

water meters



History

Some older complexes do not have separate individual water meters (or sub-meters) ... Why?

The Toowoomba Regional Council previously used a different system for charging for water.

Previously, every household could use 324 kilolitres (or 324,000 litres) of water for FREE. If a household used more than 324 kilolitres of water then households were charged "Excess" water charges.

So how did this work in practice? For example, if you owned a unit in a seven (7) unit complex ... this complex could use 324 kilolitres x 7 units or 2,268 kilolitres (or 2,268,000 litres) of water for FREE.

Accordingly, it was almost impossible for a unit complex to use their FREE water allowance. The only time a complex would ever exceed their FREE allowance was when there was a massive common water leak.

Therefore, because of this massive FREE allowance and following the rules at the time, developers were **NOT** required to install separate individual meters or sub-meters ... so it was quite rare for developers to install individual meters or sub-meters.

Now

Some years ago, the Toowoomba Regional Council changed its water charging policy and introduced Water Access Charges and Tiered Water Charges.

As at 1 July 2025 water charges for Residential Toowoomba users are

Water Access Charge \$397.27 per half year

Water Consumption Charges

Tier 1 (0 – 100 kL) \$3.18 per kilolitre

Tier 2 (> 100 kL) \$5.42 per kilolitre

So how is water use shared in older complexes without individual meters

All complexes have a single Primary Meter somewhere near the front of the property.

All complexes have a system of "*Contribution Schedule Lot Entitlements*" that is part of the Scheme's Community Management Statement (ie part of the legal documentation for the scheme). Sometimes these entitlements are simply equal for each lot. Sometimes these entitlements are different for each lot.

Water is divided based on these entitlements.

Some examples

4 units with equal entitlements (usually when the units are approximately the same size)

Unit 1	1 entitlement
Unit 2	1 entitlement
Unit 3	1 entitlement
Unit 4	1 entitlement

Total 4 entitlements

In this complex water is simply divided 25% each unit (ie 1 / 4) – actual use is completely ignored!

4 units with different entitlements (this sometimes happens when units significantly vary in size)

Unit 1	3 entitlements
Unit 2	4 entitlements
Unit 3	4 entitlements
Unit 4	3 entitlements

Total 14 entitlements

This would mean water is split as follows:

Unit 1	21.43% (ie 3/14)
Unit 2	28.57% (ie 4/14)
Unit 3	28.57% (ie 4/14)
Unit 4	21.43% (ie 3/14)

Actual use is completely ignored!

Dividing Water Consumption Charges Based on Entitlements is Unfair!

We totally agree ... dividing water consumption charges based on Entitlements is unfair.

Some people suggest that it would be fairer to split based on occupancy ... the problem is council does not know the occupancy of units and occupancy patterns change.

The Toowoomba Regional Council has only two approved systems: -

- Water consumption based on approved sub-meters; or
- Contribution Schedule Lot Entitlements

No other system may be used, regardless of perceived fairness.

Here are some of the terribly unfair results that can result:-

- A single person living a very water conscious life pays the exact same amount as the unit next door with five people showering twice a day with a leaking tap and washing the car every day.
- A person that only visits their unit twice a year when collecting children from boarding school pays the exact same amount as the unit next door who lives permanently in the units.

The only way to overcome these unfair results is to install separate individual meters or sub-meters.

Why are individual water meters or sub-meters so expensive?

The Toowoomba Regional Council has some very special rules regarding individual water meters or sub-meters, including:-

- You **MUST** buy the meter from Council
- You **MUST** pay for all installation costs of the new meter
- You **MUST** place the meters in an accessible location

The least understood requirement is the placement of the sub-meters. All sub-meters must be placed at the front boundary alignment. This basically means the entire complex will need to replumbed.

Some examples, of what is OK and what is NOT OK are attached.

