



Central Coast Council

Water and Sewer Community Engagement and Education Approach

2025

Central
Coast
Council

Water
and Sewer

**love water
use it wisely**

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we live, work and play.

We pay our respects to Darkinjung country, and Elders past and present.

We recognise the continued connection to these lands and waterways and extend this acknowledgement to the homelands and stories of those who also call this place home.

We recognise our future leaders and the shared responsibility to care for and protect our place and people.

Our Vision

To be a trusted service provider for the Central Coast community and place our customers at the centre of everything we do.

Our Purpose

To provide water and sewer services that preserve our environment and maintain the livability and health of the Central Coast community.



Director's Message

Welcome to Central Coast Council's Water and Sewer Community Engagement and Education Approach. This approach shares how Water and Sewer will engage, communicate, educate, and continue to improve its services, while building trust with customers and the community.

This approach outlines the different ways Water and Sewer will listen, talk, and communicate with its customers across the delivery of services, and making important decisions that may affect you, your environment or your water and sewer services.

This approach aligns and complements Council's broader Community Engagement Strategy and is consistent with our commitment to be transparent and accountable to the Central Coast community. It ensures that you, Council's customers, continue to be at the centre of everything we do to deliver on today's water and sewer needs and prepare for the future.

With a focus on your values, Water and Sewer has created this approach following an extensive community engagement program. Thank you to the community members who helped inform this research.

I encourage you to continue to have your say about water and sewer services and stay connected to receive Council's updates about the delivery of its service commitments.

Jamie Loader
Director Water and Sewer



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About us

Central Coast Council Water and Sewer is the local water utility for the Central Coast region. We service the entire local government area, supporting a population of approximately 360,000 people and delivering essential services to more than 140,000 homes and businesses. Our key responsibilities include:

- **Harvesting raw water** – collecting water from natural catchments and storing it securely.
- **Providing safe drinking water** - treating water to adhere to the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines and delivering it to our customers.
- **Collecting and treating sewage** - managing the collection and transport of sewage, treating it effectively and discharging it in accordance with environmental licensing.
- **Recycling treated water** – tertiary treatment of sewage to create recycled water for non-drinking purposes.

Our guiding principles

Central Coast Council Water and Sewer is regulated by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART). IPART sets maximum prices for Council’s water and sewer services. Our planning is guided by a customer centric, cost effective approach that builds credibility and trust within the community. This aligns with IPART’s 3Cs Model: Customer, Cost and Credibility. Learn more about IPART at ipart.nsw.gov.au



Introduction

Our vision for the future

This approach outlines how we will engage, communicate, educate, and continue to build trust with our customers and community through genuine engagement, transparency, and accountability. This document forms part of an informed and strategic suite of documents that are designed to keep our residents educated and updated on our performance, projects and developments, and ensuring our customers are empowered to get the most out of their water and sewer services.

Documents that support this approach include your Water and Sewer Customer Charter, Complaints Management Framework, Community Strategic Plan and Central Coast Council’s Community Engagement Strategy. We are further committed to transparency with our customers by delivering Quarterly Performance Reports available to the public.

How we developed this approach



One Central Coast

The Community Strategic Plan (CSP) represents the highest level of strategic planning undertaken by Council and identifies the main priorities and aspirations of the Central Coast Community. It is a 10-year plan that covers all aspects of our lives including jobs, infrastructure, transport, community, culture, healthcare, the environment and more. Council’s Community Strategic Plan has five key themes that were integral in the development of this document which are:



To learn more search ‘Community Strategic Plan’ at centralcoast.nsw.gov.au

Setting the scene

What is community engagement?

Engaging with our community means actively involving them in meaningful dialogue and collaboration. The process commences with the delivery of information to our customers and community with the aim to seek and incorporate informed feedback to ensure we reach the best possible outcomes. This approach outlines the different ways we will talk and listen to you before we make important decisions that may affect you, your environment or your water and sewer services.

Helping you when it matters most

We provide a variety of assistance programs to support customers who may be experiencing vulnerability and financial hardship. We sought your feedback to ensure that this policy provides a consistent and fair approach when assessing rebate applications and supporting financially vulnerable customers, while maintaining the sustainability of Council’s water and sewer services.

To learn more about our customer assistance programs search **‘rebates and hardship assistance’** at centralcoast.nsw.gov.au

Understanding shared rights and responsibilities

This approach complements your Water and Sewer Customer Charter. The Charter acts as a mutual agreement that defines the roles and responsibilities between Central Coast Council and our customers.

To make certain decisions are made in the best interests of the entire community, our service issue escalation and response process prioritises the most urgent and important service issues.

