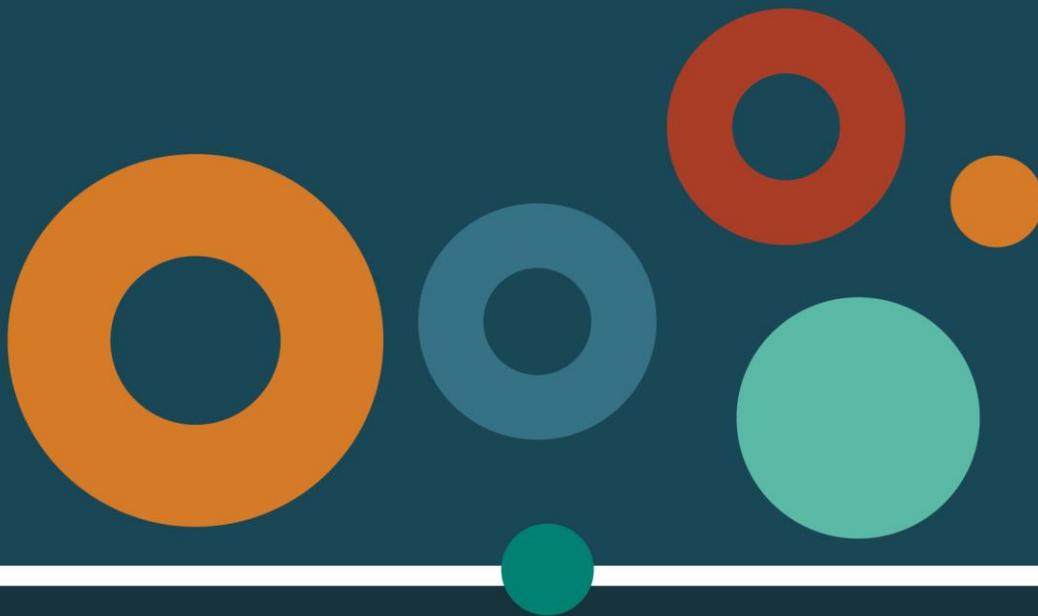


Guideline for issuing a residential water rate notice outside South East Queensland

Version 2.00 – 1 November 2020

UWS/2020/5494



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Approval

Position	Name	Date
Deputy Director General, Natural Resources Division	Linda Dobe	28/10/2020

Version history

Version	Effective Date	Comments
v1.00	June 2015	Original guideline
v2.00	1 November 2020	This version provides clarification of administrative details to be provided to customers (differentiation between volumetric and service charges and customer enquiry details), and includes examples of waterwise materials and messages.

Table of contents

1	Purpose	5
2	How this guideline applies to you	5
2.1	Who it applies to	5
2.2	When it applies	6
2.3	How to use this guideline	6
3	Requirements for water rate notices	7
3.1	Frequency of issue	7
3.2	Information that must be included	7
3.3	Additional information that should be included.....	9
3.3.1	Water restrictions	9
3.3.2	Messaging on efficient water use.....	9
3.3.3	Trigger messaging	10
4	Glossary	11
	Appendix 1: An example of a water rate notice	13
	Appendix 2: Examples of additional information	14

1 Purpose

This guideline aims to ensure customers receive consistent and relevant information in a water rate notice for the supply of water to residential premises outside of South East Queensland (SEQ) (where the water supply is measured and charged for by the water service provider or related local government). This guideline also aims to encourage customers to better monitor their water use and promote efficient water use. It does this by providing comparative data to customers about their water consumption at a household and against the broader community in an accessible format.

For the purposes of this guideline, a water rate notice is an invoice, rate notice or account notice issued by a registered service provider or related local government to a customer for the supply of water to a residential premises, or a utility charge for a water service issued under the *Local Government Act 2009*.

