

Hall & Partners

Future Service Options



Water
and Sewer

Community Engagement Program Report

Confidential | June 2025



Background

Central Coast Council's water supply system incorporates three dams, three weirs, three water treatment plants, over 50 reservoirs and more than 2,200 kilometres of pipelines.

The NSW Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) sets the maximum prices for the water and sewerage services provided by Central Coast Council. Council's next pricing submission is due for lodgement with IPART in September 2025 and will determine Council's prices for those services from 1 July 2026 till 30 June 2031.

Customer engagement is a crucial component of any pricing proposal submitted to the regulator as it provides the evidence that customers are willing to pay for improvements to services and discretionary projects, which supports a utility's request for price increases. IPART have specific guidelines and expectations on customer engagement and IPART's new '3Cs' regulatory framework gives greater emphasis to customer engagement than prior frameworks.

Hall & Partners partnered with the Centre for International Economics (CIE) to deliver the engagement program for the willingness to pay aspects of pricing submission.

Objectives of the Engagement Program



Build customer trust

Involve customers in the process of balancing their preferences with affordability which can foster trust and build confidence in Council.



Educate customers on expenditure drivers

Inform customers of forecast expenditure that is non-discretionary which may impact their willingness to pay for discretionary service improvements and projects.



Determine customer preferences

Inform measure customer support for different service level improvement options



Guide decision-making

Provide actionable insights to balance affordability with customers' preferences and long-term sustainability.



Approach to measuring customer preferences

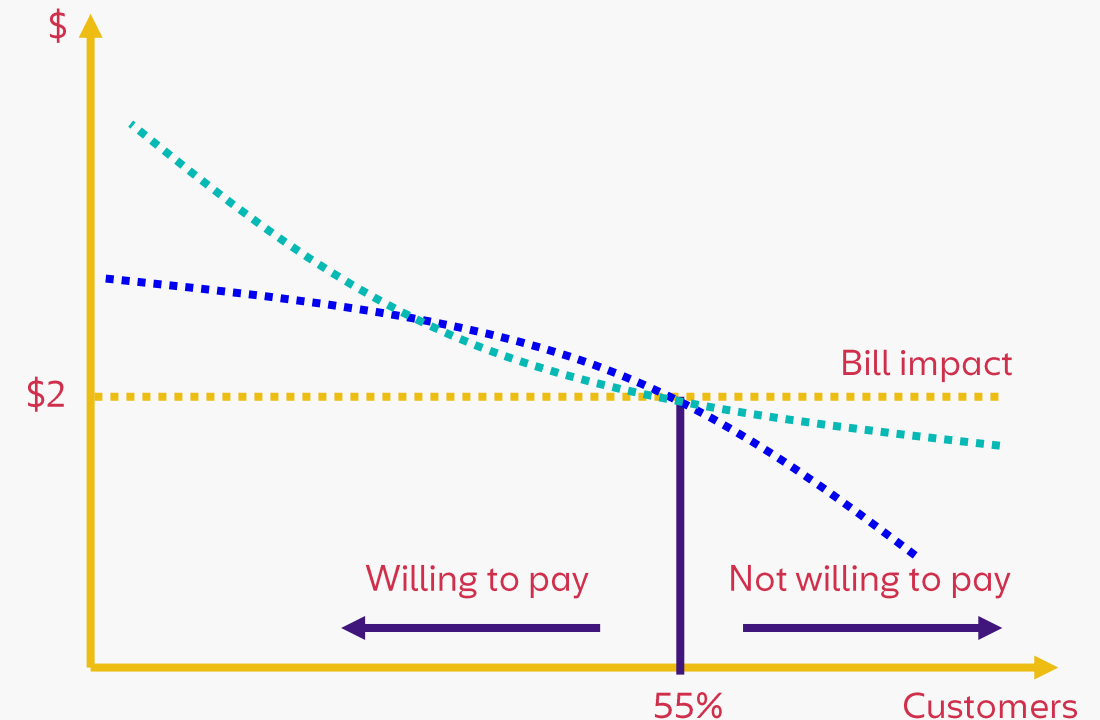
Willingness to pay (WTP) is an important concept when assessing price/service options because it is a measure of economic benefit that can be compared with cost (economic cost-benefit analysis). WTP is defined in the economics literature as the maximum amount a consumer would be willing to pay for a change or a new service.

The approach to assessing WTP in this study involved testing customer demand for each option only at its estimated price (not at other hypothetical prices). The output is a proportion of customers voting for an option. In the illustrative diagram on the right, this approach will allow us to observe that 55% of customers are supportive of an option with a bill impact of \$2.

However, this approach does not identify the degree to which 'yes' voters like an option, nor the degree to which 'no' voters dislike an option. In the illustrative diagram, average WTP across all customers would exceed \$2 if the distribution of WTP across customers followed the turquoise line, but it might be less than \$2 if the distribution of WTP followed the blue line.

If a clear majority supports an option, we can be relatively confident concluding that WTP exceeds cost. However, if support is in the range 40%-60%, conclusions need to be drawn with some caution.

Willingness to pay for new services



Engagement Program

The engagement program conducted by Hall & Partners and the CIE consisted of four phases, as outlined below:

FEBRUARY PHASE 01 Plan Inception workshop Internal service options workshop Engagement plan	MARCH PHASE 02 Prepare People's Panel workshop Stakeholder group meeting	APRIL PHASE 03 Engage Customer Forums Council Community Pop-ups Surveys – online panel and open survey on Your Voice Our Coast	MAY PHASE 04 Report Stakeholder group meeting Analysis and reporting
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This report provides the findings from the two customer forums conducted in Phase 3.

Phase 1: Plan

SERVICE OPTIONS

A series of internal ‘Service Options’ workshops were held between Central Coast Council, the CIE and Hall & Partners to ascertain which options for service improvements were viable and could be presented to customers for consideration for willingness to pay as part of the engagement program.

The options were assessed based on alignment to customer values (water quality, reliability, affordability, environmental focus, effective planning, education and transparency) and feasibility. For each topic the measure of customer outcomes was identified and quantified, along with the net impact on costs and customer bills.

The expected level of ‘essential cost’ items, or non-discretionary component, was also calculated along with the average baseline bill impact.

Topic	Option	Description/ Investment/ Activity	What is the measure of customer outcomes?	Has the impact on customer outcomes been quantified?	Has the net impact on costs/bills been quantified?

Materiality (approx. \$/cust/a)	Identified as important in earlier engagement/ customer values?

Phase 2: Prepare

PEOPLE'S PANEL

Central Coast Council's 'People's Panel' is a group of around 20 customers who meet several times a year to provide feedback on relevant topics and assist Council in its decision making. They are an important component in ensuring that Council's decisions are community focused and align with customer priorities.

For this project, a smaller group of the Panel (8 participants) were asked to provide input into the development of the agenda and materials for the main customer engagement.

The group met on Monday 7 April to discuss the customer priorities identified in previous engagement, the essential costs and the service options developed in the Service Options Workshops.

The panel discussed and provided feedback on the proposed format of the engagement sessions, along with the information and questions proposed. They were asked to assess them based on aligned with the customer priorities, clarity and comprehension.

STAKEHOLDER GROUP

The engagement program also included two meetings with stakeholders from organisations such as Business NSW, Justice and Equity Centre, Community Environment Network, and ADW Johnson. The first meeting took place on Thursday 10 April during which these stakeholders provided feedback on the information and questions proposed for the forums and surveys.

At the conclusion of the project the findings of the engagement program were presented to the group for comment, along with some questions for consideration regarding financial support and communications. This meeting took place on Monday 26 May.





Community Forums

METHODOLOGY

Two community forums took place – the first one on 30 April 2025 at Wyong Golf Club, followed by 1 May at Central Coast Leagues Club in Gosford. Each forum ran for three hours, from 6:00 PM to 9:00 PM.

The format of the meetings consisted of a mix of information provision from Central Coast Council, table discussions and activities, identifying preferences for service options and table feedback sessions.

RECRUITMENT

Participation in the forums was open to all residents of the Central Coast Council Local Government Area who receive water/sewerage bills from Central Coast Council and/or their body corporate.

The majority of the participants were recruited via a third-party market research panel with additional participants recruited through an expression of interest form on the Central Coast Council website and from Council’s People’s Panel.

SAMPLING

Final participant selection aimed to ensure a mix of demographics in terms of gender, age, ethnicity, business ownership, income and vulnerability.

A total of 43 participants attended Wyong forum, including 9 members of the People’s Panel. For the Gosford forum, 42 participants were selected, including 5 People’s Panel members. Their demographic breakdown is shown below.

DEMOGRAPHICS	WYONG (n=43) %	GOSFORD (n=42) %	TOTAL (n=85) %
18-34 yrs old	16	12	14
35-49 yrs old	29	33	31
50-69 yrs old	40	36	38
70+	14	17	15
Male	45	52	48
Female	55	48	51
CALD	5	12	8
First Nations	5	2	4
Disability	0	10	5
Financial Hardship	21	21	21
Business Owner/Manager	21	21	21

INCOME			
	WYONG (n=43)	GOSFORD (n=42)	TOTAL (n=85)
Less than \$41,600	7	12	9
\$41,600-\$78,000	19	31	25
\$78,000-\$104,000	26	14	20
\$104,000-\$156,000	26	17	21
\$156,000 and above	12	14	13
Prefer not to say	12	12	12

The research was carried out in accordance with ISO 20252 requirements.

Meeting structure and agenda

As mentioned, the forums consisted of a mix of information provision from Central Coast Council, table discussions/activities and table feedback sessions. There were five tables at each of the forums, each seating 8-9 participants. Each table had a facilitator engaged by Hall & Partners. The overall session was led by Hall & Partners' lead facilitator, Liz Sparham.

The table facilitators guided participants through the discussions, asked questions on the topics and kept the tables to time. An overview of the agenda is included on the right with a full run sheet included in the Appendix.

Central Coast Council Water and Sewer staff Jamie Loader, Krystie Bryant, Danielle Hargreaves, Stephen Legge and Rhys Richards gave presentations on the topics. Staff members were on hand during discussions to answer any questions from community members and to provide any additional information required.

Overall, the participants were highly engaged with discussions being interactive and lively. An evaluation was conducted at the close of the session with participants completing an end of session survey – results are included in the Appendix.

Time	Agenda Item
6.00pm	Welcome and Introduction
6.10pm	Presentation: Customer Values
6.15pm	Table Discussion: Feedback on the Customer Values
6.25pm	Presentation: 'Essential Costs'
6.40pm	Table Discussion: Discussion of Essential Costs
6.55pm	Presentation: Optional Item – Water Quality
7.00pm	Table Discussion: Discussion and Preference for Water Quality
7.20pm	DINNER
7.45pm	Presentation: Optional Items – Reliability (water and wastewater)
7.50pm	Table Discussion: Discussion and Preference for Reliability (water and wastewater) options
8.15pm	Presentation: Optional Item – Effective Planning
8.20pm	Table Discussion: Discussion and Preference for Effective Planning
8.40pm	Presentation: Bill Phasing
8.45pm	Table Activity: Final Choices and Preference for Bill Phasing
8.55pm	Next Steps and Close



Survey

METHODOLOGY

- An online questionnaire, covering:
- information about expected bill increases for essential costs
 - information about optional initiatives, including quantified service improvements
 - choice questions offering each optional initiative at a bill impact tailored to the respondent
 - selection of an overall package of initiatives in the context of the total expected bill.

RECRUITMENT

- Open to adult residents and business owners/managers within the Central Coast Council LGA who receive water/sewerage bills from Central Coast Council and/or their body corporate or landlord.
- Recruited via:
- the i-Link Research/Pureprofile panel ('panel' sample)
 - a link on the Central Coast Council website and social media ('client' sample).

SAMPLING

Results were weighted to be representative of the tenure type and dwelling type of households in Central Coast Council LGA.

The largest weights were applied to renters, as the sample included only 15% compared to a population of 30%. Apartments and flats were also given higher weight to correct for under-sampling..

DEMOGRAPHICS	PANEL (n=400) %	CLIENT (n=1143) %	TOTAL (n=1543) %
18-34 yrs old	22	6	10
35-49 yrs old	33	22	24
50-69 yrs old	31	48	44
70+	13	23	21
Male	36	50	46
Female	62	44	49
CALD	6	9	8
First Nations	5	5	5
Disability	12	10	10
Financial Hardship	25	21	22
Business Owner/Manager	2	2	2

INCOME (%)			
	PANEL (n=400)	CLIENT (n=1143)	TOTAL (n=1543)
Less than \$41,600	14	18	17
\$41,600-\$78,000	21	15	17
\$78,000-\$104,000	15	11	12
\$104,000-\$156,000	21	12	14
\$156,000 and above	16	15	15
Prefer not to say	10	27	23

Bill impacts shown in the engagement

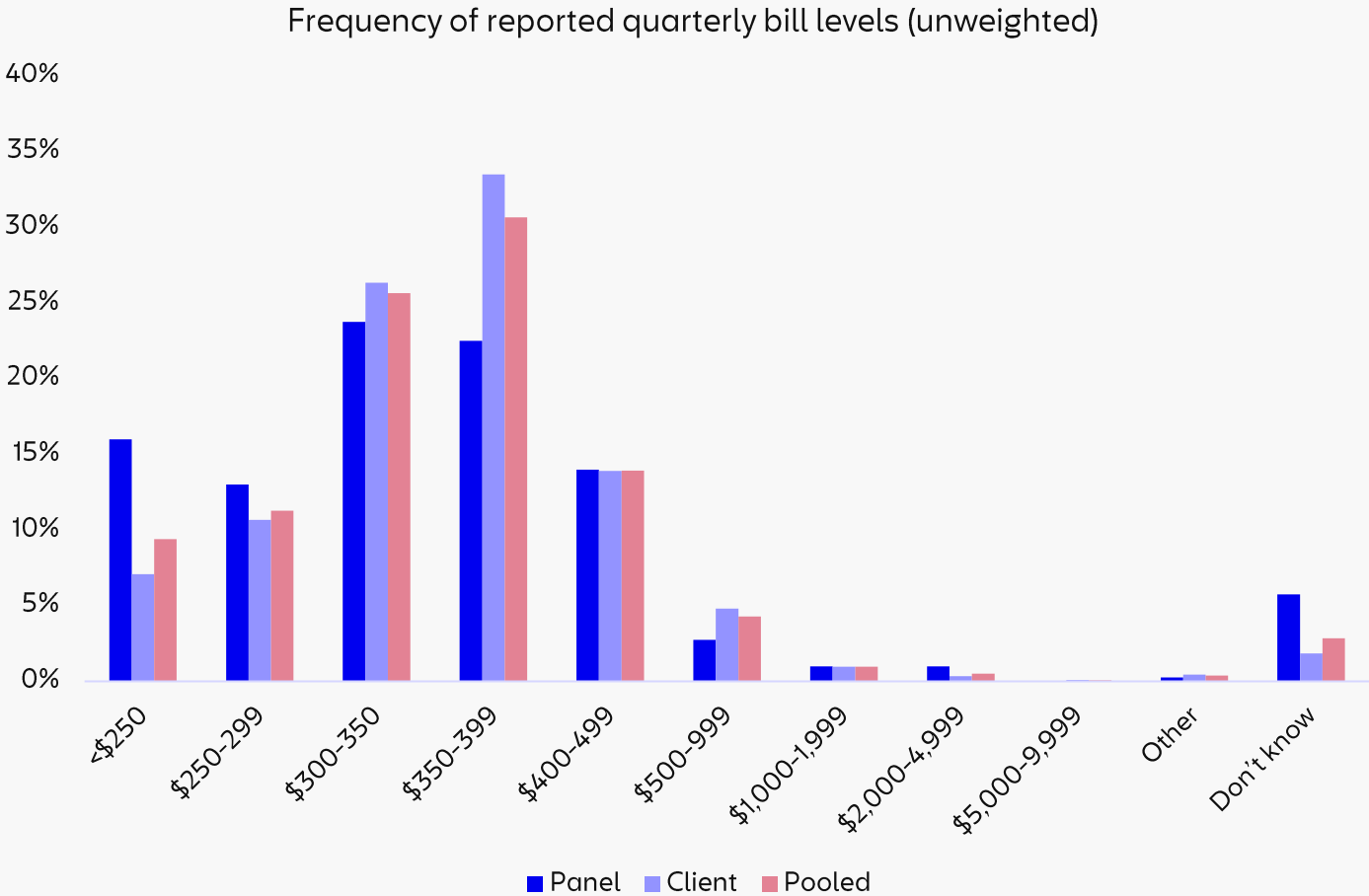
As part of the survey and forum methodology the impact of each service option was shown on the average residential bill.

For the survey, this cost was then scaled up or down depending on each respondent's bill size, so higher-usage customers bill impact was more and lower-usage customers bill impact was less. For example, the pipe cleaning program cost \$0.94 p.a. for the average \$1 463 p.a. bill, so someone with a \$2 000 p.a. bill was assumed to pay \$1.29 p.a.

Therefore, as part of the survey, respondents were asked what their average quarterly bill was.

Most households reported quarterly water bills between \$250 and \$500 (annual bills between \$1000 and \$2000).

The total bill shown to respondents at the end of the survey when choosing their overall package of options was also based on their reported bill level. It included either a 17% or 22% increase (randomly assigned) to ensure respondents took account of, and to test potential impacts on choice of, the bill increase resulting from 'essential cost items'.



01

Customer Values

Feedback on the Customer Values

At the start of the forums, following an introduction from Central Coast Council Water and Sewer on the background to the project, participants were presented with a summary of the customer values developed from previous customer engagement sessions and asked for their feedback on whether they captured everything or whether they wanted to suggest any changes, additions or deletions.



Participants were generally very supportive of the list of customer values and felt they aligned with what they considered important regarding the delivery of water and wastewater services.

‘Water quality’, was seen to be mandatory and non-negotiable, as was ‘affordability’ which was also regarded as an area for immediate Council focus.

In terms of missing values, there were several participants who believed ‘efficiency’ should be singled out as a value and not wrapped within another value.

This emerged from a reference to the past financial problems and the fact that Council was put into administration for four years. Therefore, many argued that it was important for Council to report where money was being spent, and for management to endeavour to be as efficient as possible in its operations.

In that sense, ‘transparency’ was also seen to be vital as community members wanted information about how Council is spending revenue.

“The cost of living is really hard for a lot of people in the Central Coast at the moment – affordability is therefore key” Wyong participant

“We pay a lot of money so we expect it to be managed well – the more efficient they are the further that money goes.” Gosford participant

Feedback on the Customer Values

This then led to conversations suggesting that ‘Communication’ could potentially be included as a value. Good communication was seen as vital, especially during outages and emergencies.

Many believed that they could also be better informed by Council on issues such as available discounts, entitlements and payment schemes, outbreaks of water contaminations (e.g. E.coli), timing of clean-ups that can affect water quality and reasons for bill increases.

“

“There is no communication when there are outages or outbreaks of things we should know about for example, E.coli.” Wyong participant

“We didn’t know we were entitled to any discounts until recently. We found out through different sources what we can get.” Wyong participant

“Last time there was a mass event with un-drinkable water, there wasn’t much follow up – they just said ‘it’s all good now.’ This was hard to believe when it had only been a couple of days. I would have appreciated a more detailed follow-up” Gosford participant



Customer Experiences

During this initial table discussion, customers were also asked for their experiences of water and wastewater services in the Central Coast area, including any positives and negatives.

Generally, the view was that the water and wastewater services provided by Central Coast Council were reliable, and that Council was quite responsive when needed, with most participants never having experienced any real problems.

Where some concerns were raised however, was around the true quality of the drinking water, with complaints of incidences of brown water, unpleasant smells, and stains on clean laundry. There were also some suggestions that the drinking water was high in chlorine and therefore poor tasting, with some participants preferring to drink filtered water.

There were also concerns that some of the waterways were in declining condition and needed attention.

“I have noticed the deterioration of Tuggerah Lakes over the past 6 years, we used to be able to swim in it and now I wouldn't want to put a toe in it, it's full of pelican itch.” – Wyong

“I think water should be maintained a lot better, maybe open the Entrance. It is still pretty smelly, Toukley is worse – it's hold your nose.” Wyong

Discussions surfaced regarding the water pressure in some locations, with very low water pressure being a continuing issue despite complaints to Central Coast Council.

