Policy

Water meters

1.   Overview

1.1   At a glance

This policy explains:

- our responsibility for the meters we issue
- your responsibility for the meter on your property
- where a plumber should install a meter
- why we need access to the meter
- when and how we get readings
- when we replace meters
- the accuracy of our meters.

1.2   Scope

This policy applies to you if you:

- have a Sydney Water meter on your property
- arrange the installation or install Sydney Water meters.

This policy doesn't cover private or trade waste meters.

1.3   Objective

This policy ensures that licensed plumbers install meters correctly. This means we can:

- access meters easily to read them
- charge customers for the actual water they use.

2. Policy in detail

2.1 Responsibilities

2.1.1 Our responsibilities

We own meters that measure the water a customer uses. We're responsible for reading and maintaining them.

2.1.2 Customer responsibilities

You're responsible for:

- ensuring you have an authorised connection to our water main. In most cases, this will include a meter
- ensuring the licensed plumber who installs a meter onto your property follows our *Water meter installation guide*
- protecting the meter from damage
- telling us if the meter is behind a locked gate or fence
- keeping the area around the meter clear so we can read it regularly
- maintaining a private data logger attached to our meter if you have one. This includes the connection to the meter
- maintaining a private meter if your property has one
- maintaining a metered standpipe if you have one.

2.2 The water meter

2.2.1 Installing the meter

Only a licensed plumber or a Sydney Water contractor can install a meter. If the meter is 32 mm or larger, the licensed plumber must also install a backflow prevention device. Smaller meters have this device inside them.

When laying a private water pipe, the licensed plumber must allow the correct space for the meter.

If the plumber is installing the private water pipe from the water main, they must plan where the meter needs to go. They must ensure the inlet riser is between 300 mm and:

- 1,000 mm inside the front property boundary
- 600 mm from the left or right property boundary.

They must also ensure that the inlet riser and outlet riser are:

- 300 mm from the ground
- parallel to the closest side boundary.

When the plumber installs the meter, they must make sure:

- there is a 300 mm gap around it
- we can access and read it in future.

If the property has a locked and tagged water pipe, the plumber won't need to plan where the meter needs to go. This is because the developer has already laid part of the pipe, which goes from the water main to the inlet riser. The plumber must still follow the installation guide for the correct spacing to allow for a meter to be fitted.

Exceptions to these requirements must comply with our *Water meter installation guide*.

2.2.2   Metering units in a new multi-level building

From 1 September 2014, units in most new multi-level buildings must have their own meters. These requirements apply to new multi-level:

- residential buildings
- mixed developments (this is a residential and retail/commercial building)
- serviced apartments
- commercial buildings under a strata title.

The requirements don't apply to existing buildings and most commercial buildings. To comply, buildings that are strata subdivided must have:

- a meter for each unit
- the meters and wireless reading system in the common area, not inside the units.

To comply, buildings that are not strata subdivided:

- must have plumbing with a meter spacer for each unit. This must be in the common area, not inside the units
- may have a meter for each unit
- may have a wireless reading system for the meters. This must be in the common area, not inside the units.

We'll supply the master meter for the building. For details on planning and installing meters in multi-level developments, read our *Multi-level individual metering guide*.

2.2.3   Metering units in an existing multi-level building

It's not compulsory to meter each unit in existing buildings. If you'd like to separately meter each unit, you may ask a licensed plumber to do this for you. They must:

- change the water pipes in your building to allow for the meters
- buy the meter and a wireless reading system from our accredited meter suppliers
- install a meter for each unit
- install the meters in the common area, not in the units.

The owners corporation or property owners are responsible for the plumbing, meters and installation costs. To find out more, read our *Multi-level individual metering guide*.

2.2.4   Redeveloping a property

If you're redeveloping a property, you must leave the meter on the site and make sure it's accessible. If you're not using water, we won't charge you for water use. If you don't need the water connection, you can

apply to disconnect via Sydney Water Tap in. If approved, a licensed plumber must disconnect the private water pipe from the water main. They must also return the meter to us.