This guideline specifies what information is required to be included in a water rate notice for the supply of water to residential premises outside SEQ¹. It includes:

- the frequency at which a water rate notice must be issued for the supply of water to residential premises
- types of information that must be included
- additional information to promote efficient water use, that should be included
- examples of additional information.

This guideline has been prepared consistent with the *National Guidelines for Residential Customers' Water Accounts 2006* (the National Guidelines), which were developed as part of the Delivery Pricing and Demand Management actions under the National Water Initiative². The requirements for issuing an account for a water rate notice by a SEQ water service provider were also considered when preparing this guideline³.

2 How this guideline applies to you

This guideline replaces the '*Guidelines for issuing a rate notice or account for the supply of water to residential premises: For water service providers outside South East Queensland*' dated June 2015. No substantial changes have been made to the requirements for issuing a water rate notice. This guideline (compared to the previous version) clarifies administrative details that are to be provided in a water rate notice (refer to section 2.2). This guideline also gives additional examples of material and messages that water providers can use in a water rate notice to encourage efficient water use (refer to section 2.3 and Appendix 2).

2.1 Who it applies to

A related local government or water service provider (water provider) outside the SEQ region who provides a retail water service to residential premises and where the supply of water is measured and charged by the water provider must comply with this guideline (required under section 138 of the *Water Supply (Safety and Reliability) Act 2008*). A water provider must comply with this guideline, despite the requirements for levying rates under the *Local Government Act 2009*.

¹ The regulator has made these guidelines as allowed for under section 138 of the *Water Supply (Safety and Reliability) Act 2008* accessible at <https://www.legislation.qld.gov.au/>.

² The National Guidelines can be accessed at <http://www.nepc.gov.au/resource/ephc-archive-water>.

³ The requirements for issuing a water account in SEQ are stated in section 99AV of the *South East Queensland Water (Distribution and Retail Restructuring) Act 2009*.

This guideline does not apply to water supplied to common property under the *Body Corporate and Community Management Act 1997* or the *Building Units and Group Titles Act 1980*.

This guideline does not place requirements on a water provider for issuing a water rate notice to non-residential customers. However a water rate notice can be issued to non-residential customers in the same format, as long as this is consistent with customer service standards.

Water providers to whom this guideline does not apply may find the content of this guideline useful and may apply all or part of the guideline at their discretion, consistent with their customer service standards and business needs.

South East Queensland water service providers

A SEQ service provider⁴ must issue an account for water services and wastewater services in accordance with the *South East Queensland Water (Distribution and Retail Restructuring) Act 2009*⁵, and the South East Queensland Customer Water and Wastewater Code, 2017. The South East Queensland Customer Water and Wastewater Code states that if the water service provider is a withdrawn SEQ council⁶, accounts for water services will be in the form of a rate notice.

This guideline does not impose any additional requirements on a SEQ water service provider (including withdrawn councils). However this guideline does provide examples for how additional information could be provided in a water rate notice by a SEQ water provider, such as information relating to water restrictions and efficient water use (refer to section 2.3 and Appendix 2).

2.2 When it applies

The date at which a water provider is required to comply with this guideline depends on the date the water provider was registered as a service provider:

- a water provider that was registered by 1 November 2020—must continue to comply with the previous version until 1 November 2021, at which time must comply with this guideline
- a water provider registered after 1 November 2020—must comply by 1 November 2021 or within a year of being registered, whichever is the greater.

2.3 How to use this guideline

To assist water providers to understand their compliance obligations with respect to the requirements of these guidelines, the following is provided:

- The word ‘must’ indicates it is required to be complied with (in accordance the *Water Supply (Safety and Reliability) Act 2008*).
- The word ‘should’ indicates a recommended course of action.

The Glossary (section 4) provides further definitions of key terms used throughout this guideline.

⁴ Under the *South-East Queensland Water (Distribution and Retail Restructuring) Act 2009*, a SEQ water service provider is defined as a distributor-retailer; and either a withdrawn council (Gold Coast City Council, Logan City Council or Redland City Council) or a corporate entity established by a withdrawn council.