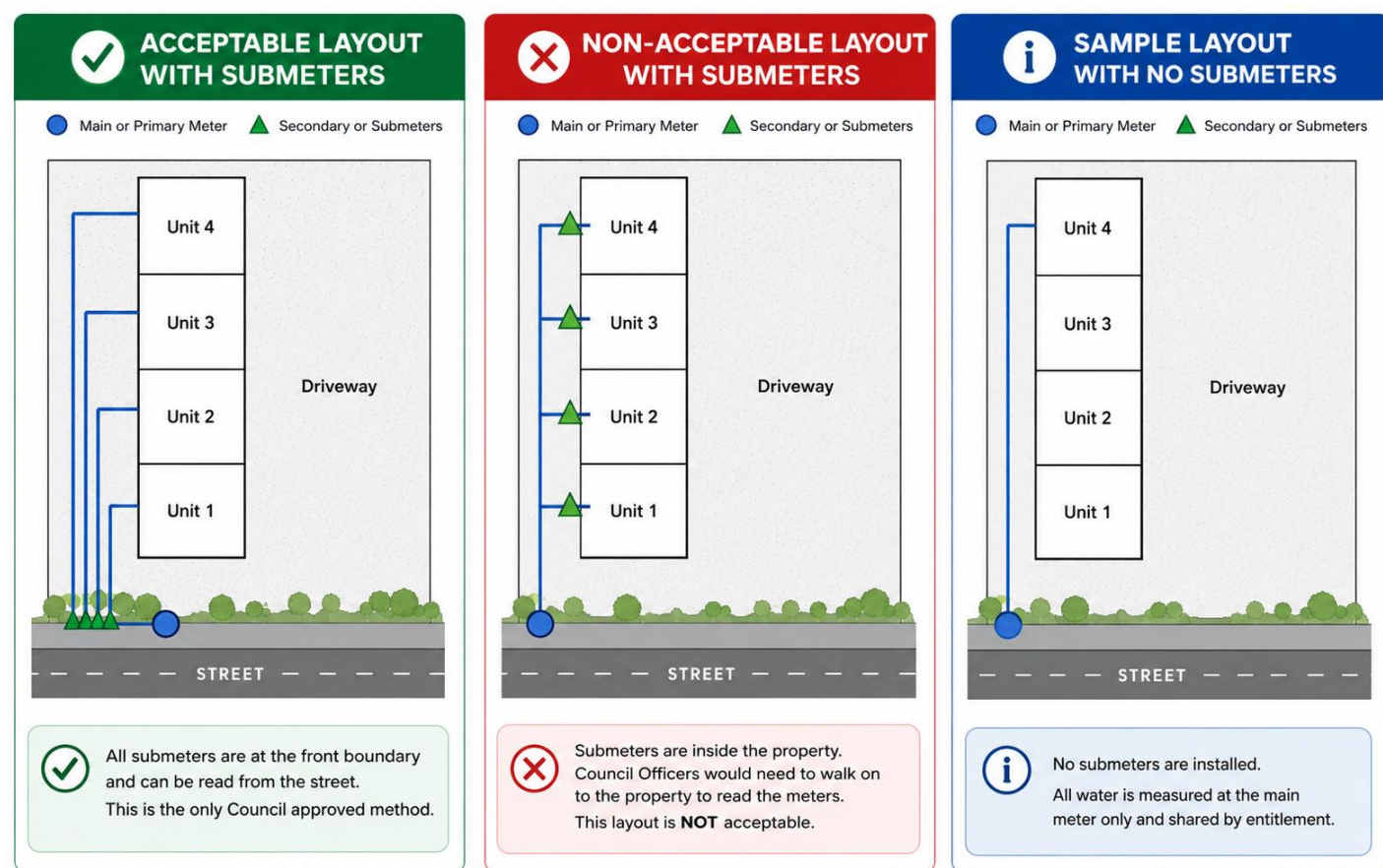
Can I just install my own meter?

Yes ... however, the Toowoomba Regional Council will **NOT** read this meter unless the entire complex has separate individual water meters or sub-meters.

If you did just install your own meter – this meter would just be considered a “private meter”.

For some people, installing a “private meter” might serve a useful purpose. A “private meter” could still be used to charge tenants water consumption.

Finally, you would need to acknowledge that the consumption through this meter would be different to the consumption allocated to your unit via the Lot Entitlement System that the Toowoomba Regional Council would continue to use.



ACCEPTABLE WATER METER LOCATION

At the Front Boundary – Council Approved Only

✓ ADVANTAGES

Council will read the meter and charge for your consumption only.

You only pay for the water you use.
Fair, accurate and transparent.

✗ DISADVANTAGES

High cost to plumb the entire complex.

More pipe work means more potential points of failure in the future.

HOW THE WATER FLOW WORKS

Water is supplied from Council's main (primary) meter, then flows through a secondary (sub) meter for each unit.

1. MAIN (PRIMARY) METER

Council installs and reads the primary meter at the front boundary.

2. SECONDARY (SUB) METER

Water flows through a submeter which measures the consumption for each unit.

3. EACH UNIT

Water then flows from the submeter to the individual unit for use.

WHY DOES COUNCIL REQUIRE THIS?

Council requires all meters to be located at the front boundary so that all meters can be read and maintained without Council Officers having to come on to the property.

THIS ENSURES:

- ✓ Safety for Council Officers
- ✓ Consistent access for meter reading
- ✓ Efficient and fair service delivery for all ratepayers

i IMPORTANT

This is the only Council approved method of installing meters, however, it means the entire complex needs to be re-plumbed from the street to each unit.

The requirement to fully re-plumb the building adds significant costs.

Council justifies this approach because it avoids the need for Council Officers to walk on to the site to read the meters. All meters can be read from the street.