

# Fixed Standpipes



## Frequently Asked Questions

Pricing for Local Government owned Fixed Standpipes in country regions changed on the 1 July 2019. This factsheet is provided to address frequently asked questions in relation to the change.

Please note, that this new pricing structure relates to potable water only.

### **What is changing?**

Local Government Authorities (LGAs) who own a regional fixed standpipe will now have their standpipes priced based on the size of the meter and the end user.

LGAs are still entitled to access concessional pricing for water used for their own purposes. This will not change. However high flow rate LGA owned fixed standpipes that are publicly accessible will no longer be charged concessional rates and commercial rates will instead apply.

### **Who does this pricing change affect?**

This change will affect users of high flow LGA owned fixed standpipes in regional areas. Although the price is charged to the LGA directly, the costs are generally passed on to users such as businesses, farmers and properties not connected to the scheme.

### **How will rates and charges be applied to fixed standpipes?**

The new pricing structure is linked to the size of the standpipe meter, as this determines the flow rate. Small standpipes (20mm and 25mm) generally deliver between 20 – 60 litres per minute. Large standpipes (any pipe larger than 25mm) generally deliver from 80 litres per minute and above.

All LGA standpipes with a meter size of 20mm or 25mm will receive concessional rates and can be used by the LGA or for wider community use.

All LGA standpipes with a meter size above 25mm that are publicly available will be charged at a commercial rate. However, an exemption to consumption charges will continue to be applied for water used for fire-fighting purposes.

Standpipes with a meter above 25mm that are located in a shire depot or locked for Shire use only will be able to access the concessional rate by providing evidence of the ability to control user access.

There will be no change to dedicated Fire Standpipes or fixed standpipes installed on privately owned property.

### **Why is 25mm the cut off for a concessional service?**

The lower flow rate is less likely to be able to deliver more than 49 kilolitres per day, which would qualify for a Major Consumer Agreement. Anything above 25mm is viewed as being used for a commercial purpose. This is consistent across the state including in the Perth metropolitan area.

### **What are the new prices for Standpipe use?**

The new pricing structure is outlined in Appendix 1.

### **Why are these changes being made?**

Some commercial customers have in the past accessed LGA owned standpipes with concessional rates which are below the regulated Town Class rate for the location as set by Government. Water is a precious resource and is regulated by the State Government like any other valuable natural resource and correct pricing must be enforced.



When the incorrect water rates are used, it creates inequity and results in the community and State Government subsidising the activities of private enterprises on an unequal basis.

Fixed standpipes provide an essential source of water for the following:

- customers who are remote from reticulated water schemes;
- amenities to communities by enabling local governments to maintain street trees;
- undertake minor building activities; and
- enable economic growth by supplying businesses that rely on carted water as an input to production.

These changes will ensure the rate commercial customers pay is consistent across Western Australia whether someone is connected to the scheme or not connected to ensure equity for all users.

### **Why are water use charges higher for customers in regional areas?**

Prices for water use in most regional towns are higher than in the metropolitan area because the cost of supplying water is higher, usually due to their remote location and smaller population size (where costs are spread over fewer customers).

The maximum charge per kilolitre for non-residential customers is based on Non-Residential Class Step 15 (refer to fees and charges) on Water Corporation website for current charges. This maximum charge protects customers from very high water bills, even when the cost of providing water services may be substantially higher than this.

### **How can Shires better manage and control the use of standpipes?**

Many standpipe infrastructure suppliers offer control systems for standpipes. Some Shires already have these installed for better management of their own standpipes.

Alternatively, having a lock on the standpipe to restrict access also provides security to protect the scheme supply.

### **Can contractors working on Local Government projects access a Local Authority standpipe if required as part of a Shire project?**

Contractors working on Shire projects are permitted to use locked LA standpipes, thereby minimising the volumetric costs incurred by Local Government. Contractors are not entitled to use an LA standpipe for other commercial (non-LGA) purposes.

