

POLICY



CENTRAL TABLELANDS WATER

# CONCEALED LEAKS POLICY

## DOCUMENT CONTROL

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## Contents

<i>Introduction</i> .....	4
<i>Policy Statement</i> .....	4
<i>Policy Objectives</i> .....	4
<i>Policy Scope</i> .....	4
<i>Eligibility Criteria</i> .....	5
<i>Not-for-profit Organisations and Associations</i> .....	6
<i>Roles and Responsibilities</i> .....	6
<i>Definition</i> .....	7
<i>Annex A – Concealed Leak Rebate</i> .....	7
<i>Criteria for Financial Relief Due to Concealed Water Leaks</i> .....	9

## **Introduction**

The purpose of this Policy is to outline how Central Tablelands Water (CTW) will apply water account adjustments in relation to higher than usual water consumption caused by undetected concealed water leakages.

## **Policy Statement**

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 compensation to customers for water charges as a consequence of an undetected concealed water leak on their property. As an act of good faith and the interest of good public relations, CTW provides a means by which an adjustment to their water account can be obtained, subject to the provisions of this policy being met.

Submission of an application under the CTW Concealed Leak Policy and subsequent acceptance of the application does not constitute an admission of liability by CTW. By applying under this policy, customers acknowledge that any approval to provide compensation is made solely as a gesture of goodwill. It does not imply any legal obligation or liability on the part of CTW for leaks occurring on the property side of the water meter.

Customers are responsible for monitoring their own water usage via their water meter and should not rely on CTW to detect or notify them of potential water leaks.

## **Policy Objectives**

The property owner (as listed on the water account) is responsible for the reticulation, use and payment of all water which passes through their water meter. The property owner, whether residential or non-residential, is responsible for the maintenance and repair of their internal plumbing.

If a property is rented, it is the owner's responsibility to make an application under the policy, not the tenant. Any payment arrangements between the tenant and owner in respect of water charges has no bearing upon the assessment of the application. Failure by the tenant to notify the owner of a concealed leak is a matter between the owner and the tenant.

CTW has no obligation to grant an allowance on water accounts affected by leaks in private plumbing. It will only consider, at its absolute discretion, applications for water account adjustments due to undetected water leakage which are made in writing.

The Executive Management Accountant is responsible for the administration of this policy. The General Manager will ultimately determine and approve all allowances relating to applications for adjustments up to 1,000 kilolitres (kL). Any adjustments over 1,000 kL will be directed to Council for approval. The General Manager will determine and approve all allowances relating to applications from CTW staff and councillors in accordance with the eligibility criteria of this policy.

## **Policy Scope**

CTW will apply an adjustment to the customer's water account in accordance with the criteria and rules set out in this policy and related documentation.

This policy applies to customers as per Appendix A where a concealed leak has occurred on the property, resulting in excessive water use.

This policy applies to concealed leaks only and does not apply to water loss from:

- Leaking taps, toilet cisterns, hot water systems or other water appliances;
- Faulty plumbing or human error resulting in the filling of a rainwater tank;
- Property sprinkler or other irrigation systems; or
- Swimming pools, spas, ponds and other outdoor water features, or their related fittings.

Unless expressly stated otherwise in the eligibility criteria outlined in this policy, any customer seeking an adjustment to a water account must apply in writing to CTW and must be the water account holder for that property.

Should an application for relief under the concealed leaks policy be unsuccessful, Council will consider requests for a payment arrangement including extended time for payment or waiving interest charges.

All approved adjustments will be applied to the water account for the property where the concealed leak occurred; monetary refunds will not be issued.

## **Eligibility Criteria**

In the case of a water leak on the property, a customer will be eligible for an adjustment to their water account charges if they meet all of the following criteria:

1. The leak was undetected and concealed (refer to definition below and criteria in Annex B).
2. The customer took action to permanently repair the leak within 7 calendar days of becoming made aware of the leak.
3. The CTW account holder completes the Concealed Water Leakage Allowance Application form (Annex B) and submits this together with a licenced plumber's invoice to support the application. It should be noted that all pipe work repair, in accordance with the Plumbing and Drainage Act 2002 and related plumbing standard AS/NZS 3500, should be completed by a licenced plumber. Where the customer completes the repair, they should arrange for a licenced plumber to check the repair to ensure compliance with relevant legislation and plumbing standards.
4. The leak occurred and was repaired within the period of the previous water accounts or 30 days from the date of the recent water account.

