
Debt write-off information report

Responsible Officer: Group Manager Organisational Services (Helen McNeil)

Recommendation

That Council receive and note the debt write-off information report with debts written-off totalling \$ 8,356.80 for the period 1 January 2024 to 30 June 2024.

Background

Council's 'Debt Management and Financial Hardship' policy provides that an information summary report be submitted to Council on a bi-annual basis.

As per Council Resolution [50/22]:

- All debts above \$5,000.00 (ex-GST) may be written off only by resolution of Council.
- Council has delegated to the General Manager the power to write-off debts equal to or below the \$5,000.00 threshold.

The General Manager has delegated authority for the write-off of debts equal to or below:

- \$ 1,000.00 to the Group Manager Organisational Services and the Finance Manager.
- Debts written off equal to or below \$ 5,000

Debts approved for write-off by Council staff were done so under delegation and in accordance with clauses 131 or 213 of the *Local Government (General) Regulation 2021*.

Debts approved for write-off during the period 1 January 2024 to 30 June 2024 are tabled below:

Table 1:

Customer type	Ref. number	Write-off amount	Background	Reason	Approved by
Retail water account	11080	\$47.15	The customer's meter was replaced with a smart meter on 29/02/2024 they received a bill for the final read indicating that the average daily usage increased from 0.2245kL to 1kL resulting in an additional 20kL of usage. The customer was unable to locate a leak and did not recall extra usage so they requested that Rous investigate further. The final meter reading photo confirmed the read was recorded and charged correctly. The only way to investigate their usage further is to download the cycle unit data from the old meter to see the usage. This would take 3 hours in labour to travel to Ballina and go through the removed meters to locate the old meter. There is no guarantee the meter, if found, will contain the required daily data. It is not cost effective to attempt to recover the debt.	Attempt to recover debt not cost effective	FM

Customer type	Ref. number	Write-off amount	Background	Reason	Approved by
Retail water account	10387	\$161.12	The final read on the meter before the change over to a smart meter was less than the previous read and was verified by a photo. This meant the last read written by the meter reader on the meter reading sheet was incorrect. The customer was overcharged by 53kL.	Debt raised in error	FM
Retail water account	11967	\$72.96	A leak was identified at the customer's water meter union and Rous staff have repaired the leak. Since a leak at the meter union is deemed to be an 'infrastructure failure', a credit of \$72.96 was calculated based on the average daily usage for the same quarter last year.	Debt Not lawfully recoverable	FM
Retail water account	11308	\$27.36	During the quarter 4 meter reading cycle, the read data showed that the usage was less than last quarter. A photo of the meter read confirmed that the previous reading cycle in February 2024 was incorrect. The customer was overcharged by 9kL.	Debt raised in error	FM
Retail water account	10459	\$30.40	The customer had a leak in April 2024 and could not turn the isolation valve off to stop the leak. They advised Rous of the issue on 17/04/2024 and a staff member was on site the same day to fix the issue resulting in minimal water loss. However, Rous acknowledged that some water loss was caused by the faulty tap at the meter. 10kL was recommended to be written off.	Debt Not lawfully recoverable	FM
Retail water account	10750	\$47.17	The customer was charged the backflow facility fee in error as this charge had been postponed to October 2024. A manual adjustment was required on all the accounts that were already setup with the fee. At the time an oversight meant that this account was charged by error and needed to be credited.	Debt raised in error	FM
Retail water account	10723	\$47.70	The customer was charged the backflow facility fee in error as this charge had been postponed to October 2024. A manual adjustment was required on all the accounts that were already setup with the fee. At the time an oversight meant that this account was charged by error and needed to be credited.	Debt raised in error	FM
	Total	\$433.86			

Debts written off above \$ 5,000

Debts approved for write-off by Council resolution during the period 1 January 2024 to 30 June 2024 are tabled below.

Table 2:

Customer type	Ref. number	Write-off amount	Background	Reason	Resolution
Retail water account	10625	\$7,922.94	The customer's pipe was likely damaged by Rous' work in the Weigel Creek area. It is believed that a Rous contractor had inadvertently damaged the poly pipe with their equipment, resulting in the service connection being separated from a fitting to a 50L drum. The lever on the 90-degree ball valve has likely caught on the ground, a tree root or vines thereby causing it to open, resulting in the undetected discharge of water through the customer's water meter. We recommended the write-off of the excess usage (2,606kL) of water as result of the work performed by Rous and inability to identify the cause of the leak with absolute certainty.	Debt Not lawfully recoverable	26/24
	Total	\$7,922.94			

Governance

- **Finance**

Charges written off during the period 1 January 2024 to 30 June 2024 total \$ 8,356.80 and this amount will be included in Council's Annual Report.

- **Legal**

Clause 131(6) of the *Local Government (General) Regulation 2021* requires the General Manager to inform Council of any amounts written off under delegated authority.

Conclusion

Charges totalling \$ 8,356.80 were written-off under Council resolution and delegated authority pursuant to clauses 131 or 213 of the *Local Government (General) Regulation 2021*. The next debt write-off information summary report will be included in the February 2025 business paper.