



4 November 2021

Ms Kristy Mamaril  
Analyst  
IPART

Dear Kristy,

### **Follow up comments and questions from the IPART community forum**

Thank you for your follow up comments and questions that were made at the recent IPART online public hearing. As requested, Council has included a response to each comment for you to please pass on to the relevant individual.

#### **Comments/questions received from** [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]:

*We have attached [REDACTED] which she asked be shared with Boris, in particular. In addition to her presentation, [REDACTED] has commented about work done by farmers in managing stormwater, particularly on her farm where she has a dish drain. [REDACTED] has also mentioned the [REDACTED] property that she manages, which uses a RAM to transfer water [REDACTED], noting that using the RAM is the most environmentally friendly option for them.*

#### **Council Response**

Thank you [REDACTED] for sending through a copy of your presentation, which has been sent to Boris Bolgoff, Director Infrastructure Services for his information.

Unlike the water and sewer network where services must be connected directly to the property, the stormwater drainage network provides a region wide benefit to all members of the community regardless of where they live. IPART agrees with Council on this, recognising the regional benefit provided by the stormwater drainage network in the prior Central Coast Council Determination and in their recent Stormwater Drainage Information Paper from October 2021.

Although some rural and urban properties have no stormwater drainage infrastructure directly in front of them, during rain events the stormwater runoff from these properties still flows downstream and needs to be appropriately managed downstream to prevent undesirable impacts. And every time it rains the stormwater drainage network is benefiting



the whole community by taking stormwater runoff away from roads allowing residents to move around the coast and preventing the flooding of community facilities and public areas. The stormwater drainage charge ensures that Council can continue to manage and construct the infrastructure required to connect communities and support access to work, recreation and essential services. The stormwater drainage charge is used to fund:

- Strategic asset management and flood planning to identify, prioritise and develop stormwater drainage projects.
- Construction of new stormwater drainage infrastructure as Council continues to expand its network – this includes drainage pipes, culverts, pits, headwalls, open channels, roadside table drains, levees, basins / dams, wetlands and pollutant traps.
- Maintenance and repair of existing stormwater drainage infrastructure.
- Treatment of stormwater to remove pollutants and improve the quality of our waterways.

In developing our current submission, we have looked closely at the stormwater drainage services provided in our rural areas to ensure that the level of service we deliver is reflective of the revenue raised from these areas. It is also noted that the collection and reuse of stormwater is not unique to agricultural land, with many urban properties also diverting stormwater runoff away from the network for reuse.

In our current submission to IPART, Council is proposing to consolidate all stormwater drainage activities within the single stormwater drainage charge – including those previously funded by another stormwater levy under the Local Government Act, which ceased to be charged in 2016/17 financial year and has since been subsidised by General Rates revenue. At the same time, we are also looking to improve service levels in how we manage critical assets, stormwater quality, flood planning and flood mitigation.

Council is also proposing to retain the current declared Drainage Areas during the next Determination period. As most properties west of the M1 Motorway in the former Wyong Council area are not located within a current declared Drainage Area – nothing will change for these properties, and they will not be asked to pay the stormwater drainage charge.

**Comments/questions received from [REDACTED]:**

#### **Service provision and bill increase**

[REDACTED]  
*We are responsible for our own drinking water, sewerage management, flood damage recovery and road maintenance. We are also restricted on what we can do on the farm as it is in a water catchment zone. There is no proposal to change the service provided by CCC. So why should people west of the M1 pay such increases?"*

#### **Council Response**

Thank you [REDACTED] for your question regarding stormwater service provision and potential bill increases. Unlike the water and sewer network where services must be connected directly

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**Stormwater harvesting:**

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*“What plans are there to develop a system for stormwater harvesting, which will have, one hopes, many benefits for all ratepayers and the environment?”*

*“It would be interesting to know if and when, CCC might consider stormwater harvesting and as many other councils are also, very seriously, considering the recycling of wastewater, rather than, following treatment, discharging it into already overly nutrient enriched waterways.”*

Thank you [REDACTED] for your questions regarding stormwater harvesting. In terms of stormwater harvesting there are no plans for Council to construct additional schemes from a water supply security perspective. Water and Sewer’s focus is instead on reviewing the operation of existing schemes and how these can be optimised.

Council currently operates a number of recycled water and stormwater harvesting schemes. The draft Central Coast Water Security Plan has identified the potential for future investments in recycled water for non-drinking uses such as irrigation of open spaces. The Plan also identifies the future potential for purified recycled water to be added to our bulk drinking water supplies.

Council systematically develops Flood Studies and Floodplain Risk Management Plans to identify appropriate actions to help mitigate flooding, manage stormwater runoff and support sustainable development. Stormwater harvesting is one of many flood mitigation and stormwater management options considered as part of this process – however there are currently no stormwater harvesting actions identified at present.

Council already has some smaller scale stormwater harvesting programs in place in locations such as Blue Haven Sports Field and Mingara Swimming Pool, and stormwater harvesting schemes continue to operate on a residential scale with new developments requiring domestic stormwater reuse to be integrated as part of each development.

In our current submission to IPART, Council has recognised the critical role stormwater runoff plays in the health of riverine and estuarine systems – and we have focused on improving stormwater quality management rather than diverting stormwater runoff away from the network.

