>Unit/s</b>	Shall mean a house, flat, lot of land or an apartment within a complex.



TERM	DEFINITION
<b>Water meter/s</b>	Means a device, including equipment related to the device, for measuring the volume of water supplied to premises.
<b>Water Service Provider</b>	Means an entity registered under chapter 2, part 3 of the Water Supply (Safety and Reliability) Act 2008 as a service provider for a water service.

## Related Legislation

- Building Act 1975
- Building Code of Australia
- Building Regulation 2021
- Information Privacy Act 2009
- Local Government Act 2009
- Planning Act 2016
- Plumbing and Drainage Act 2018
- Plumbing and Drainage Regulation 2019
- Plumbing Code of Australia
- Public Health Act 2005
- Queensland Plumbing and Wastewater Code
- Water Act 2000
- Water Efficiency Labelling and Standards Act 2005
- Water Regulation 2016
- Water Supply (Safety and Reliability) Act 2008

## Related Documents (Local Laws, Policies, Forms)

- Concealed Leak Financial Assistance Policy
- Drinking Water Quality General Policy
- Information Privacy Policy
- Management of Confidential Information General Policy
- Revenue General Policy
- Water Conservation General Policy
- Water Meter Installation General Policy

## Policy Review

This policy is to be reviewed every four years, or whenever legislation changes, or at the direction of the Chief Executive Officer.

**Policy Details**

<b>Policy Name</b>	<b>Sub-metering (Water) Policy</b>
<b>Policy Number</b>	90
<b>Policy Version</b>	1
<b>Document Number</b>	1106514
<b>Endorsed by</b>	Chief Executive Officer
<b>Policy Type</b>	Council
<b>Approval Authority</b>	Council
<b>Date Adopted</b>	September 2022
<b>Time Period</b>	4 years
<b>Review Date</b>	September 2026
<b>Policy Department</b>	Water and Wastewater
<b>Link to Corporate Plan</b>	Theme 3 - Leading Environmental Stewardship Theme 4 – Inclusive Engagement, Planning and Partnerships Theme 5 – Robust Governance and Efficient Service Delivery
<b>Revoked/Superseded</b>	Nil

**This policy is to remain in force until otherwise determined by Council.**