Improving Water & Sewer Services – Customer Engagement

March 2023

Central Coast Council | Water and Sewer

WOOLCOTT RESEARCH & ENGAGEMENT

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Executive Summary

1 Executive Summary

This report summarises key the themes from Phase 1 of Central Coast Council's customer engagement program for ongoing engagement for IPART and the Water and Sewer Masterplan.

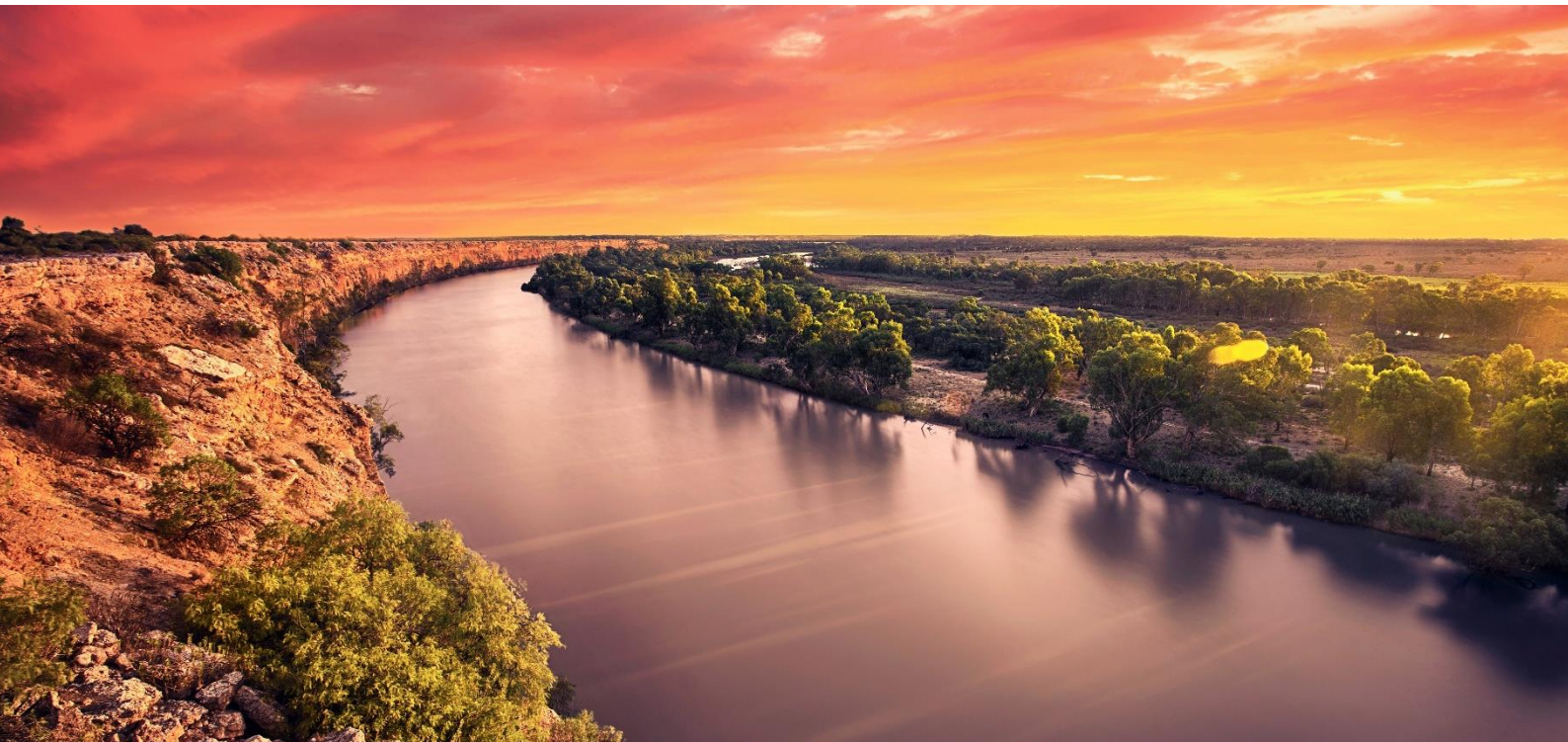
1.1 Background & Objectives

The objectives for the ongoing engagement for IPART are to:

- Identify and understand community values
- Gauge community feedback in relation to Council's commitment to a Customer Charter
- Develop a set of performance metrics that customers would like to know about, along with the desired method and frequency of reporting

The obejctives for the engagment for the Water and Sewer Masterplan are to:

- Identify levels of service and customers' expectations (long term)
- Identify the values related to treatment/network planning and ascertain whether they are the same values as for water resource planning
- Identify the issues and priorities that the community want considered as part of long term planning
- Test willingness to subsidise un-serviced properties to be connected to the existing network



1.2 Engagement Design

The engagement program consists of three phases that will run from January to July 2023. The engagement components for Phase 1, conducted between January and March 2023, were:

- Two face-to-face community forums with residents and small to medium businesses – one in Gosford and one in Wyong
- Six in-depth interviews with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander customers (ATSI)
- Six in-depth interviews with culturally and linguistically diverse customers who speak a language other than English at home (CALD)
- Five in-depth interviews with large customers

The group and depths were conducted online using the Zoom videoconferencing platform.

In total 107 individual customers took part in the Phase 1 engagement (residential and business customers).

The forums, group and in-depths involved information provision about the issues followed by discussion and activities. During this phase of engagement customers were asked what they thought the Council's goals should be for water and sewer, what customers value and what outcomes Council should be trying to achieve for water and sewer services. These sections aimed to identify what is important to customers by uncovering their values and desired outcomes.

Customers were also asked what performance measures they would like to see implemented in addition to those that Council already has to report on, particularly in relation to the values and outcomes generated from the first discussions.

The main themes from these activities are outlined below.

1.3 Water Supply Themes

The discussions at the forums, group and in-depth interviews on the goals, issues, values and outcomes in relation to water supply were analysed by researchers and the following key themes identified as important to customers. These will be presented and tested with participants during the Phase 2 engagement activities.

Figure 1: Values & Outcomes in Relation to Water Supply

Values	Outcomes
Good quality water	Clean, clear and safe drinking water
	Good taste and smell
	Water content is tested/monitored regularly e.g. for chlorine levels, microplastics
Reliable service	Consistent water supply, available to everyone
	Good water pressure
	Well maintained network, reducing leaks
	Responding to faults and issues quickly
Affordable	Cost efficient - keeping costs as low as possible for customers
	Consistent bills over time (predictable)
	Fair allocation of costs between customers
Effective Planning	Have enough water for an increased population
	Using a variety of sources for non-drinking purposes and to deal with varied climate conditions, e.g. recycled water, stormwater capture
	Collecting and reusing more water at household level e.g. rainwater tanks, use of greywater
Environmental Focus	Protecting the natural environment within catchment areas
Transparency	Providing clear, easy to understand information and good communication
	Raising community awareness about our water supply and water conservation
	Transparent pricing and costs – showing where money is spent
	Greater public trust that council has the expertise and resources needed to deliver on its promises

1.4 Sewer Service Themes

The discussions at the forums, group and in-depth interviews on the goals, issues, values and outcomes in relation to water supply were analysed by researchers and the following key themes identified as important to customers. These will be presented and tested with participants during the Phase 2 engagement activities.

Figure 2: Values & Outcomes of the Sewerage System

Values	Outcomes
Quality treatment	No health impacts on customers or workers
	Suitable effluent quality
	Minimal odours
Reliable service	Minimal overflows, broken pipes – responding quickly to issues
	Suitable infrastructure, well maintained
Affordable	Cost efficient - keeping costs as low as possible for customers
	Fair allocation of costs between customers
Effective Planning	Long-term planning to ensure the sewerage service is sufficient for future needs
	Using the latest technology/innovations/learning from other countries
	Adaption to a changing climate
Environmental Focus	Protecting the oceans and marine life
	Using renewable power for treatment plants
	Greater use of bio solids
Transparency	Providing clear, easy to understand information and good communication
	Raising community awareness – what to put down the toilet, implications of not doing this, what happens to waste
	Transparent pricing and costs – what the service fee is made up of
	Easier accessible water safety ratings for beaches and recreation areas
	Greater public trust that council has the expertise and resources needed to deliver on its promises

1.5 Performance Measures

Participants at the forums were presented with a list of the performance measures that Central Coast Council currently have to report on for water and sewer services. They were asked to consider what other information they would like reported or performance measures they would like to be implemented in relation to the values and outcomes they developed in their groups.

Overall, although most had not actively searched for performance related information, there was a strong desire expressed for simple, clear and easy to understand performance summaries to be made easily available.

The list below are the aspects mentioned by participants, although some measures are currently being measured by Council. Some are also aspects that customers would like to know more about/be available from Council, rather than performance measures. These have been grouped under key values however there is some cross-over between the aspects mentioned.

We have placed asterisks next to those that were commonly mentioned - with two asterisks signifying those most frequently mentioned.

Water Quality & Quality of the Sewerage Released into the Ocean

- Water quality testing results (on an ongoing basis) – along with any reasons for change in quality standards**
- Compliance with Australian Drinking Water Guidelines – microbial guideline values in the water supply & chemical guideline values**
- Measures of bacteria /guardia**
- Number of incidents of not meeting quality standards – and the location of lower quality water in the area**
- The number of algal blooms in dams*
- How Central Coast Council Water quality compares with other areas/locations*
- A rating (online or on a sign) like a fire rating, to check before you swim at the beach – and the number of days that beaches/lagoons are not 'swimmable'*
- How pipes are maintained to ensure the water is clean – and to ensure sewerage doesn't leak out

Reliability Measures – System Failures & Recovery Times

- The number of outages/failures in the system – and where they typically occur in the region**

- The duration of outages (average duration)*
- The severity of outages (volume of water)*
- The severity/volume of any overflows*
- Total complaints per 1,000 properties for water/sewer issues*

Affordability

- Typical residential bills*
- How the sewerage charge on the bill is calculated*
- The cost per litre of producing water (compared to other providers)
- What income is derived from on-selling products (e.g. bio-solids)

Planning for the Future

- Storage volume measures/real time dam levels**
- List of new infrastructure projects planned, and completed*
- The number of infrastructure upgrades undertaken each year
- A 'Priority Improvement Plan' with critical focus areas and project timeframes

Environmental Measures

- Volume of material recycled – and information about how it is used/where it goes**
- Real time information when overflows impact/pollute recreational waterways**
- How / if Council is measuring microplastics*
- How much power has been generated by alternative power sources

Transparency & Education

- Are they educating the community? How many education campaigns have been run – and what do they do to educate children/the community**
- Common complaints and how long it takes to resolve complaints

- Independent testing of community trust in Council as a provider of water and sewerage services

Similar to the values and outcomes, the performance measures will be re-visited in the Phase 2 forums to ensure that those with the greatest support are taken forward.

Detailed Report

2 Background

Central Coast Council wished to conduct an integrated research and engagement program to inform its ongoing engagement for IPART submissions and the Water and Sewer Masterplan.

2.1 Water & Sewer Ongoing Engagement for IPART

The NSW Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) sets the maximum prices for the water, wastewater and other services provided by Central Coast Council as a Water Supply Authority.

IPART recently reviewed Council's water prices to apply for the 4 years from July 2022 to June 2026. In reviewing these water prices IPART suggested that Council improves its performance and increases its accountability to its customers and regulators.

IPART has recommended that Council:

- Develop a set of performance measures that match the community's preferences and expectations (IPART have suggested some but the final set need to be developed collaboratively with customers)
- Put systems in place to publicly report on its performance against these measures every year starting in 2022-23
- Uses a reporting format that suits customer preferences.

Council has also made several commitments itself to improve its performance and accountability to customers which include:

- Establishing an Accountability Strategy, which will focus on information provision from a customer centric lens

- Developing a revised Customer Charter that will include water related measurable outcomes.
- Improving its asset management strategies
- Developing an outcomes-based reporting framework

2.2 Water & Sewer Masterplan

Council is starting to prepare its Water and Sewer Masterplan in accordance with the new Regulatory and Assurance Framework for local water utilities issued by the Department of Planning and Environment in July 2022.

The next phase of this will involve planning for the regions treatment and network assets and providing a framework for providing water and/or sewerage services to properties outside the Council's existing service area.

The current engagement program aims to assist Council in its planning.

3 Objectives

The objectives for the engagement program are outlined below.

3.1 Water & Sewer Ongoing Engagement for IPART

- Identify and understand community values
- Gauge community feedback in relation to Council's commitment to a Customer Charter
- Develop a set of performance metrics that customer would like to know about, along with the desired method and frequency of reporting

3.2 Water & Sewer Masterplan

- Identify levels of service and customers' expectations (long term)
- Identify the values related to treatment/network planning and ascertain whether they are the same values as for water resource planning
- Identify the issues and priorities that the community want considered as part of long term planning
- Test willingness to subsidise un-serviced properties to be connected to the existing network

4 Engagement Design

The engagement program as a whole consists of three phases. For the first two phases the main components are qualitative, for the third phase there will be a quantitative survey.

A summary of the program is outlined in the figure below.

