

# **Regional Shire Standpipes**

Frequently Asked Questions

This factsheet addresses frequently asked questions regarding the updated pricing for Local Government-owned fixed standpipes in the regions.

Please note, this pricing structure applies exclusively to potable water.

### **What is changing?**

Local Government Authorities (LGAs) owning regional fixed standpipes will now have pricing based on the meter size and the end user.

LGAs will continue to receive concessional pricing for water used for their own purposes. However, high flow rate LGA-owned fixed standpipes that are publicly accessible will no longer qualify for concessional rates and will be charged commercial rates instead.

### **Who does this pricing change affect?**

This pricing change impacts users of high flow LGA-owned fixed standpipes in regional areas. While the charges are billed directly to the LGA, the costs are generally passed on to end users such as businesses, farmers and properties not connected to the scheme.

### **How will rates and charges be applied to fixed standpipes?**

The pricing structure for fixed standpipes is based on the size of the standpipe meter, which determines the flow rate. Here's a breakdown of how it works:

- **Small standpipes (20mm and 25mm):** These generally deliver between 20 – 60 litres per minute. All LGA standpipes with a meter size of 20mm or 25mm will receive concessional rates and can be used by the LGA or for wider community use, where water use is under 49 kilolitres per day.
- **Large standpipes (above 25mm):** These generally deliver from 80 litres per minute and above. All LGA standpipes with a meter size above 25mm that are publicly available will be charged at a commercial rate, where water use is under 49 kilolitres per day. However, an exemption to consumption charges will continue to be applied for water used for fire-fighting purposes.
- **Standpipes in shire depots or locked for shire use only:** Standpipes with a meter above 25mm located in a shire depot or locked for shire use only will be able to access the concessional rate by providing evidence of the ability to control user access.
- **Water use above 49 kilolitres per day:** Should be referred to Water Corporation on 13 13 95.

Please note, there will be no change to dedicated fire standpipes or fixed standpipes installed on privately owned property.

### **Why is 25mm the cut off for a concessional service?**

The lower flow rate of standpipes with a 25mm meter or smaller is less likely to exceed 49 kilolitres per day, which would qualify for a major consumer agreement. Standpipes with meters larger than 25mm are typically used for commercial purposes. This standard is applied consistently across the state, including in the Perth metropolitan area.

### **What are the new prices for Standpipe use?**

The new pricing structure is outlined in Appendix 1.

## **Why are these changes being made?**

In the past, some commercial customers have accessed LGA-owned standpipes at concessional rates, which are below the regulated Town Class rate set by the Government. Water is a precious resource, regulated by the State Government like any other valuable natural resource and correct pricing must be enforced to ensure fairness.

Using incorrect water rates creates inequity, resulting in the community and State Government subsidising private enterprises unequally. Fixed standpipes provide an essential source of water for:

- customers who are remote from reticulated water schemes
- communities, by enabling local governments to maintain street trees
- minor building activities
- economic growth, by supplying businesses that rely on carted water as an input to production.

These changes ensure that commercial customers pay consistent rates across Western Australia, whether connected to the scheme or not, promoting equity for all users.

## **Why are water use charges higher for customers in regional areas?**

Water use charges in regional towns are often higher than in metro areas because it's more expensive to supply water there. This is mainly due to their remote locations and smaller populations, which means the costs are shared among fewer people.

To help with this, Water Corporation has a maximum charge per kilolitre for businesses, based on the Non-residential class step 15. This cap ensures that even if the cost of providing water is high, customers won't face extremely high bills. You can check the current rates on the Water Corporation website.

## **How can shires better manage and control the use of standpipes?**

Shires can enhance the management and control of standpipes by installing advanced control systems offered by many standpipe infrastructure suppliers, which some shires have already implemented for better management. Alternatively, securing standpipes with locks to restrict access can provide additional security and protect the scheme supply, ensuring efficient and secure use of the water supply system.

