

Phase 4 Future Service Options Community Engagement Summary 2025

Background

Central Coast Council is preparing its next submission to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART), that set the maximum prices for the water and sewerage services. Council's submission is due for lodgement in September 2025 and will cover prices from 1 July 2026 till 30 June 2031.

Customer engagement is a key component of this proposal and Phase 4 – Future Service Options consisted of several different methods of engagement:

- Stakeholder Group and People's Panel forum co-design – facilitated by Hall and Partners
- Deliberative forums – facilitated by Hall and Partners
- Pop-ups kiosks – facilitated internally
- Online survey – facilitated by Hall and Partners
- Workshop co-hosted by Business NSW – facilitated internally

The objectives of our program were to:

- Be transparent with our customers around potential bill increases for the pricing period 1 July 2026 – 30 June 2031.
- Educate our customers on the essential costs that Council must fund in the next pricing period.
- Give our customers choices around 'optional' expenditure that aligned to our customer's core values.
- Determine the most appropriate way to implement the new prices in terms of bill phasing.

Participation

Stakeholder Group and People's Panel

- 5 participants from 'consumer and business advocacy' organisations attended the co-design workshop.
- 8 members of the People's Panel attended the co-design workshop.

Deliberative forums

- 43 participants attended Wyong forum, including 9 members of the People's Panel.
- 42 participants attended the Gosford forum, including 5 members of the People's Panel.
- For detailed demographic breakdown, please refer to Hall and Partners, 'Community Engagement Program Report June 2025'.

Survey

- 1133 responses from direct link on Council's Your Voice Our Coast engagement platform.
- 400 responses from Panel sample (recruited via i-Link Research/Pureprofile).
- For detailed demographic breakdown, please refer to Hall and Partners, 'Community Engagement Program Report June 2025'.

Business Workshop

- 16 representatives (from 14 organisations) attended this workshop, in addition to representatives from Business NSW.

Key insights

Values

Participants that attended the Deliberative Forum were generally supportive of the existing Customer Values, with 'affordability' regarded as a focus area for Council. There was also discussion around 'efficiency' being singled out as its own value, instead of being absorbed by other values, and 'communication' being added as a new value.



Essential Costs

Asset Condition Assessments

Forums participants agreed that these assessments were beneficial and essential, particularly with our ageing infrastructure, but there were some questions around the costs and why these had not been addressed in the past.

Sludge Management / PFAS

There was divided knowledge and understanding of sludge and PFAS amongst forum participants and there was a desire for future education on this topic. Participants asked why this issue is only emerging now and if alternate ways of disposing of sludge should be further researched.

Capital Projects

The costs to fund future capital projects was seen as essential, but participants questioned whether it could be funded in part by developers and/or future population growth in the region. There was also a question around why essential capital projects aren't being funded on a continuous basis (covered under existing rates). The region's geography and its impact on our infrastructure, was also raised as a challenge.

Water Security Plan

Participants agreed that long term water security was crucial, however there was differing opinions on the urgency of the works to address it. The desalination plant was discussed, and participants questioned whether it was the most cost-effective solution.

Survey responses on Essential Cost items

The most common feedback from customers was that the essential cost items would make paying their bill a challenge, and some felt that they didn't have enough information on technical topics to understand the impacts.

Stakeholder Group

This group was keen to hear how Council will implement customer feedback into its pricing proposal. There was also stakeholder sentiment that Council should be more transparent about essential costs and what is controllable, including a breakdown of the drivers of those costs.