To learn more about shared rights and responsibilities and our customer charter search **‘customer charter’** at centralcoast.nsw.gov.au

What can you provide feedback on?

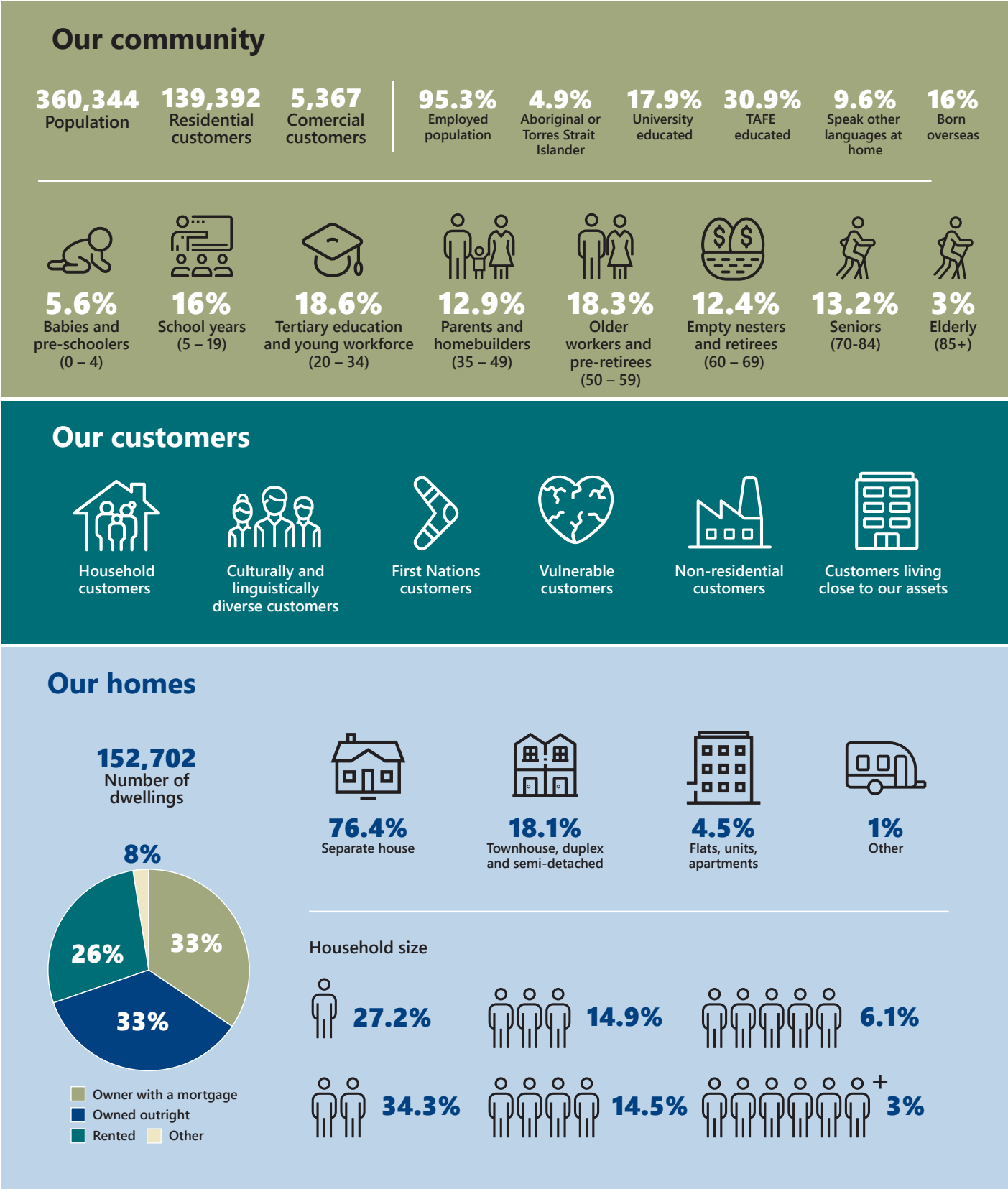
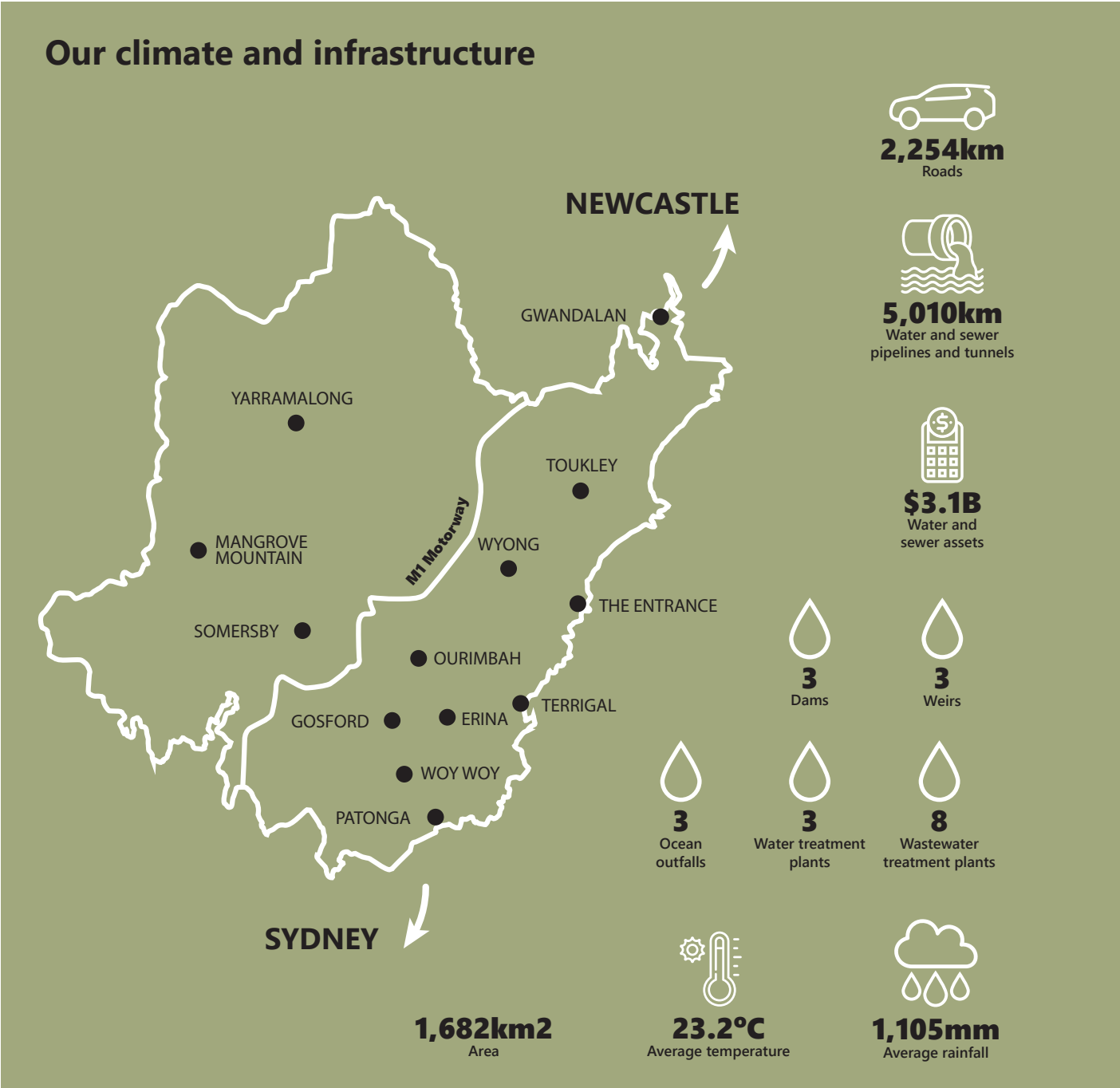
Central Coast Council Water and Sewer is a regulated business so there are things that community feedback cannot influence such as legislation and regulatory compliance. However, other important areas can be influenced by your feedback to help ensure that we make decisions in the best interests of our broader community. For example, our customer values provide us with clear direction on future investments. This means the amount of money that we spend on our maintenance and infrastructure can be targeted to the water and sewer services our community value most.