Figure 3: Overview of Engagement Program

	Planning (Dec 2022-Jan 2023)	Phase 1 (Jan-Mar 2023)	Phase 2 (Mar-May 2023)	Phase 3 (Apr-Jul 2023)
Engagement	Meetings with CCCW	2 x forums (n=40 each) 12 x in-depths with ATSI and CALD customers 5 x in-depths with large customers 1 x group with young people	2 x forums (n=40 each) 12 x in-depths with ATSI and CALD customers 5 x in-depths with large customers 1 x group with young people	Customer survey amongst residents (n=500) and businesses (n=120) Open community survey on YVOC
Outcomes	• Finalisation of the Engagement Plan, including the approach, methodologies and timeline	• Educated and informed participants • Identification of what's important to them - values and outcomes • Exploration of desired performance metrics	• Performance metric prioritisation • Levels of service and customer expectations (long term) • Identification of what should be included in a Customer Charter • Whether customers are willing to subsidise unserviced properties	• Identification of additional performance metrics that customers want • How they should be reported – method and frequency

The engagement program for Phase 1 consisted of the following components:

- Two face-to-face community forums with residents and small to medium businesses – one in Gosford and one in Wyong
- Six in-depth interviews with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander customers (ATSI)
- Six in-depth interviews with culturally and linguistically diverse customers who speak a language other than English at home (CALD)
- Five in-depth interviews with large customers
- One youth group with 16-18 year olds

The group and in-depth interviews were conducted online using the Zoom videoconferencing platform.

4.1 Community Forums

Two community forums took place in Gosford and Wyong.

Table 1: Locations & Number of Participants at the Forums in Phase 1

Location	Date	Number of Forum Attendees
Gosford (Gosford Entertainment Grounds - Race Club)	Weds 1 March	45
Wyong (Wyong Race Club)	Thurs 2 March	39
Total		**84**

The forums consisted of a mix of information provision through presentations from Central Coast Council executives and a video along with table discussions and activities. There were 7-9 participants per table, and each session ran from 6:00pm - 9.00pm and included dinner and dessert.

For both forums Woolcott Research & Engagement provided a lead facilitator – Karyn Wong (who chaired the sessions and managed flow and timing), five table facilitators plus an administrative support staff member. Woolcott facilitators ensured all issues were covered and everyone's views were heard and captured in discussions. Further probing by facilitators into the themes that arose within the discussion provided a greater level of detail. A copy of the agenda used by the facilitators is in Appendix A.

Central Coast Council executives presented, observed the discussions throughout the sessions and were on hand to answer any questions that arose. Forum presenters included Jamie Loader (Director of Water and Sewer), Luke Drury (Acting Unit Manager Assets and Projects), Danielle Hargreaves (Unit Manager Headworks and Treatment) and Luke Welfare (Unit Manager Network Operations and Maintenance). Overall, there were 11 Council attendees across the forums – including presenters and subject matter experts.

Participants were recruited through a variety of means including letter box drops, cold calling within a half an hour driving radius of the forum locations, Facebook advertising and through the Council website. They were provided with information on the details of the forum and what to expect, and were asked to complete a screening questionnaire to ensure a representative group of participants. The recruitment screener is included at Appendix B

By design, the demographics of the Central Coast Council area were reflected in the composition of each table - a mix of age, gender etc.. Participants were offered $100 to take part in the Phase 1 forums, with a further $150 being offered for Phase 2 when it is completed.

Participant Profile

The table below shows the demographics of those who attended the Phase 1 forums.

Table 2: Forum Participant Demographics

Forum Participant Demographics	Total (n=84) %	Gosford (n=45) %	Wyong (n=39) %
Age			
18-34	**14**	16	13
35-49	**30**	29	31
50-69	**50**	44	56
70+	**6**	11	0
Gender			
Female	**56**	58	54
Male	**42**	38	46
Language Other than English (CALD)			
Yes	**5**	9	0
No	**95**	91	100
Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (ATSI)			
Yes	**8**	9	8
No	**90**	89	92
Prefer not to say	**1**	2	0
Small to Medium Businesses (SMB)			
Yes	**21**	24	18
No	**79**	76	82
Dwelling Ownership			
Currently rent	**18**	22	13

Currently own fully or with a mortgage	**82**	78	87
Income			
Less than $41,600	**19**	22	15
Between $41,600 and $78,000	**18**	11	26
Between $78,000 and $104,000	**20**	24	15
Between $104,000 and $156,000	**17**	16	18
More than $156,000	**12**	11	13
Prefer not to say	**14**	16	13
Difficulty Paying Bills			
Yes	**13**	7	21
No	**82**	91	72
Prefer not to say	**5**	2	8

What age bracket do you fall into? / Do you speak a language other than English at home or with family members? / Are you of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin? / Are you the owner or a decision maker for a small or medium enterprise (less than 200 employees) / Which of the following best describes the dwelling where you are currently living? / What is your approximate annual household income (before tax)? / 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, been disconnected, delayed other payments or borrowed money to pay?
Base: All respondents (n=84); Gosford (n=45); Wyong (n=39)

People who worked in the area of water supply or sewerage services, in market research, or for IPART, NSW Health in a role related to water quality regulation or the NSW Environmental Protection Agency were screened out.

Participants had to receive water/sewerage bills from Council, their body corporate or be charged a specific charge by their landlord for water/sewerage.

4.2 Groups & Depths

The forums were supplemented with groups and depths with harder to reach audiences, such as young people and those from an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander or different language background. There were also depths conducted with large businesses with higher water usage.

The forum materials and questions were adapted for an in-depth interview format.

Table 3: Groups & Depths

Customer Type	Participants
ATSI customers	6
CALD customers	6
Large customers	5
Young people (16-18)	6
Total	**23**

The youth group were recruited by a professional recruiter. The ATSI/CALD participants were recruited via a variety of means including a recruiter, Facebook and cold calling. The large customers were recruited using a list provided by Central Coast Council.

5 Water Supply Findings

5.1 Forum Findings

At the beginning of the forums participants were provided with information about the water supply system and Central Coast Council's role within that.

In the first session they were asked to discuss their priorities for the water supply system in the form of what the 'goals' for a water supply plan should be and any issues they thought Council should consider in their planning.

After a short presentation by Council on the challenges facing our water supply, participants were asked to take part in a table activity aimed to explore their values in relation to water supply and what outcomes they thought Council should be providing. A spokesperson from each table was then asked to provide a summary of the values and outcomes that their table had developed.

The findings from these sessions were quite similar and as such have been summarised into a number of key themes in the table below.

Figure 4: Values & Outcomes in Relation to Water Supply

Values	Outcomes
Good quality water	Clean, clear and safe drinking water
	Good taste and smell
	Water content is tested/monitored regularly e.g. for chlorine levels, microplastics
Reliable service	Consistent water supply, available to everyone
	Good water pressure
	Well maintained network, reducing leaks
	Responding to faults and issues quickly
Affordable	Cost efficient - keeping costs as low as possible for customers
	Consistent bills over time (predictable)
	Fair allocation of costs between customers
Effective Planning	Have enough water for an increased population

	Using a variety of sources for non-drinking purposes and to deal with varied climate conditions, e.g. recycled water, stormwater capture
	Collecting and reusing more water at household level e.g. rainwater tanks, use of greywater
Environmental Focus	Protecting the natural environment within catchment areas
Transparency	Providing clear, easy to understand information and good communication
	Raising community awareness about our water supply and water conservation
	Transparent pricing and costs – showing where money is spent
	Greater public trust that council has the expertise and resources needed to deliver on its promises

Detail about each of these values has been provided below.

5.2 Good Quality Water

This value was raised repeatedly during the forums and was thought to encapsulate having clean, clear and safe drinking water that has a good taste and no smell. Regular testing was thought to be crucial to ensure its safety.

Clean, Clear & Safe Drinking Water

Most participants indicated that having access to clean, clear drinking water that is safe to drink was an important outcome when planning for the future. Overall, participants stated that an improvement in water quality was needed and this was often brought up in relation to recurring discolouration and in particular brown coloured water. They questioned what the cause of the discolouration could be and whether it is safe to use, let alone drink. Quite a few participants indicated that they currently do not drink tap water at all but use filtered water instead.

"Cleanliness of the water. I don't even drink it where it is now it is so bad. It is brown." Residential Participant Gosford

"We need better water. I don't drink what comes out of my tap." SME Participant Wyong

"My washing gets ruined. Council has sent out packages of stuff to rinse your clothes in but that is not good enough. They need to fix the issue." Residential Participant Gosford

"It is not really appealing to have brown water coming out of your taps. It has happened to us 2-3 times but I also see consistent posts on social media about it." Residential Participant Wyong

"We want drinkable water. No brown water." Residential Participant Gosford

"I use filtered water to give to my dog because the tap water is currently so poor." Residential Participant Gosford

"I rely on having filtered water in my home. I don't even bathe my kids in the unfiltered water because it's so disgusting." Residential Participant Wyong

"Not brown, or bugs coming out of the taps, no silt in the water." Residential Participant Wyong

Good Taste & Smell

As part of water quality, participants specifically cited the importance of taste and smell. For some, there were concerns around the strong chlorine smell.

"Clean water that tastes good and smells ok" - SME Participant Gosford

"Intermittently there is an issue with the quality of the water. It is discoloured and has a weird taste. It is usually a broken pipeline, I assume caused by corrosion or floods." Residential Participant Wyong

"I'm concerned about the amount of things they put in the water. Sometimes you can really smell the chlorine." Residential Participant Gosford

"The chlorine really seems to have ramped up in recent years." SME Participant Wyong

"A lot of the time you can really smell the chlorine in the water. It is really smelly." Residential Participant Wyong

Water Content is Tested/Monitored Regularly

For many, it was thought to be crucial that the water is regularly tested and monitored to limit issues related to water quality and levels of emerging focal points like microplastics. It was thought to be important that the quality of the water is consistent within the network area and that the public could easily access the results. However, even assuming regular testing there were concerns about whether the water could be contaminated on the journey from the treatment plant to the tap, through poorly maintained pipes.

"I want to know that they are regularly testing the water quality." Residential Participant Gosford

"I have had some discussion with the Council about water quality and he says it gets tested at the facility but there is a big difference in distance from there to us." Residential Participant Gosford

"I would like there to be more studies on what is actually in our water. I'm wary of microplastics in our water and I think these results should be available to the public." Residential Participant Gosford
"Easy access to water treatment results." Residential Participant Gosford

"We want it to be of consistent quality." SME Participant Wyong

"Routine quality control measures. Ensuring consistently high water quality." Residential Participant Wyong

5.3 Reliable Service

This value related to having a consistent water supply with good water pressure that is widely available across the Council area. A reliable service included a well maintained network to ensure minimal leaks and where there are issues these are responded to quickly.

Consistent Water Supply, Available to Everyone

Many participants noted availability and consistency of supply as a key outcome for the future. This involved two different aspects – a water supply with minimal interruptions as well as one that is available across the wider area – i.e. expanding the water network to connect more remote properties to the system. Some were also concerned about the availability of water during a drought.

"Consistent supply to our taps - no stoppages... a continuous and uninterrupted water supply to our homes." SME Participant Gosford

"They need to make sure that there's enough water for everyone, even in times of drought." Residential Participant Gosford

"The droughts a few years ago were really bad. We need to ensure that we are prepared for the worst conditions." Residential Participant Wyong

"I would like to see reticulation go up to the more remote areas. I am trying to buy a property and there are so many properties that are not on mains water." Residential Participant Gosford

Good Water Pressure

This outcome was mentioned by fewer participants but for those who were affected by water pressure issues, it tended to had a strong impact. Some participants in the forums related their suboptimal experiences regarding water pressure.

"I would like to see better water pressure. I live in Kariong. Council says I am getting 125KPA so it is over the level they have to provide of 100KPA. They feel they have ticked that box but it is terrible. We are paying rates and I have to stand literally on top of the plant to water it and when I wash my daughter's hair it is trickling out. We are at the top of the hill. They refuse to fix the pressure because they say to fix it for us would blow the mains. There is going to be more housing development up there so it is just going to get worse. What are they going to do about it?" Residential Participant Gosford

"We have really poor water pressure, and it limits my ability to do business here." SME Participant Wyong

"A good user friendly experience like good water pressure". Residential Participant Wyong

Well Maintained Network, Reducing Leaks

A reliable service was also linked to effective maintenance from the participant's perspective. They valued regular maintenance and upgrades to prevent leaks and interruptions that would impact reliability. Some felt that the approach to maintenance could be more proactive, particularly with a view to future proofing the network.

"Upgrading the infrastructure and regular maintenance." Residential Participant Wyong

"To minimise loss through the pipes." Residential Participant Gosford

"We need efficient water pipes, making sure they are not leaking." Residential Participant Gosford

"Investing in infrastructure - ensuring a reliable system and not just band-aiding the problem." Residential Participant Gosford

"They seem to be replacing pipes when they become a big problem, but it would be great if they could be replaced before they become an issue." SME Participant Wyong

"We need regular maintenance." Residential Participant Gosford

"Sturdy infrastructure – ageing infrastructure is a concern for the future." SME Participant Gosford

Responding to Faults & Issues Quickly

Participants also wanted the Council to respond to faults and issues in a timely manner when they do occur, to ensure a continued reliable network.

"When there's an issue, you want them to respond straight away." Residential Participant Gosford

"Speedy and reliable response to damaged pipes and issues." SME Participant Wyong

"We need timely, responsive repairs." Residential Participant Gosford

5.4 Affordable

This value included Council making cost efficient investments that will provide value for money and bills that are as low as possible for customers. Participants desired bills that are predictable rather than fluctuating and a fair allocation of costs between customers.

Keeping Costs as Low as Possible

Many tables at the forums indicated that keeping the service cost affordable was very important, particularly in the context of the ongoing cost of living pressures. Ensuring efficiency in Council spending was mentioned, particularly in light of the recent financial troubles and resulting bill increases for customers.