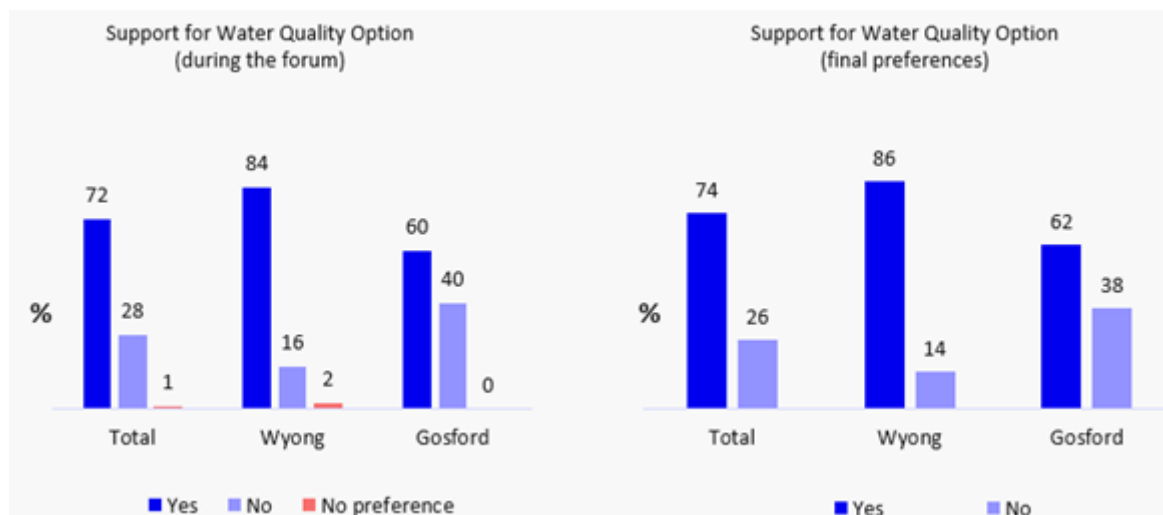
Optional investment results

Water Quality

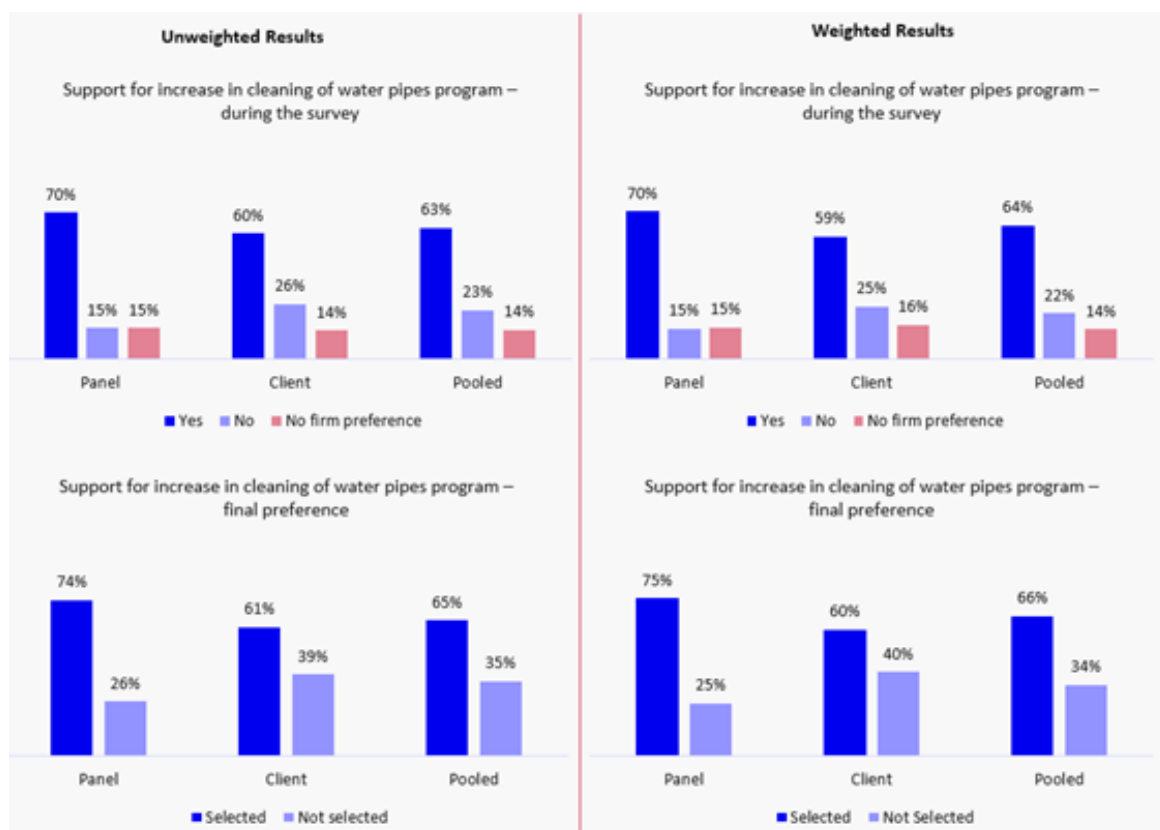
Mains cleaning

Council presented an option to increase the length of water mains cleaning each year from 50km to 100km. This option sought to reduce the number of water quality complaints per 1000 customers per year from 7 to 5.6.

Forum results



Survey results



NOTE: For an explanation of weighting, please refer to Hall and Partners, 'Community Engagement Program Report June 2025'.

Business workshop results

Water Quality Option

