

Frequently Asked Questions

How has the City allocated the cost of the project to property owners?

The City has used a dollar per kilo-volt-ampere (KVA) allocation methodology for the financial model to determine the Network Charge to Property Owners.

The network has been designed to meet the expected energy requirements for the area and this is achieved by allocating a KVA to each property type. The total KVA's are added up together and then divided by the total project network cost to get a dollar per KVA. The dollar per KVA is then multiplied against an assigned expected KVA for that property which results in the total network fee for that property.

A connection charge is then calculated based on the connection type for each property and then added to the network charge to arrive at the full project cost required to be paid by the Property Owner.

Why are commercial/non-residential type properties much higher than the advised survey amount?

As noted above each property type is allocated a specific KVA based on what it is expected to be drawn from the network.

Each commercial property is carefully assessed with assistance from Western Power for its expected KVA draw. That KVA value is multiplied against the dollar per KVA which results in the total network fee for that property. The larger the KVA required the larger the amount required to contribute to the infrastructure required for the network.

What happens to any outstanding monies owed on my property if I sell my house?

As with outstanding Council rates, any amount outstanding for the underground power project charge would be payable on settlement if the property is sold.

What if I cannot afford to pay the Underground Payment Notice?

Payment options are outlined on the Notice. If you are unable to meet these options please contact the City to discuss the matter further.

Can I defer my Underground Power charge?

Ratepayers who are eligible Pensioners are entitled to defer the payment of the underground power charge in the same way they defer rates. The deferred amount will be charged in full, no rebate will be applied and payable in full at the time of the property sale.

Does the cost per property include the connection to my meter box?

Yes, it does. It includes a new underground property service cable from the green dome near the front of your property, to your meter. If you have already have the connection undergrounded please refer to the next FAQ.

Frequently Asked Questions continued

Some properties already have underground power from the front of the property to the meter box, would these owners still have to pay for the project?

Yes, but they will receive a discount on the connection fee component.

A discount of 50% of the property owner's connection fee would apply for property owners with an existing underground property service connection where a new pillar is required. If there is already an existing underground connection and pillar a full discount of the connection fee is given. The property owner will still have to pay the network charge component of the project cost for that property.

What if my land is vacant?

Vacant land would be charged for the cost of underground power, just as for Council rates and sewerage. However there will be no connection fee payable by the property owner due to there being no property service connection.

Are there any other unknown costs at this point such as for non-compliant electrical installations identified during the project?

There are no other costs.

Property owners would only have to pay the property owner cost as per their Rates Notice. Any non-compliant electrical installation at the meter box will be remedied by the project at **no cost to the owner**. Western Power does not otherwise inspect the property for non-compliant electrical installations.

What happens if the contractors damage my property, the verge or my reticulation?

These works are a major civil project and even with the non-invasive methods used, some verge and front garden disruption will occur. To assist the process, all verges and work areas will be filmed before work commences.

Property Owners/Occupiers should direct any requests to the relevant contractor, as they are responsible for all re-instatements and repairs and have all the appropriate resources. The various Advices delivered during the project will contain the contractor's contact details. Property Owners/Occupiers can always contact Western Power or the City of Stirling if they are not satisfied with the contractor's response.

Property Owners/Occupiers will not be reimbursed for work done by any other party to reinstate or repair damage caused by the contractor during the work without the contractor's prior authorisation. Property Owners/Occupiers are encouraged to carry out minor re-instatements or repairs if they wish, provided no reimbursement is sought. The contractors reserve the right to charge for time taken to investigate complaints that are subsequently shown to be clearly unrelated to the underground power work.

Frequently Asked Questions continued

Why should property owners contribute to the replacement of Western Power infrastructure?

It costs Western Power a lot less to deliver power to consumers by maintaining the overhead system instead of installing a new modern underground system.

This program is unique in Australia because of the shared funding arrangements that reflect the benefits gained by property owners, the State Government and Western Power. Property owners will gain greatly enhanced streetscapes, better and more reliable power, brighter and safer streetlights and a safer public environment. An added benefit is the demonstrated increased property value.

What Legislative right do Local Governments have to charge for UPG?

The City has the legislative powers under Section 6.38 of the Local Government Act 1995 to impose a service charge on Property Owners to meet the cost to the Local Government in the provision of a prescribed work. The service charge is adopted by absolute majority by Council as part of the annual budget process or specific Council meeting via a submission by the City.

Why is the cost different to other suburbs?

The cost for different suburbs and projects will vary depending on the unique site conditions, constraints imposed by ground conditions, and the number of properties within the nominated precinct. Western Power conduct an open tender process for each project and select the best contractor based on their selection model, the City has no involvement in this process.

If you wish to discuss this matter further please contact Western Power, please click [here](#) to be taken to their Underground Power website.

Why do Local Governments pass on the cost to property owners and not pay for it out of current budget?

