

Rural Subtract Meters

Purpose

This policy seeks to address historical installation of rural subtract meters and their management. This policy outlines the reasons that these types of meters are no longer approved for installation.

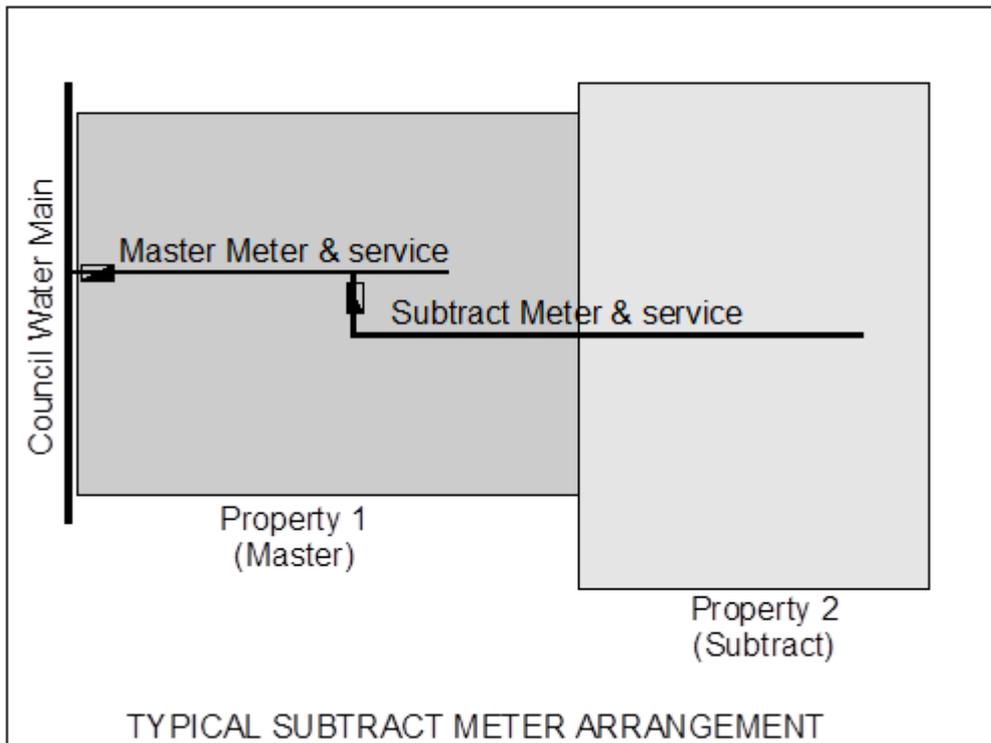
Scope

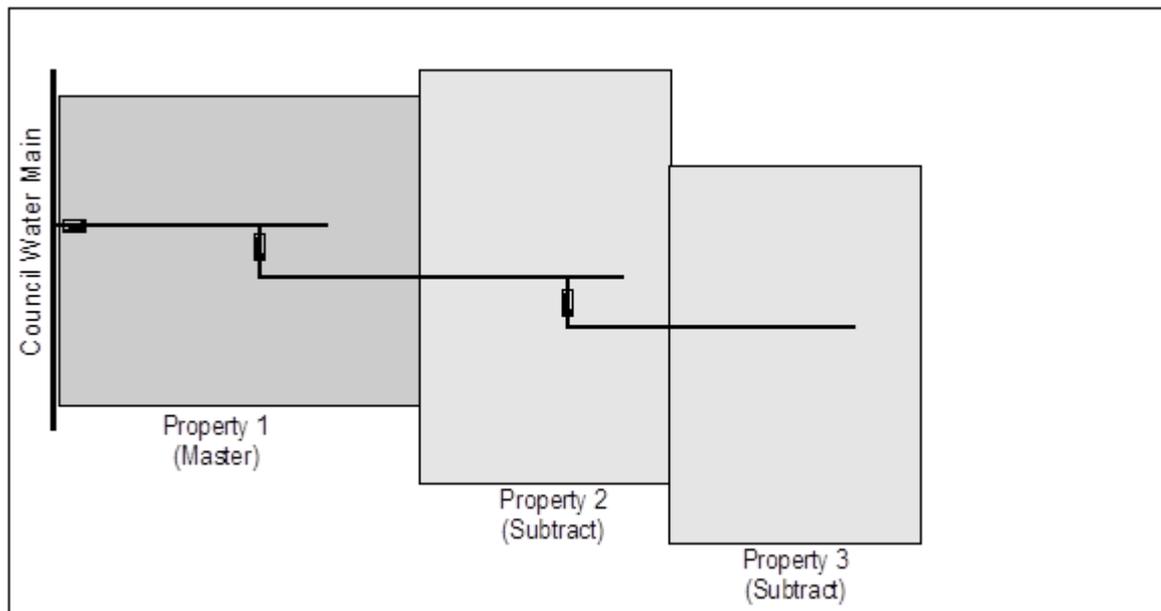
This policy applies to historical rural subtract meters only. Council has resolved that no new/additional rural subtract meters are allowed (refer to council resolution 01/108).

