

74. CONCEALED LEAK FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE POLICY

Intent

To establish a policy for the provision of financial assistance regarding water consumption charges in cases of proven concealed leakage.

Scope

This policy is applicable to Douglas Shire property owners with property serviced by a water meter that is not a smart meter. A concealed water leak is an underground water leak in the private plumbing pipework, on the customer's property up to and including where the pipes connect to the water meter, where there are no visible signs of a leak and where an owner or occupant could not be reasonably expected to know of its existence, as determined by Council.

Provisions

High consumption levels identified when water meter reads are conducted are communicated to the customer. However, property owners are responsible for all consumption on their property and should therefore not rely solely on Douglas Shire Council to advise them of an increase in consumption through the meter.

To be eligible for financial assistance, the following conditions must be met:

1. The applicant must be the ratepayer, with the rate notice being issued in the applicant's name.
2. The concealed leak must be repaired by a Queensland Building and Construction Commission licenced plumber, in accordance with the Plumbing and Drainage Act 2002, within 28 days of identification of the leak (taken to be from the date Council is informed of the leak or the date that Council informs the owner of excessive water usage, whichever is sooner). Council may undertake meter reads to confirm the repair.
3. The applicant must provide a statement signed by a licenced plumber who repaired the leak certifying that a concealed leak had occurred and was undetectable by the customer.
4. The applicant must provide a licenced plumber's invoice as evidence of suitable repair.
5. Only one application may be granted per ratepayer per property within a four-year period (i.e. four years from the date of approval of the first application for financial assistance).
6. An application for assistance needs to be made, using the Concealed Leak Financial Assistance form within 60 days of the identification of the leak.; or no more than 30 days after the issue of the water usage account for the period affected by the leak.
7. Total additional water consumption for the billing period must be greater than 150 kilolitres in comparison to the prior billing period.
8. No smart meter is installed on the property.
9. The leaks are from water services that meet the current plumbing standards at the time of installation.

10. Water loss is not from:

- Internal pipework, water fittings and appliances including taps, toilets, showers, sinks, hot water systems and appliances with water connections such as dishwashers, washing machines and fridges
- Water tanks that are plumbed to the potable water supply, including solar water heaters and pipework related to such tanks
- External water taps, hoses, sprinklers and irrigation systems
- Swimming pools, spas, ponds and other outdoor water features
- Firefighting equipment and systems
- Construction work, renovations, excavations or similar activities
- Theft, vandalism, and carelessness (e.g. tap/hose left running due to an oversight)
- Vacant land.

Council will provide the following financial assistance:

- Waiver of 50% of additional water usage charged for the water billing period applicable to the leak (one billing period only); Capped at a maximum rebate of \$1,000.
- Additional Water Usage Calculated as: total usage (kilolitres) less average consumption (kilolitres, calculated over 3 prior billing periods); where no prior billing history is available, Council will assess each application on a case-by-case basis.
- The financial assistance entitlement will be applied as a credit to the property owner's outstanding water account. If the water account has been paid in full an EFT refund may be issued upon request.

Special consideration for additional financial assistance may be granted to those ratepayers deemed by Council to be 'vulnerable', including but not limited to: a pensioner ⁽¹⁾, a person with a disability (as defined by the Disability Discrimination Act) and victims of domestic violence.

If Council becomes aware of any ratepayer providing false or misleading information, in order to gain assistance for which he/she would otherwise not be eligible, the agreement with Council will become null and void. Any charges waived, including interest, will be restored to the full amount.

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

Related Legislation and guidelines

Water Act 2000

Water Supply (Safety and Reliability) Act 2008

Plumbing and Drainage Act 2018

Plumbing and Drainage Regulation 2019

Queensland Plumbing Wastewater Code

AS/NZS 3500 Set: 2013 – Plumbing and Drainage Set

Energy and Water Ombudsman Act 2006

Local Government Act 2009

Local Government Regulation 2012

Douglas Shire Council Revenue General Policy

Douglas Shire Council Rates Rebate – Not for Profits 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

Policy Name	Concealed Leak Financial Assistance Policy
Policy Number	74
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Endorsed by	Chief Executive Officer
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Policy Department	Finance and Corporate Services
Link to Corporate Plan	Robust Governance and Efficient Service Delivery
Revoked/Superseded	

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

(1) The applicant(s) MUST be the holder(s) of one of the following Queensland cards:

- Centrelink, Pension Concession Card.
- Department of Veterans' Affairs, Pension Concession Card.
- Department of Veterans' Affairs, Repatriation Health Card. (Full Conditions only)