We will engage with our customers and community when and where it matters most to ensure our community is involved in important decisions. We will continue to consult with you on:



Our customers and community

Central Coast Council Water and Sewer is a major water utility with over with approximately 145,000 connected customers. This means we have a broad customer base that includes residents, businesses, hospitals, schools, universities, community groups and more. While not everyone in our community pays for our services directly, we all interact in the same environment and are impacted by the decisions we make. We are committed to working closely with our customers and community to make decisions in the best interests of our whole community.



What matters to you

We’ve shaped our customer values and outcomes based on continuous feedback from our customers and community. These are now embedded within our work plans and strategic objectives. They guide our decision-making, from every day operations to major investment choices, and will continue to evolve over time to help refine our strategic direction and ensure we deliver lasting value.

Here’s what you said you valued most about your water supply and sewer services



Good quality water
Clean, clear, safe drinking water that tastes and smells good and is tested and monitored regularly.



Quality treatment
Minimising odour and health impacts on customers and workers and releasing high quality effluent to the ocean.



Reliable service
Well maintained network with minimal leaks and breakages with fast response times to faults and issues.



Affordable
Cost efficient, consistent, and good value for money with fair allocation of costs between customers.



Effective planning
Using the latest technology, water sources and long-term planning to ensure future supply demands can be met and are resilient to climate change.



Environmental focus
Protecting our catchments, oceans and marine life and utilising renewable energy to power our assets.

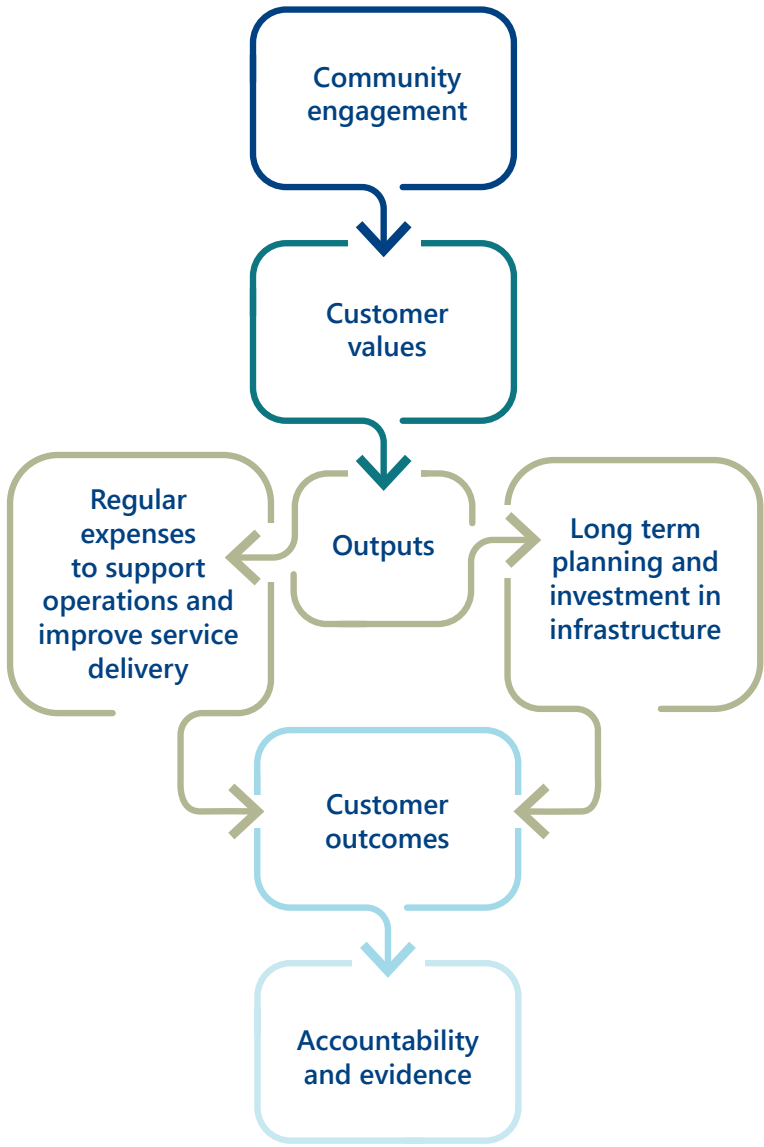


Transparency and education
Providing clear, easy to understand information and good communication and raising community awareness about our water supply, water conservation and what is safe to flush down the toilet.

Influencing outcomes

Central Coast Council Water and Sewer recognise that community feedback plays a vital role in influencing our decision making. By incorporating your values into our daily operations, we aim to deliver customer outcomes that reflect the priorities of our broader community. For example, insights from our customer values can help guide day to day spending and future investment decisions. This ensures that funding for maintenance and infrastructure is directed toward the water and sewer services that matter most to our community.

How your values and outcomes influence our services



Putting our customers first

We're committed to listening and working together with our community. We believe that when decisions affect you, your voice should be part of the conversation. Our approach to engagement is guided by values of fairness, inclusion, and respect, and it's closely connected to how we aim to deliver great customer experiences. We're here to make sure everyone has the chance to be involved and heard.

Our engagement principles



1. Respect and transparency

- Consult with you when possible and use the information gathered in a meaningful way.
- Respect your time and listen to you.
- Engage at a level that is appropriate to the possibility to influence.
- Share the responsibility, building trust with transparency.



2. Access and inclusion

- Seek a diversity of views and perspectives.
- Provide feedback to you as to how your input contributed to decision-making.
- Endeavour to identify and remove barriers to participation.
- Use a range of opportunities and techniques to encourage participation, and increase engagement.
- Have an awareness and understanding for all who may be affected by or interested in the outcome.
- Work in partnership with relevant community groups, State and Federal Government, Local Government partners, and / or other stakeholders internally within Council.



