

Utilities – Water, Electricity, Gas

Services to your home such as electricity, gas and water are called “utility services”.

This fact sheet is about:

- connecting and disconnecting utility services;
- when you must pay for utility services;
- what to do if you have trouble paying for utility services; and
- leaks.

*In the
Residential
Tenancies Act
the **landlord** is
referred to as
the **lessor**.*

CONNECTING UTILITY SERVICES

Water

Generally, you do not need to arrange connection of water to your new home. Water is generally provided to your home under a contract between your lessor and the Water Corporation.

Before you move in, your lessor should arrange a special meter reading so that you are not charged for the previous occupant’s water usage.

Other utility services

Other utility services include electricity and gas.

Usually, you must ask utility service providers to connect these other utility services to your home before you move in.

You should give the utility service providers as much notice as possible – at least 48 hours – for them to connect utility services to your home.

Usually, you must pay the utility service provider certain fees for connection of utility services to your home.

Before you sign a residential tenancy agreement, you should ask your lessor whether any other utility services will be provided to the property under a contract between your lessor and a utility service provider. For example, your lessor might already have a contract with an electricity company to provide electricity to your home. If any other utility services are provided to the property under a contract between your lessor and a utility company, you should ask for this to be written in your residential tenancy agreement.

After arranging with a utility service provider for connection of a utility service, you will have a contract with the utility service provider. The utility service provider will charge you directly for consumption charges and other fees.

DISCONNECTING UTILITY SERVICES

If you have accounts with utility service providers, you must notify them before you move out of the property. You should ask them to:

- close your account;
- conduct a final meter reading if necessary; and
- disconnect the utility service.

If you do not notify your utility service providers before you move out, they may continue to charge you for utility services after you move out.

The amount of notice that you must give your utility service provider depends on your contract with the utility service provider.

UTILITY METERS

'Meters' are used to measure how much of a utility service is consumed in a place.

Your home may have its own meter to measure consumption of a utility service. For example, your home may have its own dedicated meter for measuring the consumption of electricity at your home. When your home has its own meter for measuring consumption of a utility service, that utility service is 'separately metered'.

Your home may share a meter with one or more other homes to measure consumption of a utility service. For example, there may be one water meter which measures the total consumption of water between your home and other homes. If your home shares a meter for measuring consumption of a utility service, that utility service is not separately metered.

Your residential tenancy agreement should indicate which utility services are separately metered.

If a utility service is not separately metered, your residential tenancy agreement should include a method for calculating your consumption of the utility service. For example, if your water meter is shared between four different homes, your residential tenancy agreement might say: "your consumption is one quarter of the total consumption shown on the shared water meter." If a utility service is not separately metered, and there is no written agreed method for calculating your consumption of the utility service, you generally do not have to pay your lessor for your consumption of the utility service.

WHEN DO I HAVE TO PAY THE LESSOR FOR A UTILITY SERVICE?

When a utility service is provided under a contract between your lessor and a utility service provider, the utility service provider will give your lessor invoices for the utility service – usually once a month or once every two months. Your lessor must pay consumption charges and other fees to the utility service provider after they are given these invoices.

Your lessor may ask you to pay them back for your consumption of the utility service.

Generally, you are only required to pay your lessor for a utility service if your lessor gives you a written notice within 30 days after your lessor receives an invoice for a utility service.

If the utility service is separately metered, then the notice must contain the following information:

- The total charge for your consumption of the utility service
- The meter reading and the charge per metered unit
- The amount of GST payable

If the utility service is not separately metered, then the notice must contain the following information:

- The total charge for your consumption of the utility service
- Your consumption of the utility service, calculated according to the previous written agreement about how your consumption is calculated
- The amount of GST payable

FAILING TO PAY A UTILITY BILL

When the utility service is provided under a contract between you and the utility service provider

If you have a contract with a utility service provider, and you do not pay your utility bill for a long time, the utility service provider can take steps to cut off your utility service.

If you have trouble paying your utility bill, you should contact a financial counsellor as early as possible for help. A financial counsellor may help you contact your utility service provider to arrange a payment plan, or access financial support. You can find a financial counsellor by calling the National Debt Helpline on 1800 007 007 or visiting their [website](#).

If you have a dispute with your utility service provider, you should speak to the utility service provider first to try to resolve the dispute. If you cannot resolve the dispute, the Energy and Water Ombudsman may be able to help. You can contact them on 1800 754 044 or visit their [website](#).

When the utility service is provided under a contract between your lessor and the utility service provider

If your lessor gives you a notice to pay them for a utility bill, and you fail to pay your lessor, you may be in breach of your residential tenancy agreement.

If your lessor believes you are in breach of your residential tenancy agreement, your lessor may take steps to end your lease – for example, they could give you a breach notice, or a termination notice. For more information, see our fact sheet [Eviction – Lessor is Ending your Tenancy](#). You should get legal advice if your lessor takes steps to end your lease.

LEAKS

A large utility bill may be a sign that there is a leak in the property.

