

Wednesday 15 February 2023

OIA IRO-343

Name: [REDACTED]

Email: [REDACTED]@gmail.com

Kia ora [REDACTED]

Official information request for information on Wellington Water's reimbursement policy.

Thank you for your official information request dated Thursday 5 January 2023

We have considered your request in accordance with the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987 and determined that we are able to grant your request in part.

The information you have requested is enclosed in the Appendix of this letter.

You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of this decision. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or freephone 0800 802 602.

Ngā mihi

[REDACTED]

Team Lead, Communications and Engagement

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Appendix

Question 1: Please send me a copy of your Reimbursement Policy or any other information (e.g., documents, emails, web content) you hold on your reimbursement processes. I am particularly interested in understanding WW's policy / stance on not paying plumbers directly, the criteria for assessing reimbursement claims, the scope of reimbursement claims (i.e., what you will and won't reimburse for), and the timeframes I can expect for a reimbursement to be assessed and processed (e.g., payment made).

Answer...

Wellington Water does not have a Reimbursement Policy, nor do we pay plumbers directly if we are not the ones to directly engage them. Consequently, we do not involve ourselves in the original transaction between plumbing companies and their clients.

The process for reimbursement, whilst not stipulated in documentation, is that once we have received the required documentation, and after payment has been made between the client and the plumbing company, and if it is established that costs should be covered by Wellington Water, we reimburse the full amount to the customer once we have considered and agreed to the claim for reimbursement.

The process we follow to reimburse a customer is outlined in turn and is the text sent to a requester upon claim for reimbursement.

"In order to be considered for a reimbursement from Wellington Water we require the following documents. Wellington Water does not pay plumbers directly.

Item	Document	Examples include any of the following
1	A copy of the invoice/bill	• Electronic: legible scan or photo • Paper copy
2	Proof of payment. Either a receipt or something like a statement of accounts.	• Electronic 1: legible scan or photo • Electronic 2: A legible screen shot/photo of bank account showing payment • Paper Copy
3	Bank account details	• Bank deposit slip

	for the reimbursement to be made into*	• Statement header • Something else from the bank showing name and account number, such as an extract from online banking
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[1] A bank logo, customer name and account number are required, and they must be on the same page. As long as these conditions above are met, anything else can be redacted, blurred or cropped. These can be photos of physical documents if online means are unavailable.

[2] Wellington Water cannot accept verbal, typed or handwritten account numbers"

Question 2: Can you please also provide further information about, or a link to (if the information is publicly available), the specific bylaws and criteria set out by local councils that you have referred to below.

Answer...

Please see attached in our email response to you our record of Wastewater & Stormwater Lateral Bylaws for each Council.

Each city has their own bylaw or policy as to who is responsible for fixing a lateral. In general, if the issue is within the property owners property boundary, they are responsible. If the issue is outside the property boundary it depends on which city they live in. See below for a summary of each city's lateral bylaw or policy.

Wellington

- Wellington City Council is responsible for any part of the wastewater lateral in public roads
- Property owners continue to own, and remain responsible for, the parts of the wastewater lateral on their property, or on an adjacent private property or other public land (for example, a reserve).
- More information on [WCC policy for laterals here](#)

Porirua

- Property owners own and are responsible for the maintenance and renewal of laterals within their property boundary
- Porirua City Council own the laterals from the property boundary to the council main and is responsible for the maintenance and renewal
- If the wastewater main runs through private property, the property owner is responsible for the maintenance and renewal of their lateral up to 1.5m before it connects to the main. Porirua City Council is responsible for the 1.5m section of the lateral before it connects to the wastewater main

Lower Hutt

- Property owners own and are responsible for the maintenance and renewal of the lateral from their property to where it connects to the council main
- If the defect or blockage in the lateral is beyond the property boundary and within Council property, and it has not been caused by the property owner or occupier, Hutt City Council will take responsibility for repairing the lateral
- HCC is conscious that each case may have its own set of circumstances and will work on a "case by case" basis with the property owner to determine the best way forward

Upper Hutt

Note:

- some laterals are wholly private (i.e. owned by the property owner from the property to the council main) and some private/public (the section within the property is private and the section from the property boundary to the council main is public) – contact UHCC if you are unsure
- the property owner will need to employ a plumber or drain layer to establish the cause of the blockage

Blocked wastewater lateral

- Where the lateral is private, the property owner owns and is responsible for the maintenance and renewal of the private lateral

- If the defect that caused the blockage on the lateral is due to damage from a Council tree (as confirmed by a CCTV recording), UHCC will consider reimbursement for reasonable costs
- If the lateral is public, and the blockage in the public lateral is due to a defect , such as tree roots or a collapsed pipe (as confirmed by a CCTV recording), UHCC will consider reimbursement for reasonable costs
- If there is no obvious defect in the public lateral, the property owner is responsible for all costs incurred in clearing the blockage
- If damage to the lateral has been caused by a utility company or third party (e.g. gas, electricity, phone, broadband) then the utility company or third party is responsible for the repair of the damage
- If the blockage is caused by a blocked council main, contact UHCC

Blocked stormwater lateral

- Stormwater laterals serving a property are the responsibility of the property owner. This includes the full cost of maintenance and repairs
- Stormwater laterals are private through to the point of discharge at the public main or drain or street kerb and channel