

Policy

Customer Account Adjustments

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to outline how Urban Utilities will manage and rectify retrospectively the identification of undercharges or overcharges on a customer account. This policy applies to account errors on billed accounts, as well as failures to bill charges in their entirety.

Applicability of the Policy

This is a strategic policy. This is also an external policy, available to customers and the public on our website.

Scope

This policy applies to:

- any billing errors identified, by either a customer or Urban Utilities, that lead to the undercharging or overcharging of any Urban Utilities account, or
- omitted complete bills and omitted charges (from any previous bill) that may or may not have come about due to an error.

This policy will outline how to manage and rectify the following scenarios:

- if a customer has been undercharged due to a charging error and there is a resultant amount owed to Urban Utilities,
- if a customer has been overcharged due to a charging error and there is a resultant amount owed to the customer,
- if a customer has been undercharged due to the omission of charges and there is a resultant amount owed to Urban Utilities, or
- if a customer has not received a bill/s for a specified period/s.

This policy expands on the requirements as set out in the Department of Energy and Water Supply's *South East Queensland Customer Water and Wastewater Code 2017*.

Related Legislation

- *Human Rights Act 2019* (Qld).
- *Public Sector Ethics Act 1994* (Qld).
- *South East Queensland Water (Distribution and Retail Restructuring) Act 2009* (Qld).
- *Water Supply (Safety and Reliability) Act 2008* (Qld).

Policy Statement

Urban Utilities is committed to correctly and promptly billing water and sewerage accounts. Unfortunately, sometimes billing errors do occur and Urban Utilities may need to rectify these errors by sending an adjusted bill, or a new bill/s. **If a customer believes Urban Utilities has made an error on their account, they can make contact to dispute the bill. Urban Utilities will respond within 20 business days, in accordance with their Complaints Management Policy, which can be found at: <https://urbanutilities.com.au/about-us/corporate-information/our-policies>.**

Urban Utilities can review:

- the estimation of water consumption,
- the calculation of the total charge,
- the application and/or calculation of any discounts or concessions that may apply,
- the time period for which the charges are applied,
- an adjustment made for a faulty meter, or
- any interest applied on overdue charges.

An error refers to a mistake in the billing process or the inaccuracy of input data. This may be an error on Urban Utilities' part (e.g. a sewerage service charge is not applied), an error made by the customer (e.g. lower consumption data given on a self-meter read) or a differing external factor that may or may not be deemed Urban Utilities' fault.

Undercharging

Undercharging occurs when Urban Utilities becomes aware that what has been charged is incorrect and less than what was owed.

*If a customer has been undercharged **due to a charging error** and there is a resultant amount owed to Urban Utilities (for example, the incorrect charge, tariff or category may have been applied), Urban Utilities will:*

- contact the customer to notify them of the error or issue an adjustment bill in retrospect within ten business days of becoming aware of the error. If the latter, the adjustment bill will include an explanation for the adjustment bill and of the charging error, and
- not charge interest on the amount owed.

*If a customer has been undercharged **due to the omission of charges** and there is a resultant amount owed to Urban Utilities, Urban Utilities will:*

- for residential customers who owe more than \$1,000, notify via a phone call within ten business days,
- for non-residential customers who owe more than \$5,000, notify via phone call within ten business days,
- for all other customers, either contact the customer to notify them of the error or issue an adjustment bill in retrospect within ten business days of becoming aware of the error. If the latter, the adjustment bill will include an explanation for the adjustment bill and of the charging error,
- not charge interest on these amounts owed,
- correct the charging structure on the account and bill correctly in subsequent periods; and
- notify the customer of the correct charging structure, via letter, within 20 days.

Overcharging

If Urban Utilities determine there has been an overcharge on an account, Urban Utilities will credit the amount to the next water and sewerage bill. An overcharge can occur due to the inclusion of incorrect charges (in their entirety) or due to a charging error.

If this occurs, Urban Utilities will advise the customer via letter within ten business days and if the account is credited, Urban Utilities will issue an adjustment bill once the investigation has been finalised. If requested by the customer, this amount can also be refunded and will occur within 20 business days of the request.

Bills not received in current quarter

If a customer has not received a bill/s for a specified period, Urban Utilities will issue complete bill/s for entire quarter/s in the current quarter. The circumstances in which this may occur include:

- if the account is temporarily placed on hold due to an investigation,
- Urban Utilities were provided with insufficient information at the time of account set up,
- complex account set-up resulted in delay,
- change of circumstances (e.g. transition from residential to non-residential),
- undelivered mail, and
- the discovery of errors in account setup which required the account to be placed on hold until the errors were rectified.

If Urban Utilities need to issue a bill to a customer for a billing period other than the current quarter, a letter will be sent to the customer within ten business days advising of this, and why. In addition, the following actions will be taken, if applicable:

- for residential customers who will be retrospectively billed over \$1,000, Urban Utilities will notify via a phone call within ten business days, and
- for non-residential customers who will be retrospectively billed over \$5,000, Urban Utilities will notify via a phone call within ten business days.

The above actions and time frames will apply regardless of whether the charging errors or billing omissions are identified within Urban Utilities, identified by a customer or identified via a third party.

When billing retrospectively for residential customers and small businesses, Urban Utilities can only include charges incurred in the previous 12 months.

Commercial customers will have their internal representatives notified if bills of over \$5,000 are to be retrospectively released.

Complaints

If no agreement is reached on the amount owing, a complaint may be lodged through Urban Utilities' complaints process. Urban Utilities' Complaints Management Policy can be found at:

<https://urbanutilities.com.au/about-us/corporate-information/our-policies>

If the complaint is not resolved within 20 business days, the complainant will pay the higher of the following:

- the portion of the account that is not part of the complaint or is not in dispute, pending resolution, or
- the average amount of the accounts for water and sewerage services in the previous 12 months, pending resolution.

Once the complaint is resolved, if there has been an undercharge, Urban Utilities will issue an adjustment bill and the customer must pay any balance owing. If there has been an overcharge, Urban Utilities will deduct the amount from the next account, unless the customer requests a refund, and in this case, payment will be made within 20 business days.

Definitions

Customer	is a customer of Urban Utilities (or their authorised representative, including body corporates).
Error	Is a mistake in the billing process or the inaccuracy of input data.
Non-residential	means the non-residential and commercial rating and billing categories for properties where it has been determined by Urban Utilities that the land use is intended for use other than residential purposes.
Non-residential customer	means the owner or lessee of a property which has a non-residential designation and who is billed directly by Urban Utilities.
Residential	means the residential rating and billing category for a property where it has been determined by Urban Utilities that the intended land use is for a residential purpose.
Residential customer	means the owner or lessee of a property which has a residential designation and who is billed directly by Urban Utilities.
Small business	means a business that uses less than that uses less than 100kL p.a.

Related Documents

- POL74 Complaint Management Policy.
- Urban Utilities Residential Customer Charter.
- Urban Utilities Business Customer Charter.

Review Date

This policy will be reviewed every 2 years or in accordance with changes to relevant legislation or business objectives.

Authorising Officer

Urban Utilities Board