

1. BACKGROUND

Council in its role as a Water Supply Authority, provides potable water to the boundary of a property. Council relies on the income generated from access and user charges to fund the ongoing provision of Water and Sewerage Services within the Coonamble Shire Local Government Area.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to provide a framework for the General Manager, staff and public regarding the responsibilities of water consumption and necessity of early detection of water leaks.

3. POLICY OBJECTIVE

Council provides potable water to the boundary of a property; water that has subsequently passed through a meter service connection becomes the responsibility of that property owner. This policy is not intended to provide full compensation to customers for water and sewer usage charges as a consequence of an undetected water leak on their property. However, as an act of good faith and to promote sound water conservation practices, the policy provides Council with a means by which some assistance can be provided to customer who have incurred higher usage charges due to a concealed water leak occurring on their property.

For the purposes of this policy, a “concealed water leak” is defined as water escaping from a private water service that is hidden from view (usually below ground or under concrete). The interpretation of the customer being unaware of a leaking service and the leak being concealed from view is to be taken that there is no visible evidence of soaking or dampness. Damp walls, lush grass or damp soil does not constitute being concealed from view. Running toilets, leaking taps or unmonitored automated sprinkler systems (as examples only are not considered concealed water leaks).

4. LEGISLATION

All applications under this policy are to be dealt with in accordance of the following legislation:

- *Local Government (General) regulation 2005.*
- *Local Government Act 1993.*
- *Australia Accounting Standards.*

5. APPLICATION/SCOPE

DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY

Authority for implementation of the Water and Sewer Usage Charges – Concealed Leaks Policy may be delegated by Council to the General Manager in accordance with the *Local Government Act 1993*.

The General Manager can delegate the implementation and management of claims under this policy to the Manager of Finance and Procurement. The Manager of Finance and Procurement is authorised to assess and determine applications received under the terms of this policy.

6. POLICY

6.1 PRUDENT PERSON STANDARD

All applications received under this policy will be managed with the care, diligence, and skill that a prudent person would exercise.

6.2 ETHICS AND CONFLICTS OF INTERST

Officers shall refrain from personal activities that would conflict with the implementation and assessment of applications received under this policy. This policy requires officers to disclose any conflict of interest to the General Manager.

6.3 ESSENTIAL ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

To be eligible for a concealed leak allowance, the following criteria must be met:

- The leak must be hidden beneath a concrete slab or in a cavity wall or otherwise underground where it effects are not readily visible.
- Leaks must be identified and repaired within a timely manner (30 days) of the bill issue date; the customer is responsible for any repairs.

- The customer must have engaged the services of a licenced plumber to repair the concealed leak.
- The concealed leak allowance is a concession and applies to all customer types and will be property based. Only one application will be accepted as a result of a concealed leak at the same property and by the same owner regardless of whether it is a related event or separate concealed leak within a 5-year period. If a customer moves to another property or owns more than one property, the allowance will be given once on each property within a 5-year period.
- Non-Residential properties, which incur a sewer usage charge will also be eligible for a leak allowance to be applied to the increased sewer usage charges resulting from a concealed leak. The allowance given for sewer usage will be in addition to any allowance given for water usage, but it will not be subject to a 5-year time limit.

6.4 EXCLUSIONS

Applications for a leak allowance will not be accepted when:

- The leak was found to be due to the neglect of obvious defects in the private water service.
- The leak was caused directly by way of accidental or wilful damage.
- The leak involves a leakage from an appliance, pump, hot water system, pressure release or float valves, solar panels or pool heaters, pool or pond lines, taps cisterns and other water fittings etc.
- The leak emanated from private water pipelines that are located outside the property boundary.
- The leak is the result of a second occurrence of a concealed leak at the same property and by the same owner within a 5-year period of a prior claim against this policy.
- The application does not contain the required documentation or meet the terms of a complying claim.

6.5 APPLICATION PROCESS

Customers who wish to access the allowance provisions available through this policy must provide sufficient information to Council for an assessment to be made. Applicants should submit their application in writing and are requested to complete the approved form.

The application must be completed and returned to Council with the following supporting documentation which may include, but is not limited to:

- A copy of the invoice from the licenced plumber who carried out the repairs.
- A written report on the leak from the licensed plumber who completed the repairs, which provides Council with the following information.
 - Confirmation that the leak was concealed from view and could not be located by visual inspection.
 - The dates the leak was detected and repaired.
 - The possible cause of the leak.
 - Where the water was escaping.

Should the Manager of Finance and Procurement assess the application as being valid, the appropriate adjustments will only be made if all other water and sewerage charges have been paid in full or are up to date on their arrangement at the time the determination is made.

Should an application be declined by Council, the customer will be liable for all consumption of water that has passed through the meter.

6.6 CONCEALED LEAK ALLOWANCE LIMITS.

- The maximum concealed leak allowance that will be applied to water usage charges will be 50% of the difference between the usage of the affected account and the average consumption for the corresponding period for the past two (2) years, or from change of ownership if that occurred in the past year.
- The maximum concealed leak allowance that will be applied to sewer usage charges will be 100% of the difference between usage charges of the affected account above the statutory minimum access charge per quarter.