### **Can Local Government still obtain a concessional rate for any water taken from a Commercial standpipe for Shire purposes?**

Yes, but there will now be a requirement to provide evidence of the volume taken. Local Government will need to submit a Claim form via the Water Corporation website to obtain the concessional rate from a Commercial standpipe. The claim must be actioned within 12 months from the date the water was drawn.

### **Can Shires continue to on-sell water?**

Yes, Shires are able to set the price for on-selling at their discretion. Water Corporation charges the local governments at the correct regulated prices, and the local governments may choose to add a surcharge to cover maintenance and operational costs for offering a public water service.

### **My Shire has been charging GST on water from a local government owned standpipe to third parties, can this continue?**

No, charging GST on water is not allowed. Guidance surrounding this is outlined by the Australian Tax Office via their website – [www.ato.gov.au](http://www.ato.gov.au).



### **Do standpipes require backflow prevention?**

Yes. An ongoing threat to the quality of our drinking water supply is the reverse flow of water from a property back through the internal water service connection. Without prevention, this water may be contaminated by the activities carried out at the standpipe.

It is the owner of the standpipes responsibility to ensure suitable high rated backflow prevention is installed. These devices also require annual testing. Your licensed plumbing contractor certified in backflow prevention, will be able to assist you in meeting these backflow requirements.

### **Does backflow prevention impact on water pressure?**

Yes. Some forms of backflow prevention will reduce water pressure and flow rate downstream of the device. If water pressure and flow rate is critical for the activities on your property, you need to consult with a licensed plumbing contractor or hydraulics consultant before choosing and installing a backflow prevention device.

### **Are the design standards for new standpipes changing?**

Yes, all new standpipes will require the installation of a gate valve to ensure adequate control over water flow when standpipes are turned on and off to prevent water hammering in the pipes.

This requirement is for all new standpipes only, however if an existing standpipe has been identified as constantly being a problem, the Water Corporation will discuss an upgrade to a gate valve option with the cost being borne by the standpipe owner. Having a gate valve installed will help reduce breakages in the water pipes, which owners are currently being billed for if evidence shows the standpipe is being impacted through water hammering occurring from the standpipe.

### **How do I know if commercial users are accessing water from our Shire use meter, we work on an honesty system?**

Shires are responsible for knowing who is using their standpipes and if it is being used inappropriately. Introducing a control system may support this, e.g. Swipe card or managed within LGA depot to identify major users.

### **Why is the cost of water going up for commercial users when we have been accessing water without any issue?**

Water is a valuable resource and regulated charges are set by the State Government based on its use. Pricing of water is based on a 'user pays' principle and in regional Western Australia it has not been implemented according to legislation for fixed standpipes. Having a regulated pricing structure ensures all users are paying the correct rate for water use no matter where they are located across the State.

Current usage patterns on fixed standpipes have shown that commercial suppliers are getting charged at the concessional level by accessing LGA standpipes which is inequitable for other commercial operators that are charged correctly.

Accessing large volumes of water from a fixed standpipe can also cause water supply issues to other users on the scheme and any large users need to be directed to the Water Corporation to be set up on a major consumer agreement.

### **Will high-flow standpipes be accessible for commercial use?**

Yes, but they will now be charged a commercial rate and not have access to concessional rates.



However if more than 49 kilolitres per day is required, the Shire should direct these commercial users (if known) to the Water Corporation so a Major Consumer Agreement can be set up instead.

From time to time, Water Corporation may restrict access if the high usage affects other users on the scheme.

### **What happens in drought conditions for the price of water to farmers?**

A 'Water Deficiency Declaration' is a government response to safeguard the commercial interests of farmers during very dry periods.

When a state government declared drought zone exists, all large shire-owned fixed standpipes will be made available at concessional rates to the community for drought relief in accordance with the terms of the declaration conditions. If conditions for commercial use relief are not specified then standard rates will apply.

