

IPSWICH WATER

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# Frequently asked questions

HELPING YOU TO  
HELP US



LEADING THE WAY IN SUSTAINABLE WATER MANAGEMENT



## Mayor's Introduction

The important role water plays in the life of Ipswich residents has been highlighted by Ipswich City Council in its water management and planning for the future.

The pressure of apparent climate change, increasing population and economic growth had highlighted the potential for water supply issues in the absence of developing sustainable water solutions.

As Mayor I receive many queries on various water issues and I therefore congratulate Councillor David Pahlke and the team at Ipswich Water for taking the initiative in developing this brochure which aim to address a variety of questions and concerns about water and sewerage issues.

Solving tomorrows problems today!

Paul Pisasale

Mayor of the City of Ipswich



# Taps

My taps make a hammering noise.

## What is the cause of this?

Probably the most common cause is a simple broken clip or not enough clips on your pipe work in your roof or walls. A valve shutting in your automatic washing machine or dishwasher can also be a problem. Another cause for a hammering noise in your pipes could be a jumper valve (or washer) bouncing or jumping inside your tap when you turn it on. If this is the case, the jumper valve (or washer) will have to be pinned inside the tap.

## What should I do?

Call a licensed plumber. Have them inspect and/or repair jumper valves and clips on pipework.



# Burst mains

I think I have a burst sewer and sewerage is bubbling up out of the ground. What should I do?

Contact us during OFFICE HOURS on (07) 3810 7855 or AFTER HOURS on (07) 3810 6666.

I think I have a burst water main/pipe/service. What can I do?

Contact us during OFFICE HOURS on (07) 3810 7855 or AFTER HOURS on (07) 3810 6666.

I cannot turn my water off. Can you help me?

If you cannot turn the water off at the water meter or at the footpath cock, contact us during OFFICE HOURS on (07) 3810 7855 or AFTER HOURS on (07) 3810 6666.

Burst mains/ pipes



# Sewerage

I think I have a sewerage blockage.

## What causes this?

Sewers, particularly old sewers throughout Ipswich can become blocked due to foreign objects, tree roots, nappies, toys, fat build up etc.

## What can be done about it?

Ipswich Water has personnel dedicated to providing a 24-hour service to clear blockages in Council's sewer mains and house connections.

Private drainers or plumbers are not permitted to undertake repair or replacement work on Council's sewer mains and house connections without permission from Ipswich Water.

Only licensed drainers should clear blockages in privately owned house drains. Under certain circumstances Ipswich Water personnel may clear blockages in privately owned house drains. Fees may apply.

## What should I do?

If you have a sewerage blockage, contact Ipswich Water or a private drainer.

Sewerage blockages



# Water Meters

## Does my property have a water meter and/or where is it?

All new water connections, have a meter located below ground in plastic boxes on the footpath. Generally, meter boxes are located just outside the front property boundary. Meters which have been installed above ground in the past will be progressively replaced with underground meters, under the current meter replacement program. If a customer requests the relocation of an above ground meter to below ground prior to replacement under the meter replacement program, the standard meter relocation fee would apply.

## I don't think I have used as much water as what my rates notice states. What can I do?

If you feel the water usage stated on your bill is too high, there are 3 things that you can do:

### 1. Check Your Water Meter

- The first step would be to ensure that your meter has been read correctly.
- To do this, you need to read the black numbers on your water meter and compare your reading with the meter reading on your rates notice. If the number on your meter is less than the number stated on your rates notice you should contact the Ipswich City Council on (07) 3810 6666.

Water meters



# Water Meters

## 2. Check for leaks.

Use the following as a guide for carrying out a leak check:

- Turn off all the taps on your property, avoid flushing the toilets, and ensure that any automated devices such as washing machines and dishwashers are not in use.
- Carry out a meter reading and write down all the numbers on your meter (black and red).
- After a period of time of not using any water (usually overnight), read your meter again. If the meter number has increased it is possible that you may have a leak on your property.
- Check for dripping taps, wet spots, green spots and if the problem is not obvious contact a local plumber to investigate and repair the leak.

## 3. Monitor your water usage

Another simple method for checking your water usage is to monitor your consumption over a period of time (usually 1 week).