SUPP projects are based on a user-pays principle, where those benefitting are those required to pay a contribution. The benefits of the program are received by the State Government agencies (through upgrade of their infrastructure) and the ratepayers (through improved reliability, efficiency of services and improved property values).

Local Governments are not the asset owners and do not receive any direct benefits, and therefore do not contribute to the cost of the project (outside of contributions required for City-owned properties). Funding such activities out of current budget would place an upward pressure on rates paid by all Property Owners in the City and this would represent an unreasonable attribution of cost as the other Property Owners outside the SUPP project would not receive the benefits of electrical infrastructure being placed underground.

Frequently Asked Questions continued

Could you please explain why some properties get a discount on their connection fee?

To recognise that some properties already have an underground connection from the pillar to their meter box, a connection discount is offered.

There is either a 50% discount if a new pillar has to be installed or a 100% discount if a pillar exists and is connected underground to the properties meter box. The connection charge amount is outlined in a previous FAQ; please refer to that for how the amount is calculated. The property owner will still have to pay the network charge component of the project cost for that property.

Why is the connection cost lower to what is on Western Power's website?

The connection fee is based on a contribution at a reduced value, as the State Government is contributing a percentage of the cost, and there are economies of scale provided by the State Underground Power Program (SUPP) due to the number of other properties requiring connection in the scheme.

This connection cost would therefore be much greater if the works were undertaken for an isolated property outside of the underground power program. The property owner will still have to pay the network charge component of the project cost for that property as the connection fee is a separate component of the project cost.

Pensioner and Senior rebates - what are the conditions and timing for those?

To be eligible for a State Government Rebate on your Underground Power account you must fulfil certain criteria:

- Must be an owner and occupier of the rateable property as at 1 July or earlier
- If a pensioner, either receives a pension and holds a current Pensioner Concession Card or State Concession Card
- Hold both a WA Seniors Card issued by the Department of Communities' WA Seniors Card Centre and a Commonwealth Seniors Health Card. Rebates are up to 50% of the Underground Power charges
- If a senior, holds a WA Seniors Card issued by the Department of Communities' Seniors Card Centre. Seniors who meet the eligibility criteria are entitled to claim a rebate of up to 25% (capped at \$100).

The State Government rebate is only available in the first financial year in which the Underground Power debt is raised and, the account must be paid in full on or before the 30 June of that financial year for the rebate to be claimed.

Please refer to [Finance WA – “Pensioner and Seniors Concessions Scheme”](#) for further clarity and details associated with this matter.

Why is the penalty interest so high?

The penalty interest rate is set as part of the annual budget process and applies to other types of rates or service charges, not just Underground Power contributions. Under section 6.51 of the Local Government Act 1995 the City may under specific circumstances apply the annual budget interest rate. A penalty interest rate is required so the many ratepayers who pay their notices by the due dates are not disadvantaged.

Ratepayers who receive a State Government Rebate are not charged penalty interest.

Frequently Asked Questions continued

What happens if I refuse to pay?

If you are having difficulty paying the required amount on your notice please contact the City early and we will work with you to arrange a payment plan that is suitable to both parties.

The City endeavours to avoid legal action wherever possible and will work with Property Owners if they are unable to pay. As with the refusal to pay your general Rates, penalty interest accrues and the City will apply the debt against the property. Where charges remain outstanding for a period of time legal action may be taken to recover those funds from the property owner. The Local Government Act 1995 outlines the actions that the City is required to take in such matters.

What if I do not agree the outlined benefits justify the cost charged to property owners?

The contribution from Property Owners is defined by the benefit that is gained from the undergrounded power. Each owner will have their own view on what they consider valuable out of the provided list. A report from the Economic Regulation Authority does outline that there are clear benefits to this activity.

It is up to each individual owner to determine which of the listed benefits they consider most important to them and whether or not it justifies the charge to the Property Owner. The public survey and associated vote is your chance to express if you consider that the cost justifies the benefit to underground the electrical infrastructure.

Who can I speak to if I am not happy with the UGP scheme?

Residents can choose to speak with Western Power or Energy Policy WA (formerly Public Utilities Office) to express their concerns regarding the State Underground Power Program (SUPP). If residents are not satisfied with the response(s) provided, they may also choose to contact the State Ombudsman's office.

I have a question about the location of light poles or other electrical infrastructure, who can I speak to?

As work is about to start in your area, you will receive a work notice in your letter box. The contact details of Western Power's contractor will be listed on the notice and Western Power advises they are the best first contact. If you are unable to contact the contractor, please click [here](#) and contact Western Power via their website.

Electrical infrastructure has to be placed in certain locations to meet Australian Standards but if you are adversely affected by certain types of electrical infrastructure please contact the advised parties early so the matter can hopefully be reviewed before any construction has happened.

The Contractors details will be provided when they are known to the City.

Where can I go to get more information about underground power projects as I have questions that are not covered above?

You can visit Western Power's website which can be found [here](#).