

The Concept of Sub-Metering

Sub-meters are individual water meters attached to units or lots in a multi-unit development. This system differs from master meters, which measure the supply of water to a complex as a whole. Sub-metering enables individual units to track and pay for the water they use, promoting fairness and transparency within the community.

Benefits of Sub-Metering

Implementing a sub-metering system brings several benefits. For starters, it increases awareness of water usage, encouraging residents to conserve water and reduce overall consumption. It allows for equitable billing, ensuring that owners are billed according to their actual water usage. It also facilitates leak detection within individual units, preventing water wastage and potential damage. Moreover, sub-metering allows owners to gain insights such as average monthly usage/spend, and communities can monitor common water usage to better identify possible leaks.

Sub-Metering in New and Existing Developments

As of 1st January 2008, the Queensland Plumbing and Wastewater Code made it compulsory for all new residential multi-unit developments and some non-residential premises to have sub-meters installed. While existing developments are exempt from these conditions, the body corporate can elect to sub-meter all units at its own cost. Many communities are choosing to implement water sub-metering due to the rising utility costs and the obvious benefits for occupiers and investors.

Billing Arrangements and Changes for Owners

If meters can be installed or upgraded to meet the metering technical specifications, owners can be billed directly by the **water service provider**. However, if a water provider solution is unfeasible due to cost or complexity, **private** sub-meters can be a cost-effective means to facilitate equitable bills for owners.

Under this system, owners will receive two separate bills: one from their water provider for fixed access charges, with any applicable concessions, and one from their billing agent on behalf of the Body Corporate for measured water consumption charges.

Technical Considerations and Costs

Setup costs comprise the supply and installation of water sub-meters by a licensed plumber, while ongoing costs include service fees for meter reading and billing administration. Specialised meters can overcome access issues and infrastructure unsuited to conventional meters. They are also often designed for low-cost maintenance and simple, economical compliance for an affordable retrofit solution.

Sub-Meters and Water Conservation

Residential water sub-metering with equitable bills typically results in a sustained reduction of 22% in water consumption. By providing occupiers with real data on their water usage, sub-meters empower them to make informed decisions about their consumption patterns. This heightened awareness often leads to more responsible usage, as individuals become more conscious of the costs associated with excessive water consumption. Consequently, while sub-meters may not alter fixed access charges, they can effectively put occupiers in control of their own water usage and costs.

Anticipated Impact of Sub-Meters

Sub-meters play a crucial role in promoting water conservation and efficiency. By enabling users to monitor their consumption closely, these devices encourage more mindful and sustainable water usage practices. As a result, the anticipated impact of sub-meters extends beyond mere cost control; it encompasses the broader goal of promoting environmental sustainability by reducing unnecessary water wastage. It may also help optimise insurance and plumbing costs.

Summary

With rising utility costs, owners, managers and tenants can benefit from water sub-metering.

- ✔ Fair and accurate bills - only pay for the water you use.
- ✔ Reduce the risk of property damage through leak alerts.
- ✔ Data to pinpoint leaks and where water is being used.
- ✔ Occupiers incentivised to conserve water.
- ✔ Landlords able to recoup measured water usage.*
- ✔ Increased appeal to property buyers / investors.
- ✔ Reduced admin burden and operating costs.
- ✔ Improved sustainability and peace-of-mind.