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

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

1

Yes, this option is supported

9

No, this option is not supported

4

No firm preference

Example Qualitative Feedback – Forums

"The amount is miniscule in the grand scheme of things- It is less than a cup of coffee." Wyong 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.

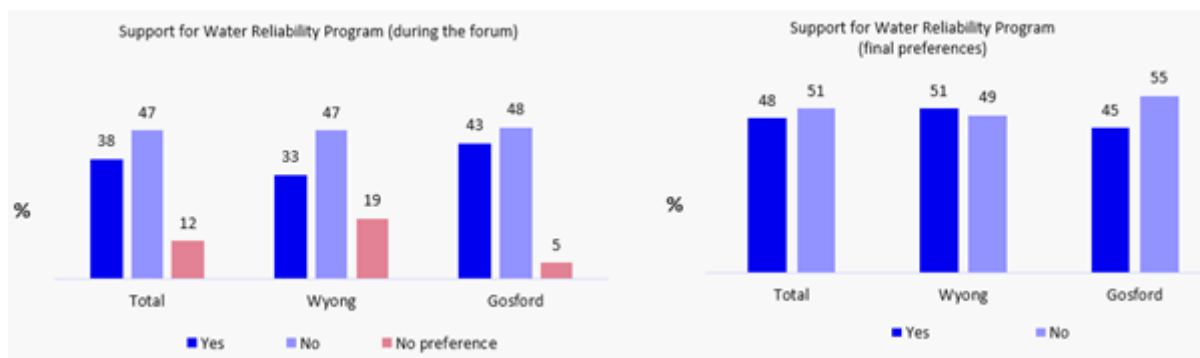
For full details of Qualitative Feedback, please refer to Hall and Partners, 'Community Engagement Program Report June 2025'.

