



POLICY NO: CCC019

POLICY FOR CONCEALED LEAKS

JUNE 2017

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CERTIFIED A TRUE COPY OF POLICY ADOPTED BY COUNCIL

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| COUNCIL RESOLUTION DATE | 28 JUNE 2017 |
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History of Revisions:

| Version | Date | TRIM Doc. # |
|----------------|-------------|--------------------|
| 1 | June 2017 | D12726169 |

PART A Introduction

- 1 This policy defines how Central Coast Council ("Council") will assess requests for financial assistance where ratepayers have received an unusually high water rate notice in a particular rating cycle and will identify and support individuals under genuine financial hardship.

PART B Policy Background

- 2 Council relies on rates and charges to fund facilities and water services for its community.
- 3 Council is a Water Supply Authority under the Water Management Act and relies on payment of water accounts to ensure continuous service to our community.
- 4 Council recognises that debt recovery procedures need to consider individual cases where genuine financial hardship may arise.

Part C Policy Statement

5 JURISDICTION

- 5.1 This Policy covers all elected members of Council, all personnel employed by Council, any person or organisation contracted to or acting on behalf of Council, any person or organisation employed to work on Council premises or facilities and all activities of the Council.
- 5.2 This policy does not confer any delegated authority upon any person. All delegations to staff are issued by the Chief Executive Officer.

6 GENERAL

- 6.1 Customers receiving metered water supplies are responsible for managing the water supply on their property i.e. from the property side of the water meter. This includes maintenance and repair of all water services on the property.
- 6.2 Council has no obligation to provide financial assistance to customers affected by leaks on their property. All reasonable effort must be taken by the owner to ensure that the property's water infrastructure is maintained in good working order.
- 6.3 A concealed water leak is water leaking from plumbing, on private property, that is *hidden from view* and generally underground. It is not able to be located by visual inspection. There are often no signs whatsoever of water leaking. Water that can be seen coming from the ground or under a driveway is not a concealed leak. The fact that a plumber may have difficulty establishing the exact site of the leak does not mean the leak is concealed. Water leaks in paddocks, yards and gardens are generally detectable by finding lush grass or boggy ground and hence not concealed. The fact that a particular customer has not discovered the leak because they have not detected it does not indicate that it is a concealed leak.

- 6.4 Loss of water from faulty fixtures and fittings such as hot water services, taps and toilet cisterns or appliances such as dishwashers are not considered to be concealed water leaks.
- 6.5 Assistance will not be provided for:
- Commercial premises;
 - Premises not occupied by their occupants for more than three days;
 - Holiday homes;
 - Leak due to neglect or obvious defect in private water service;
 - Failure of water service due to failure of fittings, e.g. leaking tap or toilet;
 - Failure of rainwater tanks, valves or the pipe work supplying them;
 - Water tanks that are plumbed to the potable water supply;
 - Sprinklers and irrigation systems;
 - Swimming pools, spas and other water features and fittings or the pipe work supplying them;
 - Hoses, hose pipes, external taps and fittings;
 - Solar panels or the pipe work supplying them; or
 - Private Off Line Mains (OLM).
- 6.6 Council has to date acknowledged that at times water leaks can go undetected for relatively long periods and may cause financial difficulties for some customers. Council may, at its discretion, assist customers, on hardship grounds, where a concealed leak is located on their property by a licensed plumber and that concealed leak has resulted in excessive or unfair fees and charges being levied by Council.
- 6.7 Council will only assist customers, on hardship grounds, who live permanently in their homes or are **not-for-profit organisations** which occupy premises at least five days per week and are responsible for water use charges.
- 6.8 **Council will refund, to those eligible, 50% of the additional water usage up to \$1000 for undetected leaks once only per owner per property.**
- 6.9 Customers seeking assistance will be required to provide, in the first instance:
- Statutory Declaration from a licensed plumber certifying that the leak was concealed from view and could not be located by visual inspection, details about how the plumber located the leak, and certifying that the plumbing was not faulty;
 - Information regarding hardship; and
 - Statutory declaration from customer confirming they live permanently in their homes and, circumstances regarding the concealed leak not being identified.
- 6.10 Customers will then be assessed in accordance Council's *Debt Recovery and Hardship Policy*.

PART D Policy Statement

- 7.1 This policy should be read in conjunction with the Central Coast Council Code of Conduct.
- 7.2 It is the personal responsibility of all Council employees and agents thereof to have knowledge of, and to ensure compliance with this policy.

PART E Definitions

Concealed Water Leak is water leaking from plumbing, on private property, that is hidden from view.

Council means Central Coast Council, being the organisation responsible for the administration of Council affairs and operations and the implementation of Council policy and strategies.

Council means the governing body of Central Coast Council.

Council policy shall mean policy created and approved by the elected members of the Central Coast Council.

Customer means the owner of the property.

Hardship shall include the inability to reasonably discharge financial obligations due to illness, unemployment or other reasonable cause rather than unwillingness to do so. Financial hardship can be either of limited duration or long term.

Principal place of residence will be determined using the principles defined by the Income Tax Assessment Act 1997.

The Act means the Local Government Act 1993.

PART F Associated Documents

- Central Coast Council's *Code of Conduct*
- Central Coast Council's *Debt Recovery and Hardship Policy*