

1. Purpose & Scope

1.1 To provide guidelines by which applications can be considered and processed to allow financial relief from water consumption charges that have arisen as a result of a proven concealed leak.

2. Commencement of Policy

2.1 This Policy will commence from 23 April 2024.

3. Application Of Policy

3.1 Maintenance of a property’s infrastructure is the responsibility of Property Owner. However, Charters Towers Regional Council recognises that a Property Owner may require assistance to reduce the water consumption costs incurred in the circumstance of a concealed leak.

3.2 Concealed leaks can remain undetected for lengthy periods of time if the property’s water meter is not monitored by the Property Owner. Concealed leaks can significantly increase water consumption charges on the water account, particularly if the leak is not repaired promptly.

3.3 Where Council becomes aware of an increase in a property’s normal water consumption through our regular meter reading cycle, Council will try to notify the Property Owner.

Property Owners must not rely on Council to provide this information, as this is provided, where possible, as a courtesy only.

3.4 The Property Owner owns and is responsible for their internal water infrastructure and as such is encouraged to actively monitor their water usage by taking regular readings of their water meter or by monitoring consumption by the Mi Water portal. This will assist the Property Owner to promptly detect any unusual increases in water consumption.

3.5 A concealed water leak adjustment will not be provided if a water leak adjustment has already been provided to that Property Owner at that property within the previous three (3) year period.

3.6 This policy applies to concealed leaks only and does not apply to water loss from circumstances that are considered accessible and able to be actively monitored by the Property Owner.

3.7 It is reasonable to expect that the Property Owner regularly maintains their water appliances and related fittings, and therefore these items are not likely to result in a large unexpected leak.

4. Definitions

4.1

Term	Definition
Concealed Leak	Water escaping from the main internal property water supply, where an occupant could not reasonably be expected to know of its immediate existence, as the leak was difficult to locate with little or no visual evidence of the leak. The leak must be in the pipe work servicing the property to the initial connection point of the dwelling or building.

Term	Definition
Eligible concession card holder	The applicant must be the holder of a Pensioner Concession Card or Repatriation Health Card for all Conditions (Gold Card) issued by the Commonwealth Department of Social Services or the Commonwealth Department of Veterans Affairs. Holders of Health Care Cards (Department of Social Services) are not eligible under this scheme, as these cards are issued for a limited specified period of time only.
Excess water	For the purposes of this policy, this is the difference in water consumed during the period of the water leak (or other high consumption period), compared to the average of the Property Owner's previous consumption history as recorded by the Council over the immediately preceding three (3) billing periods or other reasonable methodology as determined by the Executive Manager Organisational Services.
Financial adjustment	A sum of money that is credited to the Property Owner's account as relief for loss of water due to a concealed leak.
Internal water infrastructure	Water supply pipes on the Property Owner's side of the water meter for the purpose of carrying water from the water meter to the premises and/or property.
Mi Water Portal	An electronic portal available to Property Owners through the Charters Towers Regional Council's website, used to monitor water usage at registered properties.
Normal water consumption	The daily average consumption used during a comparable consumption period when the leak or other unexplained water use was NOT occurring.
Notifications	Notification is established as either by a Mi-Water alert to the customer or by the customer contacting Charters Towers Regional Council, whichever is earlier
Not-for-Profit Organisation	A charity or other type of public service organisation that does not earn profits for its owners or members. Not-for-Profit organisations must present evidence of a Not-for-Profit status from the Australian Tax Office with the application. Approval or financial adjustment is at the discretion of Charters Towers Regional Council and will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.
Private Off Line Mains	The Property Owner's principal supply pipe in an arrangement of pipes for distributing water, which is not owned or serviced by Charters Towers Regional Council.
Property Water Supply	The underground pipe from the rear of Charters Towers Regional Council's water meter to the initial connection point of the dwelling or building. Where trickle feed or mixed demand plumbing configurations exist, the first point of connection to the water tank or designated on-demand line to the initial connection point of the dwelling or building.
Potable Water	Potable Water supplied by Charters Towers Regional Council.
Property Owner	The party responsible for the payment of rates and charges associated with a property within the jurisdiction of Charters Towers Regional Council.