Water Quality

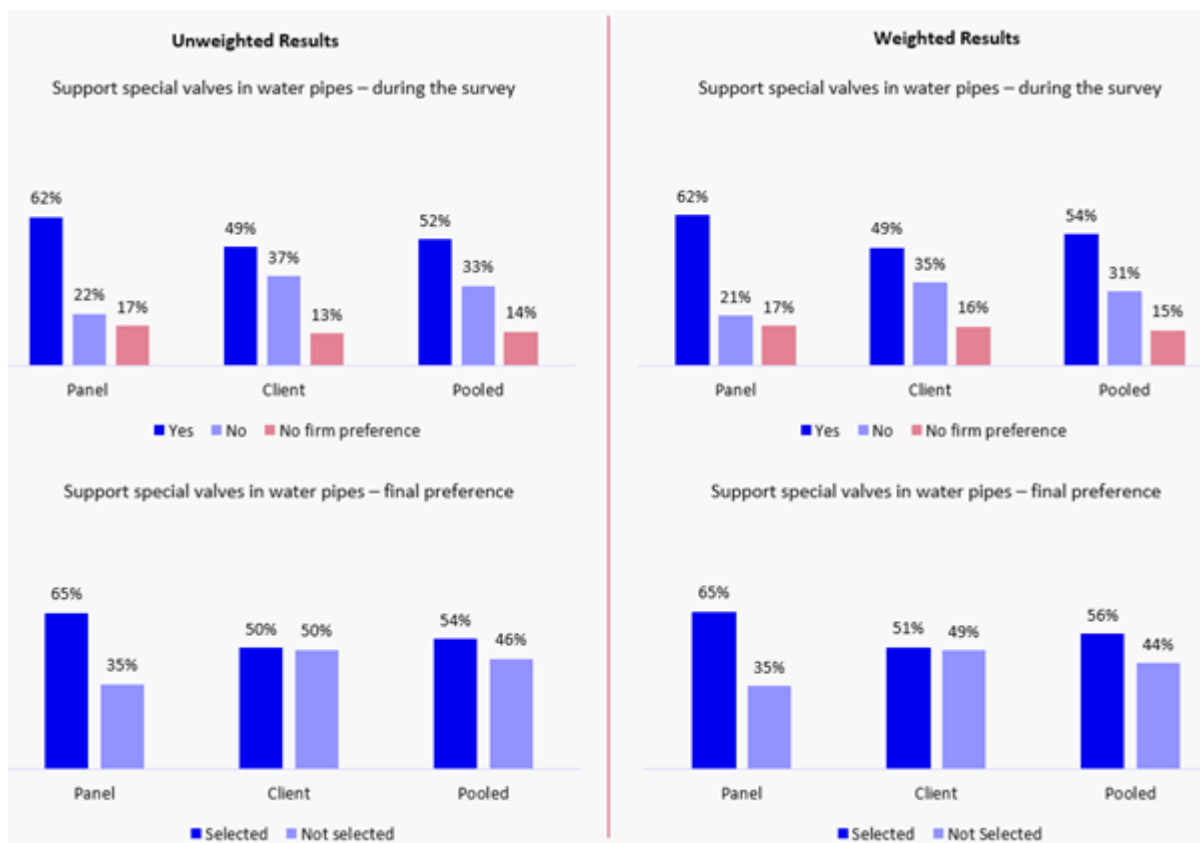
S-Gate Valves

Council presented an option to install an additional 2 s-gate valves per month. This option sought to reduce the chance of customers experiencing an unplanned water outage over the next 5 years – from 61% to 52%; as well as reduce the number of water quality complaints per 1000 properties per year, from 7 to 6.4.

Forum results



Survey results



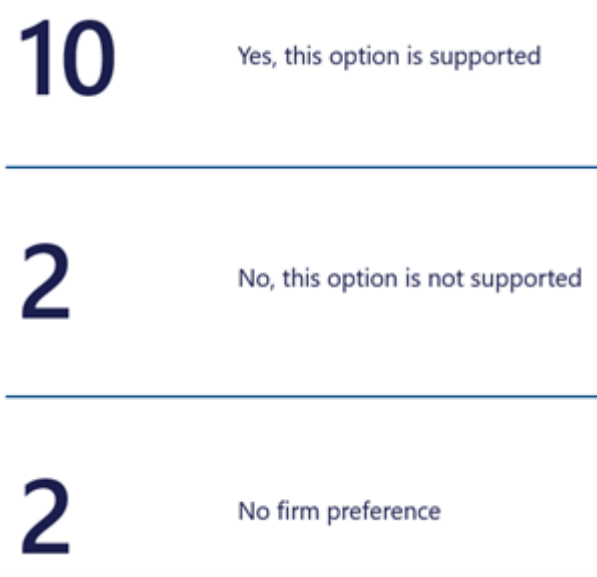
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Business workshop results

