

FAQs for Local Councils

From 1 January 2024, fees apply for drinking water audits and inspections carried out by SA Health under the *Safe Drinking Water Act 2011*.

Why is SA Health introducing fees?

Charging fees for regulatory inspections is standard practice and is implemented by SA Health, other Government agencies and local councils for other types of inspections/audits. Some local councils currently charge fees for drinking water audits and inspections. Independent auditors and inspectors also charge for these services. The introduction of fees by SA Health will promote consistency in practices and remove the disincentive for entry of other auditors/inspectors.

How have the fees been calculated?

The 2015 Local Government Association (LGA) *Safe Drinking Water Act 2011 Routine Audit and Inspection Fee Guidelines* identified \$169 + GST per hour as a reasonable cost for undertaking drinking water audits and inspections. The Guidelines also included a consideration for capping audit/inspection fees, e.g., capped fee of 1 hr for an inspection of a small provider and 2 hours for the audit of a medium provider. The fee schedule being introduced by SA Health is consistent with this approach with indexation applied to the 2015 figure.

How much will SA Health charge for an audit or inspection?

Fees are prescribed under the *Safe Drinking Water (Fees) Notice 2023* as published in the SA Government Gazette ([Number 91, 2023](#)). Fees have been categorised based on classes of drinking water providers ranging from level 1-3. These levels reflect the complexity and size of the provider or water supply. For example, a capped fee of \$209 will be charged for audits or inspections of small providers including water carters and small rain and bore water supplies. Fees range from this lower tier to a maximum cost of \$627 for a large/complex supply. A summary of classes of drinking water providers and audit and inspection costs is provided in Table 1.

Our council does not currently have an Environmental Health Officer – do we need to provide audit and inspection services for drinking water providers?

While involvement is encouraged and appreciated, particularly where council is undertaking other regulatory inspections of the same provider (e.g., food inspection in a business also registered as a drinking water provider), there is no requirement for councils to undertake drinking water audits and inspections. Under the *Safe Drinking Water Act 2011* (the Act), councils are enforcement agencies and may appoint authorised officers based on appropriate qualifications and expertise. Authorised officers are responsible for undertaking non-routine (e.g., complaint based) inspections under Part 7 of the Act. In addition to these non-routine inspections, councils may undertake routine audits and inspections of drinking water providers in accordance with Part 4 of the Act. SA Health charging fees does not impact on the provision of audit/inspection functions by councils.



Do local councils have to charge fees for drinking water audits and inspections?

Local councils do not have to charge fees. The Safe Drinking Water Regulations 2012 (the Regulations) prescribe a maximum fee of \$200 for non-routine inspections (e.g., complaint-based) undertaken by an authorised officer under Part 7 of the Act. The Act and Regulations do not prescribe charges for the provision of routine audit and inspection services. Under the *Local Government Act 1999*, councils can implement fees and charges for services. Further information is available in the *LGA Safe Drinking Water Act 2011 Routine Audit and Inspection Fee Guidelines*. **Note, these Guidelines are currently under review. The LGA will notify councils when the updated Guidelines are available.**

Are there likely to be impacts on local councils as a result of SA Health charging fees?

Drinking water audits and inspections undertaken by SA Health have previously been at no cost to providers. This was an intentional decision following the introduction of the Act, as audits/inspections were seen as a key mechanism to educate drinking water providers on the requirements of the new legislation. The introduction of fees by SA Health may result in drinking water providers enquiring with councils regarding the provision of these services.

Our council does not currently have an approved auditor or inspector – what do we tell drinking water providers in our area if they contact us?

Providers can be referred to the SA Health [website](#) for a full list of approved drinking water auditors and inspectors. This includes auditors/inspectors who are available to undertake audits/inspections in all council areas across the state. It is the responsibility of drinking water providers to engage an approved auditor/inspector of their choice and to ensure that audits/inspections are undertaken at the prescribed frequency. Providers should be encouraged to discuss any associated fees directly with their auditor/inspector before engaging them. Providers can also be referred to the Water Quality Unit via the contact details below.

I'm an Environmental Health Officer and interested in undertaking drinking water audits/inspections as part of my role for council. What do I need to do?

EHOs are encouraged to seek support from their council in undertaking drinking water audits/inspections. Further information on becoming an approved drinking water auditor/inspector is available on the SA Health [website](#). EHOs who are approved as an SA Health Food Safety Auditor or have relevant work experience are encouraged to contact the Water Quality Unit to discuss, or to refer to the website for further information and resources including the [Auditor and Inspector Application Form](#).

Table 1: Classes of drinking water providers and audit and inspection costs.

CLASSES OF DRINKING WATER PROVIDERS		FEE FOR 2023/24
Level 3	(a) Water carters (b) Small rainwater supplies (c) Small bore water supplies (d) Regulated care premises (e) Education - childcare and preschool (f) Education – primary and secondary schools (g) Regulated food premises (h) Primary producers (excluding dairy) (i) Accommodation and food premises (j) Wineries and restaurants; or (k) On-supply from other drinking water provider where materially altered by treatment or extended storage	\$209
Level 2	(a) Desalinated water supplies (b) Bore water with reverse osmosis treatment; or (c) Providers with multiple source waters – rainwater and bore water	\$418
Level 1	(a) Drinking water providers greater than 2,000 population; or (b) Surface water supplies – River Murray or Dam	\$627
Follow up audit or inspection	All providers	\$209

Note: where a drinking water provider aligns with multiple levels, the higher level applies.
Example: a winery using a surface water supply (River Murray or Dam) would align to Level 1.

For more information

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