“We had low/no water pressure for four years and was always told by council that it was our problem but in the end a plumber found it was an issue further down the line, so it was Council issue.” Wyong participant

Infrastructure and maintenance issues were mentioned by one or two participants as areas in need of focus, with some reports of sediment buildup, unplanned water outages (especially in Hardy's Bay), and concerns about aging infrastructure causing mains to crack and burst, particularly in areas like Erina and Wamberal.

02

‘Essential Cost’ items

Essential Costs

Next, Central Coast Council presented information on the projects that are required to ensure essential services can be maintained and regulatory standards are met. Information about these essential costs included:

- 1 **Asset Condition Assessments**
- 2 **Sludge Management/PFAS**
- 3 **Capital Projects**
(such as major treatment plan upgrades, replacement of ageing infrastructure, regulatory upgrades)
- 4 **Central Coast Water Security Plan**
(planning for the future to ensure there is enough water even in times of drought)

It was stressed to participants that Council will be using ‘reserves’ to fund sludge and biosolids disposal, reducing the bill impacts this would have on customers. It was also communicated that Council actively investigates alternate funding, e.g. State and Federal Government grants, as they become available, to reduce the impact of future investment on customers' bills.

Taking into account the above, Council suggested that the final costs for these essential projects are still being calculated but are expected to be in the range of a 17%-22% increase on customer bills, which is on average less than \$1 a day.

Overall, participants were not happy with the increase in costs presented but many seemed to understand why this needed to happen. In particular, there was recognition that the infrastructure was old and that the Central Coast population was growing which would put further pressure on the system in the future.

“Absolutely, it was installed in the 70s so it needs maintaining, the things we appreciate are being able to turn on the tap and dispose of what we need to so it’s critical infrastructure.”
Wyong participant

Support for each of the essential costs varied and views are outlined in the following pages.



1 Asset Condition Assessments

The first essential cost outlined by Council was for asset condition assessments. Council explained that there is a continued increase in preventative maintenance programs including ongoing condition assessment programs to manage the risks of failures from aging assets. These assessments are aimed at minimizing outages and impacts to customers and the environment.

The need to carry out asset condition assessments was seen as essential to ensuring water quality, maintaining service reliability and reducing outages.

“We do have leakages, and they need to be fixed to make sure we are not losing water or the water is not being contaminated.” Wyong participant

Participants agreed that it was beneficial to carry out regular checks and maintenance as reactive repairs were often more costly than proactive prevention. Investing in upkeep now was believed to save money in the long run.

Participants were generally aware of the ageing infrastructure issue and so there was little debate regarding the necessity of the need for regular assessments. There was some questioning however, about the efficiency of these assessments and the costs involved.

“I agree that prevention is better than fixing an issue that has already happened. If you maintain something, it lasts longer.” Gosford participant

“There is no debate this is needed, but how do we know that it is an efficient cost when doing this work.” Gosford participant

Some wondered what prior planning had been done to address this in the past, and questioned why there was such a big increase in costs now as surely assessments had always been budgeted for.

“If we are ‘falling off the cliff now’, what has been done before to prepare for this issue, could we not have seen this coming?”
Wyong participant



2 Sludge Management/PFAS

The second essential cost outlined by Council was for meeting regulatory obligations for changing EPA requirements for sewer treatment including PFAS (polyfluoroalkyl). It was explained to participants what PFAS are, and it was stressed that the exact cost to manage them remains unknown until requirements are articulated.

The issue of sludge management was new to some participants, whilst others were more aware and knew of the general concern over polyfluoroalkyl (PFAS) in wastewater.

Whilst it was thought to be concerning from an environmental and a community health perspective, it was difficult for participants to evaluate and comment on the need for future spending in this area or to understand the scale of the problem.

As costs were uncertain at this stage, Council would need to be trusted to dispose of the sludge within the EPA guidelines in the most cost-effective way.

There was also a desire for education to gain a better understanding of:

- how sludge was stored and the consequences of not dealing with it immediately

“How long has the sludge been stored for, why was it not tackled on the spot, would it have been cheaper if we did it as it was required? To some, feels like mismanagement is now costing us.” Gosford participant

- why this PFAS issue was only emerging now - why it has taken EPA to put a regulation in place for sludge to be handled appropriately

“The vast majority of people have to trust that they are doing the right thing and spending our money correctly.” Gosford participant

Some felt that this was a National issue and suggested that the Federal government could be contributing to the funding.

It was suggested that some form of education was needed to prevent these plastics ending up in the wastewater in the first place and that further research and investment was required to help look at alternative ways of disposing of the sludge and encouraging manufacturers to use more environmentally friendly product options in the first place.

“We should be reducing the amount of plastics used by manufacturers.” Wyong participant

“PFAS is such a big one, it’s so scary – a lot of people in the Blue Mountains have had issues, it’s cumulative in our bodies and the environment. Investing in this research for me is really important.” Gosford participant



3 Capital Projects

The third essential cost outlined by Council was for capital projects such as major treatment plant upgrades, replacement of ageing infrastructure and regulatory upgrades. Council suggested that significant upgrades are required at a number of sewage treatment plants including Charmhaven and Gwandalan to meet the needs of a growing region, while also replacing ageing mechanical and electrical assets. It was explained that Council's renewal programs for pipelines and mechanical and electrical equipment also need to expand to manage risks to the community and environment posed by asset failures. The assets have reached the end of their serviceable life. Council also mentioned that upgrades are required to existing assets or additional assets are required to meet legislation. Examples included ongoing upgrades to non-urban water metering and security of critical infrastructure requirements.

Similar to Asset Assessment, upgrading water infrastructure was felt to be essential, particularly due to the rapid population growth along the coast and the ageing pipes. Replacements and upgrades to treatment plants and pipes, were considered vital to ensure future reliability and to maintain good water quality.

“The coast has boomed in population; we need to keep up with this.”
Wyang participant

Some wondered however, whether increased Council revenue from the growing Central Coast population could help fund these upgrades and others suggested that developers (who contributed to network strain) should help cover costs.

The Central Coast's geography was also recognised as presenting its own unique challenges, with a large lake complicating water infrastructure maintenance and possibly contributing to increasing expenses.

Additionally, it was suspected that improving drainage systems may help to reduce flood-related issues, with some assuming pipe widening was part of this solution.

Participants agreed that these were necessary capital projects to include, however many questioned the funding of these. There was a broad consensus that these upgrades are fundamental to maintaining essential water services but many wondered why they weren't already being done on a continuous basis and covered by current rates.

“This important. It has to be done. We need our water pipes to work.” Wyong participant

“It needs to be done, it ties in to all the categories, it's a normal responsibility, it's a natural part of the business.” Wyong participant



4 Water Security Plan

The last essential cost outlined by Council was the Central Coast Water Security Plan. This investment was presented as being necessary by Council to ensure there's enough water in the future even in times of drought. This involves being 'plan ready', i.e. completing initial engineering and environmental studies for a drought response desalination plant, so Council can defer any decision to commence more costly construction activities in a future drought. This allows better understanding of how long the project would take to build, what it would cost and then allow the project to 'sit on the shelf', buying time to wait out future droughts, while lower cost drought management initiatives are implemented instead to ensure the region doesn't run out of water.

Most agreed that planning for droughts is essential, given the area's history of long-term droughts. However, opinions diverged on the urgency of the work being discussed—some believed immediate repairs to broken pipes and upgrading infrastructure should take precedence over future planning, while others argued that preparation is critical as droughts and water shortages could occur at any time.

Some wondered whether excess water from recent floods could be captured and stored to be used during droughts as an additional solution.

The Central Coast Water Security Plan was recognized as an important step, but some felt a more decisive action plan was needed and questioned whether a desalination plant was the most cost-effective solution.

Desalination plants per se were controversial—while some acknowledge the potential role for a desal plant, others saw it as an expensive and inefficient solution, with many referencing Sydney's Kurnell plant, which was perceived as being costly and underutilized.

“

“Water security is important, but I’m not for a desal plant”.
Wyong participant

“How can they consider the desal plant. My blood boils!”
Gosford participant

An alternative suggestion included more widespread use of rainwater tanks, although concerns existed about past bans due to health risks.

Overall, ensuring water security was widely regarded as crucial, but debate continued over the best approach and whether immediate investments were being made wisely.



Survey response to essential cost items

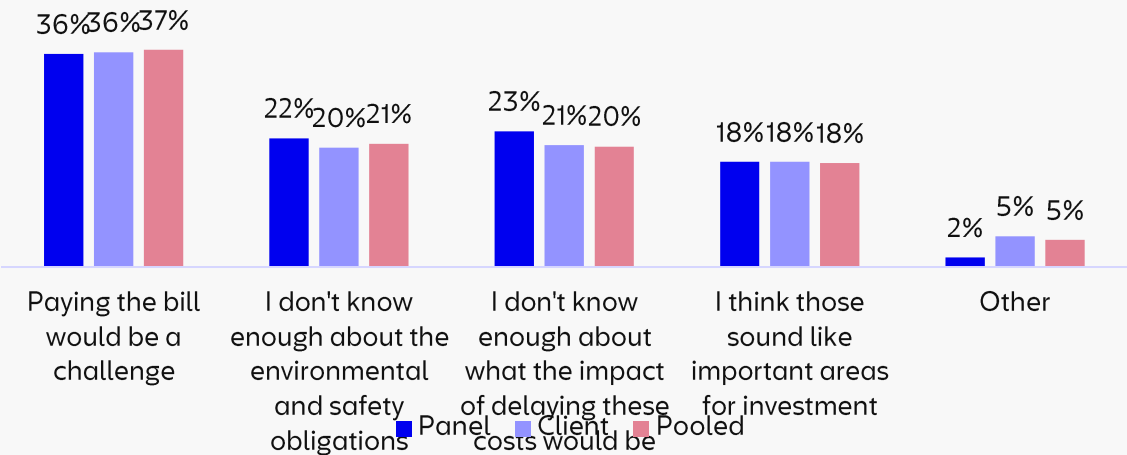
The survey touched on essential cost items only briefly. The main purpose was to ensure respondent choices about discretionary service options was informed by a realistic baseline bill level.

The most common response was that paying the bill would be a challenge. Around one in five felt they lacked enough information about the impacts. Only one in six said the proposed investments sounded important.

Some salient quotes from respondents selecting ‘other’ were:

- *Disability Support Pension is below the minimum wage. Targeted rebates are required.*
- *The increases are significant and require further explanation and evidence of sound financial management and disclosure of needs.*
- *Water is incredibly important to us all. I am happy to pay for future provisioning and that water is priced so that we are mindful of its use.*

Response to bill impact of essential costs (weighted)



Feedback from the Stakeholder Group

Feedback from the stakeholders echoed community sentiment to some degree, with some questioning of the 'essential' nature of planning for future water security, particularly the inclusion of desalination.

"We have concerns about desalination, particularly when it appears that one of the most likely scenarios for this region is a warmer climate, but a wetter climate. So is the idea that you're going to get coastal drought?"

Council reiterated that the component in the essential costs for the water security plan includes numerous other projects such as increased water conservation, upgrading groundwater infrastructure, and research into purified recycled drinking water as well as planning for desalination.

Stakeholders stressed that Council should aim to build trust in the community by being transparent to customers about the costs that they are in control of and those that they aren't. It was felt that there needs to be a strong rationale for the essential costs Council are in control of and a breakdown of the drivers of those costs.

There was input that stakeholders are keen to hear how Council will incorporate the feedback from customers on these essential items into its submission and whether Council will diverge in any way from community preferences. Where Council chooses not to incorporate community views into its decision making stakeholders stressed the importance of providing justification as to why decisions might be made that are not in alignment with community views but might be in the best interests of consumers in the long-term.

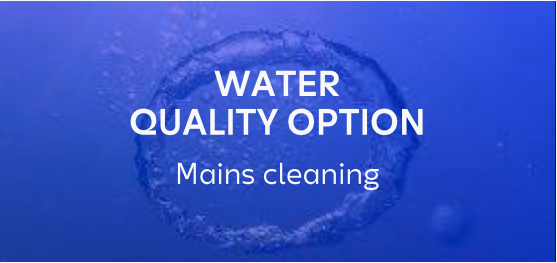
"I would really encourage Council, when putting forward your proposal, to not shy away from the areas in which you don't take on board the Community's decisions. Address those areas where you diverge and kind of put forth where Council's views differ or why the Council perceives that a particular pathway is in the best interest of consumers rather than what you heard from them. So don't just focus on the bits where there's alignment but focus on the areas where you choose not to and provide some justification there."

03

Optional Investment

Optional Investment

At the forums, following the presentation on essential costs, Central Coast Council presented information on the options for further investment. It was clearly stated that the increase driven by 'essential costs' may limit customers' appetite for any optional investment. The optional programs covered Water Quality, Water Reliability, Wastewater Reliability and Effective Planning. After each topic participants were asked to discuss their views and decide individually whether they were supportive of Council proceeding with the option. It was made clear that at the end of the forum they would be able to revisit their choices, once they had seen all the options, and make their final preferences. The optional programs are outlined below. The options in the survey were similar to the forums (refer to appendix for questionnaire). Note that service metrics vary from year to year based on 'natural variation' due to weather and soil conditions. The metrics used in the options were based on the expectation of future performance with and without the option.



**WATER
QUALITY OPTION**
Mains cleaning

Increase the length of water mains cleaning each year from 50 km to 100km

Reduce the number of water quality complaints per 1000 customers per year from 7 to 5.6

Disadvantages: potential for short-term discolouration during mains cleaning

You pay a permanent increase of \$1 per year (on top of bill increase for essential costs)



**WATER
RELIABILITY OPTION**
S-gate valves

Reduce the chance of you experiencing an unplanned water outage over the next 5 years – from 61% to 52%

Reduce the number of water quality complaints per 1000 properties per year, from 7 to 6.4

You pay a permanent increase of \$1 per year (on top of bill increase for essential costs)



**WASTEWATER
RELIABILITY OPTION**
CCTV camera truck

Number of sewage discharges, per 1000 properties will decrease from 6.4 to 6 per year

More camera inspections to find and fix sewer issues

You pay a permanent increase of \$2 per year (on top of bill increase for essential costs)



**EFFECTIVE
PLANNING OPTION**
Rebates for water efficient fixtures – residential homes

Water restrictions wouldn't be needed until 1 month later in a future severe drought or longer in a less severe drought.

Less overall energy and chemical usage associated with water and sewer systems (reduced demand).

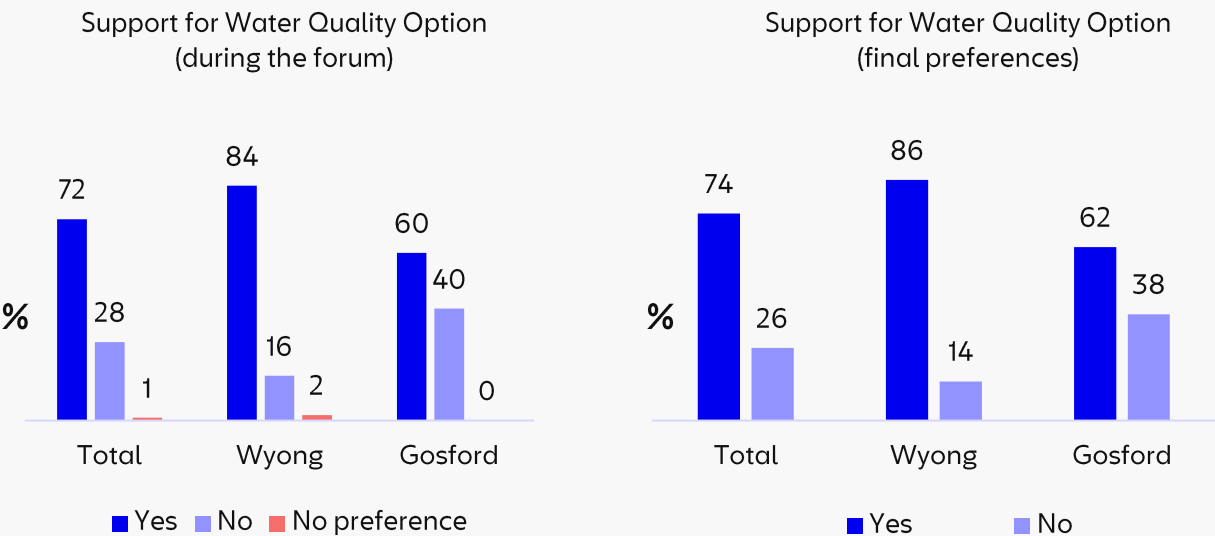
Future annual bill increases from building new supplies would be pushed back 2 years from 2040-2053 to 2042-2055

You pay a permanent increase of \$7 per year (on top of bill increase for essential costs)

Water Quality Option – Forum Results

Central Coast Council, recognising the importance of water quality to customers, put forward an option to increase water mains cleaning. The process of water main cleaning was explained as removing sediment and mineral deposits from water pipes to maintain water quality and system performance, typically done by flushing techniques. The process helps improve water clarity, taste and odour while reducing the risk of discoloration and bacterial growth. During cleaning, customers may experience temporary water discoloration or pressure fluctuations, but these are generally short-term and subside quickly, resulting in improved overall water quality. The option involves increasing the length of water mains cleaning each year from 50 km to 100km, which should reduce water quality complaints per 1000 customers from 7 to 5.6 for a permanent cost increase of \$1 per year. Participants were asked to indicate whether they were favour of this option going ahead, against it or had no preference and the reasons for their choice.

The majority of participants in both Wyong and Gosford were in favour of increasing mains cleaning for a cost of \$1 a year both during the forum and at the end when selecting final preferences, showing strong support throughout. Results are shown below as the percentage of participants at the forums who selected each option. Overall, by the end of the forums around three quarters were supportive of the program being included in Councils plans, with slightly more positive views in Wyong compared to Gosford.



Water Quality Option – Survey Results

In the survey, respondents were first asked, in isolation, whether they support a program to increase the cleaning of water pipes.

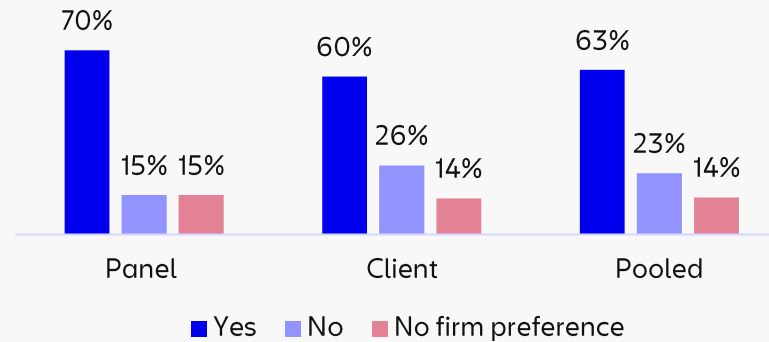
Later in the survey, respondents decided whether to include this initiative in their preferred package of initiatives in the context of the total bill. It was included by (weighted results):

- Three quarters of the panel sample
- Six in ten respondents in the client sample
- Making a total of two thirds of the pooled sample

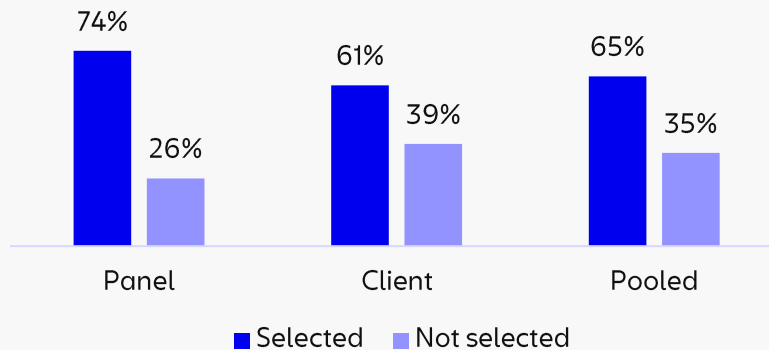
The evidence indicates that this option would have majority support and deliver a net benefit to the community, as willingness to pay is likely to exceed the cost.