In addition to this Council is also progressing the development of Coastal Management Programs in accordance with the Coastal Management Act 2016, to look at catchment impacts on waterways and how to best manage them. Coastal Management Programs are not funded via the stormwater drainage charge – they are funded through grant funding and general revenue.

#### **Comments/questions received from [REDACTED]**

#### **Capital works expenditure program:**

*“Major capital works are generally underpinned by programs [with] key dates. These programs then lead to cashflow programs. Will these programs be submitted to IPART for the 5 year capital works programs? A program of key dates would be fundamental to all capital works.”*

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Thank you, [REDACTED], for your question regarding capital works. These programs are delivered with consideration to cashflow especially with income received from developer contributions and government grants. In Technical Paper 4 Capital Expenditure Appendix 12.1 there is a list of all forecast Major capital works that Council intends to deliver over the determination period.

Should IPART request that further detail be provided, this is available upon request.

In relation to this, [REDACTED] also commented:

*“The capital works expenditure program in the council’s submission lacks detail. Based on the council’s previous submission (2018) it appears that IPART [was] unable to establish a \$20 million underspend from the previous period. Part of the problem could be poor planning. I think IPART and the public should have a level of confidence that the 5 year capital works plan will be spent as shown.”*

Thank you [REDACTED] for your questions regarding Council’s capital works program. In its 2018 submission, Council proposed capital investment of \$285M over the 2019 determination. IPART recommended an overall reduction to Council’s proposal suggesting an allowance of \$197M was a more reasonable target. IPART did not make a recommendation on all individual projects within the program, advising;

*“Our decision provides an allowance for all capital expenditure, rather than an allowance for specific projects. Our decision does not prevent the Council from re-prioritising and completing any individual projects it considers necessary to deliver its services.”*

Following IPART’s 2019 determination, Council conducted a review and reprioritisation of its proposed capital investment program to better align with IPART’s recommendation.

Council is forecasting 100% delivery of proposed capital expenditure for the 2019 determination period.

Most of Council’s capital expenditure is driven by mandatory standards and asset and service reliability. Council’s proposed capital works program for the 2022 IPART determination period is built from works linked to Council’s asset plans and strategies. The detail of those plans is built into Council’s annual Operational Plan, which is published on Council’s website, and quarterly updates are provided to the community.

Council has made significant improvements in procurement and contract management to support investment delivery. Applying an Enterprise Risk Management (ERM) Framework and detailed asset management process ensures Council’s investment is prudent, efficient and targeted.

### **Stormwater infrastructure and water quality:**

*“The Tuggerah Lakes Expert Panel (TLEP) identified the high nutrient loads entering Tuggerah Lakes via 100’s of stormwater drains as the main driver of poor water quality. TLEP members have stated that there is 5 years before it will be difficult to*

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*reverse. The massive algae blooms in the southern end of TL are testimony to the high nutrient loads. What are the council's plan to get more State Govt. Grants?"*

In relation to this, [REDACTED] also commented:

*"The State Govt. owns the land for all the stormwater infrastructure at the point of entry into all the Creeks, River, Lagoons and Lakes. The majority of this infrastructure was either not provided, poorly designed in the beginning or needs repair and upgrade. The State Govt. appointed TLEP tabled their report in early 2021 with lots of recommendations to address water quality and in particular pollution from stormwater. I understand that the ratepayer's stormwater levy is not designed to fix water quality issues. However the problem still exists. The poor water quality in Terrigal and Avoca lagoons are good examples. I would assume that Council and State Govt have formed joint funding partnerships to fix stormwater problems."*

In relation to Council's stormwater infrastructure and water quality, Council is currently preparing Coastal Management Programs (CMP) in accordance with State Government requirements under the Coastal Management Act 2016. The development of these plans is not funded by the stormwater drainage charge but they may identify future stormwater quality management actions that would fall within the scope of the current water authority.

The new CMP for Tuggerah Lakes will replace the existing 'Tuggerah Lakes Estuary Management Plan' which was certified in 2007. The new CMP will consider the findings of the State Government appointed Tuggerah Lakes Expert Panel and will continue to be developed in consultation with State Government agencies and the community.

Whilst macroalgal blooms are a natural part of the Tuggerah Lakes estuarine system - they can present problems and Council acknowledge the need to proactively and collaboratively deliver programs to address these issues and preserve / improve the health of the estuary. Council has, and will continue to seek, external funding support from government agencies.

In recent times, Council has successfully applied for \$644K in funding through the planning stream of the NSW Coast and Estuary Grant Program to develop Stage 2 and 3 of the Tuggerah Lakes Estuary CMP, with Council contributing a further \$322K towards the project. The implementation stream of the Grant Program is currently closed, and Council has not been advised if it will reopen for existing Coastal Zone Management Plans following the announcement of a two-year extension to the transitional arrangements.

Over the last 15 years, Council has successfully received or administered approximately \$30M in Federal Government grants to support the management of Tuggerah Lakes. These have supported numerous projects, including stormwater quality improvement which have resulted in measurable improvements in water quality and ecological health. A range of existing project are currently underway through the current Environment Restoration Fund grant whilst the CMP is being prepared.

Council remains committed to further improvement and enhancement of the Tuggerah Lakes Estuary, and the sourcing of appropriate funds to facilitate ongoing work including nutrient / algal management as it develops the new CMP.



Yours faithfully,

Jamie Loader  
Director Water and Sewer