

Local Approvals Policy – Water Supply – Retail Customers

Responsible Officer: Group Manager Planning and Delivery (Andrew Logan)

Report Contributors: Water Sustainability Officer (Karin Van der Heijde) and Governance and Risk Manager (Lauren Edwards)

Recommendation

That Council:

1. Revoke the following:
 - a. Rural Consumers Policy dated 19 November 1996 (Attachment 1),
 - b. Testing Water Meters Policy dated 15 June 1994 (Attachment 2),
 - c. Backflow Prevention Policy dated 20 October 2021 (Attachment 3),
 - d. Things you need to know - water service connection with Rous County Council (Attachment 4)
 - e. Headworks charges (Attachment 5) and
2. Publicly exhibit the Local Approvals Policy – Water Supply – Retail Customers (Attachment 6) for a period of 49 days, and
 - a. Should no significant or substantial public submissions be received:
 - i. The Rural Consumers Policy, Testing Water Meters Policy, Backflow Prevention Policy Things you need to know - water service connection with Rous County Council and Headworks charges are revoked effective 16 April 2025; and
 - ii. The Local Approvals Policy – Water Supply – Retail Customers is adopted effective 16 April 2025.
 - b. Should any significant or substantial submissions be received, those submissions, and the proposal in relation to the revocations and adoption of the Local Approvals Policy – Water Supply – Retail Customers, be considered by Council at its next meeting.

Key points

1. New Local Approvals Policy – Water Supply – Retail Customers Outlines circumstances in which Rous will allow retail customers to connect directly to our supply network.
2. Supported by new Standards and Conditions of Retail Water Supply with mandatory conditions including smart meters and requirement for backflow prevention.
3. Replaces five existing documents that will be revoked.
4. Will be published on the website and invite public submissions.

Background

Council staff have been undertaking an organisation wide review of its policies and procedures. This review has included reviewing associated documents and workflows to ensure that all of Council's documents are relevant to our practices, easy to read and understand for customers and that the documents provide Council with the highest possible protections, particularly for water infrastructure.

Attachments 1 and 2 to this report are policies which are well overdue for review, and **Attachment 3** is currently due for review. **Attachment 4** is a document called “Things you need to know - water service connection with Rous County Council” and was initially prepared as an information resource for Council’s retail customers.

This document has been updated over time, but as it has not been provided to customers in accordance with s68 of the *Local Government Act 1993* (LGA) and as there is no data available about which customers connected to the Rous supply at which time, it is not considered to be binding on customers.

Attachment 5 Headworks charges is very outdated, obsolete and has been replaced by Development Servicing Plan (DSP) for Retail Water Supply 2023.

To address this, and provide modern and contemporary policies, staff have reviewed of all the documents relating to retail water connections, consolidated them and prepared the new policy which is at **Attachment 6**.

It is proposed that this policy be placed on public exhibition and adopted by Council as a local policy in accordance with s160 of the LGA.

Policies for revocation

The operative portions of the Rural Consumers Policy, Testing Water Meters Policy, and Backflow Prevention Policy have been included in the new policy, and it is recommended that these policies are suitable for revocation upon the adoption of the updated policy.

The information components of these policies and the “Things You Need to Know” document have been included in a new document *Standards and Conditions of Retail Water Supply* (**Attachment 7**).

Headworks charges has been incorporated into the Development Servicing Plans.

1. Local Approvals Policy – Water Supply – Retail Customers

The Local Approvals Policy – Water Supply – Retail Customers:

- a. Outlines circumstances in which Rous will allow retail customers to connect directly to our supply network.
- b. Updates requirements taking account of the recent installation of smart meters and backflow prevention devices to the majority of Rous’s retail customers.
- c. Rationalises existing policies and integrates them into a single policy for consistency and clarity for customers.
- d. Provides Council with an enforcement mechanism in circumstances where customers deliberately damage Council’s infrastructure, attempt to circumvent safety or water billing devices, or refuse to comply with directions from Council staff regarding water connections.

2. Standards and Conditions of Retail Water Supply

This document is relevant to all retail water service connections to Council’s supply network without exception and:

- a. Clearly highlight the legislative and regulatory requirements of providing clean, safe, drinking water that protects public health for all customers.
- b. Ensures the methods for the prevention of contamination of the drinking water within the supply network are known, implemented, and appropriate levels of backflow and cross connection preventions are applied for the protection of the supply network.

- c. Adopts the new metering guidelines developed in consultation with constituent Councils and integrated with our existing policies.
- d. Explains why all connections to the Rous supply network are properly metered to allow accurate and timely billing of costs to customers.
- e. Provides information to customers about responsibilities for the costs of connection and disconnection to the Rous supply network.
- f. Provides clear guidelines to assist Council staff in making determinations relating to protecting the potable water supply network via backflow prevention.
- g. Provides clear information to members of the public, plumbers, and other stakeholders about the connection, metering, selection and installation of backflow prevention devices and Council's role in backflow prevention.

Governance

A. Finance

Not applicable

B. Environment

Not applicable

C. Legal

Public exhibition of the policy for a period of no less than 28 days is required by s160 (2) of the LGA.

Section 160(3) requires Council to allow 42 days after the day on which the policy is exhibited to allow for any submissions to be made.

Section 160(4) requires Council to exhibit the draft local policy together with any other matter which it considers appropriate or necessary to better enable the draft local policy and its implications to be understood.

Regulation 100 (b) of the *Local Government (General) Regulation (NSW)* requires public notification for a period of 7 days of the intention to exhibit the policy.

Council staff propose to include on Council's website the following:

1. 9 April 2025 – Notice regarding intention to exhibit the policy included on Council's website
2. 16 April 2025 – Local Approvals Policy – Water Supply – Retail Customers and *Standards and Conditions of Retail Water Supply* included on Council's website, with links for feedback and comments
3. 28 May 2025 – close of exhibition period
4. 11 June 2025 – close of submission period.

Any significant or substantial submissions made will be reported to Council's 18 June 2025 meeting. If no significant or substantial submissions are made, the general manager will provide an update at the meeting, and confirm the policy is endorsed as of 16 April 2025.

Consultation

Consultation occurred with a working group of staff representatives from Planning and Delivery, Operations, and Governance who reviewed the policies and contributed to the new documents, to ensure robust and well-developed documents are available.

Comment

The above policies have been reviewed having regard to legislative and regulatory requirements, and Council objectives. The Rural Consumers Policy, Testing Water Meters Policy, Backflow Prevention Policy, Things you need to know - water service connection with Rous County Council and, Headworks charges are recommended for revocation and the Local Approvals Policy – Water Supply – Retail Customers is recommended for public exhibition.

Attachments

1. [Rural Consumers Policy](#)
2. [Testing Water Meters Policy](#)
3. [Backflow prevention Policy](#)
4. [Things you need to know - water service connection with Rous County Council](#)
5. [Headworks Charges Policy](#)
6. Local Approvals Policy – Water Supply – Retail Customers
7. Standards and Conditions of Retail Water Supply