Unweighted Results

Support for increase in cleaning of water pipes program – during the survey

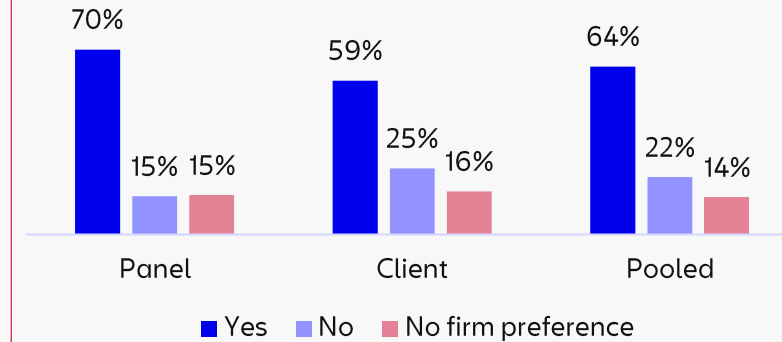


Support for increase in cleaning of water pipes program – final preference

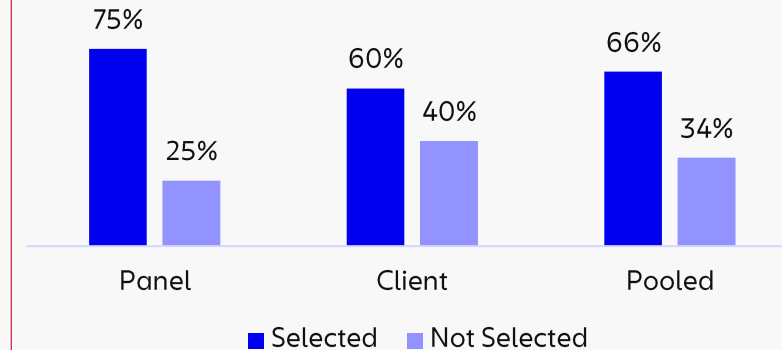


Weighted Results

Support for increase in cleaning of water pipes program – during the survey



Support for increase in cleaning of water pipes program – final preference



Qualitative Feedback – Forums

BENEFITS

In the forums, most agreed that this option was worth including in the new regulatory period, with the main benefits being seen as:

- **Prevention of problems in the future.** It was seen to be cheaper and smarter to be proactive and maintain infrastructure than wait until issues occurred that would inevitably cost more money

“Reduces cost in the future of repairing the pipes. Prevention is better.” Wyong participant

- **Cleaner, safer drinking water.** The cleaning of pipes more regularly was seen to support better public health, taste and reduce bacteria and calcium build up which in turn provided health benefits to the community.

“It is a small amount to keep the mains clean. It is an issue that can be ignored.” Gosford participant

- **Value for Money.** Many felt the \$1 a year extra was almost negligible given the benefit of a cleaner network. There was also an assumption of long terms savings gained from a reduction in pipe deterioration and future repair costs.

“The amount is miniscule in the grand scheme of things- It is less than a cup of coffee.” Wyong Participant
 “It honestly seems like such a small cost in the grand scheme of things, even if making a small difference, it’s still a difference / better than nothing.” Gosford participants

NEGATIVES / CONCERNS

Whilst there was overwhelming support for this option, some concerns were voiced by a minority of participants:

- **Affordability & Equity:** Some residents were already facing high living costs and felt that not everyone wanted to or could afford to pay more in principle, regardless of how small the increase is

“Our prices / rates are already so high – why should we pay more?” Gosford participants

- **Limited Impact:** There was some question over whether cleaning only 50km more per year would make a real difference. It would still mean decades to clean the entire system, which seemed to some, too slow or insufficient. In fact there were many calls for more of a cost increase and a greater impact.

“Only 50kms a year, it does not feel like a lot. It would take 40+ years to clean the entire network.” Gosford participant
 “I don’t have a problem for paying for a service at all, but I think going from 7 to 6.4 is just a pointless gap.” Gosford participant

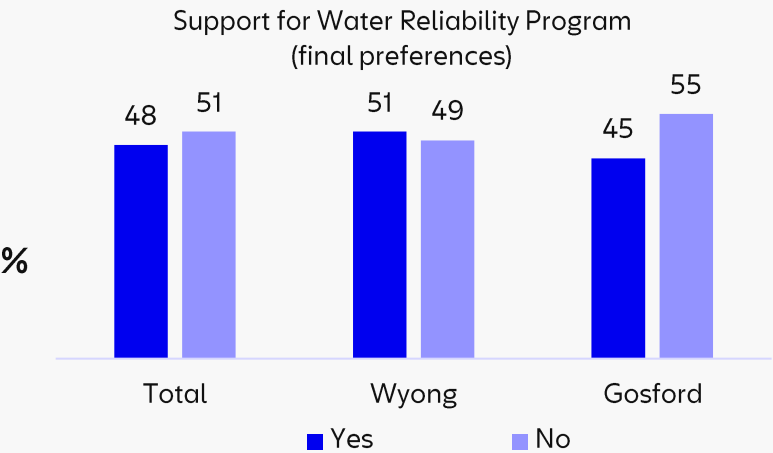
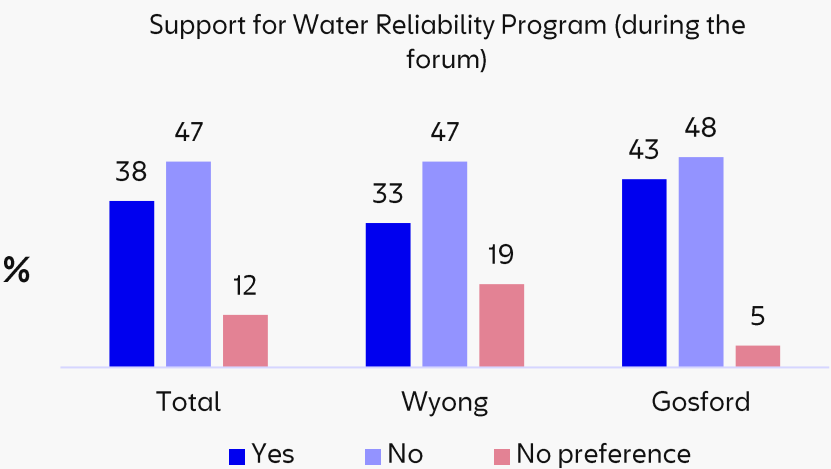
- **Personal Impact:** There was some concern that their own area may not benefit despite paying the extra money, particularly if targeted cleaning was based on number of complaints.
- **Doubt Over Effectiveness:** Some felt that it was solving a small issue, as for many the current water quality was fine.

Water Reliability – Forum Results

With reliability being ranked the second highest value in previous consultation, Central Coast Council discussed the option of increasing the installation of S-gate valves. Installing normal valves requires water shutdowns which can mean many customers have no water during repairs. The installation of S gate valves does not require shutdown of the water supply as they can be installed while the main is live. Council suggested that a valve audit would be conducted prior to mains cleaning to check the condition of the existing valves and replace any defective valves with S gate valves to support the cleaning work and reduce any customer impacts during the cleaning. From this program, Council stated that the chance of experiencing an unplanned outage would reduce from 61% to 52% over the five-year period 2026-31 and reduce the number of water quality complaints per 1000 properties from 7 to 6.4. The cost for this option would be a permanent increase of \$1 per year.

Again, participants were asked to indicate whether they were favour of this option going ahead, against it or had no preference and the reasons for their choice. Preferences were tested during and at the end of the forum.

Opinions regarding the installation of S-gates was mixed with a higher proportion of participants being unsupportive of the option during the session (47% total) and then relatively equal numbers being for and against at the end (48% total, 51% total respectively).



Water Reliability – Survey Results

Respondents were first asked, in isolation, whether they support installing special valves in water pipes.

Later in the survey, respondents decided whether to include this initiative in their preferred package of initiatives in the context of the total bill. It was included by (weighted results):

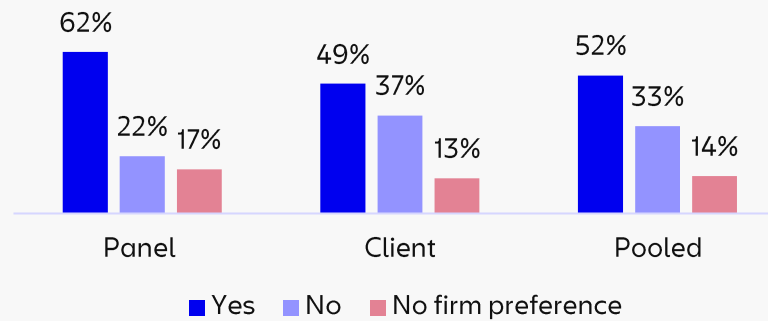
- Around two thirds of the panel sample
- Half of the client sample
- Just over half of the pooled sample

The evidence suggests this project is likely to deliver a net benefit to the community. It is supported by a clear majority of the panel sample, which is less subject to sample selection bias than the client sample.

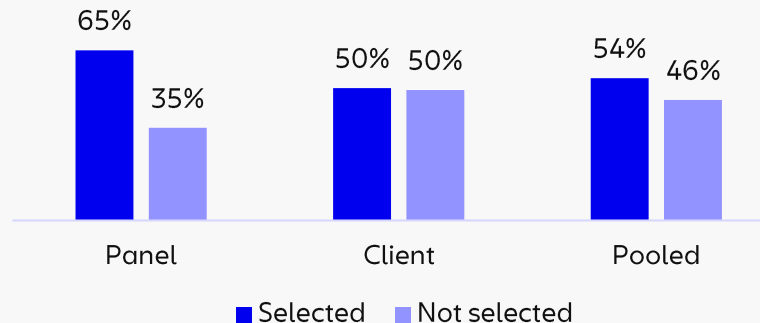
However, the concerns expressed by the client sample and forum participants would need to be considered.

Unweighted Results

Support special valves in water pipes – during the survey

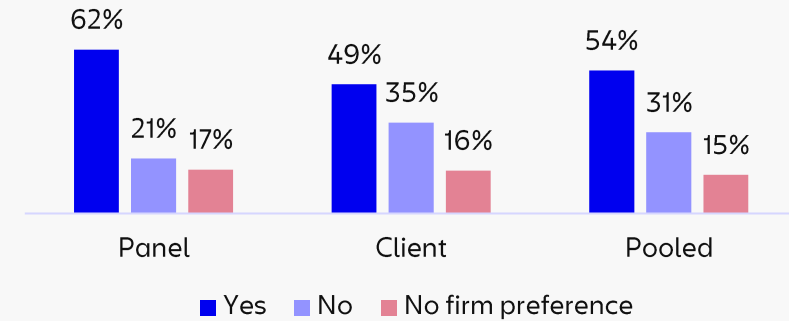


Support special valves in water pipes – final preference

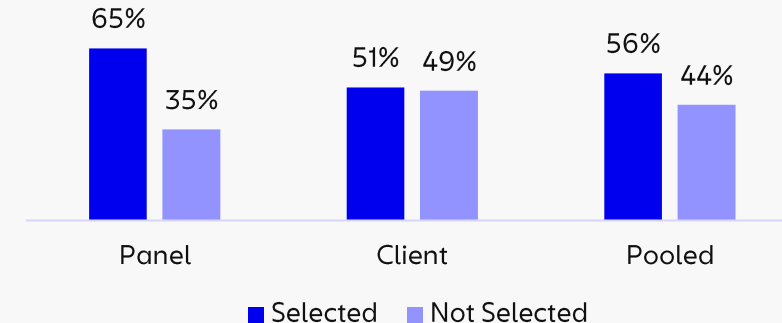


Weighted Results

Support special valves in water pipes – during the survey



Support special valves in water pipes – final preference



Qualitative Feedback – Forums

BENEFITS

The idea of increasing the speed of installation of the S-gate valves was met with positive and negative feedback in the forums, with the main benefits being seen as:

- **Long term infrastructure investment:** S-Gates were seen as a long-term solution that would reduce the number of unplanned outages and limit future disruption.
- **Efficiency and improved service:** The installation of the valves allows maintenance to happen without shutting down large areas, reducing the impact of water pipe repairs on customers.

“As the infrastructure ages, it’s important to make it easier to fix the problem.” Gosford participant

- **Small cost, some benefit:** While the impact was seen as relatively minor with predicted complaints per 1000 only decreasing by 0.6, many felt that \$1 was a small price for improved reliability and future-proofing.

“Keep in mind it’s only costing you \$1.” Gosford participant

“If it was more of a reduction I would be in favour” Wyong participant

“It’s really just an extra dollar, so it’s not a very deep thought process for me – I would just say yes.” Gosford participant

NEGATIVES / CONCERNS

There were a number of concerns or questions regarding this option:

- **Personal impacts:** Not many of the participants had experienced unplanned outages, so did not see any personal value or benefit from this program.

“Why fix what isn’t broken?” Gosford participant

“In 23 years, I have never had an interruption”. Wyong participant

“If I’m in not a hotspot, I don’t want to have to pay for it.” Gosford participant

Small cost / benefit ratio: Many felt that they were paying enough and wondered why this small amount could not be covered in the existing rates, especially after past rate increases. There was also a sense that improvements were too small to justify the extra cost.

“If this solution was offered in isolation, yes (\$1 is not much), but on top of essential investments, no.” Wyong participant

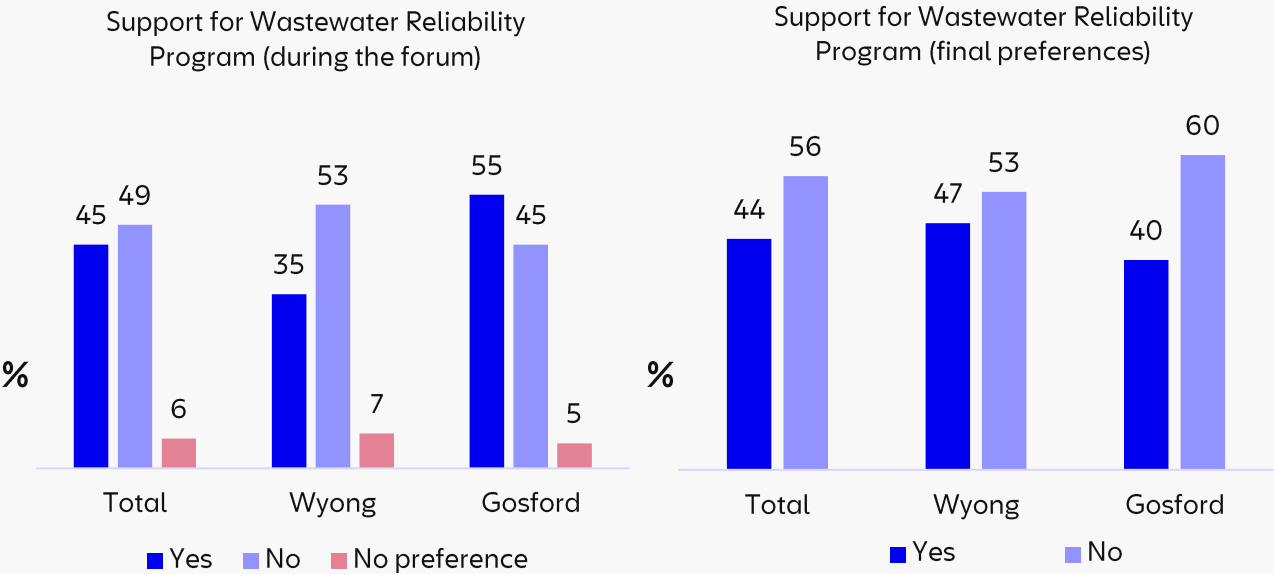
“This should be happening already under the current expenses. If these things can be done for \$1 a year, it should be easy to put in place.” Gosford participant

- **Targeting of installation:** Questions were raised as to who decides where these valves go and if they would be installed where they are most needed, for example in problem areas based on maintenance records or complaint data.
- **Question over life span of the valves:** There were unclear statistics regarding the lifespan of valves, whether \$1 includes maintenance, and if costs will rise.
- **Installation logistics:** Some concern over the logistics of the installation and whether it would be coordinated with other projects to avoid unnecessary disruption.

Wastewater Reliability – Forum Results

As service reliability also covers the wastewater network, Council put forward an option to improve reliability in this area. The presentation explained that sewer main breaks and chokes caused by tree root ingress and other factors can affect pollution of waterways, public health and damage the environment. Proactive CCTV inspections can help pick up problems in the sewer network before they escalate into bigger issues like overflows and breaks. To improve reliability, Council suggested increasing proactive CCTV sewer inspections through the purchase of an additional truck at a cost of \$2 per year on customer’s bill.

Overall, participants were split on their preference for or against this program, due to the perceived high-cost relative to the small benefit, but still acknowledged potential value in preventing blockages or sewage discharge. The proportion who were supportive remained quite consistent during and at the end of the forum, however those who were on the fence, shifted to ‘no’. By the end of the forums, in total 45% were supportive and 56% were unsupportive of the proposed program.



Wastewater Reliability – Survey Results

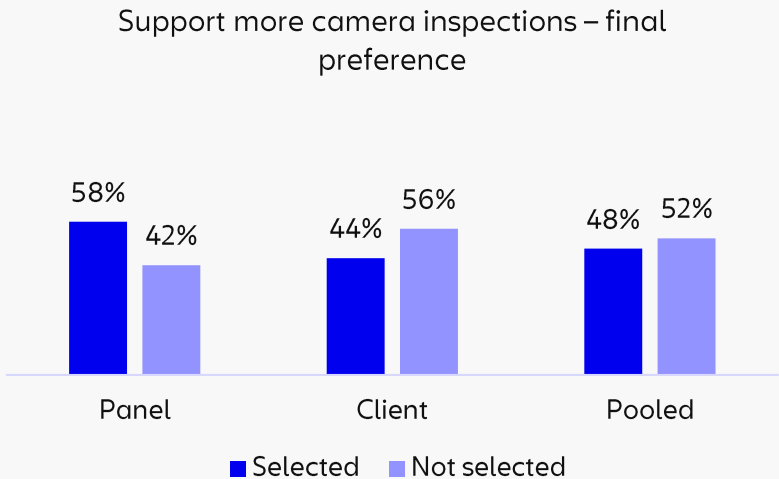
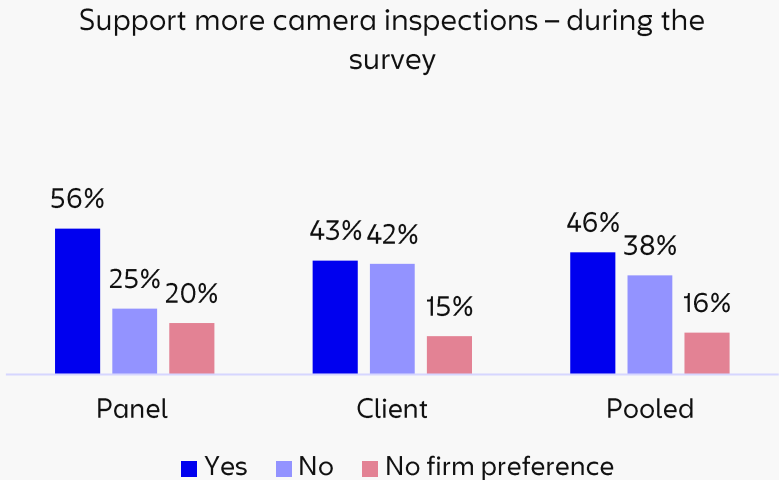
Respondents were first asked, in isolation, whether they support a program to increase the use of camera inspections in wastewater pipes.

Later in the survey, respondents decided whether to include this initiative in their preferred package of initiatives in the context of the total bill. It was included by (weighted results):

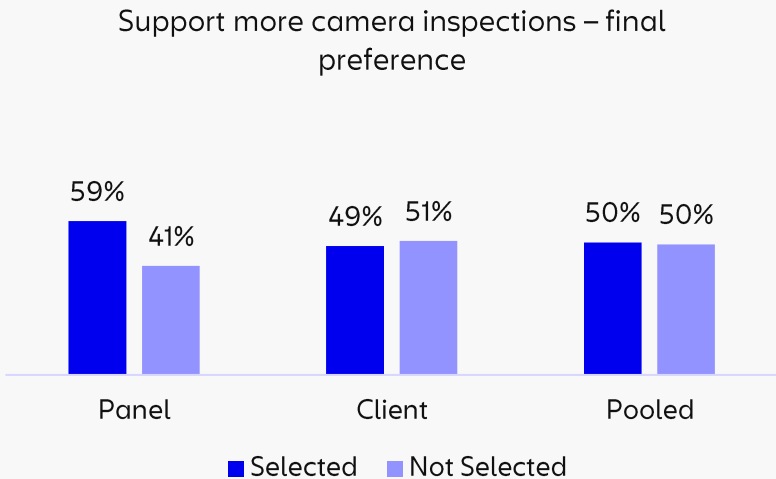
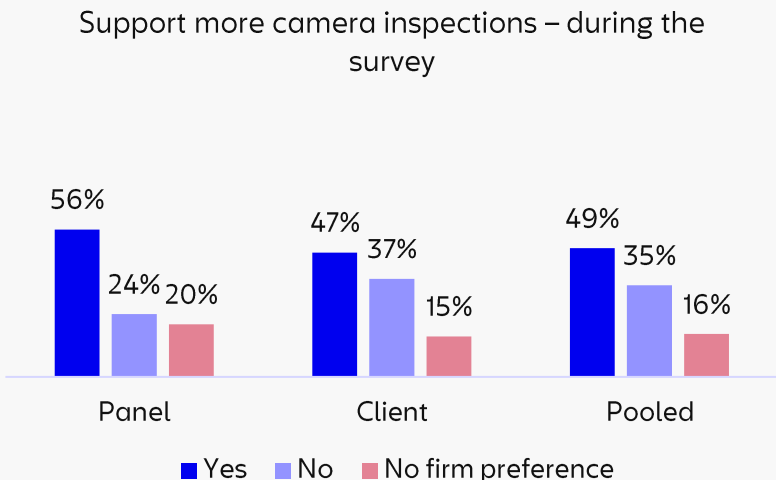
- 59% of panel respondents
- 49% of client sample respondents
- Half of the pooled sample.

