

Media Release

29 May 2026

IPART responds to submissions on Central Coast Council's maximum water prices

The Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) has considered submissions on its draft report as part of the current review of maximum prices for Central Coast Council water, wastewater and related services.

Tribunal Chair Carmel Donnelly said IPART released a draft report on maximum prices for consultation in March and had received more than 50 submissions and 300 survey responses.

After considering the submissions and deliberating, the Tribunal has decided it will issue a 1-year determination for prices to apply from 1 July 2026 to 30 June 2027. IPART will then commence a new review of maximum prices to be set for a multi-year period from 1 July 2027.

"One of the submissions we received raised concerns about the independence of the advice IPART received from an expert service provider we engaged to advise us about the costs the council should incur to efficiently deliver its services," Ms Donnelly said.

"As a precaution to maintain confidence in the integrity of IPART's decisions, the Tribunal has decided not to rely further on this advice due to a commercial relationship between the provider and the Council."

IPART takes actual, potential or perceived conflicts of interest very seriously. While IPART makes no suggestion that the advice we received was biased or about the conduct of the service provider or the Council, it will commission an independent assessment of the concerns about the independence of consultants involved in the pricing review.

IPART's original timeframe for the pricing review anticipated a final report and multi-year determination would be issued in June 2026. However, IPART has now decided to issue a 1-year determination for prices to apply from 1 July 2026 to 30 June 2027, based on the cost allowances in the current determination updated for certain market parameters such as inflation and the cost of capital. This determination would also remove the current stormwater drainage charge, consistent with legislative changes.

IPART will then commence a further review of Central Coast Council's water and wastewater prices to inform a multi-year determination that will apply from 1 July 2027.

"IPART intends to seek further, separate expert advice on efficient expenditure. This revised process and timeframe will also enable the Tribunal to consider the other information provided and issues raised in submissions we received in response to IPART's Draft Report as part of determining maximum water and wastewater prices from 1 July 2027," Ms Donnelly said.

"Key matters raised in submissions that we anticipate considering in detail include affordability for customers, IPART's methodology regarding any taxation allowance and updated information in Council's submission.

"We thank everyone who provided feedback on our draft report. We will consider all submissions and survey responses already received in the new review. This means that, while we will again seek and welcome feedback during that new review, anyone who has already made a submission will not need to provide it to us again."

IPART will issue its 1-year determination with final prices for 2026-27, together with a Final Report, in coming weeks.

ENDS

Media Contact: Mark O'Brien, 0427 105 865, media@ipart.nsw.gov.au