

# Waterways & Drainage Charge

## Frequently Asked Questions

### What does the Waterways and Drainage Charge pay for?

Melbourne Water is the caretaker of river health throughout the Port Phillip and Westernport region. We are responsible for managing over 8,400 kilometres of rivers and creeks, floodplains and the regional drainage system.

The Waterways and Drainage Charge funds works such as:

- Stormwater drainage and works to reduce flooding.
- Programs to reduce stormwater pollution entering rivers, creeks and oceans.
- Waterway erosion and bank stabilisation works.
- Weed control and revegetation works along waterways.
- Ensuring new developments do not increase stormwater run-off and cause floods, or degrade waterways.

An important source of funds for this work is the Waterways and Drainage Charge, which is collected by the water utilities on Melbourne Water's behalf, from over 2 million property owners across the Melbourne region.

Your water bill lists this charge under 'other authorities' charges'.

Everyone benefits either directly or indirectly from healthy waterways and a safe, reliable drainage system.

### How much is the Waterways and Drainage Charge?

The price you'll pay will depend on whether you are a residential customer, a rural customer or a non-residential customer.

Property type	Annual charge 2019/20
Residential	\$102.08
Non-residential (flat rate per occupancy)	\$145.36
Non-residential (rate in dollar, based on Net Annual Value of your property. Minimum fee is \$145.36)	\$0.4782
Rural	\$56.08

### What is a non-residential property?

All properties within the urban growth boundary and major airports that are not classified as residential are treated as non-residential for the purposes of applying the Waterways and

Drainage Charge. These are broad in their nature and include commercial operations like hotels, factories, retail organisations and airports.

### **What is an occupancy?**

Charges are to be applied to the rateable land in respect of each separate occupancy for both residential and non-residential properties.

Retail water businesses rely on council classifications as to what constitutes a 'separate occupancy' for the purposes of applying charges.

### **How is the Net Annual Value (NAV) of each property produced?**

The current NAV value of your property as determined by council, is converted to its value in 1990 using Victorian Valuer-General indices. This 1990 value is multiplied by the rate determined by Melbourne Water and approved by the Essential Services Commission each year to establish your annual charge rate.

### **Why do I have to pay?**

The Waterways and Drainage Charge has existed since the 1920s and is now paid by over 2 million people within our Waterway Management District boundary.

Every Melburnian benefits from a well-managed drainage network and healthy waterways. The Waterways and Drainage Charge is the fairest way of funding these services and is approved by the independent pricing regulator – the Essential Services Commission.

### **What works have you performed in my area with the Waterways and Drainage Charge?**

Melbourne Water produces local waterways updates for each local council area that outlines the works and services delivered in your local community that are funded by the waterways and drainage charge.

Visit [www.melbournewater.com.au/localupdates](http://www.melbournewater.com.au/localupdates) to view your local update

### **What can I do if I can't afford the new price?**

Your retail water company will be able to assist you with ways to manage your bill, including to set up a payment plan.

### **I don't receive any benefit to my property. Why should I pay?**

The works we carry out provide broad benefits to waterways across the catchment. Over 2 million property owners are levied the Waterways and Drainage Charge. Spreading the costs across the whole region is the fairest possible approach as everyone benefits from healthy waterways and a safe and reliable drainage system.

Works are prioritised on a whole-of-region approach for the greater good of the region. Works delivered upstream will deliver positive outcomes to river health in other places.

## I have a water/septic tank. Why should I pay?

The Waterways and Drainage Charge is not related to water and sewerage charges. The charge is a separate charge collected by the local water utilities on Melbourne Water's behalf.

## What's my legislative requirement?

Section 259 of the *Water Act 1989* (Part 13) permits Melbourne Water to levy waterways and drainage charges on properties within its "Waterway Management District".

All properties deemed rateable under the meaning of *the Local Government Act 1989* are liable for the Waterways and Drainage Charge. So, if you pay council rates, the charge will apply.

*Water Act 1989*, Section 259, parts 9 and 10 state:

(9) An Authority may in respect of a property, separately impose fees under a tariff or development tariff in respect of each separate occupancy on that Property.

(10) In determining what constitutes a separate occupancy, the Authority must use the relevant principles set out in the *Valuation of Land Act 1960*.

NB A separate occupancy is a dwelling, either occupied or vacant, on each council rated property.



Interpreter

For an interpreter, please call the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National) on 13 14 50