The evidence suggests this project is more likely to deliver a net benefit to the community than a net cost. It is supported by a majority of the panel sample, which is less subject to sample selection bias than the client sample. However, the concerns expressed by the client sample and forum participants would need to be considered.

Unweighted Results



Weighted Results



Qualitative Feedback – Forums

BENEFITS

There was some support for the purchase and operation of an additional truck to carry out more CCTV inspections of the wastewater pipes at the forums. The main advantages were thought to be:

- **Preventative value:** Several participants strongly supported the investment, arguing that prevention was better than reactive maintenance, especially to avoid sewer spills and costly emergency repairs.
- “It could create a terrible problem, it could result in millions of dollars in preparatory work to resolve wastewater problems.” Wyong participant
- **Job creation:** Some valued the option because it would presumably create and secure jobs during this cost-of-living crisis.
- **Operational benefits:** Having two trucks was imagined to increase coverage, offer backup during breakdowns, and enabled faster response during emergencies.
- “They will be able to cover more ground and fix problems before it becomes a huge issue. If one truck breaks down the other truck is still working or if there is an emergency they can get to it with two trucks in operation.” Wyong participant
- **Environmental and long-term savings:** It may reduce environmental damage and unnecessary digging, while potentially saving money over time.
- **Cost seen as low:** A few participants felt \$2 annually per ratepayer was reasonable for improved service delivery.

NEGATIVES / CONCERNS

There was equally as many negative comments and concerns:

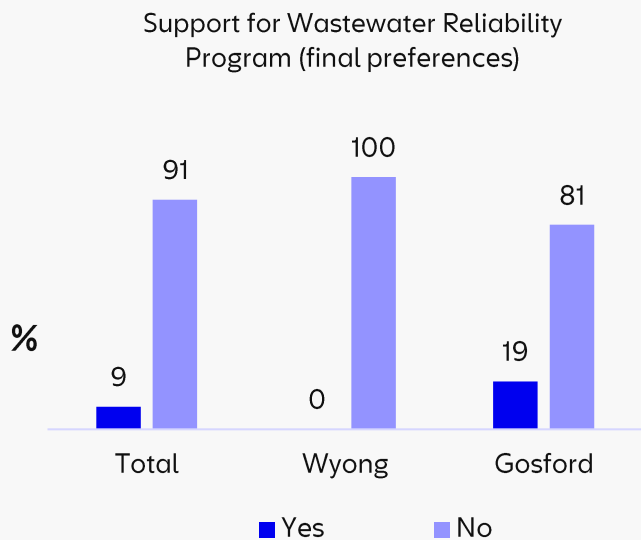
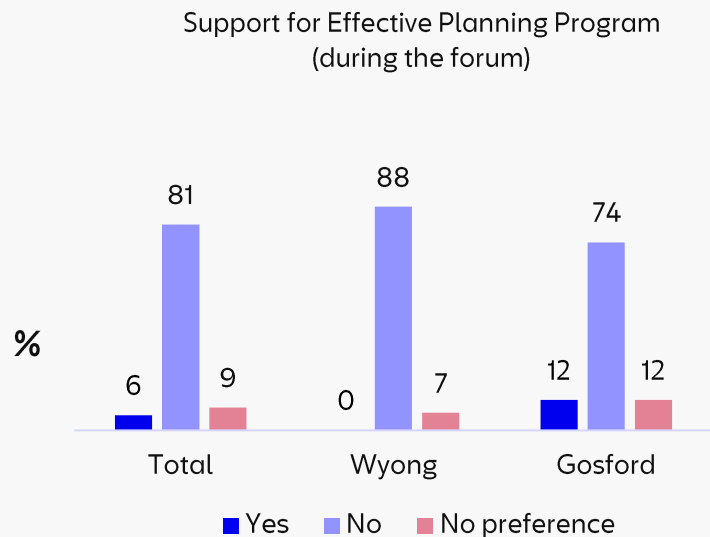
- **Insufficient impact:** Many questioned the tangible benefits, pointing out the minor improvement (6.4 to 6), and doubting if one more truck would meaningfully affect outcomes in a large council area.
- “I think if you look at the targets, it’s not as worthwhile because it’s not making much of an impact.” Gosford participant
- **Cost concerns:** Even though the cost is small, some felt ongoing expenses (maintenance, fuel, replacement) weren't justified by the results. There was also skepticism about future cost increases.
- “I don’t want to have to pay more. They keep adding money.” Gosford participant
- **Technological alternatives:** Some questioned why more modern, scalable solutions (like drones or remote monitoring) weren’t being considered as potentially better and cheaper alternatives.
- “Technology will develop so rapidly, how long is this truck going to be doing a ‘good enough’ job before new technology comes out that is better?” Gosford participant
- **Future investments:** Concerns were raised about long-term costs, technological obsolescence, and whether future budget increases would be required to maintain this system.
- “There are current and emerging technologies that can do this job better, cheaper and more efficiently than CCTV (e.g., drones).” Gosford participant

Effective Planning – Forum Results

Within previous consultation, water conservation was a highly supported option within Council’s water security plan to help manage the region’s supply versus demand balance. Council has prepared potential customer rebate programs as part of the water efficiency element of its water conservation program. These programs include rebates for purchase/replacement of water efficient washing machines, showerheads, single flush toilets, and leak repair assistance . The cost for this option would be a permanent increase of \$7 per year with the benefits of this being that:

- water restrictions wouldn’t be needed until one month later in a future severe drought or longer in a less severe drought,
- there would be less overall energy and chemical usage associated with water sewer systems, and
- future annual bill increases from building new supplies would be pushed back two years from 2040-2053 to 2042-2055.

Again, during the forum, participants were asked to indicate whether they were favour of this option going ahead, against it or had no preference and the reasons for their choice. The majority of participants in both Wyong and Gosford were against this option, largely due to lack of clarity, perceived unfairness, and limited personal relevance. During final preferences a total of 91% of participants were unsupportive of the option.



Program	Potential Annual Participants (households)	Potential Rebate Amount (\$/participant)
Washing machine replacement	1,000	\$200 - \$300
Single flush toilet replacement	2,000	\$200
Showerhead replacement	2,000	up to \$200
Leak repair assistance (WaterFix)	2,000	\$200

Total base: n=85 (Wyong n=43, Gosford n=42)

Effective Planning – Survey Results

Respondents were first asked, in isolation, whether they support a rebate program for installing water-efficient fixtures such as showerheads, toilets and washing machines in select properties.

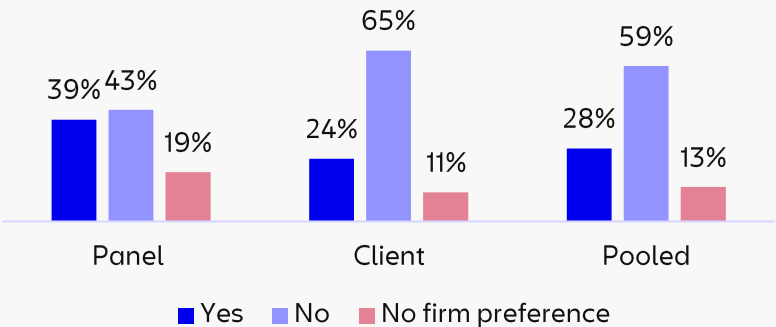
Later in the survey, respondents decided whether to include this initiative in their preferred package of initiatives in the context of the total bill. It was included by (weighted results):

- 48% of the panel sample
- 36% of the client sample
- 38% of the pooled sample

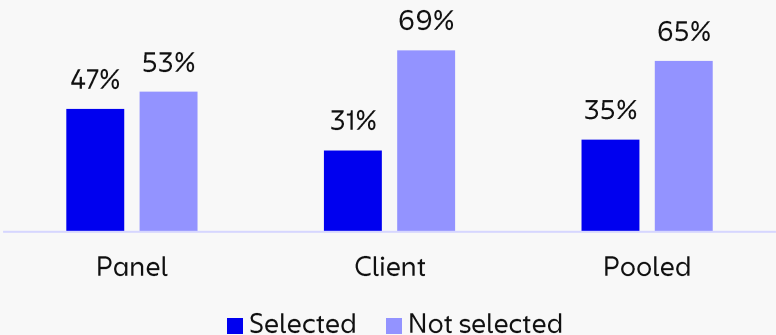
Overall, the evidence suggests this project would not have majority support and would not deliver a net benefit to the community (average willingness to pay is below cost).

Unweighted Results

Rebates for water efficient fixtures – during the survey

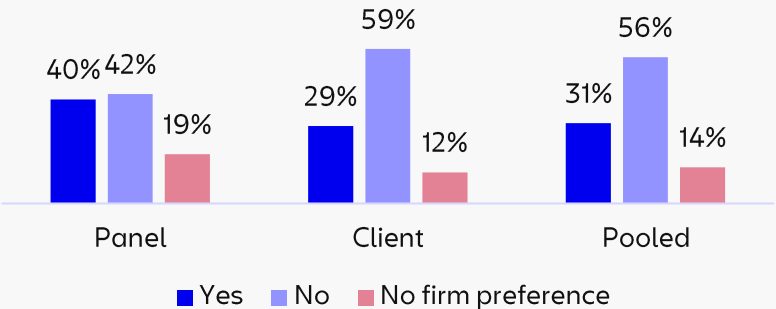


Rebates for water efficient fixtures – final preference

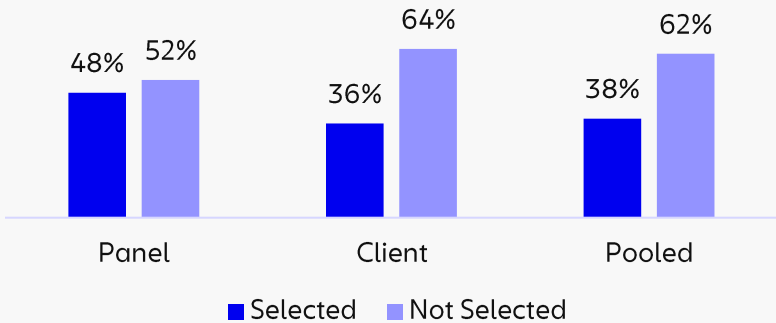


Weighted Results

Rebates for water efficient fixtures – during the survey



Rebates for water efficient fixtures – final preference



Qualitative Feedback – Forums

BENEFITS

Virtually no one voted in favour of this option in the forums, however some could see benefits to its implementation:

- **Delaying future expenditure:** Some felt that it was a small investment that could result in postponing costly new infrastructure.
- **Personal gain:** Others saw a benefit to people who could take advantage of the rebate.

“It will mean the whole system will benefit so maybe it is a good thing.” Gosford participant

NEGATIVES / CONCERNS

The major concerns regarding this option were:

- **Relevance & Personal Benefit:** Many would not benefit personally, especially renters or those with existing efficient appliances.

“I’d be paying for something I don’t benefit from.”
“It doesn’t apply to me – therefore it’s not relevant and I wouldn’t pay extra.”
Gosford participant

- **Equity & Fairness:** Seen as regressive as it benefits suppliers or wealthier homeowners more than everyday residents.

“Those who can afford it are going to buy a new washing machine anyway – they don’t need the rebate as an incentive.” Gosford participant
“These schemes are bad – people who are going to replace the equipment were going to do it anyway.” Gosford participant

- **Environmental Impact:** Encourages replacing working appliances unnecessarily leading to waste.
- **Economic Impact:** \$7 per household was felt to be too high for a benefit that many won’t use or see. There were also concerns about scamming and misuse, based on past rebate programs (e.g. insulation, solar).

“Things like this open the door to scammers”. Gosford participant
“It just sounds like a nightmare... How are they going to regulate and verify all of this?” Wyong participant

Due to the unfavourable reception, many starting thinking of alternative solutions such as :

- Reintroducing water restrictions instead as this was seen as effective and equitable.
- Using bill discounts for those who reduce usage, based on metered data.



04

Final Preferences

Final Preferences – Forums

As mentioned, once all of the programs had been presented, participants were asked to consider them as a whole and decide on their final preferences on an individual preference sheet (shown on the right).

Results are summarised below, with the Water Quality program being the only one to receive majority support.

Most participants selected at least one program during final preferences, with 58% selecting two or more programs. The average bill increase amongst participants across the programs was \$2.81.

Program	Permanent increase in your annual bill	Your final choice (yes or no)	Total cost of your choices (add them up and write the total at the bottom)
Water Quality - Increase the length of water mains cleaning each year from 50 km to 100km.	\$1		
Reliability (water) - Install Smart Gate Valves (S-gate valves)	\$1		
Reliability (wastewater) - CCTV camera truck inspections to find and fix wastewater issues	\$2		
Effective Planning - Rebates for water efficient fixtures for residential homes	\$7		
* Note that you do not have to answer yes to any options and choosing the options doesn't mean you support the 17%-22% bill increase for essential costs			

Percentage support in final preferences	Total (n=85)	Wyong (n=43)	Gosford (n=42)
Water Quality Increase the length of water mains cleaning each year from 50 km to 100km	74%	86%	62%
Water Reliability Introduction of S-Gate valves	48%	51%	45%
Wastewater Reliability CCTV Camera Truck	44%	47%	40%
Effective Planning Rebates program	9%	0%	19%

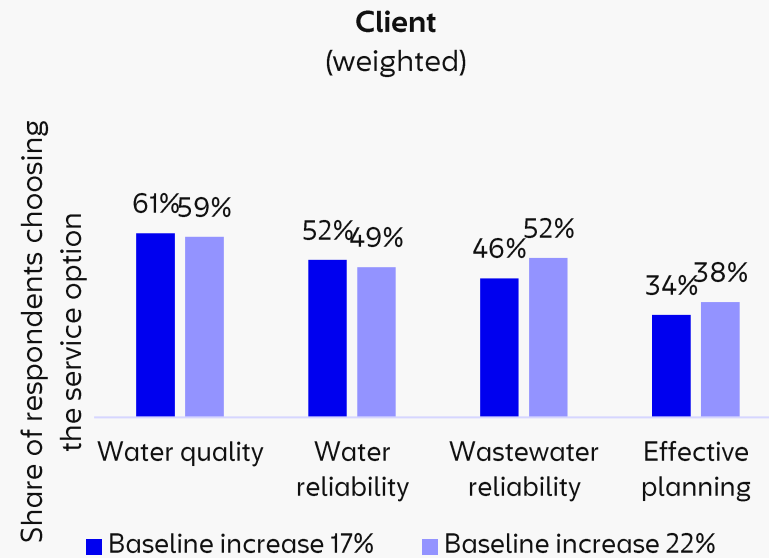
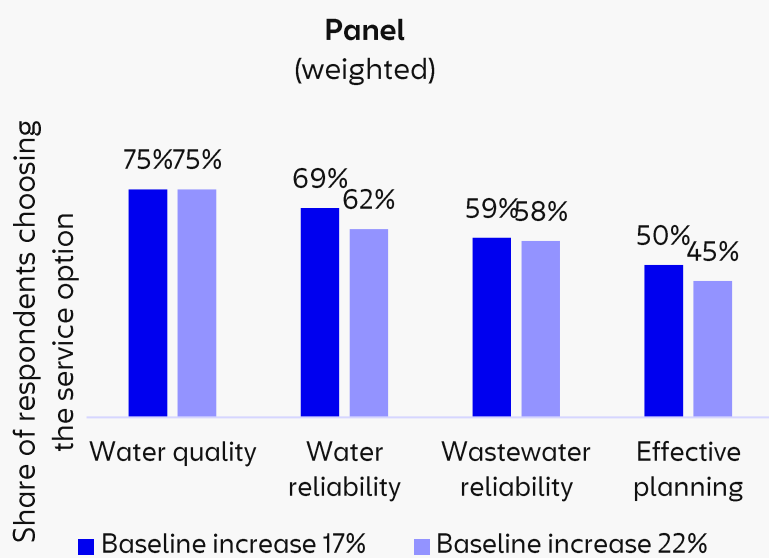
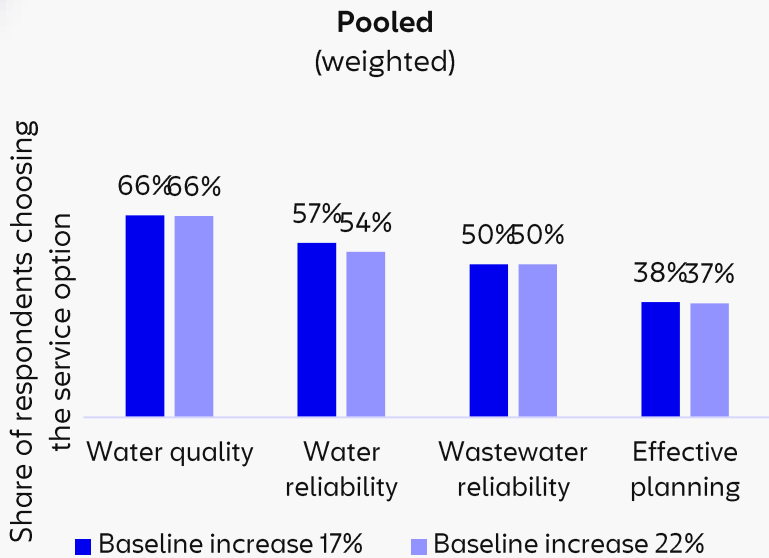
Number of programs supported in final preferences	Total (n=85)
0	22%
1	20%
2	25%
3	26%
4	7%

Total base: n=85 (Wyong n=43, Gosford n=42)

Final Preferences - Survey

Survey respondents were randomly assigned either a 17% or 22% baseline bill increase before choosing their final preferences. The graphs below show how this assigned percentage influenced the share of respondents choosing each service option in their final package.

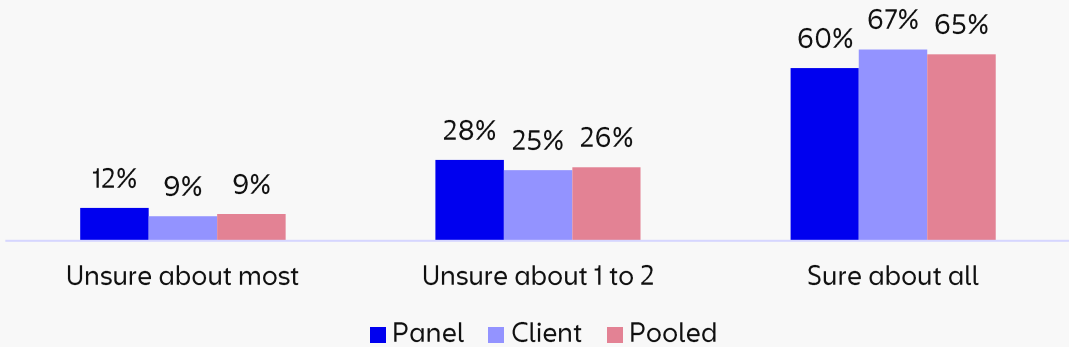
We can observe from the pooled sample that there is minimal difference in service option choices based on the assigned baseline increase. This suggests that the findings of our research will be applicable regardless of the precise bill impacts from essential cost items that are ultimately proposed by Council.



