



## WATER USAGE IN RENTAL PROPERTIES

*It sounds easy, doesn't it?*

*Just charge the tenants for water usage.*

*After all, they used it - they should pay.*

Water usage in Queensland rental properties is the most contentious matter that we deal with as property managers. The main challenge is that in Queensland, water costs are billed to the property owner, not the resident. Owners are permitted to pass on water usage costs to their tenants, but not access or sewerage charges. If you wish to pass on all water charges to your tenant, the following conditions must be met:

### **1. Your property must be water compliant.**

To minimise costs to the tenant, you must ensure your property is water efficient, according to the *Water Efficiency Labelling and Standards ('WELS') Scheme*. A plumber will perform a compliance check, make any necessary adjustments, and issue a Water Compliance Certificate. This will be required as evidence of water compliance in the event the tenant disputes a water invoice, and the matter is taken to QCAT (Queensland and Civil Administrative Tribunal).

### **2. Your property must be individually metered.**

Because water usage fees are calculated from your water bill, the property must be metered separately and read by the water authority. If the meter is shared by more than one property, the tenant cannot be charged for water usage. In this case, it is advisable to raise the rent to incorporate water usage.

### **3. The lease must state that water usage is to be charged to the tenant.**

If a property is made compliant during a fixed-term lease, the tenant cannot be charged until a new lease stating the condition is entered into.



If these conditions are met, we can charge your tenants for all water usage by taking the reading from the water bill and issuing an invoice to the tenant, who has 30 days to make the payment.

### **Points to consider**

- It is important to act quickly on minor plumbing issues such as leaks, running toilets and dripping taps, because tenants can dispute paying a water bill if water has been wasted.
- If the lease start and end dates do not coincide with the water billing period, you may not be able to charge the tenants for the dates outside the water billing period.
- Water is an essential service that must be provided by the property owner. If the tenants do not pay their water invoice, it cannot be turned off. The parties must attend conciliation and if an agreement is not reached, it proceeds to QCAT

### **Charging for excess water**

If your property is not water efficient and you are not willing to spend the money to make it compliant, you can opt to charge the tenants for **excess** water usage. This encourages the tenants to conserve water and allows you to budget for a set amount of water usage which can be incorporated in the rent. In fact, many owners opt for this solution because they receive compensation for water usage gradually in the rent, rather than in lump sums in arrears.

Feel free to contact us if you would like further information or clarification.

# APRIL LEASING REPORT

**Office Vacancy Rate: 0.09%**

Our leasing team continues to be run off its feet with enquiries and applications, as demand for rental properties shows no signs of slowing down.

In times like these, applicants who become desperate to be approved often put pressure on agents, and offer inducements such as higher rent or a lump sum advance rent payment.

While finding a tenant in this market is easy, finding the BEST POSSIBLE tenant requires a commitment to proper processes and investigation.

Our multi-layered approach to processing applications, with built-in checks and balances, dramatically reduces the risk of poor quality applications slipping through.

## DATES

### DISBURSEMENTS

Wed 5th May  
Wed 12th May  
Wed 19th May  
Wed 26th May

### STATEMENT

Tue 1st June

### LABOUR DAY HOLIDAY

Mon 3rd May

## BREAKING NEWS: COVID-19 Response for Residential Tenancies

**The Queensland Government has announced some changes to the Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation (COVID-19 Emergency Response) Amendment Regulation 2021.**

**Provisions allowing tenants experiencing domestic and family violence to end their tenancies quickly will EXTEND to 30th September 2021. This is great news to mark the beginning of DFV Prevention Month.**

**For information on DFV and Tenancies:**

**<https://www.solutionsproperty.com.au/domestic-family-violence/>**

**We all play our part  
Domestic and Family Violence  
Prevention Month 2021**