3. Clarity

- Facilitate genuine and open dialogue with the community.
- Clearly communicate the intention, scope, and outcomes of the consultation.
- Use plain language and avoid jargon to provide clear explanations.
- Make information available in accessible formats.



4. Accountability and improvement

- Seek to maintain consistent standards and levels of quality.
- Share results internally and work together to avoid duplication and 'over consultation'.
- Evaluate engagement efforts and consistently seek to learn and improve practice.
- Loop back to our customers on the outcomes and actions that resulted from the engagement.
- Ensure statistical validity of engagement by using a variety of engagement methods, large sample sizes, and minimising bias via engagement design and avoiding leading questions.



5. Capacity

- We will build the community's capacity to contribute, by educating and empowering both the community and staff so that they may participate in meaningful, two-way collaboration.



Our approach

Our Community Engagement approach aligns with Council's Community Engagement Strategy and more broadly the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Spectrum of Participation. The spectrum shows how the range and input of community involvement varies depending on the goals, time frames, resources, and impacts of a project. Council takes an active approach and goes beyond this spectrum by providing thorough education prior to engagement activities to ensure our participants are uplifted to make an appropriate decision and engage meaningfully.

Spectrum of public participation

INCREASING IMPACT OF THE DECISION						
PURPOSE	 Inform	 Educate	 Consult	 Involve	 Collaborate	 Empower
GOAL	To provide the community with information to assist their understanding of the issue, problem, opportunities, or solutions.	To provide the community with the knowledge and skills to enable them to make an informed decision.	To obtain feedback and information about attitudes, opinions and preferences that assist Council in its decision-making processes.	To work on an ongoing basis with the community to ensure their concerns, ideas and hopes are listened to and understood.	To partner with the community in each aspect of the decision, including the development of alternatives, sharing of resources, and the discovery of the preferred solution.	To place final decision-making in the hands of the stakeholders.
COMMITMENT	We will keep you informed.	We will equip you with a new, shared understanding of the issue and build your capacity so you can provide meaningful input and feedback.	We will listen to and acknowledge your concerns and hopes and provide feedback on if or how your input influenced the decision.	The community will have a role in shaping the project, and input into decisions, which will be visible throughout the process.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate this into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.

Working together

Who are our customers and community?

At Central Coast Council Water and Sewer, we define our customers as those who use our core services. Our community includes everyone living in the areas where we operate. While not all community members are direct customers, many are impacted by our services or have a stake in the decisions we make. We are committed to working in partnership with our customers and community - listening, engaging, and building relationships based on trust, transparency, and shared understanding. Together, we can shape a sustainable and resilient future for the Central Coast. To ensure characteristics of best practice customer research and engagement Council is committed to understanding their customers and community.



Ensuring inclusion



Inclusivity and Representation

- Utilising census data to determine diversity amongst our customers.
- Engaging a diverse cross-section of customers.
- Creation of water and sewer customer profiles to gain insights into emerging communities, growth areas, and infrastructure.
- Using demographic data to ensure representation across age, income, location, background, and service usage.
- Analyse customer data to determine usage patterns, complaints, and feedback.



Accessibility

- Offer multiple channels for engagement such as online surveys, community forums, pop-up events, and phone interviews.
- Providing visual representations and multimodal materials where needed.
- Offer appropriate mixed timing for engagement activities including time of day, weekends and holiday periods.