"Cost of course is a key factor. Everything else is going up and up." Residential Participant Wyong

"Cost efficiency – like build pipes along existing roadways". Residential Participant Wyong

"Ensuring that we can afford to pay our bills" SME Participant Gosford

"Good cost management". SME Participant Gosford

It was acknowledged that there is a need to balance investment in the network with the cost of doing so in order to provide good value for money.

"We don't want them to gold plate the system." Residential Participant Gosford

"We can create a wish list and it is not affordable. It needs to be affordable – you don't want to have to pay too much for all this stuff." Residential Participant Gosford

Consistent Bills Over Time

Another element were noted by participants such providing consistency in pricing and bills, particularly for more financially disadvantaged customers.

"Fewer bill variations, particularly with the vulnerable community in mind". Residential Participant Wyong

Fair Allocation of Costs Between Customers

Some participants also wanted to see costs split 'fairly' amongst customers, particularly for commercial customers and infrastructure costs for new subdivisions.

"I want to see that commercial customers are paying what we're paying, if not more, and I don't think they are." Residential Participant Gosford

"*It is important that businesses are charged accordingly e.g. Coca Cola uses a lot of water, are they paying more?" SME Participant Gosford*

"When new sub-divisions emerge, existing customers shouldn't be paying for all of the new infrastructure that new properties require. The developers should be covering that cost". Residential Participant Wyong

5.5 Effective Planning for the Future

Due to population growth and climate change, with its resulting unpredictable weather patterns, participants were mindful of the need to plan for the future. This value encapsulated having enough water for the future and using a variety of sources to deal with varied climate conditions, as well as encouraging households to capture and store more water.

Having Enough Water for an Increased Population

For many participants, population growth and housing development were key factors that they thought should be taken into account by Council for future planning. Many were conscious that the population in the council area would continue to grow in coming years, and appropriate infrastructure was seen as necessary. This included increased water supply and storage through dams and other methods, as well as increased drinking water treatment. A few participants wanted particular attention paid to helping commercial customers be more water efficient to assist with water conservation for the future.

"With population growth we need more storage and treatment." Residential Participant Gosford

"The State Government seems to be pushing us to build more houses here, but we need to be able to cater for a bigger population." SME Participant Wyong

"They need to have a fair knowledge of what the population growth will be and we need more infrastructure to plan for that." Residential Participant Wyong

"They need to keep what is in the dams, in the dams (minimising evaporation)." Residential Participant Wyong

"We need more storage, more natural viaducts." Residential Participant Wyong

"Growth in population – making sure we have lots of water for the growing population". SME Participant Gosford

"We live in high rainfall area – is it being captured correctly – are the dams in the right spot, we get a lot of rain so are they capturing enough?" SME Participant Gosford

"We need to plan for the growing population – new dams or water supply methods." Residential Participant Gosford

"What is the anticipated growth of the area – will we have enough water in the future, that's my main question." SME Participant Gosford

"Water coming out of the tap and ensuring it meets the demands of a growing population." Residential Participant Wyong

"How much of the water is used by industry? We need regulation to ensure there is responsible usage of water." Residential Participant Wyong

Using a Variety of Sources for Water Supply

Some participants were quite open to using a variety of water sources for non-drinking purposes such as desalination, recycled water for non-drinking or storm water capture. A minority of participants even suggested using recycled water for drinking to ensure a consistent supply in times of drought.

"Consider the alternatives like desalination." Residential Participant Gosford

"New and innovative systems for supply." SME Participant Wyong

"We can recycle more of our water, not all of it should go back into the ocean. We could use more greywater to be more resourceful." Residential Participant Wyong

"We should look at recycling water or doing water harvesting." Residential Participant Gosford

"I think in terms of treated sewerage – it's all from the one source originally. If it's safe, why not use it, even for drinking?" Residential Participant Wyong

Collecting & Reusing More Water at Household Level

Participants also wanted more support and incentives to encourage the capture and storage of water at the household level, through rainwater tanks, use of greywater and general water conservation.

"If people used more grey water around the house they wouldn't need to use as much fresh water. It's wasted sometimes." Residential Participant Gosford

"Incentives for properties to have cheaper water tanks." Residential Participant Wyong

"All homes should have small tanks to do things other than drinking. We use ours to top up the swimming pool, water the garden and wash our car. Drinking water should just be used for drinking." Residential Participant Gosford

"We are terribly wasteful at the moment. The water we get out of the tap is highly treated and expensive. When you wash your car or water your garden then you shouldn't use that. We shouldn't be using drinking water for everything." Residential Participant Wyong

"One thing to look at is the poor collection of water. Water from roofs and stuff." Residential Participant Wyong

"We should have permanent water restrictions to stop people wasting water – have Level 1 restrictions permanently". SME Participant Gosford

5.6 Environmental Focus

Although this value didn't come up as much as for the sewerage system, participants also indicated that there should be an environmental focus for the Council's water supply plans.

Protecting the Natural Environment within Catchment Areas

Participants were particularly concerned about protecting the natural environment, minimizing pollution and also using renewable energy where possible.

"Preserving the natural environment – I have concerns about unfettered development, putting pipelines in without being unobtrusive and things like environmental degradation." SME Participant Gosford

"We need to be more mindful of how we impact the environment around us, which means in the future being more sustainable. Maybe we could use more renewable resources within our water supply system?" Residential Participant Wyong

"Less pollution in the waterways, and good algae management." - SME Participant Gosford

5.7 Transparency

This value involved a number outcomes related to information and communication. Providing clear, easy to understand information and good communication in general as well as raising awareness about water management were raised as outcomes. Participants also felt that Council needed to be more transparent about pricing and costs and aim to increase public trust that it is equipped to do a good job of managing the water supply system.

Providing Clear, Easy to Understand Information & Good Communication

Information and education was raised frequently during discussions. Many participants indicated that they wanted the Council to provide clear, easy to understand information and good communication to residents as part of providing good customer service.

The type of information that was mentioned for this value was in relation to water quality and composition, maintenance issues, fixing leaks and water management and planning.

"Getting truthful answers and transparency of council around water issues." Residential Participant Gosford

Raising Community Awareness

Being involved in the forums had highlighted to participants where possible information gaps were and they suggested it would be beneficial for the public to become more aware about where they water comes from and how it is managed. Some also suggested that awareness of the urban water cycle could be increased amongst children at school, by providing information on how water is sourced, treated and transported. It was even suggested that schools could go on tours of water treatment plants.

"Increasing education and awareness at schools. They could use that video in schools! I am a teacher and that would really help them to be more aware about where water comes from." Residential Participant Wyong

Some participants also wanted greater communication around water supply and conservation, to highlight how the general public can save water to help ensure there is enough supply for the future.

Transparent Pricing & Costs

Providing transparency around pricing and costs, to show how much Council raises through bills and where money is spent was seen as important for some participants. Although value for money is included in the 'affordable' value, this outcome was about Council providing information to customers to show how it is providing value for money.

"I want to know that I'm getting value for money in my bill." Residential Participant Wyong

Increasing Public Trust

Many participants indicated that the Council needs to garner greater public trust, to show that they have the expertise and resources needed to deliver on promises and that they are operating with integrity.

"You just want to trust that they do the right thing, so that when you turn the tap on you get what you should get." Residential Participant Gosford

"The financial issues have caused a lack of trust. It's going to take a while to get over that. More transparency would be good." Residential Participant Gosford

"That Council is transparent. I think there was an algae issue a while back, but they didn't tell anyone." Residential Participant Gosford

"Need to build trust through transparency. Trust them to do what they say they are going to do." Residential Participant Gosford

"To build trust in the Council – I need to know that they have the expertise to manage water efficiently'". SME Participant Gosford

5.8 Youth Group Findings

The Youth Group highlighted many of the same values and outcomes as the forum participants, but with a greater focus on the future-state of the Central Coast's water supply. Population growth and the environment were seen to be crucial issues for Council to keep in mind when planning in the future.

"I think climate change is something we definitely need to keep in mind considering it is constantly changing and very fragile." Youth Group Participant

As they were particularly mindful about the environment, there was a greater emphasis on more sustainable water use, with participants seeing effective water recycling as essential for facilitating a healthy environment and growing population. Specifically, leakage at community bubblers and beach showers was mentioned as issues that compromised water conservation.

"We need to use it the best we can and make sure we don't waste it." Youth Group Participant

"When you turn the shower off and it's just leaking (at the beach). We need to be more mindful about our use of water." Youth Group Participant

Water quality was also raised by the Youth Group as an important value for their water supply. In general they mentioned simply having good quality water that they can continue to feel comfortable drinking. Ensuring that bubblers are clean and hygienic, so that people are encouraged to access tap water rather than purchase bottled water when out, was also seen as important.

"Continued use of fresh and healthy water that is clean. Right now, I don't have that problem but in the future, I want it to stay that way." Youth Group Participant

5.9 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander In-depth Interview Findings

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander in-depth interviews garnered similar results to the Forums, with perhaps a greater emphasis on protecting the environment. It was thought that having a sustainable water supply system that did not negatively impact the surrounding waterways would be ideal. This was seen as of particular importance for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, however was also as a value for the entire Central Coast population.

"Just keeping in mind natural water cycles and runoffs and maintaining those as without them we have nothing. You look up in Menindee right now how there are over a million dead fish due to issues in the waterways. We wouldn't want anything like that to occur on the Central Coast." – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander In-depth Interview Participant

"Part of the Central Coast's identity is its waterways, and maintaining the waterways is maintaining the Central Coast's identity. People love to come to our beaches and other waterways and swim so it's important to keep them clean." – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander In-depth Interview Participant

"Culturally significant places need to be looked after. These are a massive priority for the community so ensuring sites and waterways aren't damaged is huge." – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander In-depth Interview Participant

More consultation with the community regarding the waterways was also seen as being important, with participants indicating that they felt any changes should be communicated more directly to them.

"I think part of it is also including the Aboriginal community in decision-making to hold Council accountable to them, because I don't believe we have any representation in the Council right now. I think it's a shared view that we've been excluded from local government." – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander In-depth Interview Participant

"I think council needs to be more transparent and accountable to the community." – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander In-depth Interview Participant

Population growth was similarly important, with most suggesting that as the population in the Central Coast grows, there will be a need for a greater supply due to increased demand.

"The Central Coast is one of the fastest growing Aboriginal communities in Australia, but also in general of the whole community. They need to support those that move here and those being born in the area." – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander In-depth Interview Participant

5.10 CALD In-depth Interview Findings

Overall, most CALD participants were happy with the water quality as it is currently in the Central Coast. Some suggested that they came from or had visited countries where the supply of water was often interrupted and of poor quality, and that the water quality in the Central Coast was more than acceptable. In saying this, however, participants were wary to not let the quality drop, indicating it needs to be kept at a high level.

"I've been to some countries where the water is not drinkable, and it has to be boiled, or people have to only drink water out of bottles. In Australia we're very lucky to have a water supply that you can just drink it out of the tap. It's a massive luxury." – CALD In-depth Interview Participant

There was some concern regarding the quantity of the water supply in the future, as the population in the Central Coast continues to grow. Some suggested that updated infrastructure may be needed to keep up with the increasing demand.

"Absolutely population growth is something to keep in mind when planning. Over the last few years I've noticed there being way more traffic and congestion on the roads than there used to be." – CALD In-depth Interview Participant

Also relating to the quantity of water supply in the future, some also suggested that they, and older members of their respective communities would be helped by receiving an increased level of communication and engagement from Council. Most suggested having information displayed online in multiple languages, so as to increase the accessibility of information.

"I think having information in different languages would be really helpful for people in my community." – CALD In-depth Interview Participant

Some also implied that their cultures prioritise having vegetables, fruits and plants in their garden, and require significant amounts of water to maintain these. With concerns over the future quantity of supply were raised here, some indicated that greater information (in multiple languages other than English) on how to install water tanks in their homes would be beneficial.

"Many Chinese families like to grow vegetables and plants in their garden, and they want to preserve water. Council giving more education about how to install their own water tanks would be helpful I think." – CALD In-depth Interview Participant

5.11 Large Customer Findings

Similar to the residential and small business customers, the large customers were asked what the goals should be for a water supply plan and what outcomes Council should focus on to ensure significant customers such as them are satisfied.

The findings were similar to the forum outcomes, with water quality, reliability and pricing being key concerns. The growing population was also mentioned along with ensuring that Council is planning for this increase in population.

"Don't run out of water and don't charge too much!" Large Customer In-depth Interview Participant

"Making sure it is safe to drink, no environmental issues, and reliability – having enough water for the future and all that." Large Customer In-depth Interview Participant

"Population has tripled in my lifetime here. I'm not sure how they are approaching capacity in terms of dam storage and future planning." Large Customer In-depth Interview Participant

"Quality of the water supply –we see a lot of discolouration and dirt in the water. Our products are 90% water. We have filtration systems but the amount of dirt we clean out of the water is high. That puts pressure on the filters, then we have to do more maintenance." Large Customer In-depth Interview Participant

"Sometimes we get impacted by breakages in the lines. They came out and made the repair but they didn't turn it back on, or there was an airlock, so we lost 16 hours of production or something. Water is so important to the business here." Large Customer In-depth Interview Participant

There was more of an emphasis on customer service amongst this cohort - keeping them up to date and informed about issues as well as educating them about what the Council's role is in relation to the urban water cycle and water supply.