## **Ineligibility Criteria and Definition:**

This policy does not apply to properties that fall under the following categories:

### **1. Commercial properties:**

Properties primarily used for business activities, including retail, office spaces, hospitality and other non-residential activities.

### **2. Industrial Properties:**

Sites used for manufacturing, warehousing, factories and processing plants.

### **3. Rural Properties:**

Properties located outside of the village and town areas and primarily used for agricultural, farming or pastoral purposes.

### **4. Properties with Livestock:**

Any property, regardless of its location in a town or village, that houses or maintains livestock.

### **5. Account in Arrears:**

If an account is in arrears for over 4 months, without an approved payment arrangement in place, no relief is available under this policy.

**6. Vacant Property:**

Applications will not be considered in respect of any property that has been vacant for more than 6 months.

**7. Government Agencies:**

Government agencies, being Local, State or Federal Governments are not eligible to apply under this policy.

**8. Claim**

No claim for relief will be considered where property owned less than six (6) months.

Where the leak has occurred within a community title scheme (CTS), such as Strata title properties, the application for an adjustment must be submitted as follows:

- Where the CTS is individually sub-metered and the sub-meters have been approved to be read and billed by CTW, and the leak occurred on private property, i.e. the leak consumption registered on the individual sub-meter, the property owner must submit the required documentation.
- Where the CTS is individually sub-metered, and the sub-meters have been approved to be read and billed by CTW, and the leak occurred on common land, the body corporate must submit the required documentation.
- Where the CTS is not individually sub-metered, or the sub-meters have not been approved to be read and billed by CTW, the body corporate acting on behalf of all property owners must submit the required documentation.

The rebate amount will be provided as per Annex A, the amount rebated will also be determined by the policy in place at the date of rebate application. Annex A details the maximum period/s for when an account can be adjusted and the period/s should include the period in which the leak was repaired and if the leak was not repaired within 7 calendar days, then the period in which the customer was notified of a potential water leak or high-water consumption.

### **Not-for-profit or and Registered Charities**

It is important to note that only residential connections operating as a Not-for-Profit or Registered Charity are eligible for relief under this policy.

Where the leak occurred on not-for-profit or charity property, the application must be made by the appropriate administrator.

Not-for-profit and Registered Charities will be requested to provide evidence status with a rebate application. Approval for a rebate is at the discretion of the General Manager and will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

The General Manager and Executive Management Accountant are responsible for ensuring the implementation of this Policy.

## Definition

What is a concealed leak?

A concealed leak is a **water leak on your property that is not visible**, such as when there is a leak in underground pipes. A concealed leak doesn't include a leak within your property like a constantly running toilet.

## Annex A – Concealed Leak Rebate

Customer Type	CTW water usage rebate % offered above average usage*	Maximum period for which a rebate can be calculated	Frequency at which rebate can be applied for by property owner/s at the subject property for the water usage component of the rebate
Residential properties only <sup>^</sup>	50%	Within the period of the previous water account or 30 days from the date of the recent water account.	Once

<sup>^</sup> Residential properties, do not include rural connections.

\* 50% of the difference between the average three (3) year's corresponding quarterly billing periods and the actual water used. Where prior period usage data is not available for three (3) years previous corresponding periods, then the most recent available usage data will be used.

The average daily consumption for approved dialysis and medical customers shall include annual allowances as per CTW's Dialysis policy.



## Annex A – Concealed Leak Allowance Application

### Concealed Water Leakage Allowance Application Form

Prior to completion of this form ensure eligibility criteria has been achieved.