If you suspect there is a leak in the property, you should look for other evidence suggesting a leak. For example: a smell of gas in your home is evidence suggesting a gas leak; damp patches on walls or damp brick paving is evidence suggesting a water leak. The Water Corporation has useful information on [how to detect a water leak](#).

If you find evidence of a leak in the property, you must notify your lessor at the earliest possible opportunity. You should notify your lessor in writing. Your lessor is required to repair the leak within a reasonable period. You can find out more about repairs in our fact sheet [Maintenance and Repairs](#).

A leak does not mean you do not have to pay for the utility service. If your lessor does not repair the leak within a reasonable period, you may be able to seek compensation for increased consumption of the utility service. You should seek legal advice if you believe the lessor has failed to repair the leak within a reasonable period.

PENSIONER AND CONCESSION DISCOUNTS

If you hold a Pension or State Concession Card, you may be eligible to apply for a rebate on water usage. For further information, see the [Water Corporation website](#).

FURTHER HELP – TENANTS’ ADVICE AND ADVOCACY

Circle Green Community Legal www.circlegreen.org.au
(08) 6148 3636: 9:00 am – 4:00 pm Monday – Friday

Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety www.dmirs.wa.gov.au/
1300 304 054: Consumer Protection, for consumer and tenancy related matters
commerce.wa.gov.au/consumer-protection

METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRES

Fremantle Community Legal Centre (CLC)
Shop 11, Queensgate Building, William St, Fremantle
Phone: (08) 9432 9790
Web: <http://www.fremantle.wa.gov.au/fclc>

Gosnells CLC
Gosnells Community Lotteries House
Suite 1, 2232 Albany Hwy, Gosnells 6110
Phone: (08) 9398 1455
Web: <http://www.gosclc.com.au>

Midland Information Debt & Legal Advocacy Service
23 Old Great Northern Highway, Midland WA 6056
Phone: (08) 9250 2123
Web: <http://www.midlas.org.au>

Northern Suburbs CLC (Joondalup)
Building 1, Edith Cowan University
270 Joondalup Drive, Joondalup, WA 6027
Phone: (08) 9301 4413
Web: <http://www.nsclegal.org.au/>

Northern Suburbs CLC (Mirrabooka)
Cobbler Place, Mirrabooka, WA 6061
Phone: (08) 9440 1663
Web: <http://www.nsclegal.org.au/>

Southern Communities Advocacy & Legal Education Services (SCALES)
Suite 3, St Nicholas Community Centre, 14 Council Ave, Rockingham 6168
Phone: (08) 9550 0400
Web: murdoch.edu.au/School-of-Law/Clinical-Legal-Education-SCALES

Sussex Street Community Law Service Inc.
29 Sussex Street, East Victoria Park
Phone: (08) 6253 9500
Web: <http://www.sscls.asn.au/>

Welfare Rights & Advocacy Service
98 Edward Street, Perth WA 6000
Phone: (08) 9328 1751
Web: <http://www.wraswa.org.au/>

REGIONAL COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRES

Albany Community Legal Centre (CLC)
4/15 Peels Place, Albany 6330
Phone: (08) 9842 8566
Web: <http://www.albanyclc.com.au>

Goldfields CLC
23 Maritana St, Kalgoorlie, 6430
Phone: (08) 9021 1888 | 1300 139 188 (if outside Kalgoorlie-Boulder)
Web: <http://www.gclc.com.au/>

Kimberley Community Legal Services (CLS)
4 Papuana St, Kununurra 6743
Phone: (08) 9169 3100
Web: <http://www.kcls.org.au/>

Peel CLS
61B Pinjarra Road, Mandurah 6210
Phone: (08) 9581 4511
Web: <http://www.peelcls.com.au/>

Pilbara CLS (Karratha)
Welcome Lotteries House
7/1 Morse Court, Karratha 6714
Phone: (08) 9185 5899
Web: <http://www.pcls.net.au>

Pilbara CLS (Newman)
Newman House
4/46 Iron Ore Pde, Newman 6753
Phone: (08) 9175 0148
Web: <http://www.pcls.net.au/>

Pilbara Community Legal Service (Roebourne)
2 Padbury Street, Roebourne 6718
Phone: (08) 9182 1169
Web: <http://www.pcls.net.au/>

Pilbara Community Legal Service (South Hedland)
South Hedland Lotteries House
9/2 Leake St, South Hedland 6722
Phone: (08) 9140 1613
Web: <http://www.pcls.net.au/>

Regional Alliance West
1/114 Sandord Road, Geraldton WA 6531
Phone: (08) 9938 0600
Web: <https://raw.org.au/>

South West CLC
14 Plaza Street, South Bunbury 6230
Phone: (08) 9791 3206 | 1800 999 727 (Freecall)
Web: <http://https://www.swclc.org.au/>

Wheatbelt Community Legal Services
327 Fitzgerald St, Northam 6401
Phone: (08) 9622 5200
Web: <http://www.wheatbelt.com.au/>

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