## **Can contractors working on Local Government projects access a Local Authority standpipe if required as part of a shire project?**

Contractors working on shire projects are allowed to use locked LGA standpipes, which helps keep water costs lower for the Local Government. However, to ensure fairness, contractors can't use these standpipes for other commercial purposes that aren't related to the Local Government. This way, we can manage resources better and keep costs down for everyone involved.

## **Can Local Government still obtain a concessional rate for any water taken from a commercial standpipe for shire purposes?**

Yes, Local Government can still obtain a concessional rate for water taken from a commercial standpipe for shire purposes. However, there is now a requirement to provide evidence of the volume taken. Local Government will need to submit a claim form via the Water Corporation website to obtain the

concessional rate. The claim must be submitted within 12 months from the date the water was drawn. The concessional rate applies to usage of less than 49 kilolitres per day. For usage exceeding 49 kilolitres per day, please contact Water Corporation on 13 13 95.

### **Can shires continue to on-sell water?**

Yes, shires can continue to on-sell water and have the discretion to set their own prices. The Water Corporation charges local governments regulated prices, and these local governments can add a surcharge to cover maintenance and operational costs for providing public water services.

### **My shire has been charging GST on water from a local government owned standpipe to third parties, can this continue?**

No, charging GST on water is not permitted. Guidance surrounding this is outlined by the Australian Tax Office via their website – [www.ato.gov.au](http://www.ato.gov.au).

### **Do standpipes require backflow prevention?**

Yes, there is an ongoing risk to our drinking water quality from the reverse flow of water from a property back through the internal water service connection. Without proper prevention, this water could be contaminated by activities at the standpipe.

To keep our water safe, it's important for standpipe owners to install high-rated backflow prevention devices. These devices also need to be tested every year. Your licensed plumbing contractor, who is certified in backflow prevention, can help you with these requirements. This way, we can ensure our water remains clean and safe for everyone.

### **Does backflow prevention impact on water pressure?**

Yes, some types of backflow prevention can lower the water pressure and flow rate downstream of the device. If maintaining water pressure and flow rate is important for your property's activities, you should talk to a licensed plumbing contractor or hydraulics consultant before selecting and installing a backflow prevention device.

### **Are the design standards for new standpipes changing?**

Yes, all new standpipes will need a gate valve to control water flow when turning the standpipe on and off. This helps prevent water hammering in the pipes.

This rule applies to new standpipes only. However, if an existing standpipe is causing problems, Water Corporation will discuss upgrading to a gate valve with the owner, who will need to cover the cost. Installing a gate valve will help reduce pipe breakages, which owners are currently being billed for if water hammering from the standpipe is causing damage.

### **How do I know if commercial users are accessing water from our shire use meter, we work on an honesty system?**

Shires need to keep track of who is using their standpipes and make sure they are being used properly. Introducing a control system, like a swipe card or managing it within the LGA depot, can help identify major users and ensure everything runs smoothly.

### **Why is the cost of water going up for commercial users when we have been accessing water without any issue?**

Water is a valuable resource, and the State Government sets regulated charges based on its use. The pricing follows a 'user pays' principle, but in regional Western Australia, this hasn't been applied to fixed standpipes as per legislation. A regulated pricing structure ensures everyone pays the correct rate for water use, no matter where they are in the State.

Currently, some commercial suppliers are being charged at a concessional rate by using LGA standpipes, which is unfair to other commercial operators who are charged correctly. Also, taking large amounts of water from a fixed standpipe can cause supply issues for other users. Large users should contact Water Corporation to set up a major consumer agreement. This way, we can ensure fair and efficient water use for everyone.

### **Will high-flow standpipes be accessible for commercial use?**

Yes, but they will now be charged a commercial rate and won't have access to concessional rates. If more than 49 kilolitres per day is needed, the shire should direct these commercial users (if known) to Water Corporation to set up a major consumer agreement.