#### Owner Details:

Owners Surname/s:	
Owners <b>full</b> Given Names:	
Phone Number - Business Hours:	Home:
Have you self-assessed the eligibility criteria and your application has met all the eligible criteria? Yes/No	

#### Property Details:

Customer Account Number:
Property Address:

#### Leakage Details:

Where did the leak occur ( <i>provide an explanation; is it underground, was it visible?</i> )?		
What caused the leakage ( <i>corrosion, faulty installation, tree roots, etc.</i> )?		
Date leakage detected:		
How was the leakage detected ( <i>notified by CTW, found it when driving past, etc.</i> )?		
Please attach any further information that will assist us with the application (application for hardship etc.)		
Information Attached?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Have you applied for a leakage allowance previously?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>

**Repair Details:**

Date repaired:		
Did a licensed plumber repair the leak?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
If yes, please attach a copy of the plumber's invoice along with an explanation from the plumber regarding the concealed leakage and return with your application. Page 1		

**Declaration**

By signing this application, I declare that the information is true and correct. I confirm that I have read the criteria for applying for a concealed leakage concession.

Signature:

Date:

**Criteria for Financial Relief Due to Concealed Water Leaks**

1. CTW has no obligation to adjust water accounts affected by leakage in private plumbing. It will consider applications for water leakage allowances due to undetected water leaks in the following circumstances:
  - i. The undetected water leak was in a location that was not readily visible or apparent (e.g. below ground, under a concrete slab, in a wall cavity, etc.)
  - ii. The undetected leak was repaired by a licensed plumber in a timely and effective manner to minimise water loss. Repairs must be completed within 7 days of a water account being issued or the customer becoming aware of a possible leak via notification by CTW or otherwise.A customer is deemed to be notified by CTW of a possible water leak:
  - On the day a customer receives a "Higher Than Normal Usage" card via mail or similar notification by a CTW representative
  - On the day a CTW staff member telephones the property owner (or managing agent).
2. This policy applies to concealed leaks only and does not apply to water loss from:
  - Leaking taps, toilet cisterns, hot water systems or other water appliances;
  - Faulty plumbing or human error resulting in the filling of a rainwater tank;
  - Property sprinkler or other irrigation systems; or
  - Swimming pools, spas, ponds and other outdoor water features, or their related fittings.
3. All requests for undetected water leakage allowance must be in writing and provide the following information:
  - i. A statement from the property owner clearly outlining:
    - the date and circumstances leading to the leak being detected;
    - the date the leakage was repaired by a licensed plumber;
    - the cause of the leakage;
    - the reason why the leakage was not readily visible or apparent; and

- ii. A statement signed by the licenced plumber who repaired the leak, clearly explaining why the leak was undetected by the customer and certifying that the repairs comply with AS/NZS 3500

4. An application for undetected water leakage allowance may be declined if it is found that:

- i. the customer failed or neglected any visible or obvious defects in their private water service;
- ii. the customer ignored or failed to investigate any visible signs of leakage including soaking or dampness in walls, consistently wet grass or damp patches in lawns or running toilets;
- iii. the customer failed to repair and or renew the faulty pipework, fittings and fixtures for which they are responsible;
- iv. any documentation or statements received are found to be misleading or false;
- v. the undetected leakage was caused by wilful, accidental or negligent damage to the customers internal plumbing

5. If an application for water leakage allowance is not approved, the customer will be advised in writing and granted a further 28 days from the date of the advice to either pay the account in full or enter into a suitable payment arrangement.

6. If an application for a leakage allowance is approved, the customer will be advised in writing that payment of the adjusted account will be due 28 days from the date of the advice.

7. A water leakage allowance will be granted on a “one off” basis. Requests for reduction in water charges for subsequent water leaks will not be considered.

8. Where a leakage allowance is granted, the following will apply:

- i. the water account for the period will be adjusted based on the average consumption for the period that the undetected leakage occurred
- ii. the average consumption will be calculated by averaging three (3) previous corresponding billing periods (i.e. if the water account in question was issued in May, the three (3) previous corresponding May water accounts will be averaged)
- iii. the leakage allowance is applied to the billing period in which the undetected leakage occurred.

**Office Use Only**

**Date received -**

Account Number:		Letter received from Plumber:	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Pensioner:	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			
Approved:	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Signed General Manager:		
Total Credit:		Journal Number:		
Customer Notified:	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Date Journal Processed:		