Reliability Option – S-gate Valves

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

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



Example Qualitative Feedback - Forums

"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

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

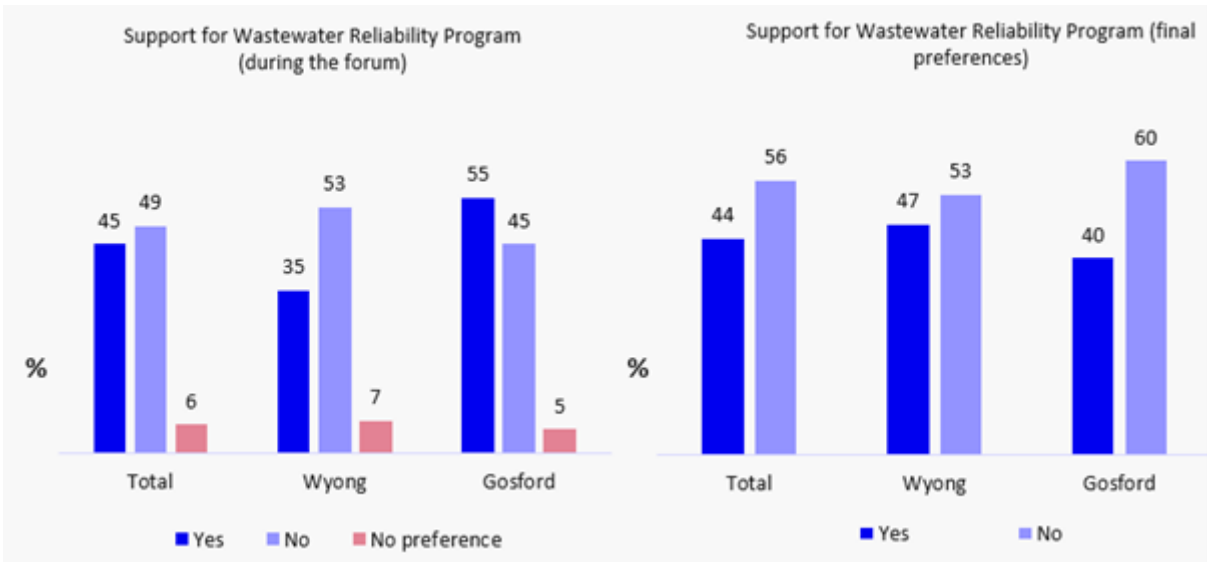
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Wastewater Reliability

