

Water information for tenants

This fact sheet sets out some useful tips and explains some of your rights as a tenant in Queensland.

Can I be charged for water?

Not every tenant in Queensland pays for their water use. Your lessor or agent may pass on the cost of the water you use if:

- the premises have an individual water meter (or water is delivered by vehicle) and
- the premises is water efficient and
- the tenancy agreement confirms that you must pay for water use.

You can only be charged for the cost of water you use. Your lessor or agent must pay the land rates, fixed water access charges and sewerage charges. Even if you don't usually pay for water, your lessor or agent can charge you for any water used over an agreed 'reasonable' amount. This amount must be agreed up front.



Before you sign the lease



Check for water efficiency

Are all showerheads and internal cold water taps (excluding taps for bathtubs and appliances) water efficient? Do toilets have full and half flush options? You can only be charged for water if the premises is water efficient and this must be noted on the Entry Condition report when you enter into the lease.

You can request proof of the water efficiency of the premises from your lessor or agent. This may be plumbing reports or receipts, packaging, warranties or instruction manuals for water efficient devices purchased. The lessor cannot charge you for the purchase or installation of water efficient devices.

Water efficient products must have a Water Efficiency Labelling and Standards (WELS) rating of at least three stars or equivalent.

For more information visit www.waterrating.gov.au



Read your water meter

Make a note of the reading on your water meter when you move in and out of a property. You should record this on your Entry and Exit Condition Reports.



Confirm what is 'reasonable' usage

Even if the premises is not water efficient, your tenancy agreement may still include a requirement that you pay for any water used over a 'reasonable' amount. To determine what is 'reasonable' ask your local water provider for information on the average water usage in the area for households of your size.





Tips for managing your water costs

Check how much you need to pay

As a tenant you will not receive a water bill directly from the water provider. The lessor or agent will pay the bill and ask you to reimburse the cost of water used.

They must provide you with a copy of the water bill or some other evidence of the amount of water used. Once you receive the bill you have one month to pay.

Your lessor can only charge you for the water used and cannot pass on any other fees or charges such as fixed charges or interest on late payments.

Keep track of when bills are due

If you live in South East Queensland your lessor will receive a water bill every quarter. In other areas it may be less frequent. Check with the local water provider what their billing schedule is so you can keep track of when bills should arrive.

Keep track of water use

Water providers are no longer required to send out a Tenancy Advice Notice so the only way you can verify your water usage is by checking your water meter.

It is important to monitor your water usage to ensure you pick up any concealed leaks as early as possible. Contact your lessor if you notice that the amount owing for water use has increased for no apparent reason.

Use water efficiently

You can save water, and money, by:

- limiting showers to four minutes
- only using the washing machine or dishwasher for full loads and always using the shortest, most efficient cycle.
- upgrading your washing machine or dishwasher to a more efficient model.

You may be able to access the No Interest Loan Scheme (NILS) to upgrade your appliances. Visit www.nils.com.au

Contact your lessor

Because tenants do not have a direct account with a water provider they don't get access to the concessions and hardship provisions that may be available to account holders.

Contact your lessor if you are having difficulties paying for water contact your lessor. They may be able to offer an alternative payment arrangement.

For more information

The Residential Tenancy Authority (RTA) provides information and services related to residential tenancies. Call **1300 366 311** or visit www.rta.qld.gov.au

For advice, support or individual advocacy on a tenancy issue call Tenants Queensland on **1300 744 263** or visit www.tenantsqld.org.au

More Information

Community Door www.communitydoor.org.au/water

Queensland Government www.qld.org.au

Energy and Water Ombudsman www.ewoq.com.au