"Providing excellent service for the lowest cost. Just provide customer service to business customers." Large Customer In-depth Interview Participant

"Knowing the journey of the water could be very impactful in my role – to tell staff where the water comes from, where it gets treated, the standards it gets treated to – then I can push for better and more considerate water use." Large Customer In-depth Interview Participant

"Council staff can often be difficult to contact. You have to go through a central email and never actually know if anyone's going to get back to you or not." Large Customer In-depth Interview Participant

"We don't know what we are being charged for, how we are being charged. They have no one to send emails. There is no issue with the service, just with communication. Council are notorious for just putting up prices and not communicating." Large Customer In-depth Interview Participant

6 Sewerage Service

6.1 Forum Findings

Following the dinner break participants were then provided with information about the sewerage system and Central Coast Council's role within that.

Similar to water supply, they were then asked to discuss what their priorities were in the form of the 'goals' for a sewerage service plan and any issues they thought Council should consider in their planning. After a short presentation by Council on the challenges facing our sewerage system, participants were asked to take part in a table activity aimed to explore their values in relation to the sewerage system and what outcomes they thought Council should be providing.

The findings from both these sessions regarding the sewerage service, have been summarised in the table below.

Figure 5: Values & Outcomes of the Sewerage System

Values	Outcomes
Quality treatment	No health impacts on customers or workers
	Suitable effluent quality
	Minimal odours
Reliable service	Minimal overflows, broken pipes – responding quickly to issues
	Suitable infrastructure, well maintained
Affordable	Cost efficient - keeping costs as low as possible for customers
	Fair allocation of costs between customers
Effective Planning	Long-term planning to ensure the sewerage service is sufficient for future needs
	Using the latest technology/innovations/learning from other countries e.g. recycled water
	Adaption to a changing climate

Environmental Focus	Protecting the oceans and marine life
	Using renewable power for treatment plants
	Greater use of bio solids
Transparency	Providing clear, easy to understand information and good communication
	Raising community awareness – what to put down the toilet, implications of not doing this, what happens to waste
	Transparent pricing and costs – what the service fee is made up of
	Easier accessible water safety ratings for beaches and recreation areas
	Greater public trust that council has the expertise and resources needed to deliver on its promises

These values and outcomes have been explored in more detail below.

6.2 Quality Treatment

This value encapsulated themes such as ensuring the safety of customers and Council workers, by preventing or limiting contamination and bacteria in the water, oceans and lakes; the importance of producing high quality effluent; and having no or minimal odours surrounding water treatment plants where houses are present and people live.

No Health Impacts on Customers or Workers

Clearly public health and ensuring that the community are safe was very important to forum participants. Having a safe environment with minimal chance of diseases being transmitted or spread when swimming in the oceans, beaches, dams and lakes, was raised often around the tables. A minority had had experiences with infections being picked up through lakes in the area, and therefore no bacteria or 'dirty' water was considered a vital outcome.

There were also many comments and questions about how far the effluent is pumped out into the ocean, to ensure the risk of getting sick was kept low.

"We need to make sure the water we dump in the ocean is an okay quality. I don't want to be swimming in water that could get me sick." Residential Participant Wyong

"My son got cellulitis from the lake. There are signs in place in certain areas but there were a high rate of kids getting infections. They need to have regular testing and a general announcement to everyone when places are not safe so people are aware of when it is dangerous to swim." Residential Participant Gosford

"Get rid of ocean outfalls or pump it further out – it will be better for humans when swimming at beaches – you hear sometimes that they've closed a certain beach because it's dangerous for humans, that's not good... and to prevent infections in sores" SME Participant Gosford

Suitable Effluent Quality

Similar to the outcome above was ensuring that the effluent being produced is of high quality and Council's processes are well executed, again to ensure there are no outbreaks of contamination in lakes and beaches. References to Tuggerah Lakes were quite common, as an example of a location where there are known to have been sewerage leaks and flooding, and this was considered unacceptable.

"Some times of the year the beaches aren't of good quality. You probably shouldn't swim there after a storm." Residential Participant Gosford

"Avoid having unprocessed sewerage." Residential Participant Gosford

"Move to a tertiary treatment process." Residential Participant Gosford

"Mitigate against rising flood waters, e.g. Tuggerah Lakes where raw sewerage leaks into it". SME Participant Gosford

Minimal Odours

Ensuring that odours around water treatment plants are reduced or eliminated, was also important to participants, in particular for treatment plants that are located near to houses where people are living. Ideally, it was suggested, that water treatment plants should not be built near suburban houses.

"The smell is something that needs looking at, for example Bateau Bay treatment works. They need to deal with that. Kincumber, Umina – you can smell it there. It is not getting processed properly." Residential Participant Gosford

"Not having the water treatment plants too close to houses like at Bateau Bay and Chittaway Bay - planning so we can't smell them". Residential Participant Wyong

6.3 Reliable Service

This value related to ensuring minimal overflows and failures in the system, responding quickly when these do happen, and maintaining the pipes and infrastructure so the sewerage system is reliable, and customers don't have to worry about it.

Minimal Overflows, Broken Pipes – Respond Quickly to Issues

A minority of forum participants had experienced overflows on their property and these were described as being highly unpleasant experiences. It was thought that Council should minimize overflows a much as possible, by ensuring that pipes are well maintained, and in situations where overflows occur, they need to be attended to quickly and fixed as soon as possible. Clearly broken sewerage pipes on properties were considered particularly undesirable (compared to broken water pipes), and it was thought that the need to rectify any breakages should be prioritised by Council because of the health and safety risk, the contamination in the soil and waterways and the odour for those in the immediate vicinity.

The notion of ensuring that Council responds quickly extended to all issues regarding sewerage leakages, for example in lakes and flooding events. There was a desire to find out more about flooding events – where they occur, why they occur, what is being done about them and how long it will take to fix the issues. It was also suggested that Council should be more proactive and plan to use back-up systems in times of need.

"I think there should be more information when repairs are needed. I'd like to know more about who is responsible for any repairs so I know who to tell if I see something, and when they will be fixed." Residential Participant Gosford

"Minimise sewer line bursts and overflows." SME Participant Wyong

"When there is a major incident, like the flooding in Chittaway Point, they took some time to bring in portable toilets and showers. It was in the media. They need to be quicker, more responsive to events." Residential Participant Gosford

"Fewer overflows and sinkholes... and fix blockages". SME Participant Gosford

"I had an issue at my place. The pumping system broke down. It blew the inspection cap off in my yard, due to back pressure, as I am at the end of the line. It was like that for four days. Everyone was walking through it including school kids. There were big storms around that time which I believe caused the incident but there were no backup systems." Residential Participant Wyong

Suitable Infrastructure, Well Maintained & Regularly Upgraded

Similarly many participants made general comments about the importance of Council ensuring that the sewerage network is suitable and well maintained, and that old or ageing pipes and other pumps and equipment are checked and replaced regularly to prevent failures occurring in the future.

It was also occasionally mentioned that there are still some areas in the Central Coast that are not connected to the sewerage system, and that needs to be rectified.

"They need to upgrade the existing system because of the age of it." Residential Participant Gosford

"Proactive maintenance of the pipes." Residential Participant Wyong

"The Council does cheap fixes. At Wanborough Lake when we get a lot of rain the pumping stations break each time. They open up the lake and let it flow out. That's not a long term solution. The pumps aren't designed to be underwater. The solution would be to replace those pumps – that's what they need to do." Residential Participant Gosford

"We need the crap to stay in the pipes! We need preventative maintenance." Residential Participant Wyong

"There are large areas that still don't even have a sewerage system, they are reliant on septic tanks. That needs changing." Residential Participant Wyong

6.4 Affordable

Minimising costs and ensuring customer bills for the sewerage component are affordable, was also a key value amongst participants. It was felt to be important to customers that Council are cost efficient, offer good value, and that the costs are fairly allocated amongst customer types.

Cost Efficient - Keeping Costs as Low as Possible for Customers & Providing Good Value

Keeping bills low was frequently mentioned by participants. It was felt to be important that the cost for sewerage did not become a burden for Council, and that cost effective solutions and advancements in technology were sought where appropriate. It was acknowledged that there is not much customers can do to reduce the waste water component on their bills, and in this context many questioned how the waste water component on their bill is determined, and if it is dependent upon household size for example. There was considerable interest in learning more about this from Council.

It was also mentioned that many older people living alone, and the more vulnerable community members, needed to be considered and helped if Council was thinking of increasing prices in the future.

"Ensure that the cost of the system isn't a burden on the community" Residential Participant Gosford

"We want cost effective solutions." SME Participant Wyong

"Minimal broken pipes, to keep maintenance costs down". SME Participant Gosford

"Keeping costs affordable – perhaps it should be based on the size of the household, or is it land value? It would be good to know more about this service charge". SME Participant Gosford

Fair Allocation of Costs Between Customers

A few participants made references to ensuring Council allocates costs fairly, mentioning aspects such as potentially considering household size for the sewerage component of their bill; that large businesses pay an appropriate amount; and that new customers pay for the infrastructure required in new developments.

"Maybe existing customers shouldn't be paying for the infrastructure required in new developments." Residential Participant Gosford

6.5 Effective Planning for the Future

Similar to water supply, planning for the future, particularly in light of population growth and climate change was a common value raised by forum participants for the sewerage system.

Long-term Planning to Ensure the Sewerage Service is Sufficient for Future Needs

Many participants indicated that it was important for Council to plan adequately for the future sewerage needs of the Central Coast, and that the expected population growth had been taken into consideration. It was commented that the area is a popular holiday destination and this will only grow in the future, so the needs of tourists and short term renters as well as long term population growth needed to be factored in.

"They need to properly plan for the expansion of the system to cope for future needs." Residential Participant Gosford

"To cope with the demand – they need to put in new assets proportional for new residents and visitors during holiday seasons." Residential Participant Wyong

"The northern area of the Central Coast is growing really quickly. They would need to make another treatment plant in this area to cope with the growing population." Residential Participant Wyong

"They need to be planning 10 years down the track, based on population estimates. Looking at what is required and what is needed." Residential Participant Wyong

Using the Latest Technology/Innovations e.g. Recycled Water

Table discussions often centred around the need for Council to investigate new technologies particularly regarding the use of recycled water. Many were very supportive of Council using treated recycled water on parks, golf courses and ovals, and some also thought recycled water for drinking should be considered in the future. However, there were many conflicting opinions at the tables on the subject of drinking recycled water.

There was an expectation for Council to research best practice methods and to look overseas to how other countries meet the demands of a growing population. Many were also unaware of the way in which Council currently disposed of biosolids and were keen to learn more about this.

"Look into new technology and best practice elsewhere." Residential Participant Gosford

"In Singapore it is cleaned and you can actually drink it. We need to consider that. We need high quality sewerage treatment so we can reuse the water again, particularly for watering gardens. A whole separate system. Long term we need to look at recycled water. Consumer attitudes have to change." Residential Participant Gosford

"If you look at Envirocycle, they break it down so they can water safely. You could use that for commercial gardens watering." Residential Participant Gosford

"What future technology can be employed to at least plan for the future? If we are going to develop the coast more, there needs to be a stronger focus on employing new technologies and planning. We have to learn from other countries. We need to align the infrastructure and sustainability with the influx of people." Residential Participant Gosford

"Using more recycled water, and making sure the solid parts are going to fertiliser. Where is it disposed of now?" SME Participant Gosford

"More recycling for gardening, and drinking. Will there be more purple pipes in houses in the future?" Residential Participant Wyong

Adaption to a Changing Climate

Climate change was mentioned by participants, in the context of ensuring that Council were planning for the climate changing and putting systems and strategies in place for this, for example more extreme weather events (bushfires, flooding, heavy rain, drought).

"Having better systems, or planning better for major rain events." SME Participant Wyong

"If there is a major flood event, what backup plans that they have? Are the communities aware of what they are?" Residential Participant Wyong

6.6 Environmental Focus

Caring for the environment was a frequent value raised by forum participants. Elements such as the oceans, marine life, soils and waterways, were important for Council to protect for future generations.

Protecting the Oceans & Marine Life, & Soils

The idea of effluent being released into the oceans raised many concerns and comments regarding ensuring that the marine environment is not adversely affected. It was felt that the effluent being released should be high quality with some going so far as to suggest it should be drinking water standard, to lessen the impact on the natural environment. Other elements in the effluent such as microplastics, drugs and hormones were also a point of concern, and the effect that these substances were having on fish and marine life.

It was felt by some, that Council should research and find other potential uses for the effluent being released into the ocean, as they do the biosolids.

Sewer leakages into the soil when pipes fail or in overflows were also felt to harm the soil and general environment, and as mentioned earlier, needed to be prevented first and foremost, and fixed in a timely manner.

"The quality of the sewage once it gets into the ocean and at our beaches needs to be at a standard where it doesn't harm the animals or us as swimmers." Residential Participant Gosford

"If they treat the water to a drinking standard that would lessen any environmental impact." SME Participant Wyong

"Look into ways of using what we produce on land, rather than sending it out to sea." SME Participant Wyong

"We need to look at the impact on animals and fish, not just humans." Residential Participant Gosford

"We need to get away from chucking out the hard stuff and then chucking it into the oceans. We need to get away from the idea that we can keep generating more waste and putting it back into the environment." Residential Participant Wyong

"All the chemicals and drugs, contraceptive pill and hormones, medicines etc, causes the fish to have terrible mutations. It's really bad for the environment and wildlife." Residential Participant Wyong

"Prevent sewerage leakages into the soil". SME Participant Gosford

"Filtering out the microplastics". SME Participant Gosford

"It's a bit shocking how much they pump into the ocean. What is it doing to the ocean environment – what research has been done?" Residential Participant Wyong

Using Renewable Power for Treatment Plants

There were some minor mentions of Council considering the use of renewable power for treatment plants, to reduce the reliance on coal powered energy. This would also have the added benefit of saving energy costs.

