

NEW WATER PRICING SYSTEM FOR RESIDENTIAL AND BUSINESS CUSTOMERS

Maranoa Regional Council is introducing a new system of water pricing for residential and business customers.

Under this system, you'll pay a fixed service fee for ongoing connection to the region's water distribution network, plus a charge for every kilolitre of water you use.

This is similar to phone bills where you pay line rental and a charge for each call you make, or electricity bills where you incur an access charge as well as a fee for how much electricity you use.

It's called a **consumption based system**, and it's the standard water pricing method used by most councils and water service providers across Australia.

This new method will replace existing allocation systems in Roma, Wallumbilla, Yuleba, Jackson and Injune, where residents currently pay set charges for pre-determined usage rates, then per kilolitre for excess. Water charges in Mitchell, Mungallala and Amby are already calculated according to consumption.

Surat will not be included in the new pricing system. Instead, residents and businesses will receive an annual allocation, with excess charges for every kilolitre over. This is in line with Council's decision to move to a user-pays system, and designed to cover costs associated with operating the town's dual reticulation system and river water treatment process.

Changes to pricing will come into effect on **1 July 2010** and itemised charges will appear on your six-monthly rates notice.

Why is the Council changing water pricing?

User-pays water pricing places greater emphasis on water being treated as a valuable and precious resource. It provides individuals and businesses with an incentive to better manage water use, and gives them greater control over ongoing water costs.

How much will water cost?

If you live or operate a business in Roma, Wallumbilla, Yuleba, Jackson, Injune, Mitchell, Mungallala or Amby, you will pay a fixed service fee for ongoing connection to the region's water distribution networks, plus a charge for every kilolitre of water you use.

The service fee is set at \$344 per residential property, and the consumption charge at 45 cents per kilolitre.

If you live or operate a business in Surat, you'll also pay a fixed service fee for ongoing connection to Council's water distribution network. Unlike other parts of the district, you will receive an allocation of 409 kilolitres of water per year, and will only pay per kilolitre for amounts in excess of this.

This service fee is set as \$908 for the financial year (including the 409KL allocation). Excess is charged at \$2 per kilolitre.

What is one kilolitre equal to?

One kilolitre is 1,000 litres. It is equal to:

- 4,000 glasses of water;
- Approximately five bathtubs full of water;
- Five 10 minute showers;
- Half flushing the toilet 166 times;
- Running a standard garden sprinkler for one hour depending on pressure and sprinkler type;
- Approximately four wheelie bins full of water

How did you calculate the new water charges?

These new service and consumption fees represent the real cost of supplying water to our communities. They take into account fixed infrastructure costs, as well as things like treatment, licensing, labour and running expenses. We've weighed these factors against consumption statistics from the past year to set prices which cover the true cost of supply, but still give you the flexibility to reduce your bill by managing water use.

Why is water charged differently in Surat?

Surat residents and businesses are exempt from the new consumption based pricing system being rolled out across the region. Those living and / or operating a business in this area will instead receive an annual water allocation, and pay excess for every kilolitre over that allocation.

This is in line with Council's decision to move to a user-pays system, and designed to cover higher fixed costs associated with operating the town's dual reticulation system and \$6.8 million treatment plant.

Surat's town water supply is drawn from the Balonne River rather than a bore, which also makes it more expensive to treat.

What can I do if I object to the changes?

If you object to changes in Council's water pricing system, you can lodge a complaint with Council's customer service team on 1300 007 662 or write to us at PO Box 42, Mitchell Q 4465.

I'm a pensioner. Am I entitled to a concession?

If you are a pensioner you can apply to receive a concession on your rates notice. However, you will not be entitled to a separate concession on water consumption.

'Pensioner Subsidy' forms are available from Council's customer service centres in Mitchell, Roma, Yuleba, Surat and Injune. If you're entitled to a discount and have previously registered with Council, you do not need to re-register - we will liaise with Centrelink to update any details. *Please contact Customer Service on 1300 007 662 for more information on pensioner concessions.*

I live in a rental property. Will I have to pay for water?

Under the Residential Tenancies Act you may be charged for water consumption.

Conditions apply for landlords who wish to pass on water consumption charges to tenants. As a minimum, they may only do so if the rental premises are individually metered and water efficient, and the tenancy agreement states the tenant must pay for water consumption.

Only water consumption charges can be passed onto tenants. Landlords must pay the fixed service charge. Visit www.rta.qld.gov.au/water_charging_1.cfm for more information about water charging for tenants.

If you are unsure about your individual circumstances, please speak to your real estate agent or landlord.

I own a unit in a complex and it doesn't have a separate water meter. How will I be charged?

The set service charge will be billed to each unit owner on their rates notice. The complex's total water consumption charge will be divided by the number of units in the complex, and distributed evenly amongst each owner.

What happens if I have an illness or disability which requires the use of water (such as dialysis)?

Council recognises there are special interest groups in the community and will consider any applications for concession regarding this matter on a case by case basis.

What if I live on a bigger block, corner block or acreage?

All customers will be charged the same rate per kilolitre of water regardless of the size of your block.

Will my water meter change or be replaced?

No. Changes to water pricing will not require any changes to, or the replacement of, your water meter.

Are water restrictions going to continue?

Council is reviewing water restrictions. Water restrictions still apply until the review has been concluded. Odd numbered houses and businesses are free to water before 9am and after 4pm Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday. Even numbered properties can water before 9am and after 4pm Wednesday, Friday and Sunday. Hand held hoses are permitted every day outside the hours of 9am – 4pm. Fines of up to \$300 for individuals and \$600 for businesses apply to those who don't comply.

What if there's a leak on my meter or the Council pipes?

Council is responsible for repairing water leaks in our infrastructure. If there is a leak on your meter or the Council pipes, we will repair it at no cost to you and adjust any resulting bills accordingly.

We appreciate your assistance in locating water leaks. Please contact Council's Customer Service staff on 1300 007 662 to make a report.

What if there's a leak somewhere on my property?

Residents are responsible for repairing water leaks in:

- The pipe carrying water from Council's meter into their premises;
- Internal pipes or plumbing fixtures within the premises;
- Irrigation piping or garden watering systems.

For more information on changes to water charges, please contact Council's customer service team on 1300 007 662.