6.10 REVIEW

Review of this policy will incorporate relevant legislation, documentation released from relevant state agencies and best practice guidelines.


The standard review period will be every three (3) years from the effective date. The Executive Leader of Corporate and Sustainability will be responsible for the review of this policy.

6.10 IMPLEMENTATION / COMMUNICATION

The Concealed Water Leaks Policy will be distributed and communicated to all relevant staff by the Executive Leader of Corporate and Sustainability.

7. DEFINITION

Term	Definition
Act	<i>Local Government Act 1993</i>
Concealed Leak	A Concealed leak is defined as water escaping from a private water service that is hidden from view and defined as occurring within pipeline breaks or connections in the ground, under slabs or within walls and is not clearly visible to the owner. (It does not involve leakage from an appliance, fixture, water pump, hot water system or the like). Lush grass or damp soil does not constitute being concealed from view.
Private Water Service	A Private Water Service relates to all water service pipes, including recycled water service pipes, fixtures and fittings on the customer's side of the meter (outlet side), or 1 metre inside the property boundary for unmetered properties (excluding separate fire services).
Customer	The customer is the owner/ratepayer of the property or an applicant on behalf of the owner who has previously given proof to Council of their agency agreement or power of attorney, etc.
General Manager	Refers to the statutory executive of the Council as defined in section 335 of the Act, including where on an Interim or Acting basis, and under any alternative titles.

Title: Concealed Water Leak Policy		
Department: Corporate and Sustainability		
Version	Date	Author
V1	09 March 2022	B Quarmby
<p>This policy may be amended or revoked at any time and must be reviewed at least three (3) years since its adoption (or latest amendment). The Executive Leader of Corporate and Sustainability will be responsible for the review of this policy.</p> <p>Review Date: 2025</p>		
Amendments in the release:		
Amendment History	Date	Detail
Adopted by Council	3 April 2022	Resolution 2022/63
Annexure Attached:		
<p>Bruce Quarmby Acting General Manager</p> 		

CONCEALED WATER LEAK APPLICATION FORM

Definition of a Concealed Leak & Criteria

A “concealed water leak” is defined as water escaping from a private service that is hidden from view (usually below ground or under concrete). The interpretation of the customer being unaware of a leaking service and the leak being concealed from view is taken that there is no visible evidence of soaking or dampness.

To be eligible for a concealed leak allowance, the following criteria must be met:

- The leak meets the definition of a concealed leak.
- The leak must be identified and repaired within a timely manner (30 days) of the bill issue date.
- The customer must have engaged the services of a licenced plumber to repair the concealed leak.
- No previous allowance has been granted to the current owner/s of the property within the last five (5) years for water usage charges.
- The property must not be connected via a non-standard water service.

APPLICANT DETAILS (must be property owner)

Salutation: (please tick)	<input type="checkbox"/> Mr	<input type="checkbox"/> Mrs	<input type="checkbox"/> Miss	<input type="checkbox"/> Ms	<input type="checkbox"/> Other
First Name:				Surname:	
Street Address:					
Suburb:				Postcode:	
Postal Address: (if different to street address)					
Suburb:				Postcode:	
Phone No:				Mobile:	
Email:					

PROPERTY DETAILS

Assessment Number:			
Street Address:			
Suburb:		Postcode:	
Lot No:		DP No	

SECTION 1: LEAKAGE DETAILS

1	Where did the leakage occur? Underground: <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify): <input type="text"/>
2	What caused the leakage? (for example corrosion, tree roots, ground movement etc)
3	Date concealed leak was detected/...../.....
4.	Approximate age of piping

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CONCEALED WATER LEAK APPLICATION FORM

SECTION 2: REPAIR DETAILS	
1	Date repairs completed/...../.....
2	Did a registered plumber carry out the repairs Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Name of Plumber:..... Licence No:.....
3	Has the plumber who completed the repairs provided you with a written statement containing the following information. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirmation the leak was concealed from view and could not have been located by visual inspection. • The dates that the leak was detected and repaired. • The possible cause of the leak. • Where the water was escaping. <div style="text-align: right; margin-top: 10px;"> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> </div>

SECTION 3: SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION	
Supporting Documentation attached	Yes / No
Copies of the Council issued Water and Sewer Usage charge Invoice for the period in which the application is being claimed.	
Copy of the invoice from the licenced plumber who carried out the repairs.	
A written statement from the licenced plumber who completed the repairs, which provides Council with the following information. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirmation the leak was concealed from view and could not have been located by visual inspection. • The dates that the leak was detected and repaired. • The possible cause of the leak. • Where the water was escaping. 	

- **Provision of the supporting documentation listed above, is required to constitute a valid application under this Policy.**

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CONCEALED WATER LEAK APPLICATION FORM

SECTION 4: DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the information provided above is true and correct.
(If you make a false statement in an application you may be guilty of an offence and fined up to \$2,200).

Signature	Date / /
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SECTION 10: CHECKLIST FOR APPLICANTS

Council will accept this application sought is provided by you. Additional information that you may have that supports your application can be attached. Please ensure all sections are completed.

I have completed	Yes /No
Applicant Details	
Property Details	
Section 1 – Leakage Details	
Section 2 – Repair Details	
Section 3 – Supporting Documentation	
Section 4 – Declaration	