5. Policy Provisions

5.1 Charters Towers Regional Council may assist an eligible owner-occupied residential Property Owner:

- a) By providing a reduction of fifty per cent (50%) of the difference between the consumption for the billing period and the average of the Property Owner's previous consumption history as recorded by the Council, through the Mi Water portal, over the immediately preceding three (3) billing periods; or
- b) Where this method is not practicable (e.g. new property and/or new owner), a reduction of fifty per cent (50%) of the difference between the consumption for the billing period and the consumption that would have occurred for the period if there had been no leak, calculated by the Council taking the average reading for a set period after the leak has been repaired.
- c) With a further twenty-five per cent (25%) reduction in the water lost to the leakage where the Property Owner of the subject property is an Eligible Concession Card Holder

5.2 Charters Towers Regional Council may, at its absolute discretion, assist a non-owner-occupied residential and eligible small business Property Owner:

- a) With a minimum financial adjustment of fifteen per cent (15%) and a maximum of fifty percent (50%) of the difference between the consumption for the billing period and the average of the non-owner-occupied residential and eligible small business Property Owner's previous consumption history as recorded by the Council over the immediately preceding three (3) billing periods lost.
- b) With additional assistance on a case-by-case basis including where a tenant is liable for water consumption charges.

5.3 Charters Towers Regional Council may assist a genuine Not-for-Profit non-residential Property Owner:

- a) With a minimum financial adjustment of fifty per cent (50%) of the difference between the consumption for the billing period and the average of the not-for profit non-residential Property Owner's previous consumption history as recorded by the Council over the immediately preceding three (3) billing periods lost.
- b) With additional assistance on a case-by-case basis including where a tenant is liable for water consumption charges.

5.4 Charters Towers Regional Council will consider one claim from the same Property Owner for the same property no more than once every three (3) years.

5.5 Charters Towers Regional Council will provide information to assist the Property Owner to detect concealed leaks through active monitoring of their water meter together with registering for Mi Water notifications.

5.6 Charters Towers Regional Council requires the Property Owner to lodge their application in writing in the approved Concealed Leak Financial Adjustment Application Form (F0220), outlining how they meet the criteria under this policy and to provide evidence that the leak was repaired by a qualified and appropriately licensed plumber.

5.7 Application of this policy is at the discretion of Charters Towers Regional Council, and Property Owner's requests for financial adjustment will be assessed against the eligibility criteria.

6. Specific exclusions

6.1 This policy applies to concealed leaks only and does not apply to water loss from the following circumstances, as these are considered accessible and able to be actively monitored by the Property Owner:

- leaks in internal water fittings and appliances including taps, toilet cisterns, hot water systems and other water appliances; or
- leaks from faulty plumbing or human error resulting in the filling of a rainwater tank, or
- leaks in property sprinkler or other irrigation systems,
- leaks in swimming pools, spas, ponds and other outdoor water features, or their related fittings or the pipe work supplying them;
- leaks caused due to construction, excavation, building, renovation or other similar activity on the property;
- leaks in hoses, hose pipes, external taps and fittings; or
- leaks in solar panels or the pipe work supplying them.

6.2 Assistance will NOT be provided for:

- leaks or water lost due to vandalism
- leaks in Private Off Line Mains.

It is reasonable to expect that Property Owners regularly maintain their water appliances and related fittings, and therefore these items are not likely to result in a large unexpected leak.

7. Eligible Property Owners

The assistance outlined in this policy applies in circumstances of concealed leaks of potable water to:

7.1 Residential Property Owners

7.1.1 Owner occupied –

- The property is owned by a Property Owner and used for residential purposes.
- The residential property where the leak occurred must be registered as the principal place of residence of the owner of the property.

7.1.2 Non-owner-occupied –

- The property is owned by a Property Owner but is not occupied by the Property Owner and it is leased to a residential tenant.