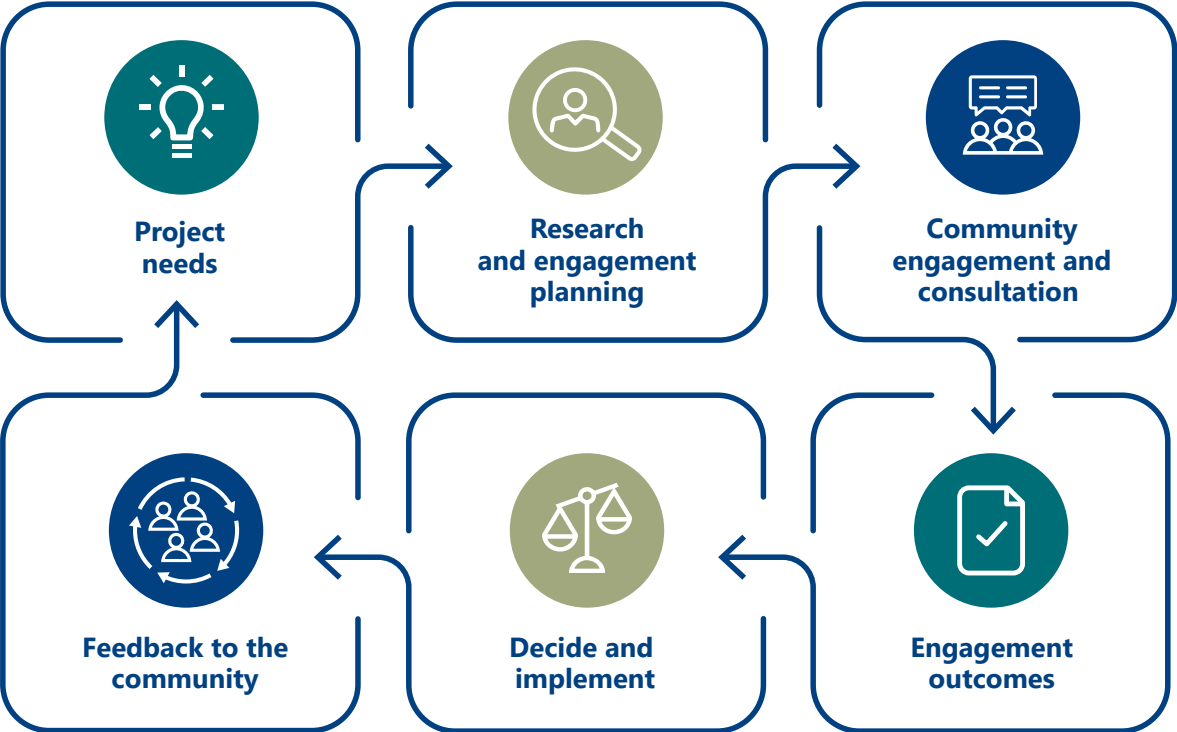
Validate with Community Partners

- Work with:
- Non-government organisations (NGOs) and advocacy groups.
 - Aboriginal Land Councils.
 - Multicultural service organisations.
 - Government agencies.



How we engage with you

This Approach guides the way engagement is planned and undertaken at Central Coast Council within Water and Sewer. Planning for engagement considers a range of factors including the stakeholders impacted by the project, the impact the project will have on the environment, and the level of interest and significance to the community.



Our engagement channels



Broad communications

- Community newsletters - print and digital.
- Social platforms.
- Radio.
- Television.
- Signage.
- Newsletters.



Deliberative forums

- In person and online.
- Spread throughout the Central Coast.
- Water security plan.
- Improving Your Water and Sewer services.



Events

- Attendance at Council run community events provides an opportunity for direct engagement, feedback and time to 'check in' with our community on behaviours and perceptions around the value of water.
- Shopping centre 'drop-in' events.



Campaigns

- Love Water: A community education campaign that educates our community on the value of water with goal of large scale behaviour change throughout the community.
- Dunny Do's and Dunny Don't's: A community education campaign on what you can and can't flush down the toilet aimed at reducing the number of water main breaks and sewer overflows caused by flushing the incorrect items.



Educational Programs

- Delivered via the Love Water Campaign.
- Tailored educational programs for early childhood, primary and high schools.
- School water audits and Water Savings Action Plans.
- Site tours and experiences



Social media

- Facebook.
- Instagram.
- Twitter.
- LinkedIn.
- YouTube.



Stakeholder forums

- Public forums at Council Meetings .
- Agencies and key stakeholders.
- Water utilities.



Surveys

- Qualitative and quantitative surveys
- Project based surveys.
- Customer experience surveys.
- Your voice surveys.
- Social media polls.



Online

- Your Voice Our Coast - an online hub, where the community can provide real input and direction into the projects and initiatives affecting our area and our region.
- Feedback helps Council shape our community, our region, and our future.



Project based communications

- Community liaison and proactive early engagement to guide our operations, services, and project delivery.
- This focused based engagement involves face-to-face discussions, online engagement and broad community communication.



People's Panel

- A representative group of Central Coast residents who give advice and feedback on Water and Sewer projects and initiatives.
- Serve as a diverse, representative voice for the Central Coast Community.
- Promote trust, accountability and transparency in the decision-making process.
- Provided feedback on Council's Water and Sewer pricing submission.
- Have an online Hub where information and feedback is shared.



Customer and Community Liaison Officers

- Engage stakeholders in capital works projects.
- Communicate with residents and businesses effected by maintenance or system failures.
- Collaborate with business to reduce the impact of planned and unplanned outages.
- Analyse and respond to concerns identified in survey feedback.