- Check the black numbers on your Water Meter at the same time each day (the black numbers represent kilolitres).
- Record the numbers for each day and from the second day of recording onwards, subtract the previous day's reading from the current day's reading to give you the total number of kilolitres used for that period.
- At the end of the week, tally your daily readings for the week and by 52 to obtain an estimated annual water usage in kilolitres or multiply by 13 to obtain an estimated quarterly water usage figure.
- For comparison purposes, an average resident uses approximately 300 kilolitres per year or 75 kilolitres quarterly.

Water meters



# Water Meters

## How can I have my water meter tested?

If you have undertaken the above checks and still believe your water meter to be reading incorrectly, contact Ipswich Water who will arrange for the meter to be tested by an independent NATA certified laboratory. There is a standard fee that applies for testing the water meter.

It should be noted that it is very rare for a water meter to read high. If there is an error in the meter it is almost always reading low, i.e. recording less water consumption. Therefore we do not encourage the testing of customer meters on request. Ipswich Water undertakes testing of water meters as part of its quality control procedures.

## What happens if the water meter is faulty?

If we find that the water meter is not accurate to within  $\pm 5\%$  of actual consumption, Ipswich Water will replace the meter and reimburse the standard fee and any additional water usage charges associated with the faulty meter.

Water meters



# Water Meters

## How do I read my water meter?

There are several different types of water meters installed throughout Ipswich City.

With all types of meters, the black numbers represent kilolitres; the red numbers represent litres. By keeping a check on these black numbers you can monitor how many kilolitres you have used in any given period.

To check your weekly consumption, check the black numbers at the beginning of the week, come back a week later and note the black numbers again. The difference will be the number of kilolitres used in a week. Multiply this by 52 and you will get a rough guide to your annual usage rate.

You are charged for every kilolitre used. For the average ratepayer, the installation of a water meter can reduce your total rates bill by more than \$400 per year compared to an unmetered water service.

Don't interfere with your water meter. There are prescribed penalties for interfering with water meters.

Water meters



# Water Pressure

## Why does the water pressure fluctuate?

Water pressure generally decreases with increased flow or consumption.

Normally in the morning between 6 a.m. - 9 a.m. and in the evening between 6 p.m. - 9 p.m., residents are at home having showers, washing clothes, washing up dishes and sprinkling lawns and gardens. These are the times of highest flows in the water supply system and consequently result in reduced water pressure.

## How can I tell if the water flow is below standard?

If you consider that you have low water pressure, we suggest that you undertake the following steps before contacting Ipswich Water.

1. Obtain a container or garden bucket (around 10 litres)
2. Turn off all internal and external taps;
3. Turn on a tap at the front of the property and time how many seconds it takes to fill the bucket. Make sure that you turn the tap on completely before starting to fill the container.
4. If the time taken to fill the bucket is less than 25 seconds, then the water flow is in the acceptable range.
5. Check with your neighbour whether they are experiencing low flow at the same time.
6. If your neighbour does not have a problem, the lack of flow may be isolated within the plumbing of your property.
7. Consider the age and size of the pipes in your internal plumbing. Smaller diameter galvanised pipes older than 15 years of age generally cause flow and pressure problems due to smaller pipe size and internal corrosion.

Water pressure



# Water Quality

## How often is Ipswich's water tested?

Ipswich Water's Environmental Laboratory tests over 5,700 samples of water each year. Water is tested from around the Ipswich area every week.

Testing points may include:

- Water that has been treated at the treatment plant
- Water from reservoirs
- Water from pipework around the city
- Sample points outside residential homes and public areas.

## Which water quality criteria does Ipswich Water meet?

Our water meets the water quality criteria of the National Health Medical Research Council (NHMRC) Australian Drinking Water Guidelines as well as the guidelines set by the World Health Organisation.

## Do I need to filter my tap water?

No. Tap water is constantly tested and monitored to ensure it is safe to drink.



# Water Quality

## What is Fluoride?

Fluoride is a natural element found in nearly all drinking water and soil.

## Does Ipswich's water supply have fluoride?

Fluoride is not added to Ipswich's water, but it naturally contains less than 0.1 mg/L.

## What can I do?

If you wish to use fluoride for dental health reasons, you should speak to your pharmacist or dentist.

## What chemicals are added to the water?

In order to ensure a safe water supply, responsible water authorities need to treat the water supplied to customers. The following chemicals are added during treatment:

- **Aluminium sulphate** (Alum) is added to combine with dirt and bacteria particles in water so that they settle and can be filtered out during the treatment processes. These processes remove all but a tiny fraction of the alum.
- **Lime** is added to reduce acidity so that the water does not corrode the city's water mains and customer's plumbing.
- **Ammonia and chlorine** are added to form chloramine, which kills bacteria. Chloramine is maintained in the water to ensure bacteria do not re-grow in the distribution system and that water quality is maintained.