If water carters are hired by farmers to transport water during a drought, this cost is the responsibility of the farmer and water will be available at the concessional rate since the end use is for the farmer.

### **Will a fixed standpipe ever be closed?**

Yes, fixed regional standpipes can sometimes become unavailable for a number of reasons including scheduled or ad hoc maintenance, drought or scheme operational issues. If this occurs, Water Corporation will work with the standpipe owner to temporarily restrict public access to protect the town drinking water supply.

Water Corporation's supply to farmland areas cannot always be guaranteed and standpipes are subject to restriction or removal from time to time in order to protect the integrity of the scheme, and allow for prioritisation of supply to groups of water users as Water Corporation deems necessary.

When standpipes are closed, the Water Corporation endeavours to keep the closure minimal to ensure no long term inconvenience to the public.

In some regions, an SMS Alert process is available, but you will need to check with your local government to confirm availability of this service. If it is available, you can register to get closure alerts.

If standpipes are unavailable, the public can approach the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation (DWER) to source alternative water sources.

### **What are the responsibilities for users of regional fixed standpipes?**

When using a public standpipe, you have the following responsibilities:

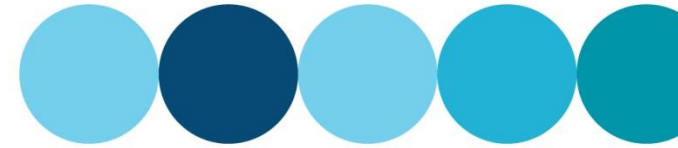
- Seek advice on how to safely access the fixed standpipe before operating it;
- Treat carted potable water before drinking, showering, food preparation and other potable uses;
- Seek treatment advice for carted potable water from Department of Health;
- Report any fault or damage to a public fixed standpipe to the local Shire;
- Report any misuse of a fire-fighting standpipe to the Water Corporation.

From time to time, Water Corporation may advise a public fixed standpipe is not be used for operational reasons. You must comply with this directive to ensure protection of the drinking water supply.

### **How do I get more information?**

Contact your local Shire or Water Corporation. Further information is also available on the Water Corporation website - [www.watercorporation.com.au/regionalstandpipes](http://www.watercorporation.com.au/regionalstandpipes)

# Fixed Standpipes FAQ



## Appendix 1- New Standpipe Charges

Type of standpipe:	Rates 2019\20 New Description
<b>LA Standpipe</b> (Shire Use only – no public access)	<p><b>Use:</b> For use by Shire only – locked and no public access available.</p> <p><b>Meter:</b> Can be any size service as long as it is for direct Shire use.</p> <p><b>Charges:</b> Non-residential Class 1 tariff applied to water use and 100% discount on service charges.</p>
<b>Community Use Standpipe (low flow)</b> (Publicly available)	<p><b>Use:</b> Owned by Local Government and available to anyone in the community.</p> <p><b>Meter:</b> Only available for 20mm and 25mm standpipes.</p> <p><b>Charges:</b> Farmlands tariff applies to water use (concessional community purpose rate). Service charges based on 20mm meter.</p>
<b>Commercial Standpipe</b> (high flow) (Publicly available)	<p><b>Use:</b> May be privately owned or made available by Local Government. Must be less than 49 kilolitres per day. For other options, call 13 13 95.</p> <p><b>Meter:</b> Any meter above 25mm.</p> <p><b>Charges:</b> Town based charges apply to water use. Service charges vary depending on size of meter.</p>
<b>Fire Standpipe</b> (No public access)	<p><b>Use:</b> Fire-fighting only. Access by DFES and volunteer firefighting units. Must be locked or controlled to limit access.</p> <p><b>Meter:</b> Any meter size but usually 25mm or larger to ensure high flow when required.</p> <p><b>Charges:</b> Nil charges.</p>
<b>Water Corporation owned</b> (Not available in all areas)	Various charges apply, contact 13 13 95 for further information.