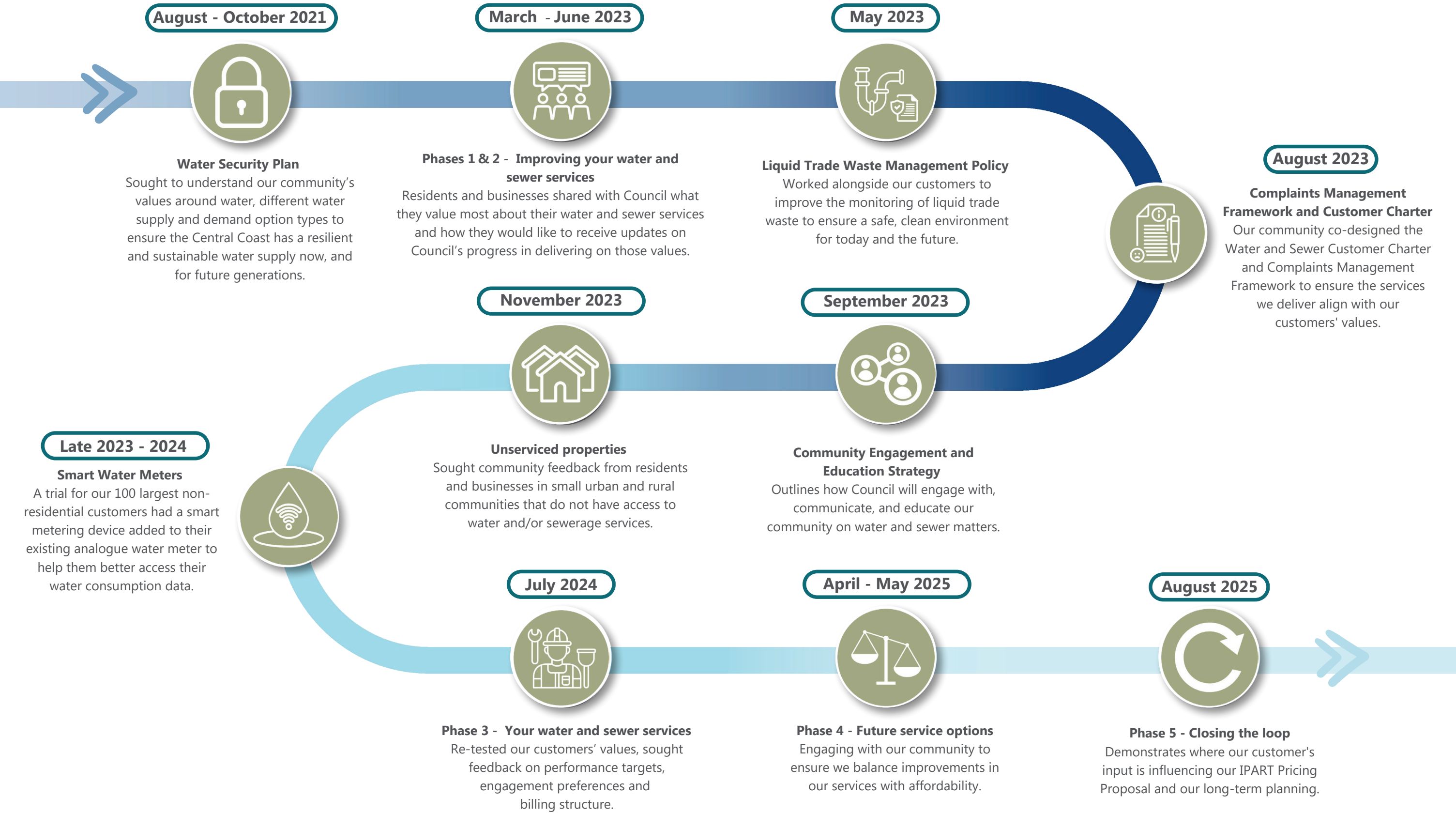


Customer journey mapping

- Face to face interviews.
- Co-designing ideation sessions.
- Customer insights and storytelling driving change.
- Creation of present and future customer journey map.



Our journey



Fostering understanding

Our informed community

Developing a water-smart community is extremely important to us. A shared understanding of where water comes from, and how to conserve our precious resource benefits us all. The Water and Sewer education team designs and delivers programs to help our community become water and sewer smart. This includes school, business and community education, tours, workshops, incursions, events, and hands-on activities, along with newsletters, media campaigns, and digital content. We engage audiences from early learning to adults, aiming to improve water literacy, promote waterwise and sewer-smart behaviours, increase awareness of Council’s role as a water utility, and better understand customer satisfaction with water and sewer services.

