



# REIQ Fact Sheet

## Residential - property management

# Water consumption laws

Lessors can pass on all water consumption charges to tenants only if the following criteria have been met:

- The property has an individual water meter;
- The property is water efficient; and
- The tenancy agreement states the tenant must pay for water consumption.

The Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation Act and Regulations state that a property is water efficient if the internal cold water taps, showerheads and toilets meet the performance standards for a 3 star WELS rating or higher. This rating can be achieved through 3 star WELS rated products or through the use of 'add on' devices, such as aerators or flow restrictors.

### **Definition of Water Efficient devices and the minimum legal standard required**

Internal cold water taps and single mixer taps (excluding bathtub taps and taps for appliances such as dishwashers) must have a maximum flow rate of 9 litres per minute.

Showerheads must have a maximum flow rate of 9 litres per minute.

Toilets must have a dual flush function that does not exceed 6.5 litres on full flush and 3.5 litres on half flush and has a maximum average flush volume of 4 litres (based on the average of 1 full flush and 4 half flushes).

### **What if the property is not deemed water efficient but has an individual water meter installed?**

If the property is not water efficient, but does have an individual water meter the lessor must pay for a reasonable amount of water before a tenant would be liable for any costs of water consumption. Refer to the RTA fact sheet [www.rta.qld.gov.au](http://www.rta.qld.gov.au) for more information.

### **What if the property does not have an individual water meter?**

The lessor must pay for ALL water consumption charges.

### **Best practice suggestions for property managers**

Queensland building laws have required any new house or unit built since 1 March 2006 to meet the minimum 3 star WELS rating. Property managers are urged to consult with their lessors and receive written instructions from any lessor who wishes to pass on all water consumption charges to their tenants, verifying that their investment property meets the legislative requirements. If the lessor is in doubt as to whether their property meets the 3 star WELS rating, the property manager should recommend a plumber investigate and report the findings in writing.

Since 1 March 2006, it has been a requirement that any bathroom renovations for an existing house or unit have water efficient devices installed. A renovation is defined as any alteration or addition that requires building development approval.

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In addition, as of 1 January 2008, any renovation to an existing house or unit (that is any alteration or addition that requires building development approval including a plumbing approval) is required to retrofit existing bathroom water devices with water efficient devices. If a property that is being managed within your rent roll has had such a renovation, seek instruction and verification from the lessor or a plumber.

There may be uncertainty as to whether properties currently managed by your agency that were built prior to 1 March 2006 and that have not have renovations carried out since 1 March 2006 meet the required 3 stars WELS rating. Property managers may recommend to any lessor who is considering charging a tenant all water consumption charges (if the property is individually metered and the 'future' agreement allows for the cost to be passed on) that a plumber investigate and provide a written report advising whether the property meets the requirements. If not, a quote can be provided for the property to meet the 3 star WELS rating standard.

It is strongly recommended that property managers do not undertake any assessment as to whether the property meets the water efficient standard. This matter is complex and should be referred to the lessor and/or plumbers (subject to lessor instruction).

It is also recommended that property managers do not undertake the physical checking and reading of water meters. If a lessor wishes to pass on all water consumption charges, seek advice from your local council regarding the council undertaking the readings and what charges could be incurred by the lessor. Any charges for reading the meter can not be passed on to the tenant. This is a cost that the lessor incurs.

It is recommended that property managers provide their lessors with the RTA fact sheet on water charging and devise their own standard cover letters advising lessors of their office policies and procedures in regards to this matter.

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