2.2.5   Accessing the meter

Giving us access to the meter allows us to bill you correctly. You must leave a 300 mm clearance around the meter so we can read, inspect or replace it. If we can't access the meter, we may estimate your water use.

You must make access arrangements with us if the meter is behind a locked fence or gate.

2.2.6   Reading the meter

We read most meters four times a year. If we can't access the meter, we'll leave a self-reading card at your property. We need you to tell us the meter reading within three days of us leaving the card (a current reading allows us to calculate up to date water use). You may do this by phone, through our website or via SMS\MMS.

If we don't receive a reading within three days, we may estimate your water use. We'll base this on your past water use. If this isn't possible, we may base it on the use of similar properties in your area. If we can't read your meter and have to average your bills over a long period, we may charge a fee. It won't apply if you provide your meter readings or choose to have a remotely read meter installed.

2.2.7   Replacing the meter

We'll replace a meter free of charge if it's faulty, the end of its life or we are upgrading your area to smart meters. Typical meter life is about 15 to 20 years for small meters on homes for mechanical meters or 10 to 15 years for battery powered meters. We regularly test our meters to assess their accuracy over time. The testing process complies with Australian Standards.

If a meter is damaged, we may charge you for a replacement.

If a meter has a private data logger attached, we'll disconnect it to replace the meter. We won't connect it to the new meter. If you connect it, we can't guarantee that it will work with the new meter.

2.2.8   Testing the meter

You can ask us to test the meter if you believe it's not recording your water use accurately. You must pay a fee for the test, which depends on the size of the meter. We'll:

- remove the meter and send it to an independent laboratory for testing
- replace the meter with a new one
- refund the fee if the test confirms the meter is inaccurate.

We recommend you check for leaks before you pay for a meter test.

2.2.9   Monitoring water use

You may want to monitor your water use more closely than the bill allows. To do this, you may connect a private data logger onto our meter. You must get our written approval before you connect one. You are responsible for:

- any supply and installation costs

- upgrading or removing a private data logger. This may be when it no longer works or is not compatible with a new meter.

We don't use readings on private data loggers to calculate water use charges.

2.2.10   Using a standpipe

We only authorise certain businesses to use standpipes. Although we don't supply standpipes, businesses must have a permit from us to use one on our hydrants. The standpipe must have a meter and be kept in good order by servicing it according to the manufacturer's guidelines.

Only Sydney Water, the NSW Fire Brigade, the NSW Rural Fire Service or the State Emergency Services may use an unmetered standpipe. Using a standpipe without a permit or a meter is water theft and fines apply.

3.   Definitions

Term	Definition
Backflow prevention device	A one-way valve that stops water going back into our water main from your private water pipes.
Inlet riser	A part of the private water pipe that comes out of the ground and connects to the meter. It's on the water main side of the meter.
Locked and tagged water pipe	A private water pipe that starts at the water main and ends just before the meter. The developer typically arranges an accredited licensed plumber to install these services. These water pipes are only in new development areas.
Multi-level building	A building that has more than a ground and first floor. It's not a house, townhouse or terrace house.
Outlet riser	The other part of the private water pipe that comes out of the ground and connects the meter. It's on the building or customer side of the meter.
Private data logger	A device that a customer installs to closely monitor their water use. The device has an electronic connection to our meter. We're responsible for the data loggers we install.
Private water meter	A privately-owned check meter that records part of a property's water use. A customer will install one of these meters to measure a specific occupant's water use. The customer is responsible for this meter. A property that has a private meter must also have a Sydney Water meter. The property's water use must go through our meter before it goes through the privately-owned meter. We don't record or calculate water use on a private meter.
Standpipe	A short metal pipe with a: • tap and a meter at the top • fitting at the bottom that connects to a hydrant. A standpipe is a temporary and direct connection into our water supply. A business typically uses a standpipe when they don't have access to water through a normal connection.
Water meter	A device we use to measure a customer's water use.