



Energy & Water
Ombudsman NSW
Free, fair and independent

High water bills



If you receive an unexpectedly high water bill or your bills have gone up and stayed up, contact your water provider.

Tell the provider why you're concerned and ask for an explanation of the charges on the bill. If it can't explain the charges to you, it may offer (or you can ask it) to do a full investigation. If you're not satisfied with the results of the investigation, you can contact us.

Billing investigations may take some time to resolve, so it's important to pay the part of the bill not in dispute. That is, pay your regular quarterly amount. This will help you stay on top of your bills and show the provider you are acting in good faith.

Is there a dripping tap, toilet or hot water system in your home?

Fixing a leaking tap is an easy way to use less water. One leaking tap can waste up to 2,000 litres a month, so replace washers as soon as taps begin to leak. A leaking toilet can waste over 16,000 litres of water each year.



Why is my bill high?

Does your bill include previous amounts you haven't paid?

Your bill may include a carried forward amount that remained unpaid from a previous billing period.

Did the price increase?

Compare the rates on your new bill with previous bills. If prices have increased the water provider should have advised you, either on the bill or in a separate notice.

Is the bill period longer?

If there is a delay issuing your bill you may be billed for a longer period than usual and therefore the bill will be higher than normal.

Have you used more water than usual?

If you had people staying with you or you were home more than usual, your bill may be higher than normal. Compare the average daily usage on your current bill with previous bills, particularly the bill for the same period last year.

Has your bill been estimated?

Your bill may be based on an estimated meter reading if the meter was not accessible when the meter reader visited. If your bill is estimated it should be clearly indicated on the bill. Estimated bills are usually based on your past usage, which may be more or less than your actual usage for the period that was estimated. Once your meter is read, your next bill will correct any over or under billing for the estimated period.

Even if your bill is high, you should pay something, and any new bills should be paid in full - if they are aligned to your normal usage.



Access to the water meter is the customer's responsibility. If it's not accessible, your bill may be estimated.



What can I do?

Check the reading on your meter

Check the reading on the bill against the reading on your meter. Are they similar? The meter would have moved on so your meter read should be a bit higher.

1. Lift the lid and clean the plastic window to expose the black and red numbers.
2. Read the numbers from left to right.
3. The black numbers are what you need to record. They represent kilolitres (kL).
4. The red numbers record each litre used, with 1,000 litres equalling one kL. The red numbers are ignored for billing purposes.

Reading a water meter

Kilolitres (kL)

0 5 0 4

Litres (L)

1 9 7

Test for water leaks

Check for damp areas or water pooling near your water meter or water pipes. If you suspect a leak, follow the steps below:

1. Turn off all taps and water outlets.
2. Take a reading of your meter.
3. Wait for an hour and don't use any water during this time.
4. Take another reading.
5. If there is a difference in the readings there may be a leak.

Water pipes are usually buried underground, so the leak may not be visible. A bright green patch of grass in the middle of drier grass is an indicator of an underground leak.

Call your water provider for advice if you detect a leak. It may ask you to have a registered plumber inspect your pipes.

If the leak is on your side of the connection to the water mains, you are responsible for both the cost of the leaked water and the costs of repairing the leak. However, some water providers may assist with the costs under their Concealed Leaks Policy.



Your water provider may offer assistance to customers who have difficulty paying a bill. Contact it to discuss what help is available.

Check your water meter

After you've made sure you don't have any leaks, check your water meter is measuring your usage accurately. To do this:

1. Turn off all taps and water outlets.
2. Take a reading of your meter.
3. Use an accurate 10 litre bucket and fill it with water from a tap.
4. Take another meter reading with reference to the red numbers on your meter. These should show 10 litres were used.

If the recording is different, your meter may not be accurate. Call your water provider to discuss.

Monitor your consumption

If you don't have a leak and your meter seems accurate, increased usage most likely caused the higher than expected bill.

To help you understand your household's water use, take regular meter readings to measure your daily consumption. The best time to do this is before and after taking showers, using the washing machine and watering the garden.

How can we help?

If you lodge a complaint with us, we will investigate the bill. The aim of our investigation is to confirm you've been billed accurately, with the meter correctly recording usage.

It's not always possible to pinpoint the exact cause of a higher than expected bill - often it's only possible to identify what is not the cause.

We will provide you with usage reduction advice. We will also assist you with setting up a payment plan with your water provider.

Make a complaint or enquiry

Freecall	1800 246 545* Mon - Fri, 9am - 5pm
Freefax	1800 812 291
Freepost	Reply Paid 86550 Sydney South NSW 1234
Interpreter	131 450
TTY/Voice	133 677
Online	ewon.com.au
In person	Level 11, 133 Castlereagh St, Sydney, NSW 2000

* If you are calling from a mobile phone, let us know and we will call you back.