7.2 Small business Property Owners

7.2.1 Owner occupied –

- The property is used by a Property Owner and used for the purposes of conducting a small business.
- A small business Property Owner is one who uses, or would use no more than 100 kilolitres of drinking water per annum.

7.3 Non-owner occupied –

- The property is owned by a Property Owner but is not occupied by the Property Owner as it is leased to a non-residential tenant who will use the property for the purposes of conducting a small business.
- A small business is one who uses, or would use no more than 100 kilolitres of drinking water per annum.

7.4 Other non-residential Property Owners

7.4.1 Not-for-Profit organisations –

- Where a Not-for-Profit organisation requests a financial adjustment for a concealed leak, evidence of the Not-for-Profit status must be provided with the application.

8. Eligibility Criteria

All of the following criteria must be met for a claim for a financial adjustment due to a concealed leak to be considered:

- 8.1 For the water leak to be considered concealed it must be difficult to locate and there must be little or no visual evidence of the leak. The leak must be in the pipe work servicing the property to the initial connection point of the dwelling or building.
- 8.2 The property on which the leak has occurred must not have been subject to development excavation or construction within the previous six (6) months.
- 8.3 The leak must not be within a dwelling or building on the property.
- 8.4 The leak must be repaired within one (1) month of identification/notification of the leak.
- 8.5 An application must be made in writing by the Property Owner in the approved form (F0220), within three (3) months of identification/notification of the leak.
- 8.6 Original documented evidence such as a plumber's invoice or report showing that the leak has been repaired must be provided from a licensed plumber and must accompany the request.
- 8.7 The owner of the property must not have received a financial adjustment on an account for that property due to a concealed leak within the last three (3) years.
- 8.8 Where a residential property owner is an Eligible Concession Card Holder, additional assistance may be considered.
- 8.9 Where a non-residential Property Owner requests a financial adjustment due to a concealed leak on the basis that they are a Not-for-Profit organisation, evidence of the 'not-for profit' status is required.

9. General conditions

- 9.1 Financial adjustments will apply to potable water consumption.
- 9.2 Before applying for a financial adjustment, the Property Owner must pay the water account in full prior to the close of discount period to be afforded the discount. If the Property Owner is unable to finalise the payment prior to the close of discount, they may seek assistance due to financial hardship. A determination of financial hardship is at the discretion of Executive Manager Organisational Services.
- 9.3 Following the granting of an adjustment for a concealed leak, Charters Towers Regional Council will expect that Property Owner will initiate regular monitoring of consumption to ensure that any future leaks are detected early.

10. Responsibility of Charters Towers Regional Council

- 10.1 Charters Towers Regional Council is responsible for the water infrastructure including pipes and water meter up to the property connection point.

10.2 If a leak is detected in these pipes, it is Charters Towers Regional Council’s responsibility to repair it and Property Owners are requested to contact Council immediately to advise of the leak.

11. Responsibility of the Property Owner

11.1 Property Owners are responsible for the installation, repair, maintenance, and replacement of all the pipes, fixtures, fittings, and mains connected water tanks on their property up to the water meter.

11.2 If a leak is detected in this private infrastructure, it is the Property Owner’s responsibility to repair it. Property Owners should contact a qualified and appropriately licensed plumber to repair the leak as soon as possible.

11.3 Property Owners are responsible for monitoring their water meter on a regular basis. This will assist in early identification of any leaks on the property.

12. Variations

12.1 CTRC reserves the right to vary, replace or terminate this Policy from time to time.

Associated Documents

- *Local Government Act 2009*
- *Local Government Regulation 2012*
- S0002 Revenue Policy
- S0003 Revenue Statement
- F0220-Concealed Leak Financial Adjustment Application

Document Review			
Date Adopted by Council	23 April 2024	Council Resolution	4172
Date Adopted by ELT	N/A	Next Review Date	April 2026
ECM No.	724431	Document Contact	Chief Financial Officer