⁵ Matters that are required to be stated in any account from a SEQ water service provider to a customer for water and wastewater services are stated in section 99AV of the *South-East Queensland Water (Distribution and Retail Restructuring) Act 2009*.

⁶ Under the *South-East Queensland Water (Distribution and Retail Restructuring) Act 2009*, a withdrawn council is the Gold Coast City Council, the Logan City Council or the Redland City Council.

3 Requirements for water rate notices

Water rate notices can be sent to a physical property or to an electronic address (e.g. email address).

A water rate notice must be issued to the owner of the premises upon which the water was used (i.e. the property owner), unless the owner of the premises has made a written request for water rate notices to be sent to another nominated person (such as a real estate agent).

Water rate notices also must comply with the process for billing, metering and accounting stated in a water provider's customer service standards (CSS). These processes for billing, metering and accounting may vary across water providers. A water provider should not issue a water rate notice that is based on estimated water usage to a customer for two or more consecutive billing periods.

3.1 Frequency of issue

Regular issuing of water rate notices is important for residents to receive timely data and better manage their water use. The minimum frequency for the issue of a water rate notice that a water provider must comply with is presented in Table 1. However, where possible, a water provider should issue water rate notices on a quarterly basis (even if this means levying the water utility charge separately to other charges).

Table 1 - Minimum frequency of issue of water rate notice

Size of water provider (number of connections)	Minimum frequency
Small (less than 1,000)	Annually
Medium (1,000 to 25,000)	Half-yearly
Large (more than 25,000)	Half-yearly

3.2 Information that must be included

A rate notice for the supply of water to residential premises located outside SEQ, issued by a water provider must include the types of information described in Table 2 for each billing period. An example of a water rate notice that satisfies these requirements is provided in Appendix 1.

Table 2 - The type of information that must be included in a water rate notice

Required information	Details that must be included on a water rate notice
Type of form	Rate notice to owner (or other preferred term used by the water provider)
Customer's billing details	Customer's name and billing address
Property details	Property address where water services were provided
Billing period for water supply	Dates that the billing period for the supply of water commenced and concluded, to which the water rate notice applies
Days in period	Number of days in billing period
Meter readings	For properties where the meter has been read—current and previous meter readings For properties where meters have not been read directly by the water service provider for that billing period—previous meter reading and an estimate of what the meter would read, a description of the method of estimation of the meter reading and the anticipated date of the next actual meter reading.
Total water consumption	Total volume of water supplied, in kilolitres (1 kilolitre = 1000 litres)*
Enquiries	Details of how to contact the water provider for billing enquiries
The charge	The total charges for the water service including a differentiation between: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the charge for being provided with the service (the fixed access charge) • the volumetric charge for water provided*
Payment details	Details of the methods for paying the water rate notice and a clear due date for payment
Concessions	Details of any concessions, discounts or rebates applied in working out the amount charged under the water rate notice
Interest	Any interest to be charged for late payment of the water rate notice
Daily average household use	Average daily water supplied during the billing period for the household in litres per day (calculated by dividing the total water consumption for the billing period by the number of days in the billing period)
Comparative data	For small water service providers—pictorial (e.g. graphical) and numerical information of average or median daily water consumption for the billing period for the household presented in litres per day compared to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the previous billing period • the same billing period in the previous year. For medium and large water service providers—pictorial (e.g. graphical) and numerical information of average or median daily consumption for the billing period for the household, presented in litres per day, compared to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the previous billing period • the same billing period in the previous year • the average or median use for all residential customers (households) in the local area for the current billing period, based on postcode, suburb or a similar basis.

This is a requirement to be in a water rate notice for a unit that is on a premises that has more than one sole-occupancy unit (under section 140 of the *Water Supply (Safety and Reliability) Act 2008*).