Community education learning areas include:

- Increase community understanding of Central Coast Council’s role as a local water utility.
- Improve awareness and adoption of water conservation and waterwise practices.
- Build water and sewer literacy within the community and schools.
- Promote behaviour change around appropriate sewer use, particularly what should and shouldn’t be flushed or poured down the drain.
- Gather insights into customer satisfaction with their water and sewer services.

Educating our community in the future

To deliver on our promise, a Water Education Plan with clear objectives, timeframes and budget has been developed in conjunction with this Approach. To ensure an inclusive approach to all our customers, education at Central Coast Council Water and Sewer will be governed by the following key focus areas and actions.



FOCUS AREA 1

Build community knowledge through engagement, education, and transparency.



Deliver a variety of educational programs and campaigns that align with the values of our community.



Improve engagement, collaboration and understanding through the development of quality water and sewer information resources.



Strive to improve water literacy on the Central Coast and inform our customers on projects and initiatives outlined in the Water Security Plan.

FOCUS AREA 2

Develop young people to be water smart, future focused, and innovative.



Deliver educational programs and campaigns to schools and early childhood centres across the Central Coast.



Facilitate educational opportunities across Central Coast Council’s water and sewer assets.



Inform young people on water conservation best practices and strive to develop school water literacy.

FOCUS AREA 3

Collaborate with First Nations Peoples to improve shared water knowledge.



Liaise with Council’s Aboriginal Advisory Committee to ensure that all collaborations and decision making is targeted and culturally appropriate.



Engage with Council’s Aboriginal Advisory Committee on all decisions affecting First Nations residents to ensure that educational programs and campaigns are community-led.



Work together with Cultural Leaders and Elders to establish partnerships on traditional water education.

FOCUS AREA 4

Engage and educate businesses and high-water usage non-residential customers so they can be water wise and reduce their impacts on the environment.



Establish regular contact with businesses and large non-residential customers to understand their preferred communication and engagement channels.



Provide education to businesses and large non-residential customers on the appropriate disposal of sewage into our sewer network.



Improve businesses and large non-residential customers resilience to future droughts and population growth.



Measuring the success of engagement

Measuring the success of our engagement efforts is essential in ensuring that community voices help shape decisions around infrastructure upgrades, service disruptions, water conservation initiatives, and future planning. Measuring engagement success is not just about numbers; it is about the quality of relationships we build and the confidence our communities have in the services we provide.

Evaluating engagement allows us to determine whether our strategies are inclusive, transparent, and effective in reaching diverse stakeholders. It helps us understand if our communication is clear, our channels are accessible, and our activities are aligned with both strategic goals and community priorities. Most importantly, it enables us to build trust by showing that feedback is valued, considered, and reflected in outcomes. Here is how we ensure the effectiveness and quality of our customer engagement:

After individual engagement activities

- Assess whether the engagement outcomes aligned with the objectives and principles of this strategy, as well as the specific objectives in our project-based engagement plans.
- Analyse the feedback we received from our customers and determine its relevance.
- Identify emerging themes across stakeholder and customer groups.
- Determine whether our engagement group were informed and educated enough to make a meaningful impact.
- Consider if we need to modify our approach, engagement channels and participation level.



After each phase

- Produce a detailed engagement report that is accessible and easy to understand and share it with our customers through multiple channels.
- Identify that those affected by decisions were reached and given the opportunity to have their say.
- Conduct internal meetings to identify lessons learned and areas for improvement.
- Close the loop with involved customers and provide them with a summary of findings and respond to specific customer queries.



Evaluating success

- Critique our stakeholder mapping strategies by service area mapping and benchmarking to ensure Central Coast demographics were represented in engagement activities.
- Validate findings through triangulation and peer review when needed.
- Analyse quantitative and qualitative feedback we receive from our community.
- View participation numbers and customer appetite for future involvement.
- Identify that all participants were informed and understand the outcome of the engagement activities.
- Regularly liaise with IPART to guarantee our engagement is effective and genuine.
- Review how customer insights were integrated into work plans and communicated to the rest of the business.



Continuous improvement

- The Community Engagement and Education Approach will be continuously reviewed and refined as our expertise evolves, and in response to key developments such as changes in regulatory frameworks, insights from community feedback, the adoption of new engagement methodologies, or shifts in corporate and community priorities. Updates will also be made to align with changes in the Council's strategic plans or in response to local, regional, national, or global events that may affect the delivery of water and sewer services across the Central Coast.
- We are further committed to the development of an Engagement Plan and calendar each year which will be guided by our customer values and engagement principles to ensure a strategic and genuine approach to our future engagement activities.





**love water
use it wisely**

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For more information visit
centralcoast.nsw.gov.au
lovewater.centralcoast.nsw.gov.au