"They could use alternative power sources to process it all." Residential Participant Gosford

Greater Use of Biosolids (& Effluent)

As mentioned previously, greater use of biosolids, was considered a desired outcome that would help the environment and improve soils. Reusing effluent would prevent pollutants in the ocean and could also be used to improve soils, fertilise parks and gardens and reduce the demand for drinking water. Many forum participants were unaware of how Council used biosolids currently.

"Re-use it instead of pumping it all out to sea." Residential Participant Gosford

"We should be making more use of what is produced. Using the biosolids somehow." SME Participant Wyong

"They should research into using sewerage for alternative fuels. Plastic waste. Most of it is petroleum based. Alternative ways to use sewerage. Residential Participant Gosford

6.7 Transparency & Education

This value covered a range of aspects including being educated and increasing awareness of some of the current practices of Council, providing easy access to information, and receiving clear communication. It also included greater transparency when it comes to costs and bill components, and building greater trust in the Council to maintain the sewerage services.

Providing Clear, Easy to Understand Information & Good Communication

Participants indicated that it was important that Council informed their customers about the sewerage system and the challenges that Council faced, in a way that is clear and easy to understand. Many wanted to receive communication, rather than have to proactively seek information. They thought it important that Council educate school children and that the community has a greater level of knowledge so that everybody can know more about the use of recycled water and what is being released into the ocean, for example.

"I think more education is needed to let people know what is going on. It shouldn't be up to the individual to find it. I feel we also need to provide for people that aren't tech savvy as well – giving the opportunity for people to find information in other ways." Residential Participant Gosford

"Education is needed. People need to know more about the issues being faced so that they can be more realistic and open to the use of alternative solutions." SME Participant Wyong

"Education for children through schools – but for adults as well." Residential Participant Wyong

"Transparency - what is going out to the ocean....and what are the fees that we pay, are they going to the right places". SME Participant Gosford

Raising Community Awareness

It was felt to be important that the community becomes more aware of the sewerage system and where sewage goes, as well as aspects such as what can and cannot be flushed down the toilet, so people can do their bit to prevent blockages and keep maintenance costs down. Greater community awareness was felt to potentially help Council to invest in new technologies and make future decisions that gain a greater level of acceptance in the community because they would understand the reasons behind decisions more.

"I feel like more education should be given as to what we can and can't flush down the toilet." Residential Participant Wyong

"The number of blockages you get from wipes and foreign objects that get put down the toilet. Need to educate people about what can and can't go down the toilet." Residential Participant Wyong

Clear Public Information Informing when Beaches & Recreation Areas are Safe/Unsafe

Some mentioned that knowing when beaches and recreational areas were safe versus unsafe was also important. It was felt that this information should be easily accessible with some suggesting a safety rating for beaches that could be clearly displayed. Others went further, mentioning that

customers should have easy access to the results of the monitoring of the oceans and lakes that Council conducts.

"We only hear about things when the media get hold of it. Especially new people moving to the area, they don't know where or when they can or can't swim. It is not healthy to swim in some places. We need a regular 'water risk rating', like the bushfire sign, for swimming places." Residential Participant Gosford

"Have access to the sampling and monitoring that they do." Residential Participant Gosford

Transparent Pricing & Costs – what the Service Fee is made up of

As mentioned under the value of affordability, participants wanted to know more about the sewerage component on their water bill. They felt it was important that Council was transparent with customers in this regard.

"I would like to know more about where my costs are going in an actual sense – I feel like a more detailed breakdown of my bill is needed." Residential Participant Gosford

Greater Public Trust that Council has the Expertise & Resources Needed to Deliver on its Promises

Comments were raised regarding the need for Council to build trust and to instill confidence that they can manage the water and sewerage system, cost effectively, and that they have the expertise, personnel and resources available. The need for greater trust was particularly apparent because, as pointed out by some, they do not have a choice regarding their water and sewerage supplier.

"We don't have a choice in who we are using for our water supply and sewage services. We're essentially in a monopoly and have to be happy with the services that Council provides – we don't have a choice either way. But they really need to build more trust in the community." Residential Participant Wyong

"Will the Council even own this in a few years or have to sell? I think a question should be asked of whether someone else can do it better than they can." Residential Participant Wyong

"I don't trust the testing. The people working there need to have better training and better testing is needed. We need to have better quality effluent." Residential Participant Gosford

"You need enforcement of the regulations. Particularly monitoring of illegal stormwater connections as that can cause massive problems – overflows to the sewerage system." Residential Participant Wyong

6.8 Youth Group Findings

Regarding the sewerage services, the youth group's values and consequent desired outcomes remained consistent with those from the forums. The effect of sewerage on the environment was a large area of concern for the younger participants, specifically the negative effect of sewerage output on marine life.

Consequently, proper treatment of sewerage was a desired outcome suggestive of the environmentally conscious values held by the youth group.

"I feel where it is pumped out and what it's like is important because it could end up hurting marine life. We'd need to find a solution to make it more sustainable for the oceans and even just the environment in general." Youth Group Participant
"Ensuring the sewage is as clean as possible when it is dumped into the ocean, so that it doesn't hurt animals/ humans etc." Youth Group Participant

Concern over the treatment of an increasing amount of sewerage, as a product of population growth, was raised, with many concerned about the inflation of already present problems. Similar concern was apparent regarding the sustainability of sewerage pipe construction.

"When they are putting sewage pipes underground making sure they are done in a sustainable way." Youth Group Participant

"We want to make sure that the system won't be overloaded when there are a lot more people using it." Youth Group Participant

"I know in Bateau Bay there's a section where the sewage is and it constantly smells, so that can turn people off from living nearby" Youth Group Participant

Safety and hygiene were therefore valued highly with regards to sewerage treatment, with minimising the unpleasant smell of treatment plants also a desired outcome.

6.9 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander In-depth Interview Findings

Overall, most of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants did not have as much to say in relation to the sewerage system relative to the water supply system. However, the most important value here, much like that in the water supply system, was found to be the Council being environmentally friendly, again focusing on being sustainable and not damaging the local waterways.

"Being mindful of any harm that we might be causing to the environment is really important." – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander In-depth Interview Participant

Innovation was also thought to be an important value. Again, relating back to the environment, participants indicated the need to look for new, sustainable ways for the sewerage system to

operate. It was also thought that Council should be ensuring that the system is ahead of the current needs, in preparation for future usage.

"New ways to treat our sewage and waterways to keep them clean and alternatives that can improve rather than exacerbate some of the issues our waterways face." – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander In-depth Interview Participant

Recycling was also talked about commonly, with participants finding the use of recycled water on fields to be a great idea, and a good step forward regarding the previous two points of ensuring the sewage system is environmentally friendly and innovative. In addition to this, having water tanks in homes was seen to be beneficial.

"Ensuring mandatory water tanks are continued is important. I think it was mandatory for new houses that are built so continuing that would be good to make the most of rainwater." – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander In-depth Interview Participant

"I think it's quite smart the way water is sometimes recycled for sporting fields, we should keep on doing this." – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander In-depth Interview Participant

Like the water supply system, participants indicated the need for greater inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait residents in the decision-making relating to the sewerage system on the Central Coast.

"I know that the Council is working on their Indigenous Accord and that's great but I just think more inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the decision-making process." – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander In-depth Interview Participant

6.10 CALD In-depth Interview Findings

Similar to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants, there was not as much interest in the sewerage system as there was in the water supply system amongst the CALD participants. Population growth, however, was frequently talked about with concerns being expressed regarding the pressure placed on the future system due to the increased demand with new homes being connected and a greater quantity of sewage being processed. Some indicated that the current infrastructure may need to be updated, or better maintained, to keep up with this.

"The population growth in the Central Coast is considerable, so they really need to keep that in mind with regards to the sewerage system." – CALD In-depth Interview Participant

"Some of the suburbs of the Central Coast still have the old fibro shacks and houses that are traditional 2-3 bedrooms and 1 bathroom and that's it. When those get knocked down, and they all eventually do, they all get built up with a much larger number of rooms, 4-5 bedrooms and a couple of bathrooms, so obviously that has a massive effect on the amount of people that are living in them and then more bathrooms being used at the same time so in turn there's greater pressure on, and more capacity in, the sewerage system. I feel like what's there now may not be sufficient." – CALD In-depth Interview Participant

Education of the CALD community on the Central Coast was also seen to be an important value. Like the water supply, having information communicated to residents through multiple languages was seen to be beneficial. Despite this, some participants indicated they would not like this information to go 'overboard', suggesting they would only wish to receive communication infrequently.

"Younger Chinese people speak English well, but the older generation tend to not be as good. I think having information displayed in their language would really help to engage them. Older Chinese people are also more likely to be the ones wanting to do maintenance around the house and having veggie patches, so they really are the ones that should be targeted." – CALD In-depth Interview Participant

"I think people just knowing what you can and can't flush would help with a lot of the issues they are facing." – CALD In-depth Interview Participant

"The customers value not knowing what happens, they just want to know that everything is running smoothly once it leaves the house." – CALD In-depth Interview Participant

"What people want is for people's waste to be cleaned properly but not look further into it, just that they pay their bills and it is handled." – CALD In-depth Interview Participant

"The sewage system needs to just be working, we don't want to have to look into it." – CALD In-depth Interview Participant

Quality of sewage and resulting effluent was also touched on, with participants wanting Council to ensure that when effluent is discharged that it is of an acceptable quality. Within this, some also spoke of recycling water for non-drinking purposes and saw this as being beneficial to the overall system.

"In an ideal world you'd want to have a system that performs so well that you don't have to even notice it, meaning that there are never any overflows or odours, that when you flush your toilet (or have a shower) the water just goes where it needs to go." – CALD In-depth Interview Participant

"When there are floods, if it's possible making sure that it doesn't affect the rest of the network and everything continues to run smoothly." – CALD In-depth Interview Participant

"They're doing a good job for me, but there will be more issues the more we expand, so modernising and new treatment plants is probably the way to go but people need to be more aware of what we put in our toilets etc." – CALD In-depth Interview Participant

CALD participants also touched on the maintenance of the infrastructure and the potential need for more. Some related this to the impact on the environment, and others pointed to the need for maintenance and construction due to the growing population.

"With the old pipes and with the trees going through them, that is obviously an issue as the pipes get older and the trees get bigger." – CALD In-depth Interview Participant

"More people move here we need to make sure the pipes can service them." – CALD In-depth Interview Participant

6.11 Large Customer Findings

Similar to the residential and small business participants, large customers valued a high level of maintenance of the sewerage system to ensure it is working efficiently and effectively. Odours were mentioned by a couple of the large business customers.

"Just make sure it works. Make sure they do maintenance between here and the plant. There are no wastewater overflows, no odours or blockages. Regularly flushing pipes. Making sure they are replaced when needed." Large Customer In-depth Interview Participant

"I know the Bateau Bay treatment plant smells pretty bad. Need to move them away and plan away from residential areas, or improve the odour. The Tuggerah one is fine." Large Customer In-depth Interview Participant

Again, a higher level of communication was called for in relation to the safety and quality of effluent and where it is discharged along with a greater focus on customer service.

"Knowing where it is going. Being a resident myself I live near the beach. I take my kids there and I want to know where it goes and what they are putting in there. What is the quality?" Large Customer In-depth Interview Participant

"We had a massive $12,000 bill. I did three emails and had no response. No feedback, no nothing – they are probably our worst supplier. I don't think there are enough people doing the job." Large Customer In-depth Interview Participant

7 Performance Measures

7.1 Forum Findings

Participants at the forums were presented with a list of the performance measures that Central Coast Council currently have to report on for water and sewer services. They were asked to consider what other information they would like reported or performance measures they would like to be implemented in relation to the values and outcomes they developed in their groups. There was also a handout of ideas for consideration (refer to appendix).

Overall, at most of the tables there was a strong desire expressed for simple, clear and easy to understand information on performance measures to be available to residential customers (and business owners). Although the majority of participants indicated that they had not actively looked for information relating to the performance of Central Coast Council in this regard, there appeared to be genuine interest in knowing how Council was performing, and how their service compared to other water (and sewerage service) providers.

"I can't say that I've ever looked into this, but I would be interested if I came across it." Residential Participant Wyong

"I would like to know some of this, but I don't need to know everything. I just need to be assured that they're doing a good job" Residential Participant Gosford

"How do they compare to Sydney Water and the Hunter? That would make sense to me" SME Participant Wyong

While it wasn't a specific area for exploration in the forums, some participants also went on to make comment about the format and availability of information. To this end some were reacting to and making specific comments in relation to the Performance Report which was available for participants at each table.

"Some of the graphs here aren't immediately clear to me. It seems as though for some measures they want to be performing above the target, and for others the ideal would be to be below the target. They should make that clear somehow." Residential Participant Wyong

"I want a one-pager with dials that is really easy to read and understand." SME Participant Gosford

"They just can't hide it on their website somewhere. It needs to be easy to find, and easy to understand." Residential Participant Gosford

7.2 Quality

One area of information that the participants had a strong interest in related to the quality of water delivered to customers, as well as the quality of treated sewerage that goes to the ocean outfalls.

