



POLICY MANUAL

Policy title:	CONCEALED WATER LEAKS
Policy number:	1.5.14
Objective:	To provide both user and interest charge relief to water ratepayers who have an undetected water leak debt
Link to community vision/service:	Imagine Lismore Delivery Program – Leadership and participation – We provide effective management and responsible governance
Program Area:	Manager Finance
Policy created: 14/10/14	Council adopted:
Last reviewed by staff: 11/05/21	TRIM Ref: ED18/4433

Objective:

Council recognises that, in certain circumstances, a water consumer may incur significant and unplanned water charges due to the existence of a concealed water leak. This policy clarifies the financial assistance that Council will provide in such circumstances.

Definitions:

A **concealed leak** is one where water escaping from a water service is hidden from view (usually below ground). This will include leaks occurring within pipeline breaks or connections in the group, under slabs or within walls.

The following specific water losses are not considered concealed leaks:

- Where there is visible evidence of soaking or dampness (which may include but is not limited to damp walls, lush grass, boggy ground or damp soil).
- Loss of water from faulty fixtures and fittings (including taps, toilet cisterns, hot water systems, dishwashers and washing machines)
- Leaks from swimming pools, spas or water features, which are not considered “plumbing” works.

Policy Statement:

1. Council provides the following notification to residents in circumstances where water usage appears to substantially exceed previous usage:
 - a. Leave written notification at the premises if the usage was identified at the time of the standard quarterly read or via a site visit,
 - b. Write to the resident if the usage is identified as part of a review of consumption stats by Rating staff.

2. Lismore City Council provides a “one off” adjustment for water lost through a concealed leak in the private water services of residents, on the following terms:
 - a. An adjustment will be made with respect to amounts determined by Council to be above the normal consumption (to be determined using data from previous consumption periods that are leak free).
 - b. The adjustment will be equivalent to 50% of the increase from the water usage bill of the previous corresponding period.
 - c. The adjustment will be processed as an adjustment to an unpaid account, or a refund if the account has already been paid.
 - d. Where time to pay arrangements for concealed leak debts are agreed, interest charged is to be written off subject to the debt being paid as agreed (the arrangement period will vary depending on the level of debt).
 - e. Adjustments will not be made for amounts under \$50.

Application guidelines:

- All applications must be made in writing.
- Applications may be made with respect to **Residential** properties only.
- The Applicant must be the person liable for the charges to which the application relates.
- The application must be received by Council within 30 days of the owner becoming aware of the leak, or within 30 days of the issue of the relevant water account, whichever comes first.
- The Applicant must provide evidence, to the satisfaction of the General Manager or nominated delegate, showing that:
 - The leak was concealed,
 - The Applicant was unaware of the leak, and that
 - The leak was not due to the neglect of obvious defects in the private water service.
- Appropriate supporting evidence to show that the leak has been satisfactorily repaired by a qualified professional must be provided with the application. Photographic evidence of the repair may be requested by Council.

Policy variations:

- Variations to this policy may be agreed to by the General Manager in special circumstances where the application of policy terms would give rise to unintended consequences or an unjust outcome.
- Decisions to vary this policy are made at the sole discretion of the General Manager, unless the financial impact is such that the matter must be determined by Council (consistent with Council's Delegations of Authority levels).
- Decisions to vary this policy must remain in compliance with the Local Government Act 1993 and any other legislation or regulation applicable in the circumstances.