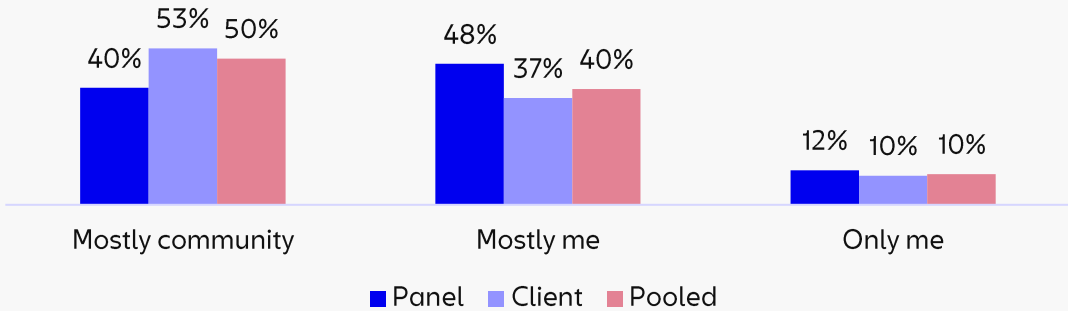
Survey debriefing questions

Survey respondents were asked a series of ‘debriefing’ questions about how they answered the survey. Responses indicated that most respondents were sure about their choices, most respondents considered impacts on the community to some degree, and around half of respondents think there is at least some chance of the survey results influencing Council decisions.

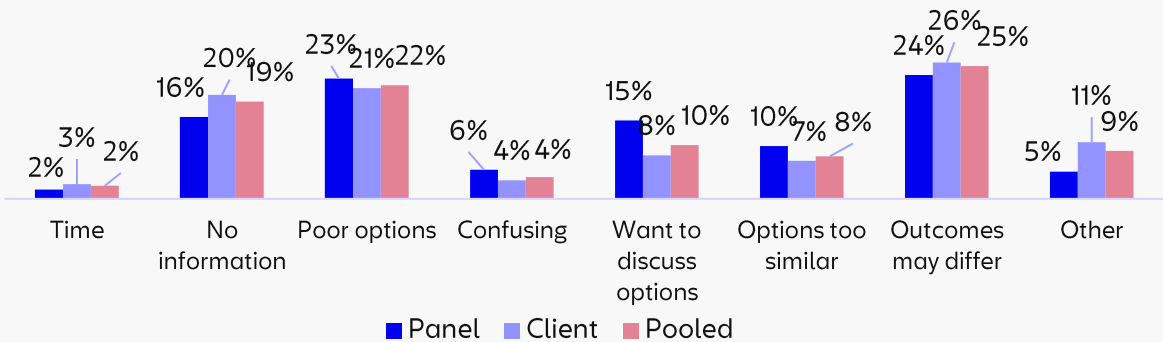
Were you unsure about any of your choices?



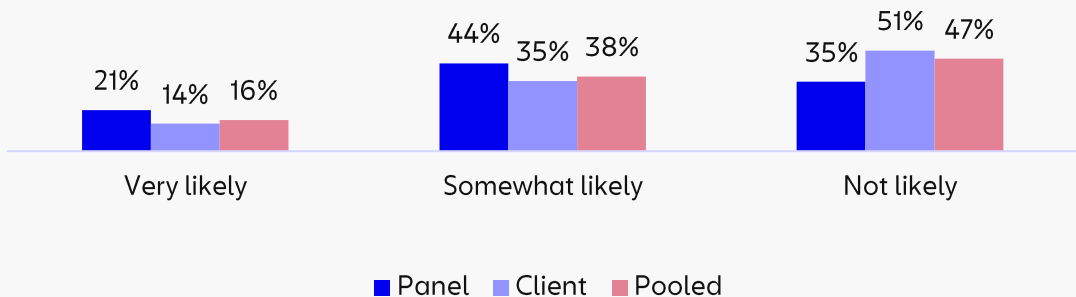
Did you think about other customers?



Why were you unsure (tick all that apply)?



Do you expect this survey will influence CCC decisions?

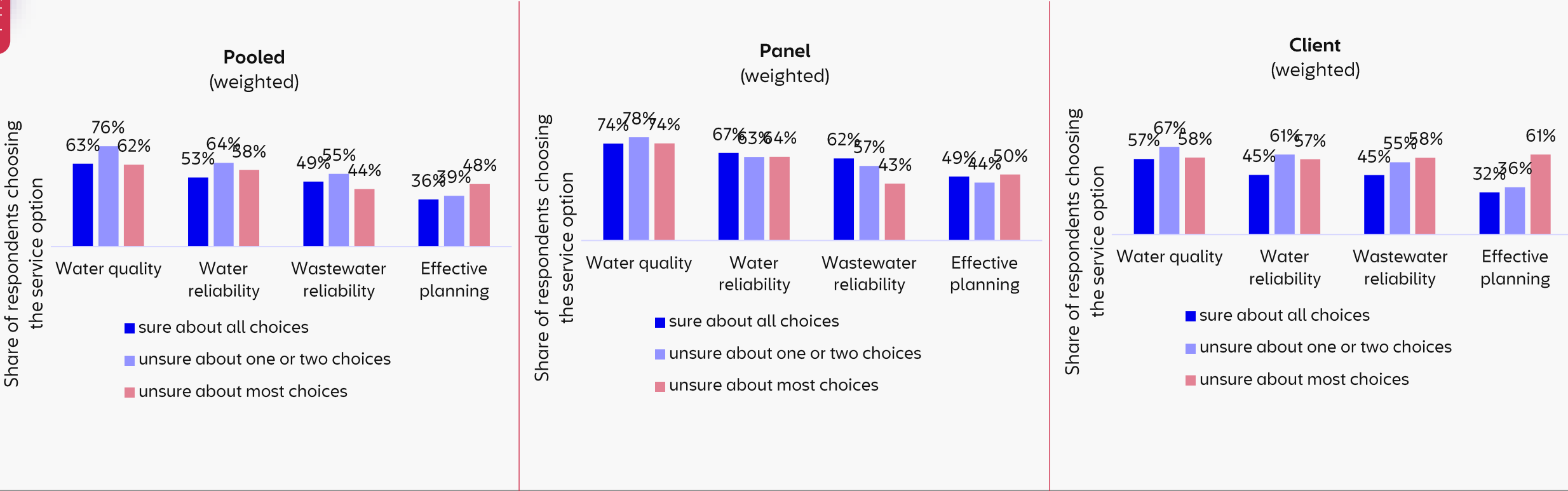


These charts use unweighted data, since the focus is on the share of the sample taking various approaches to the survey, rather than the generalization of preferences to the population.

Final preferences – impact of choice certainty

Respondents’ certainty over their choices was not strongly correlated with preferences.

Excluding respondents who were unsure about most of their choices from the pooled sample would have the effect of slightly increasing support for the wastewater reliability option and decreasing support for the effective planning option. Neither of these changes would have a material impact on the research findings.



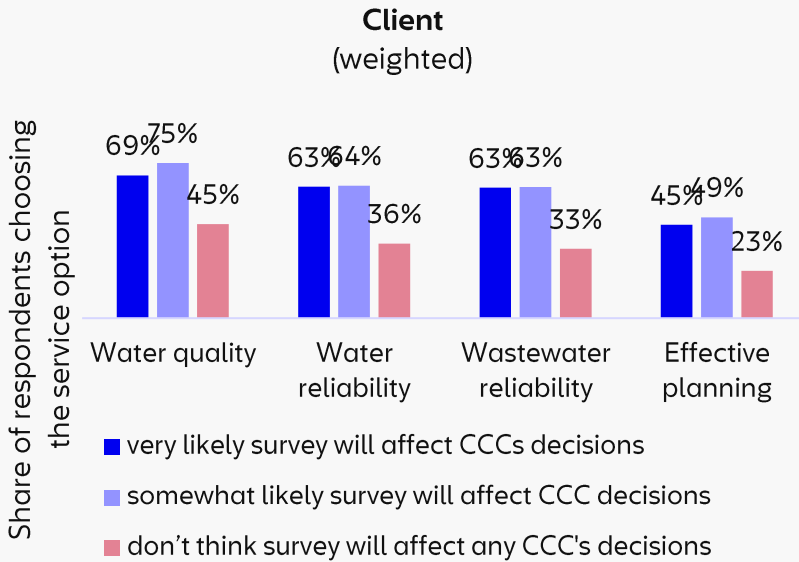
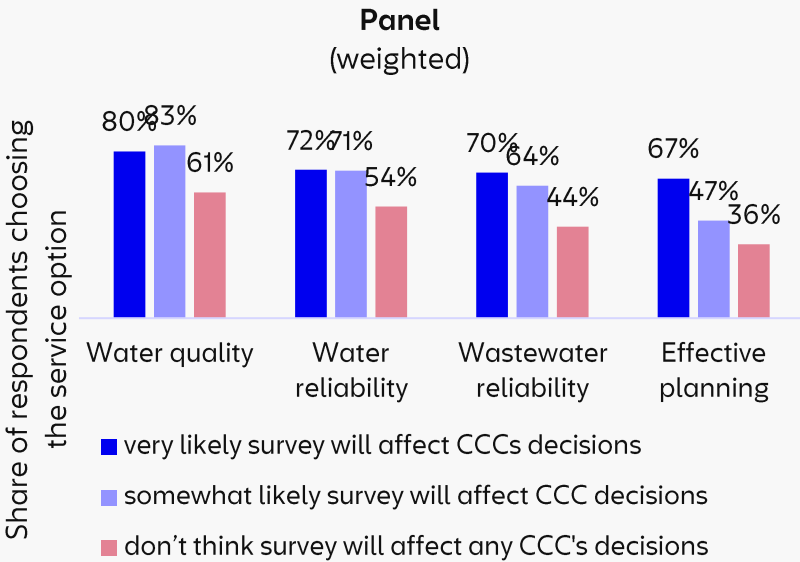
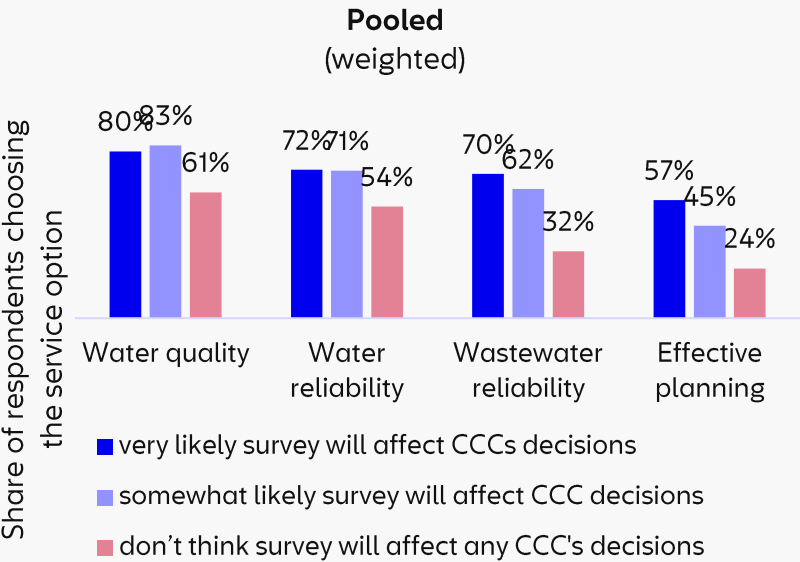
Final preferences – impact of consequentiality

Preferences were strongly correlated with the degree to which respondents expect survey results will affect Central Coast Council's decisions – moreso than in other WTP surveys we have conducted.

Excluding respondents who did not view the survey as consequential would significantly increase the support for all service options, resulting in clear majority support for the water quality, water reliability, and wastewater reliability options. There are multiple possible interpretations of this result:

- There are some people with a negative view of Council who are both more likely to vote no (e.g. due to lack of trust in Council to deliver the options) and more likely to say Council won't act on the survey (that is, the relationship is correlation, not causation).
- There may be a widely held view that Council is planning to go ahead with the service options regardless of the survey results, but only respondents voting against the options see a conflict between the survey results and the actions Council will take and state an expectation the survey won't affect decisions (that is, the preference causes the stated view on consequentiality).

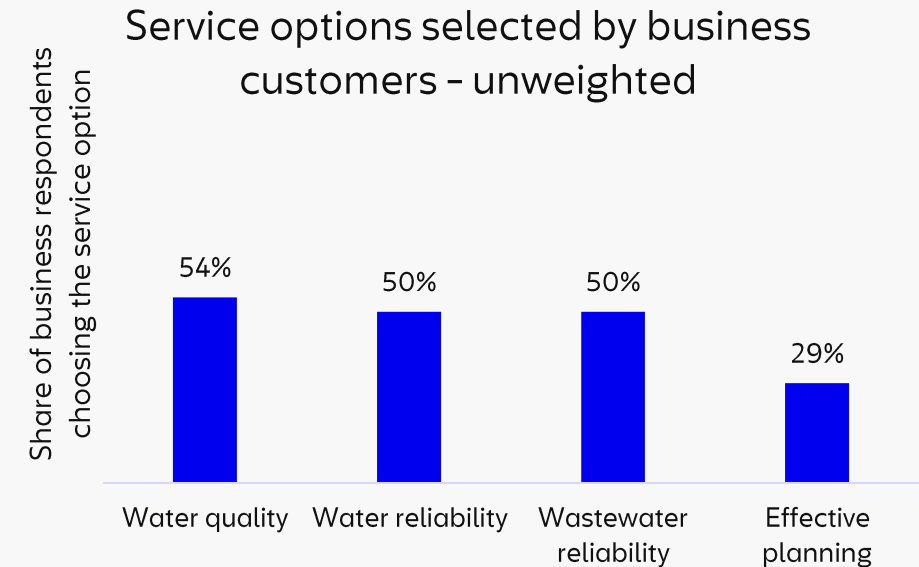
In our view, it is unlikely the view on consequentiality caused the preference. It is therefore important to retain in the sample of those who do not view the survey as consequential and the relationship noted on this slide does not affect our findings in relation to support for each service option.



Final preferences - business respondents

Only 24 respondents to the survey identified as the owner/manager of a business premises on the Central Coast and agreed to complete the survey on the business's behalf.

Although this sample size is small, the results do not indicate any significant departure from those observed for residential customers, with majority support for the water quality option, evenly split opinion on the water and wastewater reliability options, and an absence of support for the effective planning option.



05

Bill Phasing

Bill Phasing

At the forums, once the discretionary options had been presented and preferences and opinions discussed, Central Coast Council presented three distinct ways in which the bill increases could be rolled out to customers over the 5 year period. In all scenarios, the total amount collect over the period would be the same.

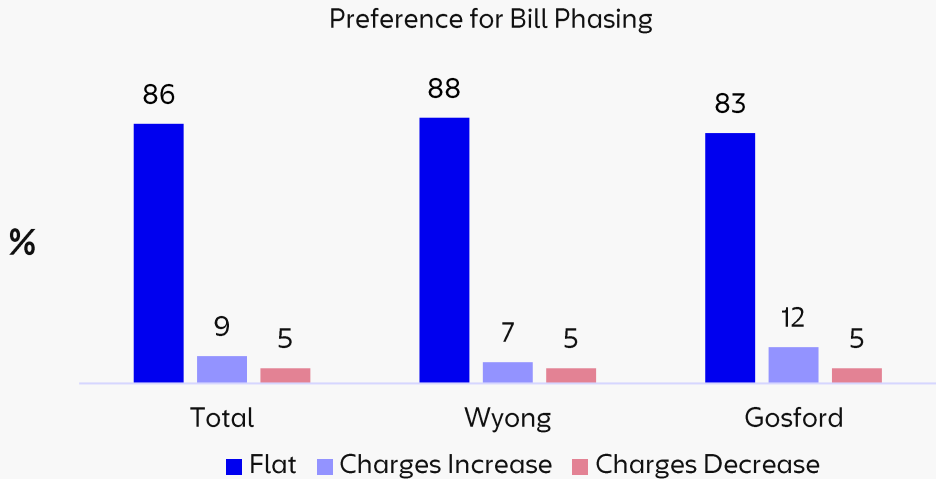
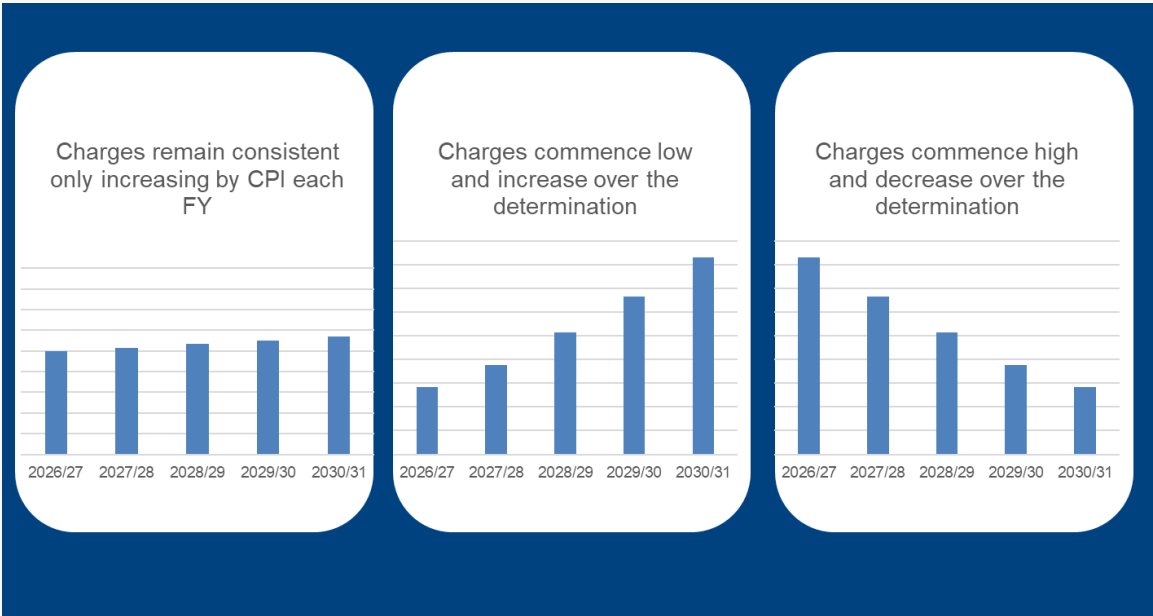
Then, based on a potential bill impact of 17-22%, participants were asked how they would prefer that bills are phased.

The majority preferred the flatter structure with the first year of increase and then CPI each year after that. The benefit was that customers could budget better and it was more favourable to those who were struggling trying to make ends meet. The downside was that there would be an element of ‘bill shock’ in the first year which some customers would have difficulty paying.

“The first one feels fairest for everyone involved – more predictable.” Wyong participant

“I don’t want any spikes. I want it to go evenly.” Gosford participant

“Flat structure is my choice because I like predictability, you don’t know what life is going to throw at you.” Gosford participant



Total base: n=85 (Wyong n=43, Gosford n=42)

Bill Phasing

The second option, starting lower then increasing through the period, appealed to some who were happier with less of a jump in the first year and increases each year after that. This was a particularly good option for those who thought that they move out of the area so may not be in the LGA after the first couple of years.

“It is a bill shock with Option A and so it is better to phase it up. People who are struggling would go for this one.” Gosford participant

The third option was unappealing to most as they felt that it would be such a jump that some people would not be able to afford their water bill. One or two however, saw it as a good option as it got the worst increase out of the way and then they would enjoy bill decreases for the remainder of the regulatory period.

Some however, whilst seeing this as a good option, were sceptical of Council's ability to manage funds, and did not trust that costs would actually go down in subsequent years.

“Why would anyone want to give more upfront?” Gosford participant

“If someone was to move away from the Central Coast sometime in the next few years, the third option would feel like they are being ripped off, as they would need to pay more upfront.” Wyong participant

“Let's get it over and done with' – I know I can afford it now, but I don't know where I will be in 5 years” Gosford participant

“It's good to pay it up front and then know the worst is over. I can still go to Council and claim hardship.” Gosford participant

“The first one – is better for people to keep bills consistent...I like the idea of the third but there's a lack of trust with this option.” Gosford participant

Feedback from the Stakeholder Group

As part of the conversation about expected bill increases, stakeholders were asked whether they think there are barriers to Central Coast customers in accessing support programs such as arrangements to pay or hardship assistance, and whether there are alternatives for financial support.

The stakeholders in the group stressed the importance of Council pre-preparing customers before any substantial bill increases. It was thought that vulnerable customers should be encouraged to create a financial buffer by paying a bit more in advance if they can, before any bill increases come into effect.