Definitions

Rural Subtract Meters Explained

The term “subtract” water meter (or service) refers to a situation where the “subtract” service is connected to another consumer’s plumbing (the “master service”) rather than being directly connected to Council’s water main. The following diagrams shows a typical arrangement





Subtract Billing Arrangements

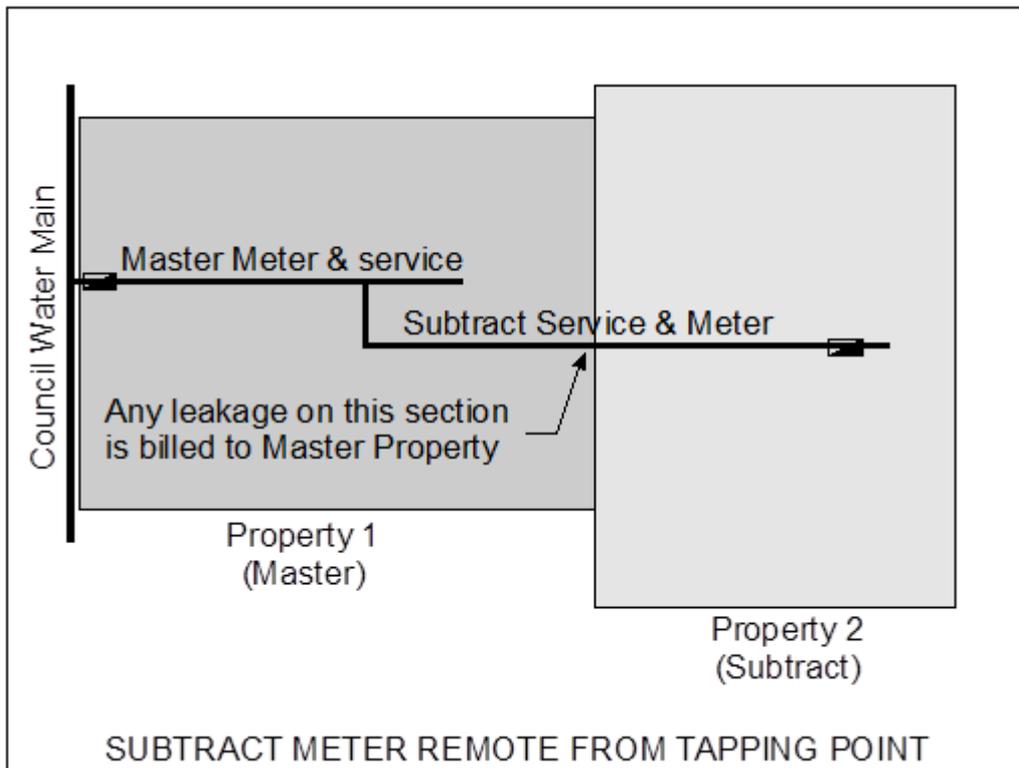
At billing time, Property 1 (in diagram above) is billed the difference between the Master and Subtract meters. Property 2 is billed according to the Subtract meter. These subtract meter installations have occurred as a historical alternate means of connecting to the reticulated water, where the second property is some distance from the water main, or where the connected rural property has been historically subdivided.

In the Riverina Water area, there are a total of 70 subtract services as at October 2018, 58 rural services and 12 “hobby farms”.