Occasionally, Water Corporation may restrict access if high usage affects other users on the scheme. This helps ensure fair water distribution for everyone.

### **What happens in drought conditions for the price of water to farmers?**

A 'Water Deficiency Declaration' is a government measure to protect farmers' commercial interests during very dry periods. When a state government declares a drought zone, all large shire-owned fixed standpipes will be available at concessional rates for the community's drought relief, following the declaration's terms. If there are no specific conditions for commercial use relief, standard rates will apply.

If farmers hire water carters to transport water during a drought, the cost is the farmer's responsibility. However, the water will be available at the concessional rate since it is for the farmer's use. This helps ensure that farmers get the support they need during tough times.

### **Will a fixed standpipe ever be closed?**

Yes, fixed regional standpipes can sometimes become unavailable for various reasons, such as scheduled or unexpected maintenance, drought or operational issues. When this happens, Water Corporation will work with the standpipe owner to temporarily restrict public access to protect the town's drinking water supply.

Water Corporation can't always guarantee water supply to farmland areas and standpipes may be restricted or removed occasionally to maintain the system's integrity and prioritise water supply to certain user groups as needed.

When standpipes are closed, Water Corporation aims to keep the closure as short as possible to minimise inconvenience to the public. In some regions, you can sign up for SMS alerts to get notified about closures. Check with your Local Government to see if this service is available.

What are the responsibilities for users of regional fixed standpipes?

Please ask the shire for advice on how to safely access the fixed standpipe before using it.

- Treat carted potable water before drinking, showering, food preparation and other potable uses.
- Seek treatment advice for carted potable water from the Department of Health, where required.
- Report faults and damage to a public regional standpipe to the local shire.
- Seek advice on safely accessing the regional standpipe before operating it.
- Report misuse of fire-fighting standpipes to Water Corporation.

From time to time, Water Corporation may advise a public fixed standpipe is not to be used for operational reasons. You must comply with this directive to protect the drinking water supply.

### **How do I get more information?**

Contact your local shire or Water Corporation. Further information is also available on the Water Corporation website - [www.watercorporation.com.au/regionalstandpipes](http://www.watercorporation.com.au/regionalstandpipes)

## Appendix 1 – New Standpipe Charges

Type of standpipe:	Rates New Description	
<b>LA Standpipe</b> <b>(Shire use only – no public access)</b>	<b>Use:</b>	For use by shire only – locked and no public access available. Must be less than 49 kilolitres per day. For other options, call 13 13 95.
	<b>Meter:</b>	Can be any size service as long as it is for direct shire use.
	<b>Charges:</b>	Non-residential Step 1 tariff applied to water use and 100% discount on service charges.
<b>Community use standpipe (low flow)</b> <b>(Publicly available)</b>	<b>Use:</b>	Owned by Local Government and available to anyone in the
	<b>Meter:</b>	community. Only available for 20mm and 25mm standpipes.
	<b>Charges:</b>	Farmlands tariff applies to water use (concessional community purpose rate). Service charges based on 20mm meter.
<b>Commercial standpipe</b> <b>(high flow)</b> <b>(Publicly available)</b>	<b>Use:</b>	May be privately owned or made available by Local Government. Must be less than 49 kilolitres per day. For other options, call 13 13 95.
	<b>Meter:</b>	Any meter above 25mm.
	<b>Charges:</b>	Town based charges apply to water use. Service charges vary depending on size of meter.
<b>Fire standpipe</b> <b>(No public access)</b>	<b>Use:</b>	Fire-fighting only. Access by DFES and volunteer firefighting units. Must be locked or controlled to limit access.
	<b>Meter:</b>	Any meter size but usually 25mm or larger to ensure high flow when
	<b>Charges:</b>	required. Nil charges.
<b>Water Corporation owned</b> <b>(Not available in all areas)</b>	<b>Various charges apply, contact 13 13 95 for further information.</b>	