“I think it might be a good idea to pre prepare your customers for what's going to happen if you're expecting that 17% increase, then you could be educating them in advance that if they enter a direct debit agreement with you, they can actually build a buffer by paying more than their bill so that when the increase happens, it's not a shock and they've got a buffer so that they're ahead.”

They suggested that the best way to communicate with vulnerable customers might be alongside paper bills because the most vulnerable customers are probably still going to receive paper-based bills. They also suggested Council should reach out to Neighbourhood Centres, local food banks and community kitchens and charities that provide support to vulnerable customers. Since vulnerable customers are probably utilising these services, providing information and support through these sources could make it easier to access and help to reduce the stigma of approaching Council directly.

“A lot of consumers will find their own alternatives to avoid that stigma by going through things like buy now pay later plans or credit arrangements which are more harmful. The Council offers arrangements that are probably better placed than those credit or buy now pay later schemes would be. It would be good to draw attention to that as well. It would be good to normalize that. The stigma issue is very real.”

It was stressed that Council should ensure that everyone who is eligible for support, knows about it and is accessing it. Automating the process as much as possible, to circumvent the stigma associated with having to ask for that support, was also thought to be important.

“As a first step, just making sure that they are being utilised by the people who need them. Automating it as much as possible without any need for further action on their part.”

Stakeholders also mentioned other organisations that are already in that space, such as the Brotherhood of Saint Lawrence, that are offering no interest loans or low interest loans to people experiencing financial hardship. It was suggested that Council could investigate what they're doing and adopt similar schemes.

Some stakeholders mentioned that small businesses can be overlooked in relation to such support – many small business owners are ‘doing it tough’ at a household level and also at a business level, so are in need of support.

Feedback from the Stakeholder Group

It was thought to be important that Council tries to build trust in the community in how financial decisions are made. Information should be freely available but it should be in consumer friendly formats as most people won't want to read detailed information.

“

“That you can have some of that information and that decision making process become a little bit clearer or at least kind of build that trust for the overwhelming majority of people that will not have participated in in making those decisions. If you can make that accessible and clear to them, I think that that goes a long way to building that trust..”

It was mentioned that the community members who probably have the most trust in Council are the ones who took part in the engagement program, and who are members of Council's People's Panel. Therefore, it was suggested that this group could become advocates for Council's decision making. The importance of keeping this group informed and engaged even after the process has finished was mentioned.

“

“Bringing those people on board and keeping them informed not just for the period of the process where you need them, where you need their feedback, but in more of an ongoing way. Making sure that you close the loop at the end.. They're going to be your strongest advocates and can build trust in the process more than he others.”

It was mentioned that a bill calculator on Council's website, or examples of bill impacts for different types of customers, might be a good way for Council to communicate the level of bill increases to be expected, both for residential and business customers.



06

Conclusions

Summary and conclusions

Participants were highly engaged during the forums – they felt they could provide their views and contribute during the sessions. Most believed that these forums were a good way of consulting the public about issues.

01 Customer Values

There was agreement and support for the customer values presented from the previous engagement – participants felt that they aligned with what they considered important in relation to the delivery of water and wastewater services. There were some calls for the inclusion of ‘efficiency’ to be a core value, particularly due to the financial troubles that faced Council in the early part of this decade. Good communication was also thought to be important, particularly in relation to outages, available customer support programs, water quality and pricing. Council could consider adding

efficiency and communication to the list of core values (communication could be included in the transparency and education value).

The implications of this for Council are that customers are looking for reassurance that Council is being cost efficient and making sustainable decisions that are in the best interests of its customers and the area, both short and longer term. This concern influenced their consideration of any optional programs for investment.

02 Essential Costs

The response to the presentation of essential costs was one of resignation – they understood the need for the essential costs but were not happy about it, particularly in the current economic climate.

The essential requirements that resonated the most with forum participants were those related to ongoing asset assessments, preventative maintenance and upgrades. In particular, there was recognition and understanding that the infrastructure was old and that the Central Coast population was growing, which would put further pressure on the system in the future. Replacements and upgrades to treatment plants and pipes, were considered vital to ensure future reliability and to maintain good water quality.

PFAS was a new issue to many – there was little understanding about it and therefore many felt that they would have to ‘trust’ Council to deal with this in a cost-efficient and effective way. Linking back to the customer values, there was also a desire for Council to educate the

public about this and advocate for preventative action.

Although there was general agreement that planning for droughts is essential, there were mixed views on the urgency of the Water Security Plan. Additionally, recent high rainfall on the East Coast led to many suggesting that water capture and storage should be a possible focus rather than a desalination plant.

Council should bear in mind the importance of good communication when implementing the bill increases for these essential costs over the coming period as customers will be looking for concrete justification for these plans and programs. It is recommended that Council communicates prior to the bill increases and clearly explains the reasons and benefits to customers of the essential costs.

Paying the increased bills is going to be a challenge for over a third of customers, according to the survey results.

Summary and conclusions

03 Optional Programs

In general, Central Coast Council customers did not seem willing to pay much more on top of the essential costs, particularly for things they felt would not have significant impacts.

The only optional program to receive majority support at the forums was the water quality option – increasing the length of water mains cleaning each year from 50-100km for a permanent increase of \$1 per year. Water quality is the most important customer value and the proactive nature of this program, to try to prevent problems in the future, was welcomed. In total, around three quarters of participants supported this program at the forums, three quarters in the panel survey and six in ten in the client survey (two thirds pooled). The evidence indicates that this option would have majority support and deliver a net benefit to the community, as willingness to pay is likely to exceed the cost. **Therefore, Council can assume support for the inclusion of the mains cleaning program in the pricing proposal.**

For programs to be supported, it seems that they either need to have a small impact on a large number of customers or a large impact on a small number of customers. Options that were perceived to have a small impact on a small number of customers were not perceived as positively. At the forums, participants reported that outages are not experienced by many customers at the moment so the program to install S-Gate valves to increase water supply reliability was not supported by a majority (48% support in final preferences).

The mixed views were reflected in the survey results too. Although around two thirds of the panel sample

supported the option, only half the client sample did, resulting in just over half of the pooled sample.

The mixed results do not present a clear direction for Council for S-Gate Valves. Although the evidence from the survey is that this project is likely to deliver a net benefit to the community, the concerns expressed by the client sample and forum participants would need to be considered by Council.

There was also mixed support for the additional CCTV camera truck as the impact of a change from 6.4 to 6 sewage discharges per 1000 properties seemed small to forum participants. There were also concerns that new technology may supersede the need for the truck. Final preferences showed only 44% support for this program at the forums, just over half from survey panel respondents and just under half from survey client respondents. **The mixed results do not provide clear evidence of endorsement by the community for an additional CCTV camera truck.**

There was very little support for the rebate program. The majority of participants at the forums were against this option, largely due to lack of clarity, perceived unfairness, and limited personal relevance. Rebates were considered to benefit the wealthier customers – those who were going to buy a new appliance anyway. During final preferences a total of 91% of forum participants were unsupportive of the option. A similar picture emerged in the survey, albeit less extreme with 62% of the pooled responses being unsupportive. **Overall, the evidence suggests this project would not have majority support and would not deliver a net benefit to the community (average willingness to pay is below cost).**

Summary and conclusions



04 Bill Phasing

Participants preferred that any cost increases are rolled out to customers using a flat format as it was seen to be more predictable for customers – overall 86% of the forum participants preferred this structure..



07

Appendix

Forum - End of Session Feedback

Participants were asked to complete an end of session evaluation of the meeting. Results are shown on the right.

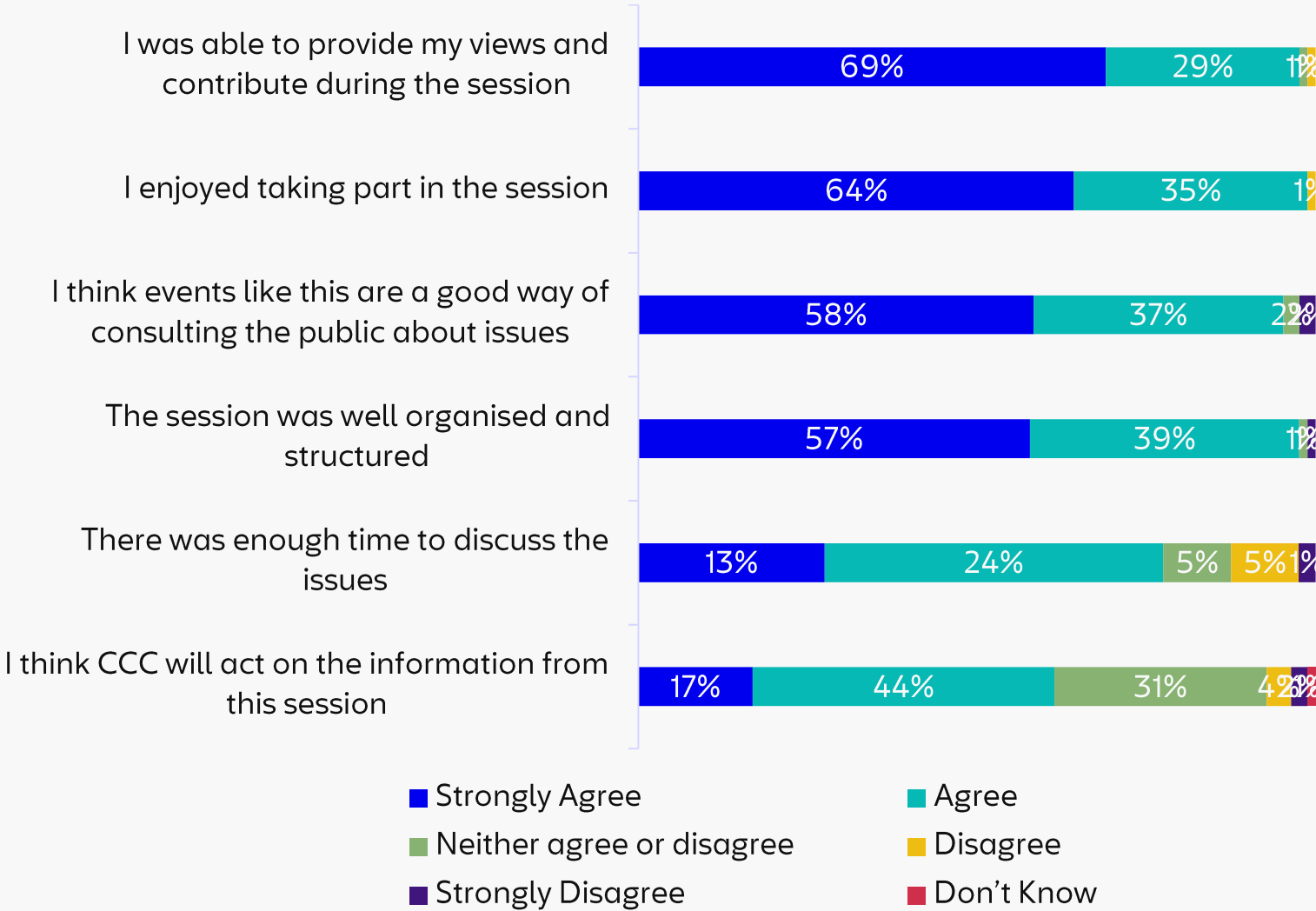
The vast majority of participants agreed that they were able to provide their views and contribute during the session, they enjoyed taking part and that such events are a good way of consulting the public about issues. They also agreed that the sessions were well organised and structured.

Over half agreed (strongly agree or agree) that CCC will act on the information from this session.. Less than half agreed that there was enough time to discuss the issues.

“ I have been to many of these sessions (people + panel) and this was the most clear, straightforward, focused and efficient. Our table facilitator was calm, clear and great to work with.”

“Really interesting to hear what is planned and get the views of others from different suburbs .”

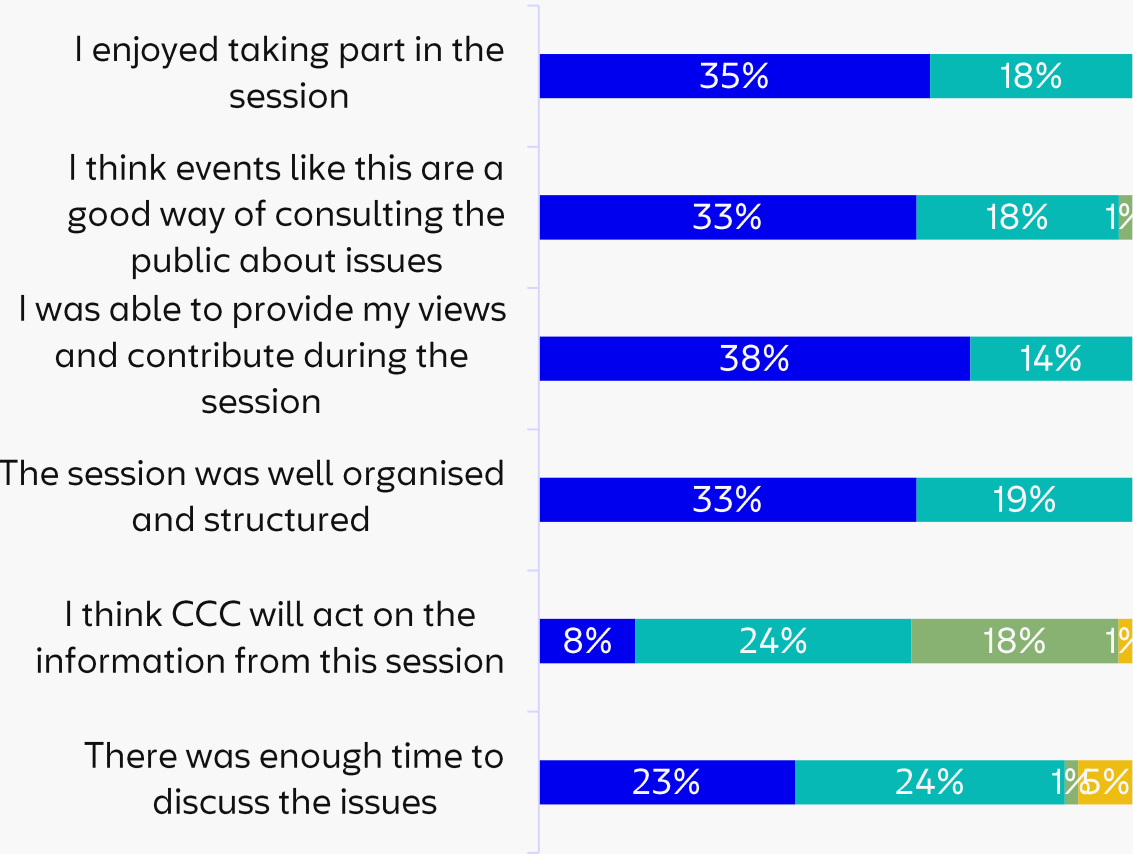
“Well organised and presented, specific and targeted



Total Base = 85

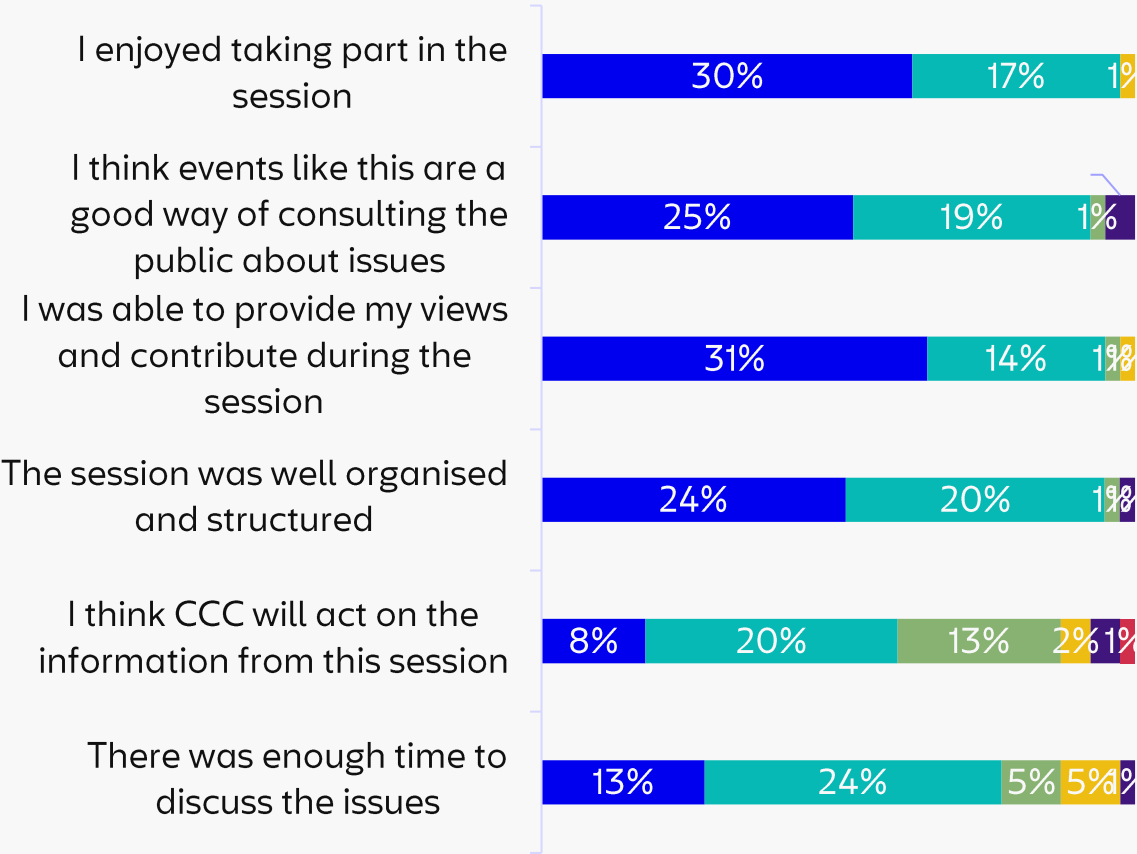
Forum - End of Session Feedback

Wyong



Wyong Base = 43

Gosford



Gosford Base = 42

- Strongly Agree

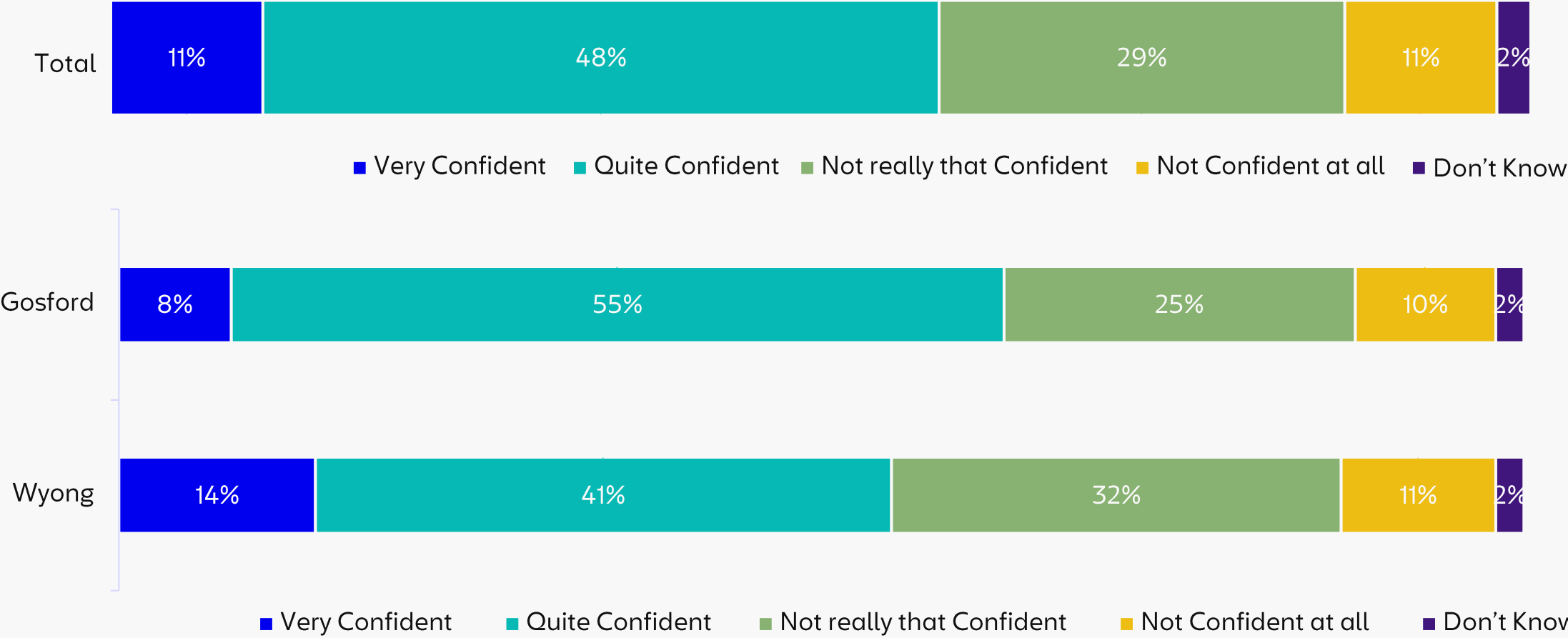
Agree

Neither agree or disagree

Strongly Disagree
- Disagree

Don't Know

Forum – End of Session Feedback



Q: If the majority of the forum stated that they are prepared to pay more for specific improvements and prices are increased, how confident are you that the improvements will be delivered? Total base: n=85 (Wyong n=43, Gosford n=42)