3.3 Additional information that should be included

As well as providing comparative data to assist customers to monitor their water use, a water rate notice is a good avenue for delivering additional information such as relevant water restriction details, and water saving messages and tips to assist customers to be more water efficient. Water providers can also include information on concessions that customers may be eligible for, managing infrastructure on the property, or advice about the water provider's policies (e.g. hardship policy, or concealed leaks policy).

Additional information provided to customers can be tailored to focus on particular issues faced by a location and can vary between bills.

3.3.1 Water restrictions

Information on any currently applicable water restrictions should be provided, including the level of the restriction, the water use target and key elements of the restrictions.

For water supply schemes that rely on surface water storages (such as a dams or weirs), information could be provided about the level of water stored as a percent (%) of the full storage level. This can help educate the community on their water supply source and encourage efficient water use.

3.3.2 Messaging on efficient water use

Residential water rate notices provide a good opportunity for water providers to educate customers about efficient household use of water (i.e. waterwise behaviours). One or more of the messages on efficient water use provided in Table 3 should be included on each water rate notice. See Appendix 2 for examples of typical messages about efficient water use and Waterwise Queensland materials that may be included.

Table 3 - Examples of messages on efficient water use that could be included in a water rate notice

Message on efficient water use	Example
How to be more water efficient	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• the importance of checking for and repairing leaks• kitchen water saving tips, e.g. using the kitchen plug instead of running water• bathroom water saving tips, e.g. taking shorter showers• laundry water saving tips, e.g. using the washing machine less by only doing full loads• outdoor water saving tips, e.g. use a broom to sweep outside, not the hose; wash your car with a trigger hose or bucket and wash it on the lawn; install a rainwater tank; top up pools with rainwater and use a pool cover• the benefits of greywater use in gardens (subject to local government requirements for greywater use).
Water efficient gardening	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• mulch to reduce water lost to evaporation• tips on how to choose plants suited to the local climate and soil type, and how to choose drought tolerant species• the potential to reduce evaporation and protect plants by including shaded areas and wind-breaks in gardens.
Initiatives to manage water consumption	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• information on available programs that help customers save water—for example, council rebate schemes• how to read a water meter to monitor water consumption

3.3.3 Trigger messaging

'Trigger messages' could be used in a water rate notice for customers with relatively high water use. Trigger messages are targeted messages that can be included in a water rate notice when prompted by water use observations such as marked changes in water use in a premises over time, or across similar premises in a local area or suburb.

Example trigger messages include:

- for customers whose water consumption is twice the average for that suburb, a message on water efficient gardening could be automatically displayed on the water rate notice encouraging watering outside of the middle of the day
- for customers whose water consumption is twice the amount for the corresponding period in the previous year, a leak detection message could be displayed urging the resident to check their property for leaking taps and pipes.

Tailored messaging could also be triggered for a water account when entering a typically high water use period (e.g. summer), when water levels have reached a particular low level, or when a water rate notice is issued to a new customer.

4 Glossary

Annually

Annually means once during the 12 month period.

Billing period

The period during which the water provider measures the volume of water supplied to the customer's premises for the purpose of charging for the water.

Customer service standards (CSS)

A standard prepared and published by a service provider for the supply of its registered service under section 115 of the *Water Supply (Safety & Reliability) Act 2008*

Greywater

Greywater is wastewater generated from the bath, shower, washbasin, laundry and kitchen. It does not include water from your toilet, which is known as blackwater.

Half-yearly

Half-yearly means at intervals of six months.

Large water service provider

A retail water service provider with more than 25,000 connections to a registered service.

Medium water service provider

A retail water service provider with more than 1000 but not more than 25,000 connections to a registered service.

Meter

A device, including equipment related to the device, for measuring the volume of water supplied to a place and installed on infrastructure that supplies retail water services at the place.