"I would like to be able to look up the water quality tests to see if anything has changed." SME Participant Wyong

"Water quality issues - where it is the worse and what they are doing to fix it." Residential Participant Gosford

"I'd like to know if they test for giardia." Residential Participant Wyong

"What about the sewerage that they're pumping back into the ocean? Can they tell us what standard that has been treated to?" Residential Participant Gosford

The specific performance measures that were suggested in relation to water quality & treatment were:

- Water quality testing results (on an ongoing basis) – along with any reasons for changes in quality
- Compliance with Australian Drinking Water Guidelines – microbial guideline values in the water supply & chemical guideline values
- Measures of bacteria / guardia
- The number of algal blooms in dams
- Number of incidents of not meeting quality standards– and the locations of lower quality water in the area
- How Central Coast Council Water quality compares with other areas/locations
- A rating (online or on a sign) like a fire rating, to check before you swim at the beach – and the number of days that beaches/lagoons are not 'swimmable'
- How pipes are maintained to ensure the water is clean – and to ensure sewerage doesn't leak out

7.3 Reliability

Quite a few participants also expressed an interest in knowing how Central Coast Council was performing in the area of 'reliability'. That is, they were interested in knowing about system failures, and recovery times.

"How about a report on failures of pumping stations." SME Participant Gosford

"It's one thing to know that there has been an issue, but you really also need to know how big a problem it is. There needs to be a measure to capture the severity of the incident." Residential Participant Wyong

More specifically, the measures that emerged in relation to reliability included:

- The number of outages/failures in the system – and where they typically occur in the region
- The duration of outages (average duration)
- The severity of outages (volume of water)
- The severity/volume of any overflows
- Total complaints per 1,000 properties for water/sewer issues

7.4 Affordability

Some participants also expressed an interest in Central Coast Council being measured in terms of the 'affordability' aspect. In particular, there was interest in knowing how cost effectively Central Coast Council performs in relation to other water providers

"Can they show us the cost per liter of the water they produce against Hunter Water, and Sydney Water etc., so we know how they're doing?" Residential Participant Gosford

"A breakdown of what's in the service charge, e.g. maintenance of pipes, and how the sewerage service fee gets determined." SME Participant Gosford

The specific measures pertaining to affordability that were raised were:

- Typical residential bills
- How the sewerage charge on the bill is calculated
- The cost per litre of producing water (compared to other providers)
- What income is derived from on-selling products (e.g. bio-solids)

7.5 Effective Planning

Planning and water security were other areas where participants were seeking to gain information on the performance of Central Coast Council. Here participants were particularly interested in knowing about the current storage capacity, and what was planned to deal with population growth in the area.

"I want to know what their 5 year plan is for supply. What they are budgeting for, what they are aiming at." Residential Participant Gosford

"What future planning is there for the expected population growth? Are we going to be ok and have they done the costing for this to see if we can afford it?" SME Participant Gosford

"How we're managing with our current supply system, and what they think is needed for the future." Residential Participant Wyong

The specific measures for reporting relating to planning and ensuring water security that were mentioned in the forums were:

- Storage volume measures/real time dam levels
- List of new infrastructure projects planned, and completed
- The number of infrastructure upgrades undertaken each year
- A 'Priority Improvement Plan' with critical focus areas and project timeframes

7.6 Environmental Focus

The forum participants also expressed interest in knowing how Central Coast Council was performing in the environmental area. This covered a range of different topics such as bio-solids, and microplastics.

"I'd like to know what they're doing with the solids – where does it go? Is it being recycled?" SME Participant Gosford

"How much is being recycled – what percentage and what are their plans for recycling?" Residential Participant Wyong

"What are their plans for removing microplastics?" Residential Participant Gosford

In terms of specific measures, those mentioned that related to having an environmental focus were:

- Volume of material recycled– and information about how it is used/where it goes
- Real time information when overflows impact/pollute recreational waterways
- How/if Council is measuring microplastics
- How much power has been generated by alternative power sources

7.7 Transparency

The final area of discussion for potential performance measures related to the idea of transparency. This included education campaigns, complaint handling, and seeking an independent measure of trust in Central Coast Council as a provider of water and sewerage services.

"What are they doing to educate their customers? Do they go into schools? What is their program." Residential Participant Wyong

"They could have a section about how many complaints they receive that is updated regularly. Common complaints and areas with the most complaints. Then people know they are aware and trying to fix it." Residential Participant Gosford

In terms of specific measures in the area of transparency, the forum participants were interested in:

- Are they educating the community? How many education campaigns have been run – and what do they do to educate children/the community
- Common complaints and how long it takes to resolve complaints
- Independent testing of community trust in Council as a provider of water and sewerage services

7.8 Youth Group Findings

The youth group participants were interested in performance measures relating to the health of individuals and the health of the environment as a consequence of water and sewerage treatment. A measure of how clean the water is to swim in was highly desired.

"A digital, online rating, so before you go to the beach you can see whether it's clean or not." Youth Group Participant

On the same measure, participants also highlighted the importance of having physical signs of how safe the water is to swim in. They highlighted that there are those in the community which may not have access to the internet and therefore are unable to check before they go to the waterways. Similarly, it was noted that there is poor reception at some beaches, so having a physical sign would be important.

Reporting of the quantity of water available in dams was also raised as another potential measure.

"A physical, digital sign at the beach would be good. Some people may not have access to electronics in their home, and also some beaches have really poor reception, so you couldn't check while you are there." Youth Group Participant

"I'd like to know the quantity of water in our dams and collection banks so we can better track how much clean water is available." Youth Group Participant

Another service that participants thought may be beneficial was a comparison between the nature of their water usage and other households. Notably, the youth group was somewhat unaware of the current measures being reported on, thus greater awareness around these measures were reported as a desired outcome.

"It would be interesting to see that other houses are consuming and how they're consuming and what they are using their water for." Youth Group Participant

"Not a lot of people know these things are accessible to the public so maybe making it more known that we can access this information would be helpful." Youth Group Participant

Information regarding areas of poor service and water events in general was also raised as an outcome important to the youth group. A point was made regarding the low awareness of measures that Council already publishes. Youth Group participants indicated they had no idea these measures were available to them, and felt that they should be made more accessible, or should be advertised more, to the wider public.

"It would be good to know just what's going on in general in terms of water events." Youth Group Participant

"Not a lot of people know you can see these things, so maybe making it more known that we can on their website would be helpful." Youth Group Participant

7.9 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander In-depth Interview Findings

The most important performance measures as seen by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants were related to the environment. The effect that both the water supply and sewerage systems have on the marine and general wildlife in the area, as well as the real-time monitoring of water quality in waterways were seen to be valuable pieces of information.

"I think it would be mostly to do with the impact on the environment. It is the most important thing I believe for the community as a whole." – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander In-depth Interview Participant

Publishing a 'Priority Improvement Plan' with critical focus areas and project timeframes was also mentioned as being important, as it would increase communication and transparency from Council to the community.

"I think if they were in breach what would be the impact to the environment? Such as a water main break – it will cost the council x amount of money because this many houses were damaged." – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander In-depth Interview Participant

"Transparent outcome, not just ticking a box." – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander In-depth Interview Participant

All financial indicators suggested by Council were also seen to be effective. Some participants highlighted that the cost of the water and sewer system should not be aimed too high, and greater transparency of the costs and what is included within them to the community should be employed.

"The Central Coast at this stage, and most people in Australia, are worried about money. They want the good quality water, they don't care how they're getting it, they are just worried about what they're paying for." – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander In-depth Interview Participant

Overall, there was a distinct lack of awareness regarding the performance measures that Council already publishes. As mentioned with the Priority Improvement Plan, many thought that communication needs to be prioritised and the measures need to be more accessible and publicised better.

"I don't think that many people would be aware that these things are accessible for them. A bigger social presence is probably needed, and greater communication of these." – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander In-depth Interview Participant

7.10 CALD In-depth Interview Findings

Most CALD participants indicated they were content with the current measures published by Council, however indicated that these should be more readily available and accessible for them to view. One suggested developing an App (in multiple languages) to communicate any information and to educate not just the CALD community but the entire Central Coast community.

"It would be great to have an App like we have for Service NSW where important information can be displayed and easily accessed. It would be really important for Council to establish a better relationship with their end users, the people that live in the area, and to have an intuitive presence in those peoples' lives. Right now, I think people only go to Council when they have a problem, but I think it would be much better for Council to be on the front foot and have a positive relationship." – CALD In-depth Interview Participant

CALD participants placed greater importance on the Environmental and Public Health measures suggested by Council and were most supportive of the real-time information on the water quality in the waterways. It was seen that transparency regarding these measures should be heightened, and Council should report regardless of whether they are doing well or poorly.

"This area is so beautiful; it would be great to understand how the environment is being considered when we are using those waterways in our water supply or sewerage systems. With all the rainfall and landslides, habitat destruction must be a huge thing." – CALD In-depth Interview Participant

"Council should be more transparent, not only sharing the good statistics but also sharing the bad." – CALD In-depth Interview Participant

Some CALD participants also indicated they would like to have information regarding how Council is faring compared to other water utilities, including the two largest in NSW; Sydney Water and Hunter Water. However, some also suggested comparisons against other coastal regions such as the North or South Coast of NSW. Some suggested this comparison to other water utilities is

simply of interest, however others indicated that comparing where they live is important to their culture.

"Chinese people really like to measure how they're doing compared to other regions, and sometimes to figure out if they'd like to move to other regions, so maybe having some sort of measure where we could compare ourselves, they would find really useful." – CALD In-depth Interview Participant

7.11 Large Customer Findings

Similar to the forums, the current performance measures listed were thought to be the most important and appropriate, however it was mentioned that accessibility to this information could be improved by streamlining reports and making them easier to find. Large businesses that use a lot of water often need to obtain information on the quality of the water used in their production processes, so it was thought that making water quality information easier to obtain would be beneficial.

"A lot of these things are part of our safety standards and licence agreement. We actually need to seek these things out but it is very hard to find information on any measures." Large Customer In-depth Interview Participant

"We would probably like to announce that our water quality is good, especially for our brewing side and to be able to say we are using good quality water." Large Customer In-depth Interview Participant

"It would be good to have data on water quality at different times. When we see water quality get worse we can let them know as well." Large Customer In-depth Interview Participant

Overall, when presented with the list of suggestions by IPART, large businesses stated that they weren't all that interested in Council having to report on a lot more performance measures.

"Not really. I would just assume that they are doing the right thing. I'm not going to check any of these measures." Large Customer In-depth Interview Participant

"I wouldn't look at any of them really." Large Customer In-depth Interview Participant

There was just one or two other measures suggested - the proportion of water reuse/recycling and a comparison in usage between large water users.

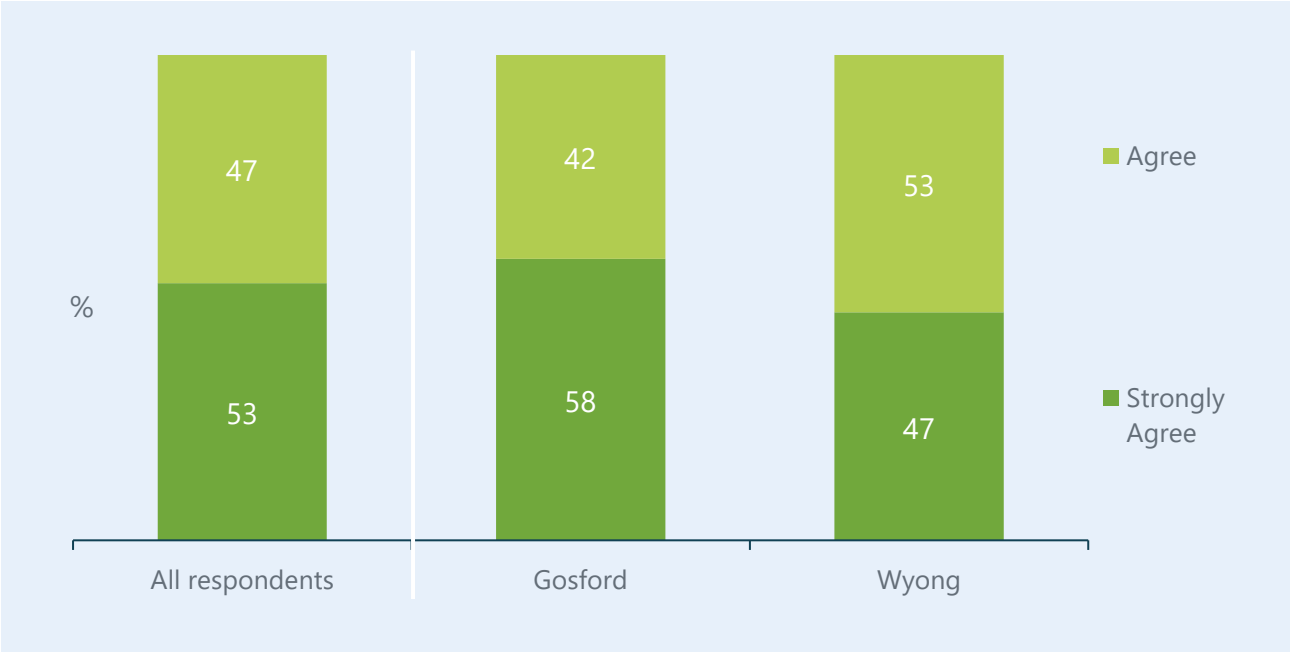
"I think it would be interesting to compare our consumption to other industries here. It would be good to have that baseline of how our consumption compares." Large Customer In-depth Interview Participant

8 End of Session Feedback

After the forums, residential and small business attendees were asked for their feedback by rating their level of agreement with several statements.

All of the forum participants agreed that they had enjoyed taking part in the session, with over half agreeing strongly (53%).