Forum Run Sheet

Time	Content	Responsibility	Materials
Before 6.00pm	Pre-forum - Registration - Table facilitators to provide participants with filming/photography permission forms and signing sheet on tables	H&P facilitators	PPT Name labels Photo forms
6.00–6.05pm (5 mins)	Guidelines and housekeeping - Welcome to the session - Explain purpose and structure of the session – brief agenda - Guidelines - Housekeeping - Introduce first speaker from Council	H&P Lead Facilitator – Liz Sparham	PPT
6.05–6.10pm (5 mins)	Presentation: Background to the session - Background to the project – requirement for Council to develop a proposal for the regulator about its spending for 2026–2031. - Would like customer input into the proposal – this ensures Council is focussing on customer priorities and preferences. - These forums are part of a wider community engagement program – explain other ways we are engaging, e.g. YVOC survey, pop-ups. <u>Tonight</u> Council will present what it considers the 'essential' costs and then some 'optional' costs for consideration.	Council – Krystie Bryant	PPT

6.10–6.15pm (5 mins)	Presentation 1: Customer Values - What CCC Water and Sewer does – role, scope, number of customers etc. - Overview of customer values from previous engagement. - Give a very brief overview what Council is already doing for the values (positive narrative about what is already being <u>done</u> and Council will keep doing going forward). Objective: Customers understand values and will be able to assess the service options within this context	Council – Krystie Bryant	PPT
6.15–6.25pm (10 mins)	Table Discussion: Customer Values <i>Introductions around tables: Ask participants to introduce themselves – say their first name, where they live and a couple of things they like about the area. Businesses can say what their business is.</i> (V brief) Are the values that Council presented what you think is important to customers in relation to water and wastewater services? - Remind them of the values if needed: <u>Good</u> water quality, reliable service, affordability, environmental focus, effective planning, transparency and education - Is there anything else that's important to you that you think is missing from these values? - What has been your experience of your water and wastewater services in the Central Coast area? Positives and negatives? Objective: Participants are aligned on what's important to customers.	H&P table facilitators	

Forum Run Sheet cont...

6.25-6.40pm (15 mins)	Presentation 2: What we do and 'Essential Costs' • Limitations in decision making regarding spending for 2026-31. • Advise of projects and initiatives that are 'essential costs': ◦ Asset condition assessments ◦ Sludge management/PFAS ◦ Capital projects ◦ Central Coast Water Security Plan • Advise of bill impacts of these set costs • Present the context of other utilities' bill increases	Council – Stephen Legge (Unit Manager – Assets and Projects) Danielle Hargreaves Jamie Loader Luke Drury	PPT
6.40-6.55pm (15 mins)	Table Discussion: Essential Costs • How important do you think it is that Council implements these things, i.e. do you see them as essential? Why/why not? Go through each in turn: ◦ Asset condition assessments, ◦ Sludge management/PFAS, ◦ Capital projects such as major treatment plan upgrades, replacement of aging infrastructure, regulatory upgrades, ◦ Central Coast Water Security Plan (planning for the future to ensure there is enough water even in times of drought) • What do you see as the benefits received for these costs? Are these benefits worth the cost (i.e. do you see them as value for money)? • Objective: Customers understand the bill impact of essential items to inform their feedback on optional items. They also have an opportunity to provide feedback on these 'essential' costs.	H&P Table Facilitators	

6.55-7.00pm (5 mins)	Presentation 3: 1st Optional Item - Water Quality • Provide information on water quality and water quality complaints • Present option for additional mains cleaning and what the outcome and cost would be for customers	Council – Danielle Hargreaves	PPT
7.00-7.15pm (15 mins)	Table Discussion and Activity: Water Quality Option Give out handout 1 • As a group discuss - do you think Council should include this program in their plans/proposal? Why/why not? Ask participants to fill in their sheets. Give each participant a sticker and ask them to stick it on wall poster under 'yes' or 'no' Discuss reasons for answers (some prompts for discussion below) • How important is this program to you? • What are the main benefits you can see for implementing this? • Do you think there would be any concerns with this program? If yes, what are they? How might these concerns be overcome? Choose a spokesperson to write a few bullet points on the flipchart on the reasons for the group's answers. The spokesperson may need to feedback to the room if called on in the next session. Objective: Customers understand how Council is meeting its obligations for water quality and what the option is for service improvement. Customers select preferred options and provide reasons.	H&P Table Facilitators	Handout 1 incl individual voting sheet Wall voting sheet

Forum Run Sheet cont...

715-720pm (5 mins)	Table Feedback: Water Quality - Lead facilitator presents wall voting sheet - Asks one-two tables to give reasons for answers (depending on time)	H&P Lead Facilitator	Wall voting sheet
720-745pm (25 mins)	DINNER		
745-752pm (7 mins)	Presentation 4: 2nd and 3rd Optional Items: Reliability (water and wastewater) - Provide information on reliability – how many planned outages there are per year on average - Present options for new 'S-GATE' valves and what the outcomes and costs would be for customers - Provide information on what sewer main breaks and chokes are and what the impacts of these are on customers and the environment - Present option for additional sewer inspections and what the outcome and cost would be for customers	Council – Danielle Hargreaves	PPT
752-810pm (18 mins)	Table Discussion and Activity: Reliability (water and wastewater) Give out handout 2 - As a group discuss – do you think Council should include this program in their plans/proposal? Why/why not? Ask participants to fill in their sheets. Give each participant a sticker and ask them to stick it on wall poster under 'yes' or 'no' Discuss reasons for answers (some prompts for discussion below) - How important is this program to you?	H&P table facilitators	Handout 2 incl. individual voting sheet Wall voting sheet

- What are the main benefits you can see for implementing this? - Do you think there would be any concerns with this program? If yes, what are they? How might these concerns be overcome? Choose a spokesperson to write a few bullet points on the flipchart on the reasons for the group's answers. The spokesperson may need to feedback to the room if called on in the next session. Reliability WASTEWATER Give out handout 3 - As a group discuss – do you think Council should include this program in their plans/proposal? Why/why not? Ask participants to fill in their sheets. Give each participant a sticker and ask them to stick it on wall poster under 'yes' or 'no' Discuss reasons for answers (some prompts for discussion below) - How important is this program to you? - What are the main benefits you can see for implementing this? - Do you think there would be any concerns with this program? If yes, what are they? How might these concerns be overcome? Choose a spokesperson to write a few bullet points on the flipchart on the reasons for the group's answers. The spokesperson may need to feedback to the room if called on in the next session. Objective: Customers understand how Council is meeting its obligations for reliability and what the option is for improvement. Customers select preferred options and provide reasons.	Handout 3 incl. individual voting sheet Wall voting sheet
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Forum Run Sheet cont...

8.10-8.15pm (5 mins)	Table Feedback: Reliability (water and wastewater) - Lead facilitator presents wall voting sheet - Asks one-two tables to give reasons for answers (depending on time)	H&P Lead Facilitator	Wall voting sheets
8.15-8.20pm (5 mins)	Presentation 5: 4th Optional Item: Effective Planning - Provide information on current water security and the risks of water restrictions and bill impacts of triggered investments - Present option for rebate programs to reduce demand and what the outcome and cost would be for customers	Council – Luke Drury	PPT
8.20-8.35pm (15 mins)	Table Discussion and Activity: Effective Planning Give out handout 4 - As a group discuss – do you think Council should include this program in their plans/proposal? Why/why not? Ask participants to fill in their sheets. Give each participant a sticker and ask them to stick it on wall poster under 'yes' or 'no' <i>Discuss reasons for answers (some prompts for discussion below)</i> - How important is this program to you? - What are the main benefits you can see for implementing this? - Do you think there would be any concerns with this program? If yes, what are they? How might these concerns be overcome? Choose a spokesperson to write a few bullet points on the flipchart on the reasons for the group's answers. The spokesperson may need to feedback to the room if called on in the next session. Objective: Customers understand how Council is meeting its obligations for effective planning and what the option is for improvement. Customers select preferred options and provide reasons.	H&P Table Facilitators	Handout 4 incl. individual voting sheet Wall voting sheet

8.35-8.40pm (5 mins)	Table Feedback: Effective Planning - Lead facilitator presents wall voting sheet - Asks one-two tables to give reasons for answers (depending on time)	H&P Lead Facilitator	Wall voting sheet
8.40-8.45pm (5 mins)	Presentation 6: Bringing it Together and Bill phasing - Before getting their final choices... - Council to outline 3 different options for bill phasing - Consistent increase (the same in each of the 5 years between 2026-31) - Start low and get higher - Start higher and get lower	Council	PPT
8.45-8.55pm (10 mins)	Table Activity: Final choices and preference for bill phasing Handout Total Bill Impact Preference Sheets - Explain to participants how to fill in the sheet and ask them to make final choices. Ensure they add their names. - Ask if anyone made changes to their earlier preferences? If so, ask them to explain reasons for changes. Facilitators to collect bill impact preference sheets - Are you happy with the combination of options that the MAJORITY of participants at the forum have chosen, for example, if a majority chose each program (but not 100% of participants) then are you happy that Council implements all 4 programs at a cost of \$11? Ask for a show of hands at the table and record number of people who support the majority view.	H&P Table Facilitators	Handout: Bill impact preference sheet Handout 5 on bill phasing

Forum Run Sheet cont...

	Give out handout 5 on bill phasing - Explain that there are different ways that water utilities can pass on cost increases: - Consistent increase (the same in each of the 5 years between 2026-31) - Start low and get higher - Start higher and get lower - What is your preference for bill phasing and why? <i>Ask them to choose preference on sheet. Ensure names are added and collect sheets.</i>		
8.55-9.00pm (5 mins)	Next steps and close - Council to outline key takeaways from the session and what will happen next. - Outline how the findings will be used and whether there will be an opportunity for participants to hear what Council has included in the proposal.	Council	PPT
9.00pm	End of session survey and respondent validation sheet <i>Table facilitators to ask participants to fill in the end of session survey and hand back</i> <i>Also check they have signed the respondent validation sheet. Explain that incentives will be emailed to them.</i> <i>Collect all handouts/voting preference sheets. Check names are included on voting preference sheets.</i>	H&P Facilitators	End of session survey and respondent validation

Survey Questionnaire – General

Welcome to our survey.

 **start**

(Make sure you have POP-UPs enabled)

Hall & Partners

CONTROL & SUPPORT

Welcome...

Placing customers at the centre of everything they do, Central Coast Council is asking you to have your say on future water and sewer service improvement options and whether you would be willing to pay for those services. Customer feedback will affect your future water bill and the services that you receive.

By participating, you will have the opportunity to provide your contact details to go into a random draw to obtain **one of five \$200 gift cards**. Please refer to [Terms and Conditions](#).

Your input is very important. This questionnaire will take around 15 minutes to complete.

Privacy and data collection notice

The survey is being conducted by Hall & Partners on behalf of Central Coast Council in compliance with the Privacy Act. The information and opinions you provide will be used for research purposes only. The responses of everyone who participates in the survey will be combined and no individual information will be published. Learn more about our [privacy policy](#).

If you wish to enter the draw for participating in this survey, you will need to provide personal information such as your name and email address or phone number. This information will be used only for the purpose of contacting the recipients. It will not be provided to Central Coast Council. You may choose not to provide this information.

Need help?

In the unlikely event of any technical difficulties please click on the technical support [e-mail link](#).

For other enquiries or to verify the legitimacy of this survey, please contact Central Coast Council on (02) 4306 7900.

Please keep in mind...

- Do not use your Back or Forward browser buttons during the questionnaire.
- Once you answer a question, you won't be able to go back and change your answer.
- On some pages, additional information is available by hovering the cursor over blue text (i).

Continue

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Hall & Partners

CONTROL & SUPPORT

Before we go through to the main questions, we would like to ask you some questions to ensure feedback is representative of our community.

Continue

Hall & Partners

CONTROL & SUPPORT

Do you:

Please select all that apply

☐ Live in a property on the Central Coast

☐ Own or manage a commercial premises on the Central Coast

☐ None of the above

Continue

Hall & Partners

CONTROL & SUPPORT

Do you work for "Water and Sewer" at Central Coast Council?

Please select one

☐ Yes

☐ No

Continue

Survey questionnaire – Residential (1)

Hall & Partners

CONTROL & SUPPORT

How do you receive water bills?

Please select one

- ☐ Directly from Central Coast Council
- ☐ Through my body corporate
- ☐ Through my landlord/real estate
- ☐ I do not receive a water bill or a specific fee from my landlord/body corporate

Continue

Hall & Partners

CONTROL & SUPPORT

Please give a rough estimate of the amount you pay for water and sewerage services each quarter.

- As a guide, a typical house would pay around \$370 per quarter
- A typical apartment would pay around \$320 per quarter
- Bills for business customers vary a lot depending on the size of the meter and how much water they use

The amount I pay for water and sewerage services each quarter is:

Please select one

- ☐ Less than \$250
- ☐ \$250 - \$299
- ☐ \$300 - \$350
- ☐ \$350 - \$399
- ☐ \$400 - \$499
- ☐ \$500 - \$999
- ☐ \$1000 - \$1999
- ☐ \$2000 - \$4999
- ☐ \$5000 - \$9999
- ☐ Other (Please type in a numeric value)
- ☐ Don't know

Continue

Survey questionnaire – Residential (2)

[illegible][illegible]

Survey questionnaire – Residential (3)

Hall & Partners

CONTROL & SUPPORT

Essential costs

Before we present the options for your consideration, we want to let you know that there are some necessary costs that Council has to incur to meet new environmental and safety obligations and to ensure the water and wastewater system is maintained to a sufficient standard. These also include planning for the future to ensure there is enough water to supply future population growth. We expect water bills to increase by between 17% and 22%, plus inflation, to cover these costs.

This survey asks about projects on top of these essential costs. We are telling you about these essential costs so you can consider affordability when giving your views on the options. [\(i\)](#)

What are your thoughts on the essential costs and their impact on your bill?

Please select all that apply

- ☐ Paying the bill would be a challenge
- ☐ I don't know enough about the environmental and safety obligations
- ☐ I don't know enough about what the impact of delaying these costs would be
- ☐ I think those sound like important areas for investment
- ☐ Other (please specify)

Continue

Hall & Partners

Continue

Continue

Survey questionnaire – Residential (5)

Water supply reliability

Sometimes, we will need to turn off your mains water supply to repair and maintain water pipes in your area.

While the water supply is turned off, you won't be able to get water from the taps on your property. This means you will not be able to:

- pour a glass of drinking water
- flush the toilet (after it's been flushed once)
- rinse or wash dishes or clothes, or
- have a shower.

Sometimes, the work will be urgent and we may not be able to warn you about an interruption.



Continue

Special valves in water pipes

We can reduce the number of water supply interruptions and the number of water quality problems by installing more Smart Gate Valves (S-gate valves). S-gate valves are special valves used for controlling water flow in pipelines. The technology decreases disruption of water services for the community by eliminating the need to shut down water mains during large water main valve replacement. However, they cost more than standard valves.

Please consider the program below.

Program details	Install special valves that enable us to work on the pipes without turning off your water
Benefits to you	Reduce the chance of you experiencing an unplanned water outage during July 2026 - June 2031 from 61% to 32%
	Reduce the number of complaints about water quality each year per 1000 customers from 7.0 to 6.4
Cost to you	You pay a permanent increase in your annual bill of \$1 p.a. (on top of the bill increase for essential costs)

Do you support this program? (i)

Please select one

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ No firm preference

Continue

Survey questionnaire – Residential (6)

Hall & Partners

CONTROL & SUPPORT

Wastewater discharges

Wastewater is the used water that goes down sinks, toilets and drains. If the system becomes blocked, wastewater can discharge from manholes or even from grates in private yards.

It is mostly water, but it can carry bacteria, viruses and other harmful organisms. When a discharge happens, people need to stop using their toilets and sinks and stay away from the area until it has been cleared. Discharges can happen at any time and often take more than five hours to be resolved.



Continue

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CONTROL & SUPPORT

Increase camera inspections of wastewater pipes

We could reduce the number of wastewater discharges by investing in a new truck with a camera for inspecting wastewater pipes. This would help us to find problems like cracks, blockages or tree roots and fix them before they lead to a blockage.

Please consider the program below.

Program details	More camera inspections to find and fix wastewater issues
Benefits to you	The number of wastewater discharges per 1000 properties will decrease from 6.4 to 6.0 per year
Cost to you	You pay a permanent increase in your annual bill of \$2 p.a. (on top of the bill increase for essential costs)

Do you support this program? [\(i\)](#)

Please select one

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ No firm preference

Continue

Survey questionnaire – Residential (7)

Hall & Partners

CONTROL & SUPPORT

Water security

When drought conditions return, we may need people to reduce their water usage so that our water supply system doesn't run out of water. This may involve outdoor water restrictions on use of sprinklers or at specified times of day.

If total water usage increases as population grows, or our patterns of rainfall and temperature change, we would also need to invest in expensive new sources of water supply, such as purified recycled water and desalination. The timing of these investments depends on the community's long term water usage patterns and the future climate. We estimate they could be needed in the period 2040 to 2053 based on current demand forecasts.



Continue

Hall & Partners

CONTROL & SUPPORT

Rebates for water efficient fixtures for homes

We can push back the need for water restrictions and more expensive investments in new water sources by reducing our water usage now. One way we can do this is by offering rebates to encourage households to install water-efficient appliances and fix leaks. The program would cover:

- swapping old showerheads and toilets for water-saving models
- replacing top loader washing machines with more efficient front loaders
- helping with the cost of a plumber to repair leaks.

A set number of eligible households (1000 to 2000 for each fixture type) would be able to take part in each offer. All households would pay more to fund the program.

Please consider the program below.

Program details	Rebates would be provided for household showerheads, toilets, washing machines, and leak maintenance
Benefits to you	Water restrictions won't be needed until 1 month later in a future severe drought or longer in a less severe drought Future bill increases from building new supplies would be pushed back 2 years from 2040-2053 to 2042-2055
Cost to you	You pay a permanent increase in your annual bill of \$6 p.a. (on top of the bill increase for essential costs)

Do you support this program? (i)

Please select one

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ No firm preference

Continue

Survey questionnaire – Residential (8)

Hall & Partners

CONTROL & SUPPORT

Overall package of options

Now we want to confirm your preferred package of options for July 2026 – June 2031 water and sewer rates.

As noted earlier, your bill may increase by between 17% and 22% plus inflation in July 2026 – June 2031 to cover the cost of meeting safety and environmental obligations before any of the options in this survey are added.

For this survey, assume that your annual bill would be \$290 higher in July 2026 – June 2031 compared to your current annual bill.

In the next question, we will show you the overall impact on your bill from your chosen options. You will be able to change your choices if you wish.

Continue

Hall & Partners

CONTROL & SUPPORT

Overall package of options

If you want to change your preferred package of options for July 2026 – June 2031 water and sewer rates, use the checkboxes in each row. The overall change in your annual bill from 2026 is shown at the bottom of the page.

This is the most important question in this survey, so please take your time to work out the best package for you. Then, click 'Choose this package'. Choosing a package does not mean you support the 17%-22% bill increase for essential costs.

A checkbox is selected based on you answering 'Yes' to supporting the relevant program when asked earlier in this survey. If you do not support it and/or do not wish to pay the extra money, uncheck the relevant checkbox.

