



CHARGES ON WATER BILLS

(REGIONAL URBAN WATER CORPORATIONS)

Information for residential customers

Water charges can be hard to understand. This fact sheet explains the main charges on the bills of residential water customers in regional urban corporation areas – and how and when these charges are applied.

The regional urban water corporations are:

Barwon Water	Lower Murray Water*
Central Highlands Water	North East Water
Coliban Water*	South Gippsland Water
East Gippsland Water	Wannon Water
Central Gippsland Water*	Western Water
Goulburn Valley Water*	Westernport Water
Grampians-Wimmera Mallee Water*	

What can the water corporation bill me for?

There is legislation that sets out how the water corporations in regional areas charge.**

The water corporations don't set their own prices. They submit proposed prices to the Victorian Essential Services Commission (ESC), the independent industry regulator. The ESC undertakes an inquiry, consults about proposed prices, and issues a final pricing decision.

Water corporations don't charge the same prices because their costs and responsibilities differ. For example, maintenance costs are higher where infrastructure, including pipes and storage and treatment facilities, is older.

Residential water bills usually include two charges—usage charges and service availability charges (service charges).

* These water corporations also provide rural water services.

** Slightly different rules apply to the Melbourne metropolitan area—see EWOV's [Charges on water bills \(metropolitan water corporations\)](#)

Usage charges

Residential customers of regional urban water corporations generally pay for usage and sewerage charges.

Usage charges are based on meter readings. Depending on the water corporation, meters are usually read quarterly, but sometimes every four months.

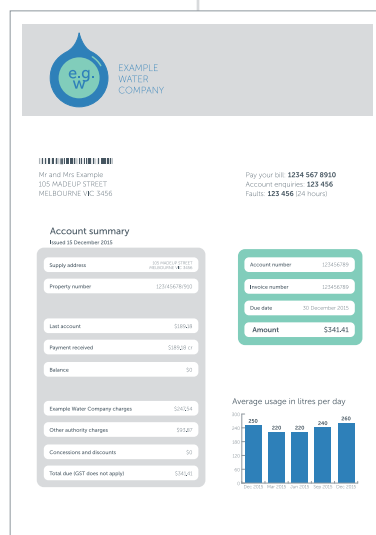
Some water corporations are moving towards block tariffs where different levels of water consumption are charged at different rates. Others charge a flat volumetric rate.

Service Charges

These are flat fees on each 'property' for access to the water and sewerage systems.

Service charges may be for water and sewerage, or wastewater. They apply to each separate occupancy on a parcel of land, regardless of whether the occupancy has a water meter. For example, a group of four flats on one or more titles attracts four service charges, not one.

Service charges can also apply to vacant land not connected to the water system – if the water corporation has made provision for water services to that land (section 144 of the [Water Act 1989](#)). In some cases, these charges are much less than those for developed properties. Some water corporations don't charge if the land isn't connected to services and doesn't have any improvements (buildings) on it.



Check out EWOV's example water bill at [ewov.com.au](#) for more information



What can happen if service charges aren't paid?

Interest and a caveat are options.

Water corporations have the power to charge interest on the debt. Although the interest rate is regulated, the debt can grow ([Water Act 1989](#), section 281).

The water corporation can register a caveat on the title of the property. This means it will be paid, with interest, when the property is sold or transferred (the debt is a 'charge on the property') ([Water Act 1989](#), section 274).

Who pays for usage if there's a residential tenant in the property?

It depends on the type of tenant and whether there's a separate meter.

If it's a residential tenancy and there's a separate meter, the tenant pays the usage charges.

Under the [Water Act 1989](#), section 273B, a tenant must notify the water corporation if they're moving out. If they don't, they become responsible for all water use until the next meter read.

If there's a gap between tenants, the landlord is responsible for the water usage in that period ([Water Act 1989](#), section 273B).

What if the residential tenant doesn't pay?

The water corporation will follow up on the debt.

Usage charges can't be transferred to an owner of a residential property because a residential tenant doesn't pay ([Water Act 1989](#), section 273B).

The water corporation needs to pursue the tenant through its usual credit management processes.

A water corporation may charge a regulated amount of interest on a debt and/or restrict the flow of water to a household. However, it can't restrict supply until it has sent the required reminder notices and restriction warning notices. Other steps may also be required in some situations.

The water corporation must also have offered to help a residential customer if they're having trouble paying their water bills (ESC [Customer Service Code: Victorian Urban Water Businesses](#), Clause 5.3).

What if there's no residential tenant and the owner doesn't pay?

The water corporation has a number of options.

As with service charges, unpaid usage charges may be a charge on the land.

Interest may be applied to them ([Water Act 1989](#), section 281).

Owner-occupiers may also be subject to a restriction of water flow.

Received a water bill for the common area?

If you live in a unit or a housing complex, you may get a separate bill for water used in the 'common area'.

Even if you don't use the common area, you'll probably have to contribute to the water bill. There's just one meter for the common area and the amount is divided among all the occupiers.

Whether you have to contribute will depend on the owners' corporation rules.

Water concessions

Pension card holders can get water concessions.

If you hold a Health Care Card or a Gold Card, it's likely that you can get a concession on your water bills. However, the name and address on your bill must be the same as that on the concession card.

You can also apply to have the concession automatically credited to your bill. Be aware that some concessions must be applied for again each year.

More information about concessions can be found by contacting your water corporation, viewing EWOV's [Fact Sheet 6: Concessions and grants](#) and also by contacting the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services' Concessions Information Line: **1800 658 521** or visit: <http://ow.ly/ZSe6E>