# Water Quality

## Why does my tap water sometimes have a musty/earthy smell?

Geosmin algae is generally responsible for this smell.

### Why?

Geosmin is a harmless substance released by algae.

### What can I do?

An inexpensive activated carbon home treatment device will remove the smell. If the problem persists please notify Ipswich Water.



# Water Quality

## Why does my tap water sometimes have a chlorine smell?

Chlorine is added to the water during treatment, this causes this smell.

### Why?

After work has been carried out on distribution pipes, in order to maintain water quality the chlorine level may be increased for a short period of time. Chlorine may also react with certain materials used in plumbing and some kettles to form a taste. These are not normally harmful and usually only occur for a short time.

### What can I do?

Refrigerate your drinking water or allow it to stand as this allows the chlorine to dissipate. If the problem persists please notify Ipswich Water.



# Water Quality

## Why is my tap water white/milky/ cloudy?

Trapped air within the water causes this.

### Why?

High pressure in the distribution pipes causes trapped air to become dissolved in the water. As soon as you open your tap, the pressure is released, allowing the air bubbles to form. It is most common after a burst water main has been fixed in the area and air has been trapped in the pipes when the water main is turned back on. Appearance of water may range from a light cloudiness to a very milky, opaque colour. After a while, the water clears from the bottom (in a clear glass) as the bubbles rise to the top and are gone.

### What can I do?

Allow a glass of water to stand and the milky appearance will clear from the bottom upwards as the air leaves the water.



# Water Quality

## Why is my tap water discoloured?

Disturbance or sediment within the water main can cause this to occur.

### Why?

A burst water main or system maintenance works generally cause disturbances or sediment in the water main.

### What can I do?

Running a tap at the rear of the property will usually clear the problem. Use this water to water plants to ensure it is not wasted. If the problem continues please contact Ipswich Water.

If the discoloured water has stained your washing, contact Ipswich Water and we will supply you with cleaning solution. (Stained clothes must be kept wet to reduce the possibility of staining).



# Water Quality

## Why is my tap water discoloured, rusty.

Iron (rust) can be the cause of this.

### Why?

Rust or orange coloured water may be the result of galvanic corrosion in homes that have plumbing with a mixture of copper and galvanised iron pipes. Rust collects in the pipes and is flushed out when you open the tap.

### What can I do?

Allow the water to run until it clears. Use this water to water plants to ensure it is not wasted. Please notify Ipswich Water if the problem persists. If the problem is caused by old piping on the premises, this piping may need to be replaced at the owner's expense.



# Water Quality

## Do we have hard or soft tap water and what is the difference?

Two minerals – calcium and manganese, cause hardness in drinking water. These are common naturally occurring elements in water.

## What is hardness?

The water is said to be hard because it is more difficult to make lather or suds for washing. Water containing little calcium or magnesium is called soft water. This water lathers more easily.

## What is the hardness value of the tap water?

Water in the Ipswich area is moderately soft with an average of 100 mg/L calcium carbonate or 7 degrees Clark. Water with a hardness between 60 and 200 mg/L is said to be 'good quality' according to the National Health and Medical Research Council's (NHMRC) Australian Drinking Water Guidelines.

## What can I do?

You can refer to the manufacturer's instructions on your dishwasher or washing machine for further guidance.

### **Description of water Hardness (as mg/L calcium carbonate)**

Soft	0 – 50
Moderately soft	51 – 100
Slightly hard	101 – 150
Moderately hard	151 – 200
Hard	201 – 300
Very hard	Over 300



# Contact Details

## **LEADING THE WAY IN**

SUSTAINABLE WATER MANAGEMENT

## **PHONE US ON**

(07) 3810 7855

## **OFFICE HOURS**

Mon-Fri 8.00am - 4.30pm

## **AFTER HOURS EMERGENCIES**

(07) 3810 6666

## **FAX US ON**

(07) 3810 7964

## **VISIT US AT**

Warwick Road, Yamanto Qld 4350 or  
[www.ipswichwater.com.au](http://www.ipswichwater.com.au)

## **EMAIL US AT**

[ipswichwater@ipswich.qld.gov.au](mailto:ipswichwater@ipswich.qld.gov.au)

## **IPSWICH WATER**

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