Registered water service

A water service for which the service provider is registered under chapter 2, part 3 of the *Water Supply (Safety & Reliability) Act 2008*.

Regulator

The chief executive of the Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy.

Related local government

A local government that charges for the supply of water for a retail water service if the retail water service is provided by a provider who is not the local government.

Residential connection

A physical connection to a residential premises that enables the supply of water.

Residential premises

As specified under the *Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation Act 2008*, residential premises are premises used, or intended to be used, as a place of residence or mainly as a place of residence.

Retail water service

The reticulation of water in a service area for a water service. The term does not include an irrigation service or a bulk water service in any area or the supply of recycled water in any area.

Service area

An area declared under section 161 of the *Water Supply (Safety & Reliability) Act 2008* for either or both of the following:

- a retail water service to customers
- a sewerage service to customers.

South East Queensland (SEQ region)

As specified under section 341(a) of the *Water Act 2000* the SEQ region includes the local government areas of Brisbane City Council, Gold Coast City Council, Ipswich City Council, Lockyer Valley Regional Council, Logan City Council, Moreton Bay Regional Council, Noosa Shire Council, Redland City Council, Scenic Rim Regional Council, Somerset Regional Council and Sunshine Coast Regional Council.

Small water service provider

A retail water service provider with 1000 or less connections to a registered service.

Water rate notice

A water rate notice can be a utility charge for a water service issued under the *Local Government Act 2009*, or an invoice, rate notice or account notice issued by a registered water service provider or related local government to a customer for the supply of water to a residential premises.

Water service

Water harvesting or collection (e.g. water storages, groundwater extraction or replenishment and river water extraction); the transmission of water; the reticulation of water; drainage, other than stormwater drainage; or water treatment or recycling.

Water provider (water service provider)

A person registered under chapter 2, part 3, of the *Water Supply (Safety & Reliability) Act 2008* as a service provider for a water service.

Appendix 1: An example of a water rate notice

For billing enquiries contact: (07) 3333 1234

Water rate notice

MR AND MRS SAMPLEFACE
123 EXAMPLE AVENUE
SAMPLETOWN QLD 4444

Property location: 123 Sample Avenue,
Sampletown

Account summary for water usage period
29/9/20 - 30/12/20 (92 days)

Fixed access charge \$300
Volumetric charge (usage @ \$2.69/kL) \$138.58

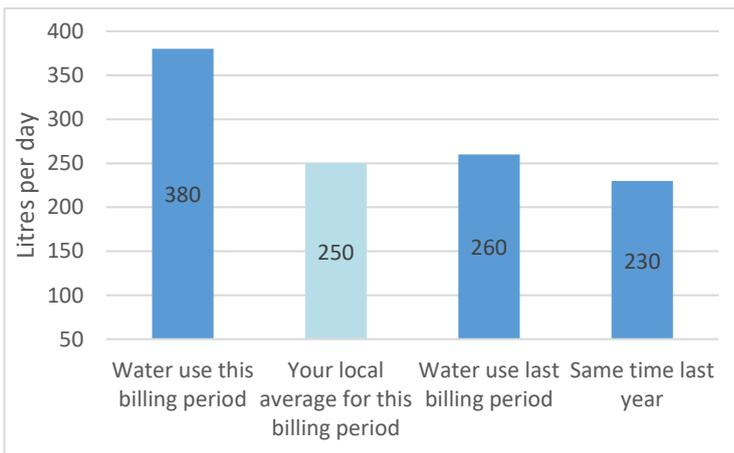
Meter no. ABC123
This reading 1695
Last reading 1660
Consumption (kL) 61
Estimate or actual read: Actual

Customer reference number	XXXXXXXXXX
Bill number	123456789
Date issued	01/01/21
Due date	02/02/21
Total charge due	\$400
Total water consumption (kL)	61
Average daily usage— current period (litres/day)	240
Average daily usage— same period last year (litres/day)	230

