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Your submission for this review:

23 June 2025 The Cooks River Valley Association (CRVA) is an incorporated association made up of caring local residents who are committed to rehabilitating the Cooks River and fostering community spirit within the Cooks River Valley. We work independently and with like-minded groups to facilitate natural resource management and to improve the quality of life and facilities in the local environment. The CRVA is writing regarding the review of Prices for Sydney Water Corporation from 1 October 2025, and the Draft Report - Review of prices for Sydney Water Corporation from 1 October 2025 - May 2025. The CRVA is surprised and disappointed that the Independent Pricing and Review Tribunal (IPART) is proposing a significant lower price increase than Sydney Water put forward in its own Water Price Proposal for 2025-2030. The CRVA notes the Cooks River Alliance (CRA) December 2024 response to the Sydney Water Price Proposal was supportive while calling out the need for additional government resources given that the funding in the pricing proposal is not sufficient to address decades to centuries of pollution and degradation. https://cooksriver.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/IPART-Submission_Sydney-Water-Price-Proposal-2025-30_PRCG_CRA_Stormwater-NSW.pdf That IPART is recommending even lower prices is a denial of community expectations for the Cooks River and the multiple challenges Sydney Water faces with climate change increasing the frequency of extreme weather, current infrastructure that is already beyond capacity, and a rapidly expanding need for services as the NSW Government and local councils seek to increase housing density. We know that the major source of faecal coliforms in the Cooks River is the sewerage system. And while stormwater overloads the wastewater network during heavy rain there is also research indicating ongoing leakage from ageing infrastructure: <https://www.unsw.edu.au/newsroom/news/2011/10/sydney-river-an-open-sewer-> The result is water quality so poor that swimming is not possible and the water is not even recommended for boating. Its not unreasonable for a community to expect an ecologically health river with clean water suitable for recreation and swimming. Sydney Water has the vision and expertise to get there though lacks the political support and resources to make the changes communities want: <https://www.sydneywater.com.au/content/dam/sydneywater/documents/what-we-heard-healthy-waterways-and-environmental-protection.pdf> While the CRVA understands cost of living pressures, and urges Sydney Water to maintain and extend rebates to health care card holders and pensioners, we are also aware of the model Sydney Water used to fund its Waterways Health Improvement Program. Sydney Waters own community research indicates there is support for an additional IPART approved levy that could be tied to improving river health and opportunities for recreation: <https://www.planning.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/2023-11/how-sydney-water-secured-funding-to-protect-waterways-case-study.pdf> As urban density increases with future development requires wastewater upgrades and naturalisation of the urban environment. The CRVA shares the CRA desire to see: Improved water quality for better environmental outcomes and to enable primary (e.g. swimming) and secondary contact recreation (e.g. canoeing and kayaking). Naturalisation of riverbanks for biodiversity, and passive and active recreational purposes (e.g. naturalisation of concreted waterways). Conservation and restoration of riparian vegetation to enhance urban biodiversity and liveability. The transition of urban waterways from channelised and polluted eyesores, to productive blue-green space that encourages passive and active forms of recreation, quiet spaces to escape the urban din, and places that encourage a range of economic opportunities, from watercraft hire, through to cafes, restaurants, and tourism (i.e. capitalising on improved urban river economics). The CRVA urges IPART and the NSW Government to adequately fund Sydney Water infrastructure so that water quality improves to the point where the Cooks River is swimmable, and the concrete channelling on the banks is naturalised wherever possible to provide urban amenity and increased biodiversity. Yours sincerely Gareth Wreford CRVA Committee Member [REDACTED]