Problems Associated with Subtract Meter Arrangements

- If the Subtract meter measurement slows or fails to record water used by the “subtract” property, the “master” property is billed for the water not recorded by the subtract meter. To some extent this problem is resolved at the billing stage by estimating usage through the subtract meter based on past usage.
- It is often difficult to position a subtract meter in a location which suits the consumers and is also accessible to Council's meter readers.
- If the owner of the master service needs to turn off their service for maintenance or other purposes, the Subtract service is isolated.
- Any leakage prior to the meter on the Subtract service appears on the water account for the “Master” property. This can cause quite significant problems when the subtract meter is a substantial distance from the tapping point (see following diagram)

- The additional water demand through the small diameter service line, can give rise to low flow/pressure complaints.
- Subtract meter installations were invariably by agreement between neighbours, with no legislative legal right of entry onto each other's property for maintenance or pipeline use. Such agreements can fail when ownership or relationships change.



Regulations

The Local Government (General) Regulation 2021 includes:

- 152 Premises to be connected to water supply by an independent house service pipe
- 1 The owner of premises must, unless the council authorises otherwise, ensure that the premises are not connected to a property service pipe linked to the council's water supply system except by an independent house service pipe.
 - 2 The owner of premises connected to the council's water supply by an independent house service pipe must ensure that the pipe has a stop-valve within the premises that is not more than 450mm from the road alignment or at some other place within the premises approved by the council.
 - 3 If several premises are supplied with water by a single house service pipe, the council may require, as a condition of the supply, that a separate house service pipe be laid to each of the premises.

- 4 *If the council authorises the connection of 2 or more premises by means of a single house service pipe, the owner of each of the premises must (unless all the premises are occupied by a single household or firm as a residence or place of business) ensure that there is installed on each of those premises:
 - (a) a separate stop-valve that complies with subclause (2), and
 - (b) a separate water meter to measure the water supply to those premises.*
- 5 *The owner of a group of contiguous premises may request the council to lay a large property service pipe or water sub-main to supply 2 or more of the premises in the group."*

This regulation clearly promotes separate service connections, and the requirements of clause (4) for separate stop-valves and meters cannot be met in most subtract meter situations. It would therefore not be in order for Council to adopt a policy that allows any further subtract meters to be installed.

Shared Private Lines

In addition to the 58 rural subtract services, there are twelve (12) shared private lines in rural areas. In these instances, a master meter records the total flow leaving council's main, and each consumer has an individual meter off the shared private line. This situation is far from ideal, as responsibilities for upkeep of the private line, and associated access onto each other's properties can create conflict, however the sharing of any water losses from the shared main is more easily proportioned.

One possible solution is where possible, existing subtract meter arrangements could be converted to shared private lines, although this is difficult where the primary consumer has stock troughs or other multiple connections.

The **best option** for servicing a property which cannot practically be served by an adjacent main, is a separate private line within an appropriate easement or road reserve. This has been Council's policy since 2001. Where possible Council should be proactive in trying to reduce the number of subtract and shared line arrangements

Council Assistance in Resolving a Subtract Meter Issue

When Council is asked to assist resolve a subtract meter issue, the following advice needs to be conveyed to the landowner;

- Notify the landowners that those served off rural subtract meters DO NOT have a legislated legal entitlement for their private pipeline and water supply through the intervening property.
- Council is not obliged to assist in providing a dedicated/independent water supply service to the subtract metered connections if the landowners have a disagreement.

- Council has a continuing programme to encourage the removal of rural substract meters and can offer the new connection to the Council's main at no charge. Consideration will also be given to a maximum contribution of \$2,000 to an impacted landowner toward the total project cost.

Policy number	2.04
Responsible area	Engineering
Approved by	Riverina Water Board – Res 23/008
Approval date	23 February 2023
Legislation or related strategy	Local Government (General) Regulations 2021
Documents associated with this policy	
Policy history	Vers 4 – number change 26/04/21 from 2.5 and 2. Vers 3 – 27 Feb 2019 Res 19/16 Vers 2 – Nov 2018 Vers 1 – 12 Dec 2001 Res 01/108
Review schedule	Every 4 years

Policy details may change prior to review date due to legislative or other changes, therefore this document is uncontrolled when printed.

END OF POLICY STATEMENT