Your last account	
Amount billed	\$450.00
Amount paid	\$450.00
Your current account	
Balance	\$0.00
Current charges	\$438.58
Total Due	\$438.58

Customer information

- Details of concessions, discounts or rebates applied in working out the amount charged, and any interest charged for late payment (*examples below*)
- “We may give a concession to pensioners with a Pensioner Concession Card, or a Department of Veterans’ Affairs Gold Card”
- “If you are having difficulty paying your rate notice, we can help with flexible payment options to help you plan your payments”
- A \$5 late payment fee or interest (at X%), whichever is higher, may be charged on overdue amounts



Details of methods for paying the account (e.g. direct debit, BPAY, credit card, cheque, Post billpay)



Sample only - not for use

Appendix 2: Examples of additional information

This Appendix provides examples of additional information that water service providers should provide as part of a water rate notice, as described in Table 3. These examples include Queensland Government Waterwise resources and materials that have been developed by water providers.

A range of Waterwise factsheets and other community resources are available that can be used in conjunction with a water rate notice to give more detailed information about improving household water efficiency. These are found in the 'using water wisely' section of the Queensland Government website (www.qld.gov.au/environment/water/residence/use), and include:

- home water audit
- home Waterwise quiz
- guidelines for water efficient gardens
- 'think before you flush' sticker
- 'think at the sink' sticker
- fact sheets on:
 - efficient irrigation
 - irrigation of active playing surfaces
 - being waterwise with your swimming pool and spa
 - rainwater tanks
 - being waterwise at home
 - detecting leaks and reading your water meter
 - water saving tips for your garden
 - residential evaporative air conditioners
- brochures on:
 - water's journey to your tap and beyond
 - how to be waterwise



Waterwise images (DNRME 2019)

The following images are from water service providers around Queensland.



Image - Waterwise tips at home

Sourced from: Townsville City Council 2020, *How to save water at home*, <https://www.townsville.qld.gov.au/water-waste-and-environment/water-supply-and-dams/saving-and-consumption>, accessed 20/03/2020.

How does your household water use compare?

Your average daily water use for this account is:

878 litres

Compare your average daily water use with the table below to see if you are a water efficient household.



Number of occupants	Garden size	Typical water use (litres per day)	Efficient water use (litres per day)
1	None	208	156
	Small	244	183
	Medium	293	220
	Large	351	268
2	None	373	280
	Small	408	306
	Medium	457	343
	Large	515	386
3	None	482	362
	Small	518	389
	Medium	567	425
	Large	625	469
4	None	581	436
	Small	616	461
	Medium	666	500
	Large	723	542
5	None	690	518
	Small	726	544
	Medium	775	581
	Large	833	624
6	None	822	617
	Small	858	644
	Medium	907	680
	Large	954	723

How much is a kilolitre of water?



Each kilolitre of water costs
\$1.17 up to 250kl



Image - How much is a kilolitre of water?

Source: Gympie Regional Council 2019, *Water wise*, <https://www.gympie.qld.gov.au/water-wise>, accessed 30/07/2020.

Image - Excerpt from a Yarra Valley water rate notice

Sourced from: Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council 2006, *National guidelines for residential customers' water accounts*, <http://www.nepc.gov.au/resource/ephc-archive-water>, accessed 28/07/2020.



Image - how water could be used in the home

Sourced from: Southern Downs Regional Council, March 2020, *Water restrictions*, <https://www.sdrc.qld.gov.au/living-here/water---wastewater/water-restrictions>, accessed 28/07/2020.

THE INS AND OUTS OF YOUR WATER & SEWERAGE BILL

See how the charges on your bill pay for getting water in and sewage out of your property.

