

Inquiry on Country Water and Wastewater Pricing
Economic Regulation Authority
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Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Issues paper. I am writing as a residential customer of the Water Corporation living in a Group A town Class 1 for over 30 years.

Regarding current application of the uniform tariff rate to all residential customers throughout the State who use up to 350kl year – yes, I am satisfied with this arrangement. After looking at figure 3.2 (percentage of water volume within each range) it appears 76% of customers fall in this range in group A towns and 54% in group B. A resident of a group B town (e.g. Wittenoom) receives a significant discount on water up to 550kl and pays only 68.9 cents per kl, the same charge as Albany up to 350kl.

I would not like to see the same tariff throughout the State regardless of water use as it does nothing to encourage efficient water use. Credit must be given to the Water Corporation for all their water wise tips and water rebates given to water saving devices such as showerheads, rainwater tanks, and frontloading washing machines.

The Water Corporation have given the figures for average water consumption in the country as 336kL. If people were serious about containing their costs for water use they could make use of all these devices. I provided by installing a dual flush toilet in a rental property in Margaret River that significant reduction in water use could be made.

Regarding current charging arrangements for pensioners – yes, I'm satisfied with the 50% concession on water usage up to 400kL in group A and 600kl in group B, but it seems unfair that Perth pensioners have to be under a miserly 150kl year when the average Perth consumption is 275kL. My water consumption would be similar whether I lived in Perth or Albany.

As I may shortly be eligible for the 50% pensioner concession I have to say it is very generous of the Water Corporation yet at the same time deserving as the pensioner is on a lower income compared to the rest of the population.

Country Residential Wastewater Service Charge

For a number of years I have been concerned by the high cost of sewerage charges, ever since I first began paying for these when Margaret River residents were connected to the sewerage in the Country Infill programme. At the time I was paying charges for my own house and a residential property I owned.

My concern was raised when I read the headline “Perth pays top dollar for sewage disposal” (West Australian 27th October 2005). Figures showed Perth paying higher charges than any capital city in Australia. When I checked my annual service account for my Bayonet Head property (Albany) I was amazed to see I had been charged \$514.10 – even more than Perth! In the same article the Water Corporation acknowledged this accounts for its record 2005 profit.

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After reading section 5 of the issues paper I was interested to study figure 5.2 (average residential wastewater charges and average operating costs per connection). I was not surprised to see that Albany residents were paying on average \$600 per connection, while average operating costs were only \$200.

Your paper mentions the fact that “Albany residents agreed to a higher wastewater charge because they preferred the more costly option of using treated wastewater to irrigate tree lots rather than disposal through ocean outfall”. Yet the graph shows average operating costs over 3 years to be 1/3 of waste water charges. Surely we are being overcharged and so are 74 of the 87 towns mentioned in figure 5.2

May I point out that most people would be unaware of their neighbours’ annual sewerage charges (based on GRV), let alone what another person was paying in another town. I think most people would also be unaware that these charges varied so significantly.

When I studied my annual water service charge, annual water use and annual sewerage charge, annual water use and annual sewerage charge for my Albany property there seems to be an anomaly in the amounts being charged for the three components.

For example, my total water consumption September 04-05 was only 112kl, with total cost for the year only \$46.60; standard water service charge \$152.30; sewerage \$514.10.

I have to point out that my Albany property is only used by my family 3-4 days a week, as my permanent home address is Takalarup 50 km from Albany on a rural property where we provide our own water from rainwater tanks and dam. Even if I tripled the amount of water I used I would still be within the 350kl limit for uniform tariff. Water does seem to be undervalued compared to other household costs such as power, telephone and gas.

I am satisfied with the amount of water service charges (\$153.30) compared to the costs of providing one’s own water supply as people do in rural areas not serviced by the Water Corporation. I worked out it would take me 26 years of annual water service charges to pay for a new 45000 L tank.

However, I do consider country sewerage charges to be excessive and I welcome your inquiry and reading the draft report.

I hope my comments will be of use.

Yours sincerely,

Anne Radys