

COUNCIL POLICY

**Policy Name**

Water Usage Charge Reduction Requests

Abstract

Gunnedah Shire Council is committed to the effective and sustainable management of its town water supplies.

To encourage water conservation, high water consuming residential customers are subjected to a step price increase of at least 50% for incremental usage above 400 kilolitre and 800 Kilolitre annually.

Customers experiencing difficulties following high water consumption charges as a result unidentified leaks may make special dispensation requests to Council for leniency consideration.

Dates	Policy or amendment approved	13 December 2023
	Policy or amendment takes effect	13 January 2024
	Policy is due for review (up to 4 years)	13 December 2027
Endorsed by	Executive Leadership Team at its meeting held 28 November 2023	
Approved by	Gunnedah Shire Council, at its Ordinary Meeting of Council held 13 December 2023 Resolution number: 6.12/23	
Policy Custodian	Manager Water Services	
Relevant to	Gunnedah Shire Council Staff, parties responsible for usage of water from metered connections within the Local Government Area.	
Superseded Policies	Gunnedah Shire Council, at its Ordinary Meeting of Council held on 19 Feb 2020. Resolution number: 21.02/20	
Related documents	NSW Department Planning Industry and Environment – Water Best Practice Management of Water Supply and Sewerage	
Related legislation	Local Government Act 1993 Local Government (General) Regulation 2021 Water Management Act 2000 Water Management (General) Regulation 2018.	

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1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this policy is to facilitate effective guidance for The General Manager to assess water usage charge requests from customers making formal requests seeking a reduction in the charge applied as a result of unidentified leaks, or exceptional circumstances.

2. Scope

- 2.1 The Manager Water Services at Gunnedah Shire Council is responsible for maintaining the town water supplies. The Manager Water Services is responsible for assessing formal requests for special dispensation of water usage charges based specific guidelines as set out in this policy and making recommendations to the General Manager or his/her delegate.

The Gunnedah Shire Council Finance Team is responsible for actioning the outcome of the General Manager's decision and making adjustments to Water Billing Accounts

3. Definitions

Term	Definition
Act	Local Government Act 1993 (NSW) Water Management Act 2000
Regulation	Best Practice Management

4. Policy Principles

- 4.1 Provide direction and guidelines for the General Manager or his/her delegate, to approve reductions in water and sewer charges formally requested by customers in exceptional circumstances that have resulted in higher than normal charges, without the requirement for Council reports to be prepared for individual cases. This will reduce the time consumed by Council staff preparing Council reports, and reduce the time taken by Councillors reading and considering individual cases

5. Policy Statement

- 5.1 Gunnedah Shire Council is committed to managing its water supplies effectively to provide safe, high quality water that meets the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines, consumer, and other regulatory requirements.

Water and sewage usage charges have been developed using Best Practice Management principals to provide a fair and reasonable return on investment, and maintain Council's water supply and sewerage assets in a safe and reliable condition for future generations.

Gunnedah Shire Council has adopted residential water charges with a three part tariff including a water availability charge for all properties within 225 metres of an accessible water main to encourage water conservation.

The three part Tariff are as follows:

1. Tier 1 – 0-400KI
2. Tier 2 – 400-800KI
3. Tier 3 – 800KI and above

Gunnedah Shire Council has adopted non-residential water charges with a Tier 1 tariff irrespective of consumption; including a water availability charge based the size of the property water meter connection for all properties within 225 metres of an accessible water main.

Matters to be considered when assessing special requests for reduction include:

- The circumstances, including supporting evidence
- Measures implemented to rectify the problem, and prevent its recurrence
- Evidence of the location of the problem that demonstrates that the customer could not reasonably be expected to be aware of the problem.

Reductions for residential properties can be made to the first tier or second Tier rate if the evidence of the above is provided.

Reductions to water charges **cannot** be applied to non-residential properties as they are already levied at the Tier one charge, the only option that can be made is to sewerage usage charges providing supporting evidence can be provided to Council, and that there has been no impact placed on Council's sewerage system as a result of the problem. History of usage is to be used when consideration is given to reductions for non-residential sewerage usage charges.

The maximum reduction amount which can be approved by the General Manager is \$5000.00. Requests above \$5000.00 must have a report prepared for consideration by Council.

6. Accountability, roles and responsibility

6.1 Policy Custodian

The Manager Water Services is the officer accountable for managing policy compliance and initiating the policy review process. The Manager will also have the responsibility for all aspects of policy implementation, unless appropriately delegated to another officer.

These responsibilities include being the primary contact point for advice on the policy or its implementation; establishing and maintaining Council's records in relation to the policy; proposing amendments; and managing the consultation process when the policy is due for review.

7. Acknowledgements

Australian Drinking Water Guidelines

8. Version Control and change history

Date	Version	Approved by & Resolution No.	Amendment
19 Feb 2020	1	Council Ordinary Meeting 19 Feb 2020, Resolution 21.02/20	
13 Dec 2023	2	Ordinary Meeting 13 Dec 2023 Resolution 6.12/23	