Figure 6: Level of Agreement with 'I enjoyed taking part in the session'



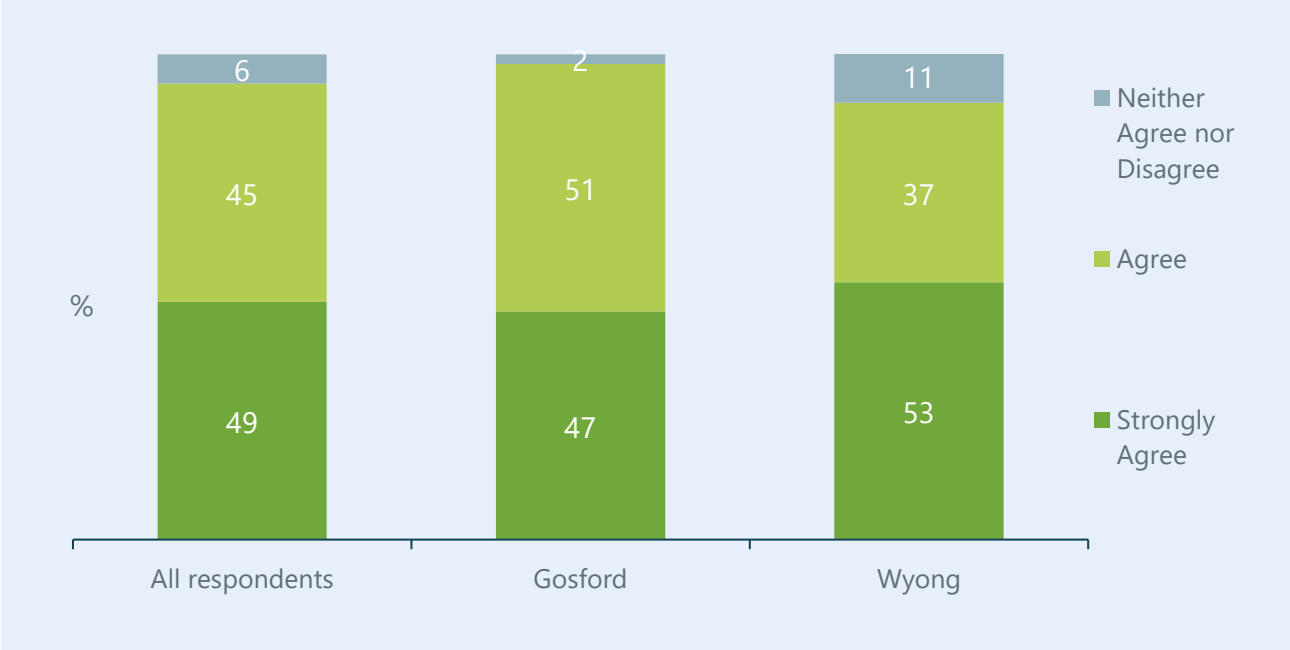
Q. I enjoyed taking part in the session
Base: All respondents who completed the end of session survey (n=83); Gosford (n=45), Wyong (n=38)

"Well organised and interesting topics, good group sizes, excellent facilitator, yum dinner." Gosford Forum Participant

"Well structured, information provided was clear and concise, the table leader was engaging and kept us on track." Gosford Forum Participant

The majority of forum participants also agreed that the session was informative, and they learned a lot (49% strongly agree, 45% agree).

Figure 7: Level of Agreement with 'It was informative and I feel I have learned a lot'



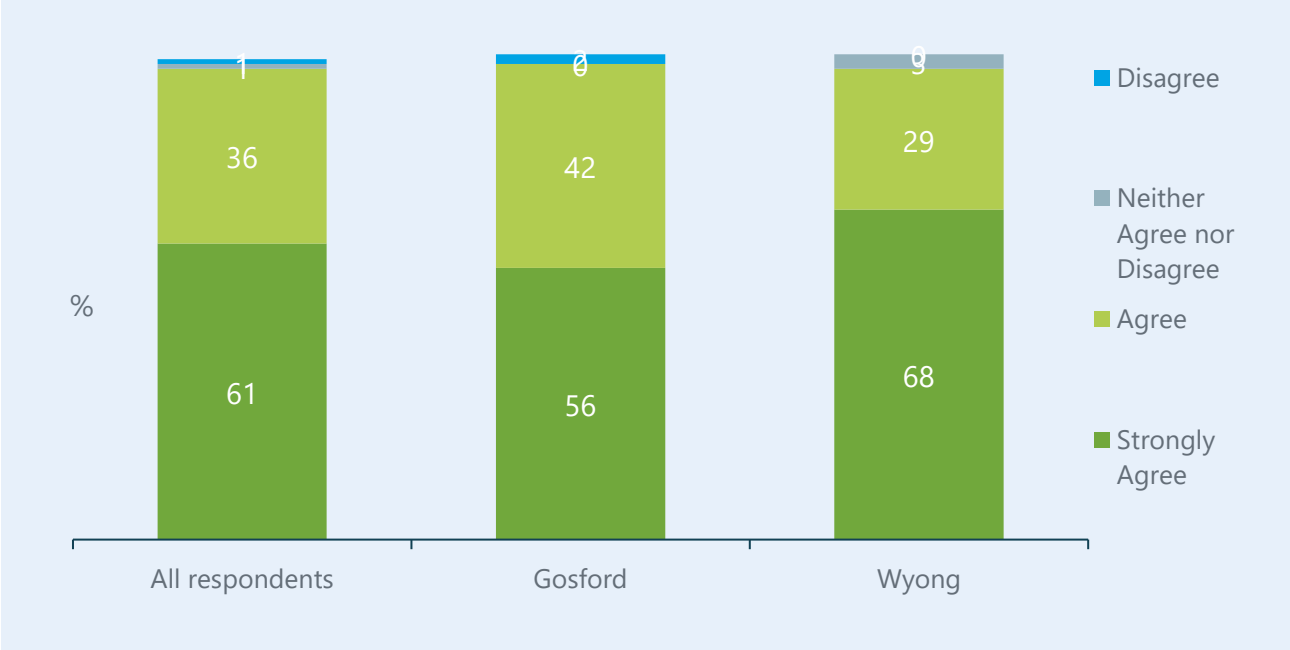
Q. It was informative and I feel I have learned a lot
Base: All respondents who completed the end of session survey (n=83); Gosford (n=45), Wyong (n=38)

"I learnt a lot about our water and sewerage and how it works." Wyong Forum Participant

"It was informative and fun." Wyong Forum Participant

Similarly, ninety seven percent of participants agreed that the session was well structured and organised, with almost two thirds (61%) agreeing strongly.

Figure 8: Level of Agreement with 'The session was well organised and structured'



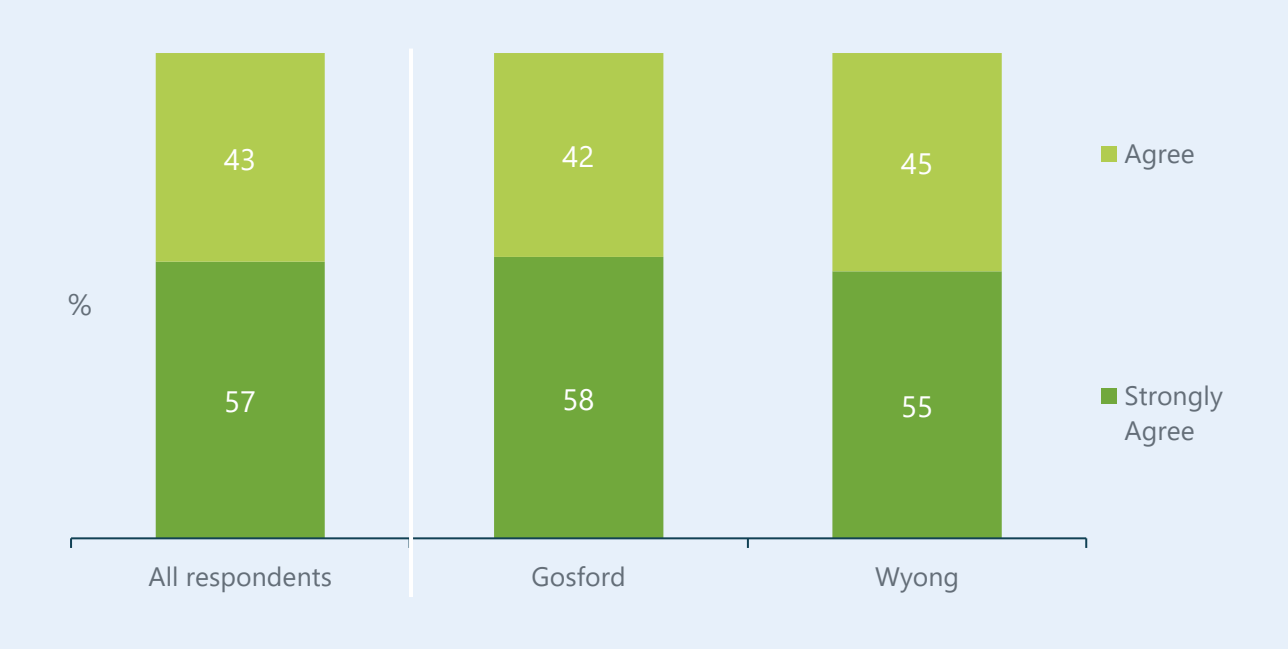
Q. The session was well organised and structured
Base: All respondents who completed the end of session survey (n=83); Gosford (n=45), Wyong (n=38)

"I enjoyed the format of being educated and then having the opportunity for a roundtable discussion." Wyong Forum Participant

"The presentation and pace of the session was good." Wyong Forum Participant

All agreed that the session allowed them to share their views and contribute to discussions (57% strongly agree, 43% agree).

Figure 9: Level of Agreement with 'I was able to provide my views and contribute during the session'



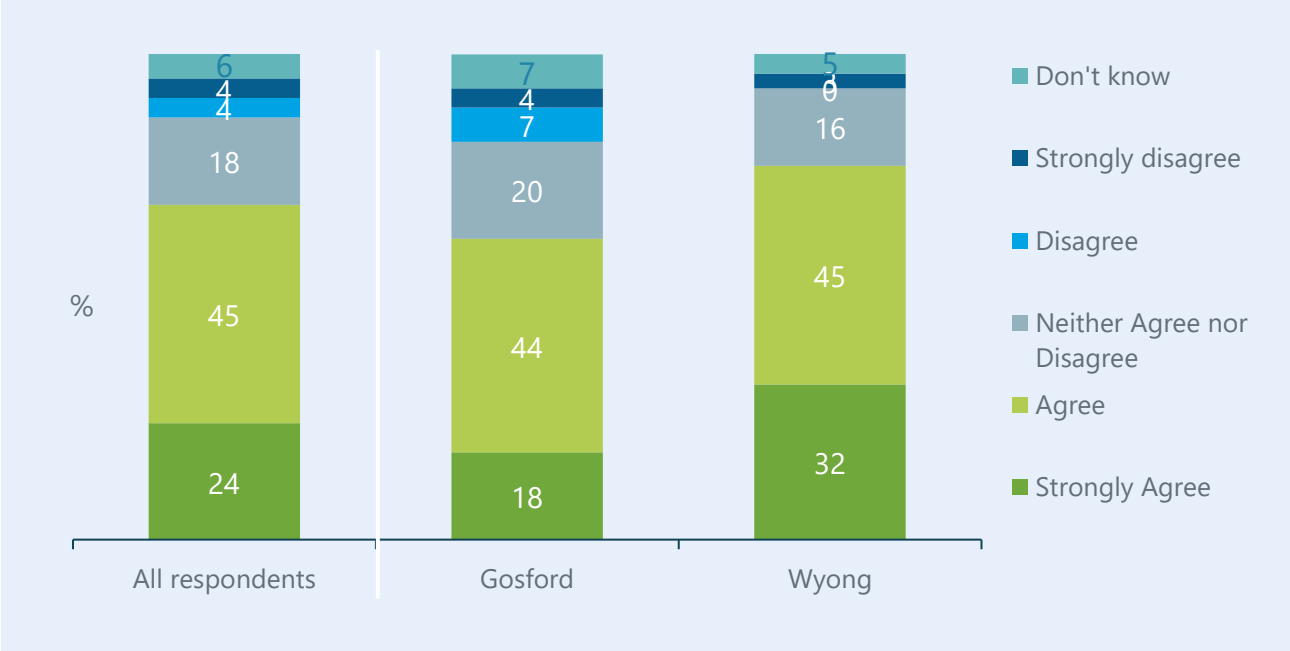
Q. I was able to provide my views and contribute during the session
Base: All respondents who completed the end of session survey (n=83); Gosford (n=45), Wyong (n=38)

"Everyone was listened to, everyone had a chance to contribute, it was relaxed. Dinner was a lovely bonus! Very much appreciated." Gosford Forum Participant

"I was able to speak freely about what concerns me in my area." Wyong Forum Participant

There was slightly less agreement that Council will act on the findings from the forum. Having said that, most (69%) did agree, however eighteen percent neither agreed nor disagreed with a further eight percent disagreeing and six percent saying they are unsure.

Figure 10: Level of Agreement with 'I think Central Coast Water will act on the information from this session'



Q. I think Central Coast Water will act on the information from this session
Base: All respondents who completed the end of session survey (n=83); Gosford (n=45), Wyong (n=38)

"Council were present and were interested in the discussion and what was being talked about. They seemed to be interested." Gosford Forum Participant

"Ease of communication, council members available to speak to." Wyong Forum Participant

Lastly, almost all (97%) agreed that events like the community forums were a good way of consulting the public about issues, with seventy percent (70%) agreeing strongly.

