

South Eastern Aboriginal Regional Management Services (SEARMS) Aboriginal Corporation

Policy Document

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| Location | Operational – Asset Management |
| Policy | Water Charges Policy |
| Version | Version 0.2 |
| Issue Date | 04 November 2016 |
| PARS Performance Outcome | 7.1 & 7.2 Efficient and Competitive Management Costs |

1. Objective

- 1.1 This policy applies to all tenants in SEARMS properties, except Employment Related Accommodation program (ERA) properties, in regard to water usage charges and other instances where Properties are managed by SEARMS and the Landlord has chosen not to apply water charges to its Tenants. SEARMS will charge tenants for water usage in a manner which is fair and consistent.

2. Background and Scope

- 2.1 SEARMS promotes and respects the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all persons with a disability and provides a service to tenants in line with the principles

of the NSW Disability Inclusion Act 2014, Disability ACT and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

- 2.2 SEARMS is committed to providing a culturally sensitive approach to service delivery.
- 2.3 Charge tenants for water usage in accordance with the NSW Residential Tenancies Act 2010, the NSW Ministerial Guidelines for Community Housing Water Charging July 2012.
- 2.4 Water charges will only be passed on where water efficiency upgrades have been implemented in-line with the NSW Residential Tenancies Act 2010

3. Policy Detail

Water Service Fee

- 3.1 Charge tenants for water usage in accordance with the NSW Residential Tenancies Act 2010, the NSW Ministerial Guidelines for Community Housing Water Charging July 2012.

Methods of charging water usage

- 3.2 The method applied to a particular property for water charging will be dependent on the presence or absence of a separate water meter for that property.

Properties with a separate water meter

- 3.3 Tenants will be charged for water usage as per the invoice received from the Water Authority. Water charges will be billed within sixty (60) days of SEARMS receiving an invoice from the respective Water Authority.
- 3.4 Where an individual water meter is present and an individual account is NOT generated by the Water Authority, SEARMS will calculate the water usage based on the individual meter reading and current market rates as per the local Water Authority will be applied.

Properties with a shared water meter

- 3.5 Where an individual water meter is present and an individual account is NOT generated by the Water Authority, SEARMS will calculate the water usage based on the individual meter reading and current market rates as per the local Water Authority will be applied.

*'Water Authority Tax invoice **minus** deduction for common area (as specified below) **divided by** the number of people living in each unit and proportioned accordingly.'*

Tenants moving properties or exiting SEARMS properties

- 3.6 If a tenant is transferring to another property or exiting SEARMS properties will be charged for water usage up to the end of the Residential Tenancy Agreement.

Common area water usage

- 3.7 Where a common area exists, SEARMS/Landlord will pay the water usage for the common areas.
- 3.8 In properties with a shared water meter, SEARMS will make an allowance for the common area water usage by applying the following method:

Where there are less than 10 properties

SEARMS will pay 10% of the bill.

Where there are more than 10 properties

SEARMS will treat the common area as 1 unit of accommodation.

Where there is more than 1 common area – e.g. a unit complex with 10 units & 2 designated common areas SEARMS will count the total accommodation units as 12 for the purpose of charging water usage.

SEARMS will treat each common area as 1 unit of accommodation.

Payment of water usage charges

- 3.9 Tenants can pay their water usage in a lump sum payment or by instalments. Any payments for water must be specified as water payments. All water usage charges fall due 21 days of receiving the water usage account. SEARMS may take action through the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal (NCAT), ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal (ACAT) or equivalent to recover any unpaid water usage charges.

Financial Hardship

- 3.10 SEARMS will assist tenants who are experiencing financial hardship on a case by case basis.
- 3.11 SEARMS will consider making allowances where the tenant or a household member has a medical condition or disability that requires them to use significantly more water than usual.
- 3.12 To be considered for an allowance the tenants must provide documented evidence to support their request.

Appeals and Reviews

- 3.13 Tenants can appeal decisions relating to water charging in accordance with SEARMS Appeals Policy.

8. Related Policies

Nil

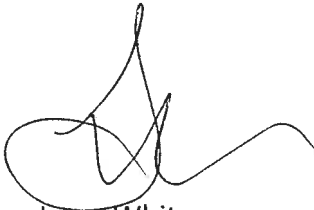
9. Policy Review

This Policy will be reviewed 04/11/2017

10. Policy Adoption

This policy was adopted 04/11/2016

Issuing Authority



Jesse White
General Manger



Tom Slockee
Co-Chairperson

SEARMS Common Seal