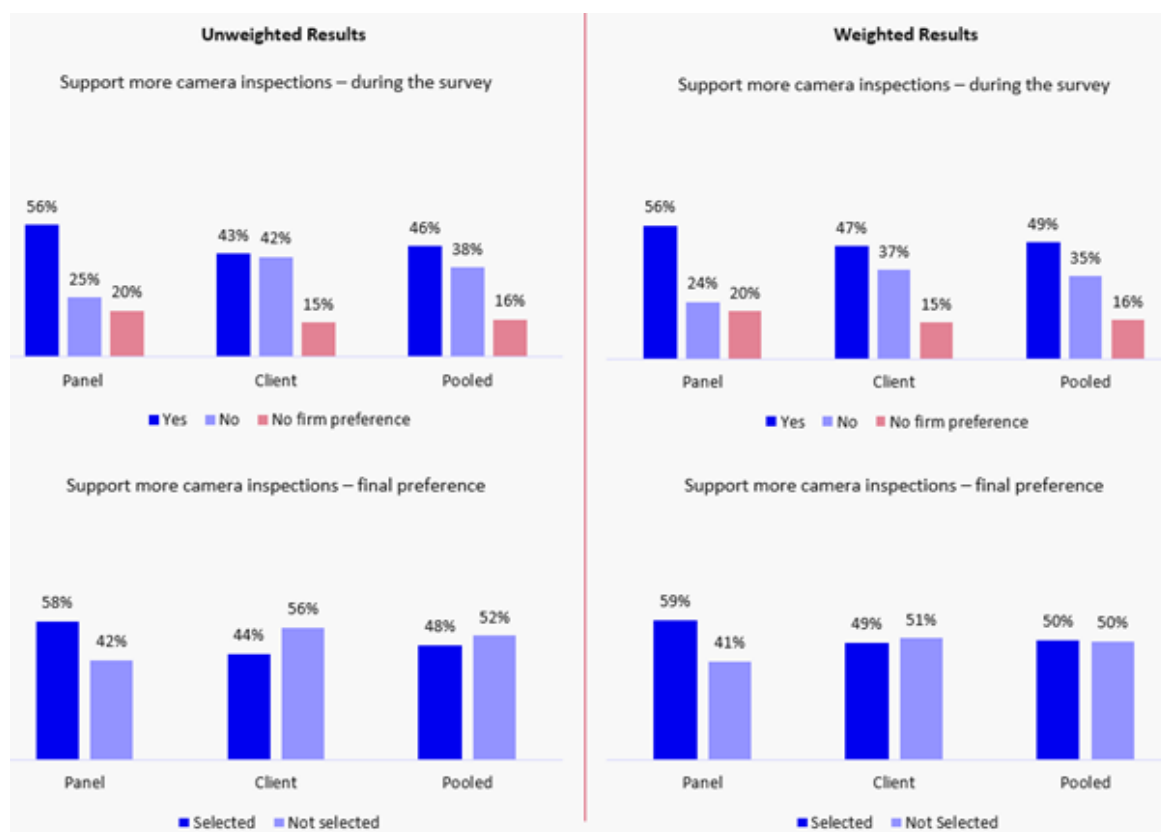
CCTV Camera truck

Council presented an option to purchase an additional CCTV camera truck to conduct preventative inspections of sewer mains. This option sought to reduce the number of sewage discharges, per 1000 properties from 6.4 to 6 per year; as well as provide more camera inspections to find and fix sewer issues.

Forum results



Survey results



NOTE: For an explanation of weighting, please refer to Hall and Partners, 'Community Engagement Program Report June 2025'.

Business workshop results

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

2

Yes, this option is supported

8

No, this option is not supported

3

No firm preference

Example Qualitative Feedback – Forums

"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

"There are current and emerging technologies that can do this job better, cheaper and more efficiently than CCTV (e.g., drones)." Gosford participant

For full details of Qualitative Feedback, please refer to Hall and Partners, 'Community Engagement Program Report June 2025'.