Cleaning water pipes Water quality complaints reduced from 7.0 to 3.6 per 1000 customers per year.	☒
Special valves in water pipes Chance of an unplanned water outage during July 2026 - June 2031 reduced from 61% to 32%. Water quality complaints reduced from 7.0 to 6.4 per 1000 customers per year.	☒
Increase camera inspections of wastewater pipes The number of wastewater discharges per 1000 properties will decrease from 6.4 to 6.0 per year.	☒
Rebates for water efficient fixtures for homes Water restrictions won't be needed until 1 month later in a future severe drought or longer in a less severe drought. Future bill increases from building new supplies would be pushed back 2 years from 2040-2053 to 2042-2055.	☒
Your bill Permanent change in your annual bill from these options	You pay an extra \$10
The approximate annual amount you pay in July 2026 - June 2031*	\$1600

* Based on the bill estimate you gave earlier in the survey and adjusted to include a 22% increase + your chosen options. To provide like-for-like comparison this bill contains drainage charges that will no longer form part of the water bill from 1 July 2026 but will be transferred to general rates.

Choose this package

Survey questionnaire – Residential (9)

Hall & Partners

CONTROL & SUPPORT

Were you unsure about any of your choices?

Please select one

- ☐ I was unsure about one or two of my choices
- ☐ I was sure about all of my choices
- ☐ I was unsure about most of my choices

Continue

Hall & Partners

CONTROL & SUPPORT

To what extent did you think about the way options would affect other customers?

Please select one

- ☐ I thought a lot about which option would be best for the community
- ☐ I mostly thought about which option would be best for me
- ☐ I thought only about which option would be best for me

Continue

Hall & Partners

CONTROL & SUPPORT

Earlier in the survey we told you that your responses will affect your bill and the services you get. To what degree do you expect the results of this survey will affect decisions made by Central Coast Council?

Please select one

- ☐ I believe it is very likely the survey will affect Central Coast Council's decisions
- ☐ I believe it is somewhat likely the survey will affect Central Coast Council's decisions
- ☐ I don't think the survey will affect any of Central Coast Council's decisions

Continue

Survey questionnaire – Residential (10)

Hall & Partners

CONTROL & SUPPORT

What is the postcode of your property?

Please select one

☐ 2083

☐ 2230

☐ 2231

☐ 2236

☐ 2237

☐ 2238

☐ 2239

☐ 2260

☐ 2261

☐ 2262

☐ 2263

☐ 2264

☐ 2775

☐ Other(specify)

Continue

Hall & Partners

CONTROL & SUPPORT

Are you...

Please select one

☐ Male

☐ Female

☐ Other

☐ Prefer not to say

Continue

Hall & Partners

CONTROL & SUPPORT

Do you speak a language other than English at home or with family?

Please select one

☐ No, English only

☐ Yes

Continue

Survey questionnaire – Residential (11)

Hall & Partners

CONTROL & SUPPORT

Are you of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin?

Please select one

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Continue

Hall & Partners

CONTROL & SUPPORT

In the last 12 months have you had any difficulty paying your water bills, e.g. had to ask for an extension or paid late, been on a special payment plan, delayed other payments or borrowed money to pay?

Please select one

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Continue

Hall & Partners

CONTROL & SUPPORT

Do you identify as having a disability?

Please select one

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Continue

Hall & Partners

CONTROL & SUPPORT

Which best describes your household:

Please select one

- ☐ Couple/family without children at home
- ☐ Couple/family with children at home
- ☐ One parent family
- ☐ Group household
- ☐ Single person household
- ☐ Other

Continue

Survey questionnaire – Residential (12)

Hall & Partners

CONTROL & SUPPORT

What is your work status?

Please select one

- ☐ Working full time
- ☐ Working part time/casually
- ☐ Student
- ☐ Not currently employed
- ☐ Home duties
- ☐ Retired
- ☐ Other

Continue

Hall & Partners

CONTROL & SUPPORT

What is your approximate annual household income before tax?

Please select one

- ☐ Less than \$41,600
- ☐ Between \$41,600 and \$78,000
- ☐ Between \$78,000 and \$104,000
- ☐ Between \$104,000 and \$136,000
- ☐ More than \$136,000
- ☐ Do not wish to answer

Continue

Hall & Partners

CONTROL & SUPPORT

In what type of dwelling do you live?

Please select one

- ☐ Separate house
- ☐ Semi-detached, row or terrace house, townhouse
- ☐ Flat or apartment
- ☐ Other

Continue

Survey questionnaire – Residential (13)

Hall & Partners

CONTROL & SUPPORT

Would you be happy to provide an email address and phone number we could use to contact you if you are randomly selected to receive one of five \$200 GiftPay gift cards?

Please select one

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

Continue

Hall & Partners

CONTROL & SUPPORT

Please provide your contact details below. These will be used only for the purpose of administering the draw for this survey.

Please type your response

Name

Phone

Email

☐ I do not wish to enter the draw

Continue

Hall & Partners

CONTROL & SUPPORT

Finally, is there any feedback you would like to provide on this survey?

Please type your response



☐ I do not have any feedback

Continue

Hall & Partners

CONTROL & SUPPORT

Thank you for participating in this survey. Your opinions are very important. Please click 'Continue' to submit your survey.

Continue

Survey questionnaire – Residential (14)

Hall & Partners

CONTROL & SUPPORT

Thank you for your participation! You have reached the end of the survey.



This market research is carried out in compliance with the Australian Privacy Act and the information that you have provided will be used only for research purposes.

Research on behalf of Open Mind

Visit <https://researchsociety.com.au/> to learn more about the market and social research industry, our standard and guarantees to research participants, our privacy guidelines and how participation in research can make a real difference to the quality of life of people living in Australia.



Survey questionnaire – Commercial (1)

Hall & Partners

CONTROL & SUPPORT

Are you happy to answer this survey on behalf of your business?

Please select one

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No, I want to answer on behalf of my household

Continue

Hall & Partners

CONTROL & SUPPORT

Does your business provide water and/or sewerage services to Central Coast Council?

Please select one

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Continue

Hall & Partners

CONTROL & SUPPORT

How do you receive water bills?

Please select one

- ☐ Directly from Central Coast Council
- ☐ Through my body corporate
- ☐ Through my landlord/real estate
- ☐ I do not receive a water bill or a specific fee from my landlord/body corporate

Continue

Survey questionnaire – Commercial (2)

Hall & Partners

CONTROL & SUPPORT

Please give a rough estimate of the amount you pay for water and sewerage services each quarter.

- As a guide, a typical house would pay around \$370 per quarter
- A typical apartment would pay around \$320 per quarter
- Bills for business customers vary a lot depending on the size of the meter and how much water they use

The amount I pay for water and sewerage services each quarter is:

Please select one

- ☐ Less than \$250
- ☐ \$250 - \$299
- ☐ \$300 - \$350
- ☐ \$350 - \$399
- ☐ \$400 - \$499
- ☐ \$500 - \$999
- ☐ \$1000 - \$1999
- ☐ \$2000 - \$4999
- ☐ \$5000 - \$9999
- ☐ Other (Please type in a numeric value)
- ☐ Don't know

Continue

Hall & Partners

CONTROL & SUPPORT

How many people does your business employ on the Central Coast?

Please select one

- ☐ Non-employing / sole trader
- ☐ 1-4 employees
- ☐ 5-19 employees
- ☐ 20-199 employees
- ☐ 200 employees or more

Continue

Survey questionnaire – Commercial (3)

Hall & Partners

CONTROL & SUPPORT

This survey is about Central Coast Council's water and sewer services and pricing for July 2026 - June 2031. It has three parts:

1. Background information
2. Your preferences
3. About you

We want your feedback on specific options to improve:

- Water quality
- Water supply interruptions
- Wastewater discharges
- Water conservation

Continue

Hall & Partners

CONTROL & SUPPORT

Essential costs

Before we present the options for your consideration, we want to let you know that there are some necessary costs that Council has to incur to meet new environmental and safety obligations and to ensure the water and wastewater system is maintained to a sufficient standard. These also include planning for the future to ensure there is enough water to supply future population growth. We expect water bills to increase by between 17% and 22%, plus inflation, to cover these costs.

This survey asks about projects on top of these essential costs. We are telling you about these essential costs so you can consider affordability when giving your views on the options. [\(i\)](#)

What are your thoughts on the essential costs and their impact on your bill?

Please select all that apply

☐ Paying the bill would be a challenge

☐ I don't know enough about the environmental and safety obligations

☐ I don't know enough about what the impact of delaying these costs would be

☐ I think those sound like important areas for investment

☐ Other (please specify)

Continue

Survey questionnaire – Commercial (4)

Hall & Partners

CONTROL & SUPPORT

Water quality (i)

When water usage is high or a pipe is broken, water moves quickly through our pipes, stirring up sediment and minerals. This can affect the colour, odour and taste of your tap water. While this is not a health risk, some people may dislike the taste, and, in severe cases, it can discolour clothing or other items being washed. These water quality issues are rare, with complaints from fewer than 1% of our customers each year.



Continue

Hall & Partners

CONTROL & SUPPORT

Cleaning water pipes

To improve your water quality, we could increase the cleaning of our water pipes. This involves flushing water through the pipes to remove sediment and mineral deposits. This option is based on previous community consultations where water quality was identified as a top priority.

Please consider the program below.

Program details	To increase the length of mains cleaned each year, from 50km to 100km
Benefits to you	Reduce the number of complaints about water quality each year per 1000 customers from 7.0 to 5.6
Cost to you	You pay a permanent increase in your annual bill of \$2 p.a. (on top of the bill increase for essential costs)

Do you support this program? (i)

Please select one

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ No firm preference

Continue

Survey questionnaire – Commercial (5)

Hall & Partners

CONTROL & SUPPORT

Water supply reliability

Sometimes, we will need to turn off your mains water supply to repair and maintain water pipes in your area.

While the water supply is turned off, you won't be able to get water from the taps on your property. This means you will not be able to:

- pour a glass of drinking water
- flush the toilet (after it's been flushed once)
- rinse or wash dishes or clothes, or
- have a shower.

Sometimes, the work will be urgent and we may not be able to warn you about an interruption.



Continue

Hall & Partners

CONTROL & SUPPORT

Special valves in water pipes

We can reduce the number of water supply interruptions and the number of water quality problems by installing more Smart Gate Valves (S-gate valves). S-gate valves are special valves used for controlling water flow in pipelines. The technology decreases disruption of water services for the community by eliminating the need to shut down water mains during large water main valve replacement. However, they cost more than standard valves.

Please consider the program below.

Program details	Install special valves that enable us to work on the pipes without turning off your water
Benefits to you	Reduce the chance of you experiencing an unplanned water outage during July 2026 - June 2031 from 61% to 52%
	Reduce the number of complaints about water quality each year per 1000 customers from 7.0 to 6.4
Cost to you	You pay a permanent increase in your annual bill of \$2 p.a. (on top of the bill increase for essential costs)

Do you support this program? [\(i\)](#)

Please select one

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ No firm preference

Continue

Survey questionnaire – Commercial (6)

Wastewater discharges

Wastewater is the used water that goes down sinks, toilets and drains. If the system becomes blocked, wastewater can discharge from manholes or even from grates in private yards.

It is mostly water, but it can carry bacteria, viruses and other harmful organisms. When a discharge happens, people need to stop using their toilets and sinks and stay away from the area until it has been cleared. Discharges can happen at any time and often take more than five hours to be resolved.



Continue

Increase camera inspections of wastewater pipes

We could reduce the number of wastewater discharges by investing in a new truck with a camera for inspecting wastewater pipes. This would help us to find problems like cracks, blockages or tree roots and fix them before they lead to a blockage.

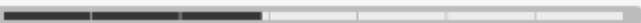
Please consider the program below.

Program details	More camera inspections to find and fix wastewater issues
Benefits to you	The number of wastewater discharges per 1000 properties will decrease from 6.4 to 6.0 per year
Cost to you	You pay a permanent increase in your annual bill of \$4 p.a. (on top of the bill increase for essential costs)

Do you support this program? (i)

Please select one

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ No firm preference



Continue

Survey questionnaire – Commercial (7)

Water security

When drought conditions return, we may need people to reduce their water usage so that our water supply system doesn't run out of water. This may involve outdoor water restrictions on use of sprinklers or at specified times of day.

If total water usage increases as population grows, or our patterns of rainfall and temperature change, we would also need to invest in expensive new sources of water supply, such as purified recycled water and desalination. The timing of these investments depends on the community's long term water usage patterns and the future climate. We estimate they could be needed in the period 2040 to 2053 based on current demand forecasts.



Continue

Rebates for water efficient fixtures for homes

We can push back the need for water restrictions and more expensive investments in new water sources by reducing our water usage now. One way we can do this is by offering rebates to encourage households to install water-efficient appliances and fix leaks. The program would cover:

- swapping old showerheads and toilets for water-saving models
- replacing top loader washing machines with more efficient front loaders
- helping with the cost of a plumber to repair leaks.

A set number of eligible households (1000 to 2000 for each fixture type) would be able to take part in each offer. All households would pay more to fund the program.

Please consider the program below.

Program details	Rebates would be provided for household showerheads, toilets, washing machines, and leak maintenance
Benefits to you	Water restrictions won't be needed until 1 month later in a future severe drought or longer in a less severe drought
	Future bill increases from building new supplies would be pushed back 2 years from 2040–2053 to 2042–2055
Cost to you	You pay a permanent increase in your annual bill of \$14 p.a. (on top of the bill increase for essential costs)

Do you support this program? [\(i\)](#)

Please select one

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ No firm preference



Continue

Survey questionnaire – Commercial (8)

Hall & Partners

CONTROL & SUPPORT

Overall package of options

Now we want to confirm your preferred package of options for July 2026 – June 2031 water and sewer rates.

As noted earlier, your bill may increase by between 17% and 22% plus inflation in July 2026 – June 2031 to cover the cost of meeting safety and environmental obligations before any of the options in this survey are added.

For this survey, assume that your annual bill would be \$660 higher in July 2026 – June 2031 compared to your current annual bill.

In the next question, we will show you the overall impact on your bill from your chosen options. You will be able to change your choices if you wish.

Continue

Hall & Partners

CONTROL & SUPPORT

Overall package of options

If you want to change your preferred package of options for July 2026 – June 2031 water and sewer rates, use the checkboxes in each row. The overall change in your annual bill from 2026 is shown at the bottom of the page.

This is the most important question in this survey, so please take your time to work out the best package for you. Then, click 'Choose this package'. Choosing a package does not mean you support the 17%-22% bill increase for essential costs.

A check box is selected based on you answering 'Yes' to supporting the relevant program when asked earlier in this survey. If you do not support it and/or do not wish to pay the extra money, uncheck the relevant checkbox.

Cleaning water pipes Water quality complaints reduced from 7.0 to 5.6 per 1000 customers per year	☒
Special valves in water pipes Chance of an unplanned water outage during July 2026 - June 2031 reduced from 61% to 52%. Water quality complaints reduced from 7.0 to 6.4 per 1000 customers per year.	☒
Increase camera inspections of wastewater pipes The number of wastewater discharges per 1000 properties will decrease from 6.4 to 6.0 per year	☒
Rebates for water efficient fixtures for homes Water restrictions won't be needed until 1 month later in a future severe drought or longer in a less severe drought. Future bill increases from building new supplies would be pushed back 2 years from 2040-2053 to 2042-2055.	☒
Your bill Permanent change in your annual bill from these options	You pay an extra \$22
The approximate annual amount you pay in July 2026 - June 2031*	\$3682

* Based on the bill estimate you gave earlier in the survey and adjusted to include a 22% increase + your chosen options. To provide like-for-like comparison this bill contains drainage charges that will no longer form part of the water bill from 1 July 2026 but will be transferred to general rates.

Choose this package

Survey questionnaire – Commercial (9)

Hall & Partners

CONTROL & SUPPORT

Were you unsure about any of your choices?

Please select one

- ☐ I was unsure about one or two of my choices
- ☐ I was sure about all of my choices
- ☐ I was unsure about most of my choices

Continue

Hall & Partners

CONTROL & SUPPORT

To what extent did you think about the way options would affect other customers?

Please select one

- ☐ I thought a lot about which option would be best for the community
- ☐ I mostly thought about which option would be best for me
- ☐ I thought only about which option would be best for me

Continue

Hall & Partners

CONTROL & SUPPORT

Earlier in the survey we told you that your responses will affect your bill and the services you get. To what degree do you expect the results of this survey will affect decisions made by Central Coast Council?

Please select one

- ☐ I believe it is very likely the survey will affect Central Coast Council's decisions
- ☐ I believe it is somewhat likely the survey will affect Central Coast Council's decisions
- ☐ I don't think the survey will affect any of Central Coast Council's decisions

Continue

Survey questionnaire – Commercial (10)

Hall & Partners CONTROL & SUPPORT

What is the postcode of your property?

Please select one

- ☐ 2083
- ☐ 2230
- ☐ 2231
- ☐ 2236
- ☐ 2237
- ☐ 2238
- ☐ 2239
- ☐ 2260
- ☐ 2261
- ☐ 2262
- ☐ 2263
- ☐ 2264
- ☐ 2775
- ☐ Other(specify)



Hall & Partners CONTROL & SUPPORT

Are you...

Please select one

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Other
- ☐ Prefer not to say



Survey questionnaire – Commercial (11)

Hall & Partners

CONTROL & SUPPORT

In which industry does your business mainly operate?

Please select one

- ☐ Accommodation and Food Services
- ☐ Administrative and Support Services
- ☐ Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing
- ☐ Arts and Recreation Services
- ☐ Construction
- ☐ Education and Training
- ☐ Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services
- ☐ Financial and Insurance Services
- ☐ Health Care and Social Assistance
- ☐ Information Media and Telecommunications
- ☐ Manufacturing
- ☐ Mining
- ☐ Professional, Scientific and Technical Services
- ☐ Public Administration and Safety
- ☐ Rental, Hiring and Real Estate Services
- ☐ Retail Trade
- ☐ Transport, Postal and Warehousing
- ☐ Wholesale Trade
- ☐ Other Services
- ☐ Don't know

Continue

Hall & Partners

CONTROL & SUPPORT

Do you have clients/customers at your business premises?

Please select one

- ☐ Never / very rarely
- ☐ Some of the time
- ☐ Very often / all of the time
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Continue

Survey questionnaire – Commercial (12)

Hall & Partners

CONTROL & SUPPORT

How much of your business activity takes place at your business premises?

Please select one

- ☐ All/most of our business activity
- ☐ Some of our business activity
- ☐ Little/none of our business activity



Continue

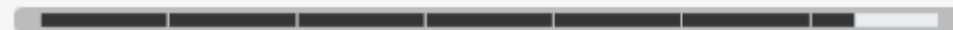
Hall & Partners

CONTROL & SUPPORT

For how many years has your business been operating?

Please select one

- ☐ Less than 1 year
- ☐ 1-2 years
- ☐ 2-5 years
- ☐ 6-10 years
- ☐ More than 10 years



Continue

Survey questionnaire – Commercial (13)

Hall & Partners

CONTROL & SUPPORT

What is your position or title within your business?

Please select one

- ☐ Owner / proprietor
- ☐ Senior management
- ☐ Other employee

Continue

Survey questionnaire – Commercial (14)

Hall & Partners

CONTROL & SUPPORT

Would you be happy to provide an email address and phone number we could use to contact you if you are randomly selected to receive one of five \$200 GiftPay gift cards?

Please select one

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

Continue

Hall & Partners

CONTROL & SUPPORT

Please provide your contact details below. These will be used only for the purpose of administering the draw for this survey.

Please type your response

Name

Phone

Email

☐ I do not wish to enter the draw

Continue

Hall & Partners

CONTROL & SUPPORT

Finally, is there any feedback you would like to provide on this survey?

Please type your response



☐ I do not have any feedback

Continue

Hall & Partners

CONTROL & SUPPORT

Thank you for participating in this survey. Your opinions are very important. Please click 'Continue' to submit your survey.

Continue

Survey questionnaire – Commercial (15)

Hall & Partners

CONTROL & SUPPORT

Thank you for your participation! You have reached the end of the survey.



This market research is carried out in compliance with the Australian Privacy Act and the information that you have provided will be used only for research purposes.

Research on behalf of Open Mind

Visit <https://researchsociety.com.au/> to learn more about the market and social research industry, our standard and guarantees to research participants, our privacy guidelines and how participation in research can make a real difference to the quality of life of people living in Australia.