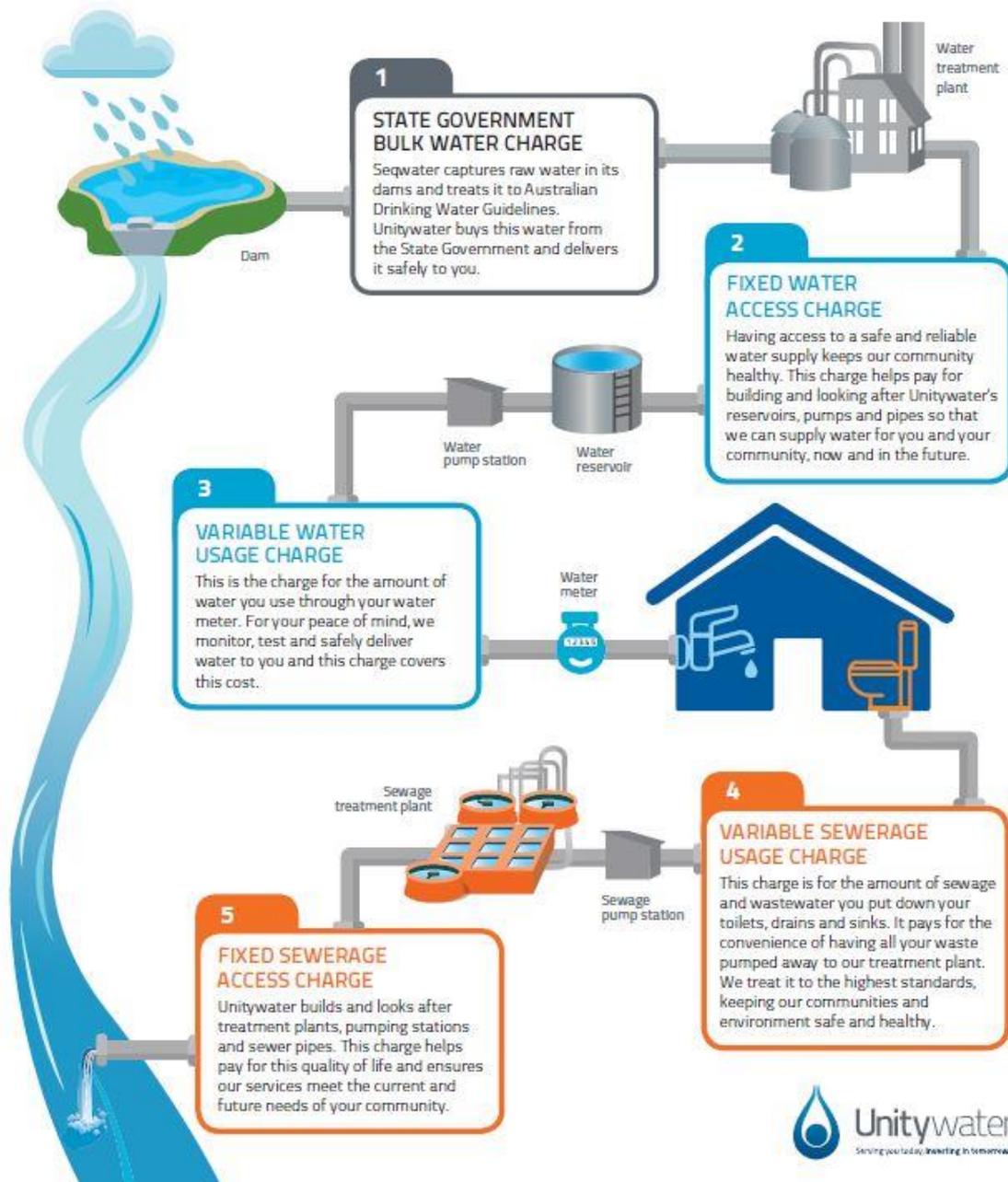


Image - 'The Ins and outs of your water and sewerage bill'

Sourced from: Unitywater 2020, *The ins and outs of your water and sewerage bill*, <https://www.unitywater.com/ins-and-outs>, accessed 28/07/202.

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