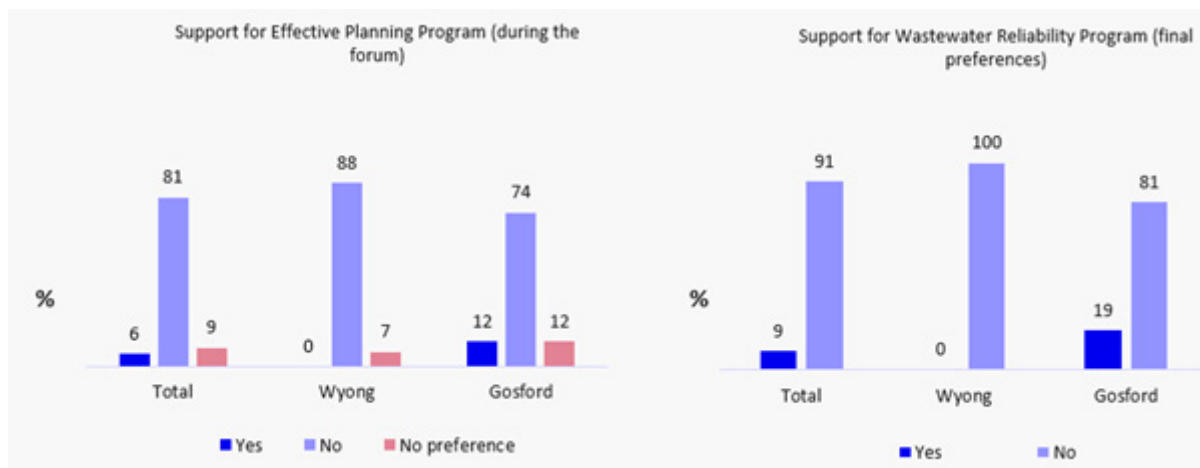
Effective Planning

Rebates for water efficient fixtures (residential homes)

Council presented an option to offer residential customers rebates on water efficient fixtures. This option proposed that:

- Water restrictions would not 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

Forum results



Survey results



NOTE: For an explanation of weighting, please refer to Hall and Partners, 'Community Engagement Program Report June 2025'.

Business workshop results

This option was not considered by non-residential (business) customers as there was no identifiable benefit.

Example Qualitative Feedback - Forums

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

"I'd be paying for something I don't benefit from." Gosford participant

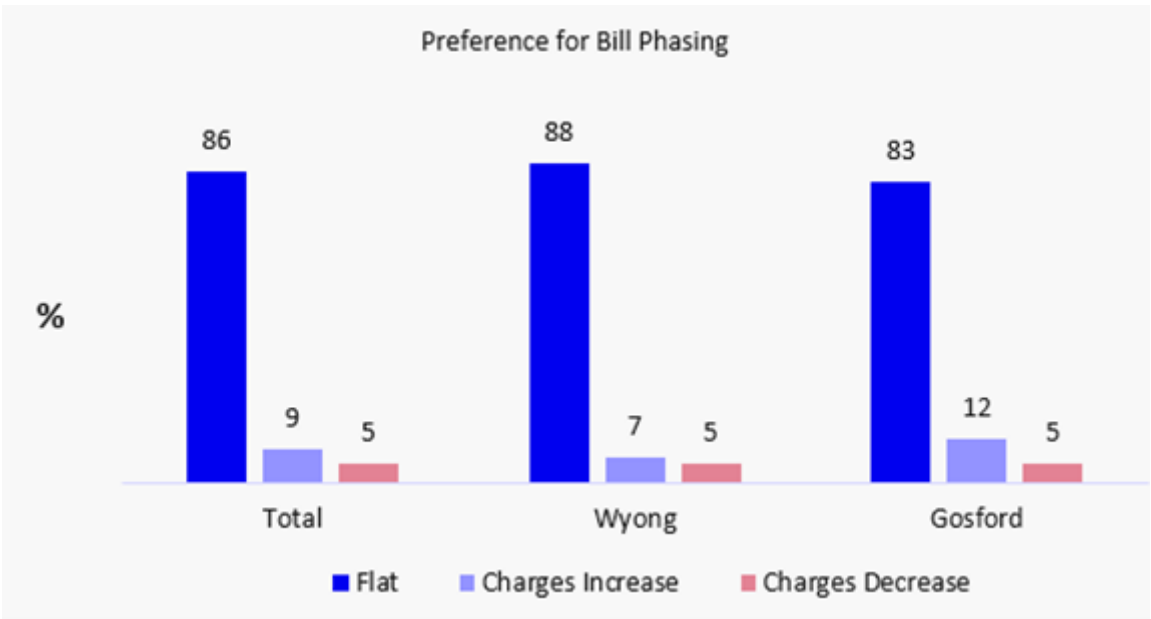
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Bill phasing

Council presented three distinct ways shown below in which the bill increases could be rolled out to customers over the 5-year determination period. In all scenarios, the total amount collected over the period would be the same.



Forum results



Business workshop results