Figure 11: Level of Agreement with 'I think events like this are a good way of consulting the public about issues'

Q.: I think events like this are a good way of consulting the public about issues
Base: All respondents who completed the end of session survey (n=83); Gosford (n=45), Wyong (n=38)

"Table discussions were good. They came up with great ideas which seemed to be consistent across most of the tables." Gosford Forum Participant

"The opportunity to be involved and have input." Gosford Forum Participant

Appendices

Appendix A: Forum Agenda

Project:	Water and Sewer Masterplan and IPART ongoing engagement				
Event:	Phase 1 Forums				
Details:					
Dates and location:	Wednesday 1 March 2023 Thursday 2 March 2023	**Time:**	6.00pm-9.00pm	**Duration:**	3 hours
Forum objectives:	• Build knowledge amongst participants about the water and sewer systems and Central Coast Council's role within that. • Identify what is important to customers in relation to water and sewer services – overarching values and specific outcomes. • Explore what customers would like to know about Central Coast Council's performance in order to input into developing performance metrics.				

Time	Session details	Responsibility	Materials
Before 6.00pm	**Pre-forum** • Registration • Provide participants with filming/photography permission forms and signing sheet • Explain boards – 'parking lot' and 'further thoughts' • QR code – sign up to receive updates from Council on this project	WR	Filming/ photography form Signing sheet Boards and post it notes
6.00-6.09pm (9 mins)	**Welcome and guidelines for the session** • Acknowledgement of Country • Structure of the session – first part of forums (second part in May) • Guidelines • Location of toilets and evacuation in emergency • Introduce speaker	WR Lead Facilitator – Karyn Wong	PPT slides

6.09-6.17pm
 	
(8 mins)
	Presentation 1: Introduction
	• Purpose of/reason for the engagement – long term planning
	• What we want to find out:
	  ○ What customers value
	  ○ What their priorities are
	  ○ What their expectations are
	  ○ What aspects of our performance you want to know about (performance metrics)
	  ○ How we should measure them
	  ○ What should go into a 'Customer Charter'
		CCC – Jamie Loader	PPT slides

	• Outline of the engagement program – 2 forums, surveys		
6.17-6.25pm (8 mins)	**Presentation 2: Build knowledge on water supply and CCC's role within it** • Educate the community about the role and responsibilities of CCC in relation to water supply - show the water cycle and where CCC play a role perhaps using a video • Reference sewerage services but explain we will focus on water supply first	CCC – Luke Drury	PPT slides and video

6:25-6.37pm
 	
(12 mins)
	Table discussion: Introduction
	
	Introductions on tables: *Ask participants to introduce themselves – where they live and one thing they like about the area they live in. SME table – ask them what their business does.*
	
	Give your own guidelines on tables: *e.g. speaking one at a time so you can take notes, you will move them on at times so we can cover all the topics, you may ask more talkative members to let others speak sometimes etc.*
	
	Explain boards *– the room level 'parking lot' board is for any thoughts/feedback they want to provide that is 'off topic'. The A3 'further thoughts' board on the table is for anything that comes to mind outside the time of the discussion e.g. if they think of something at dinner that they wish they'd said.*
	
	Issues of importance – water supply
	
	• What do you think should be the most important goals of a water supply plan for the next 10 years? ***Focus on water supply in this discussion not sewerage – there is another session later in the forum on the sewerage system***.
	  ○ *Drill down into their experiences, or what they have heard, that makes them suggest those goals.*
	• What issues do you want Council to consider as part of its planning for Central Coast's water supply? *If they are focussing on current issues then prompt for future issues.*
	  ○ *Again drill down into their experiences, or what they have heard, that makes them suggest those issues.*
	
	Start to get them thinking about what is important to them – what CCC should focus on in its planning.
		WR Table Facilitators	Table level handout 1: Water supply summary map (CCC will provide)

<table>
<tr>
<td>6.37-6.43pm

(6 mins)</td>
<td>Presentation 3: Challenges facing our water supply

• Educate the community about the challenges facing water utilities and CCC in particular, e.g. population growth, changing climate, ageing networks, regulatory requirements? (briefly)
• In the next session the table captains will ask you about what we should be aiming at as a water supplier. We have asked customers this before, so we will use that knowledge too in our planning, but we want to find out from you what you think is important.</td>
<td>CCC – Luke Drury</td>
<td>PPT slides</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.43-7.05pm

(22 mins)</td>
<td>Table activity: Development of water values and outcomes

• Thinking about what we discussed before, and the challenges facing CCCW, what outcomes should we be trying to achieve in terms of our water supply? What outcomes do you think customers value?

Give out handout 2: Examples of outcomes that customers think are important from the electricity sector:
<table>
<tr><th>Outcome</th><th>Value</th></tr>
<tr><td>-Workers and the public are protected, assets well maintained</td><td>Safety</td></tr>
<tr><td>- A day to day consistent supply with minimal interruptions
-Quick response to outages</td><td>Reliability</td></tr>
</table>

Ask each participant who mentions an outcome to write it on a separate card. So you end up with a pile of cards.

If they are struggling - what makes for a good quality of life and how does water fit into that lifestyle? What is important to ‘keep’ in the future?

Introduce personas to encourage the participants to think from other perspectives, if the table needs it. e.g. a young family, retired couple, small business, low income family, single person, young ATSI person. Have images of these personas and a description of their circumstances.
• What would be important to these different types of customers? What outcomes would they value? What would their priorities be? Write these outcomes on cards too.

• (You can do this as you go too) Once you have a pile of outcomes, work together as a table to group the cards into ‘values’ and create a name for each value. Write the name on a post it note and stick to the pile of outcomes.</td>
<td>WR Table Facilitators</td>
<td>Handout 2: example value/ outcome from electricity

Cards to write outcomes on

Large post it notes to write values categories on

Personas as table stimulus</td>
</tr>
</table>

	Choose spokesperson to write the value names on the flipchart, and to feedback to the room in the next session. If needed, they can use the piles of outcomes to explain what each value means.		Flipchart
7.05-7.30pm (25 mins)	**DINNER** Buffet style – participants to get up, help themselves and bring back to tables to eat Participants encouraged to add to the 'further thoughts board' on their table if they think of things they wanted to mention		
7.30-7.40pm (10 mins)	**Feedback from each group to the room** • Spokesperson from each table to present their values to the room (2 mins per table) and a v brief overview of what outcomes each covers. If it starts to get repetitive then tables should be encouraged to try to just feedback values (and outcomes) that have not been mentioned by other tables.	Table spokesperson	Flipchart
7.40-7.45pm (5 mins)	**Presentation 4: Build knowledge on sewerage services and CCC's role within it** • Educate the community about the role and responsibilities of CCC in relation to sewerage services. • Refer them to the maps on tables.	CCC – Luke Drury	PPT slides

7.45-7.53pm
 	
(8 mins)
	Table discussion: Issues of importance – sewerage services
	
	• What do you think should be the most important goals of a sewerage plan for the next 10 years?
	  ○ *Drill down into their experiences, or what they have heard, that makes them suggest those goals.*
	• What issues do you want Council to consider as part of its planning for Central Coast's sewerage services? *Again, if they are focusing on current issues then prompt for future issues.*
	  ○ *Drill down into their experiences, or what they have heard, that makes them suggest those issues.*
	• Are these the same as for water supply or are some different?
		WR Table Facilitators	Table level handout 3: Sewerage system summary map (CCC will provide)

7.53-7.55pm	**Presentation 5: Challenges facing sewerage services**	CCC – Luke Drury	PPT slides

(2 mins)	• Brief overview of how the challenges impact sewer services.		
7.55-8.10pm (15 mins)	**Table activity: Development of sewerage services values** • What outcomes should we be trying to achieve in terms of our sewerage services? What outcomes do you think customers value? *Again, try to get them to think about outcomes and write on cards, then work together to group them into values. Create a name for each value - write the name on a post it note and stick to the pile of outcomes.* *Using the personas again as stimulus if needed.* • How similar are these values and outcomes to the water supply values and outcomes the table developed earlier? • Are there any water outcomes that relate to the sewerage system? *Flipchart values. Choose spokesperson to feedback to the room.*	WR Table Facilitators	Refer back to personas stimulus Flipchart
8.10-8.20pm (10 mins)	**DESSERT**		
8.20-8.30pm (10 mins)	**Feedback from each group to the room** • Spokesperson from each table to present their values to the room (2 mins per table) and a v brief overview of what outcomes each covers. If it starts to get repetitive then tables should be encouraged to try to just feedback values (and outcomes) that have not been mentioned by other tables.	Table spokesperson	Flipchart
8.30-8.40pm (10 mins)	**Presentation 6: Measuring CCC's performance** • Each year CCC has to provide information to the community about how we are performing. • Some things are not negotiable – we have to provide information on these things e.g. …. • We want to know what else you think we should be providing information on, in relation to our performance. • We will be touching on it today and then doing more on it next time.	CCC – Danielle Hargreaves	PPT slides

8.40-8.55pm (15 mins)	**Table discussion: Performance measures** ***Give out Handout 4 to show examples of performance measures for electricity outcomes/values*** • How should CCC's performance be measured on the water and sewer outcomes/values your table came up with? OR worded another way what might customers want to know in relation to each, to reassure them that this outcome/value is being met? *Go through each value/outcome and generate unprompted ideas from participants for what CCCW should report on.* *If they struggle provide Handout 5 as stimulus.*	WR Table Facilitators	Handout 4 of electricity example with performance examples included Handout 5 (if needed)
8.55-9.00pm (5 mins)	**Summing up and thanks** Closing remarks: • Recap on the deliverables/purpose • What CCC has heard this evening and what we will take from today • What we will focus on in the next forum • The importance of their input in the next forum • *Woolcott Research Lead Facilitator – thanks and reminder to fill in end of session questionnaire on tables.*	CCC WR Lead Fac WR Table Facilitators	End of session questionnaire and signing sheet Incentive
CLOSE			

Appendix B: Screener

Thank you for your interest in being involved in the community forums. We just need to ask a few demographic questions to ensure we have a representative group of the community.

Q1. Do you live in the Central Coast Council local government area?

Yes

No THANK AND TERMINATE

TERMINATE MESSAGE FOR Q1. Unfortunately, you do not live within the area we are looking for. Thanks again for your interest.

Q2. Which forums are you interested in attending?

Gosford (1 March and 10 May 2023) 1

Wyong (2 March and 09 May 2023) 2

Q3. Do you, or does anyone in your household, work for any of the following organisations?

Water supply or sewerage services

Market research

IPART (the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal)

NSW Health in a role related to water quality regulation

NSW Environment Protection Authority

Yes 1 THANK & TERMINATE

No 2

TERMINATE MESSAGE FOR Q3. Unfortunately, we are unable to include anyone with a close connection to Central Coast Council, water regulation or market research. Thanks again for your interest.

Q4. Does your household receive water/sewerage bills from Central Coast Council and/or your body corporate?

Yes, from Central Coast Council	1 (skip to Q6)
Yes, from my body corporate/landlord/strata management	2 (skip to Q6)
Yes, from Central Coast Council and my body corporate	3 (skip to Q6)
No	4

Q5. Does your landlord charge you all or part of your water/sewerage bill?

Yes	1	
No	2	TERMINATE

Q6. In which year were you born? _____

IF REFUSED: Which of the following age groups best describes you?

18-34	1 (Quota across both locations: 24%)
35-49	2 (Quota across both locations: 24%)
50-69	3 (Quota across both locations: 33%)
70+	4 (Quota across both locations: 19%)

Q7. Are you…

Male	1 (Quota across both locations: 49%)
Female	2 (Quota across both locations: 51%)
Non-gender-specific	3
Prefer not to indicate	4

Q8. Do you speak a language other than English at home or with family?

No, English only	1

Yes (please specify) 2 (Quota across both locations: 7%)

Prefer not to say 3

Q9. Are you of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin?

No 1

Yes 2 (Quota across both locations: 5%)

Prefer not to say 3

Q10. Are you the owner or a decision maker for a small or medium business (less than 200 employees)?

Yes 1 *RECRUIT AS A SMALL BUSINESS (Quota 20%)*

No 2 SKIP NEXT QUESTION

Don't know 3 SKIP NEXT QUESTION

Q11. What industry does the business operate within?

_____

Q12. Which of the following best describes the dwelling where you are currently living?

I/We own it fully or with a mortgage 1 (Quota across both locations: 66%)

I/We currently rent this property 2

Other (please specify) 3

Q13. Do you live in a…

Stand-alone house or dwelling 1 (Quota across both locations: 77%)

A townhouse or semi 2

An apartment or unit complex 3

Other (please specify)	4

Q14. What is your approximate annual household income (before tax)?

Less than $41,600 (less than $800 per week)	1 (Quota across both locations: 25%)
Between $41,600 and $78,000 ($800-$1,500 per week)	2
Between $78,000 and $104,000 ($1500-$2,000 per week)	3
Between $104,000 and $156,000 ($1500 - $3,000 per week)	4
More than $156,000 (more than $3,000 per week)	5
Prefer not to say	6

Q15. 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, been disconnected, delayed other payments or borrowed money to pay?

Yes	1
No	2
Don't know	3

Q16. Are you a member of any special interest groups or associations related to water, farming or the environment?

Yes (please specify)	1
No	2

Q17. How did you hear about this forum?

Letterbox Brochure

Word of Mouth

Facebook/Social Media advertisement

Council Website

Other (specify): _____

Thank you for providing that information. Lastly, could you please provide your contact details:

TITLE:

FIRST NAME:

SURNAME:

Preferred ph. number to be contacted on:

ADDRESS:

SUBURB/POSTCODE:

EMAIL ADDRESS:

Thank you for your time and willingness to participate. We will be in touch to confirm whether you have been selected to participate and with further instructions.

Should you require further information in the meantime please contact Melissa Homann or Liz Sparham of Woolcott Research on 02 9261 5221.

Thanks

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