

1. What do you think about the quality of the water services you receive from the Central Coast Council and how much you pay for them? 10 No comment
2. What are your views on the council's proposed increase to bills to improve the quality of the water services you receive? 10

The proposed price increases and costs may be reasonable from an professional's asset-management-lifecycle point of view – or not. This proposal provides no data with which simple householders could voice an opinion either way, or even if data is provided – it's doubtful we as simple householders would know how to interpret them over the noise of rabblers and politicians with interests to grind.

The key issue is that residents in this Council have with the CCC is a longstanding deficit of trust and governance. We are frankly, sick of being told every week that prices must drastically increase for everything across the board just to stay in the same place when there is no trust that the council will not squander and misuse the funds raised nor action be taken to get to the root of our predicament nor what will be put in place to prevent this happening again.

IPART has a critical role to play in helping to re-establish trust through the actions that it takes in this review. It is also in IPARTS interest to do so given that its previous determination was indicative itself of IPART avoiding battle with CCC to hold it accountable for its lack of investment of funds (and here we are with underspent funds on critical infrastructure.....with a world-beating deficit that no-one is accountable for).

I believe IPART could do a number of things to help make its determination of real value by causing a change in approach a) by imposing strict performance and reporting requirements (reporting not just to IPART but to all householders) on the council to ensure funds are invested wisely and professionally and that deliver the benefits proposed. IPART could go further and insist that an independent assessment be performed of the investment plan and it made available to residents b) IPART itself taking more ownership of its own determinations – the last determination was clearly made in response to an unresponsive council. What will IPART do this time to ensure the council is responsive, that ongoing governance happens and is transparently communicated, and that the council is held accountable for results?

3. What do you think about the council's proposed costs? 14 No comment. See above.
4. What do you think about how the council can improve its performance and be held to account? 15

See earlier comment. The performance measures proposed on pp14 (complaints, preventable service interruptions etc) are all lag measures and are NOT the sort of performance measures that could restore trust and give residents confidence that things are now being properly managed. IPART should introduce leading measures that go to the heart of the quality of the investment plan as well as the robustness of its governance and its actual implementation performance to the plan. Furthermore, any such plan should explicitly include climate change both in terms of appropriate investments and in terms of risks and feasibility thresholds.

5. What does providing 'good quality water services' mean to you, and what do you expect the council to provide? 15 No comment
6. If we decide to allow a price increase, how would you prefer to pay for it – would you prefer the increase to occur gradually over a few years, or all in one go in one year, and why? 16

I'd prefer a one-off increase. Consistent with the points above relating to discreet transparent reported planning and accountable implementation, this will create a clear project kickoff budget that could be scrutinised.

7. What influences how you use water, and how much you use (e.g. the COVID-19 pandemic and/or climate change)? If you are using less water, what are the reasons why? 18 No comment
8. What do you think about the idea of higher water prices applying during drier conditions or drought? 18

While drought pricing is an effective economic incentive with which to influence consumer behaviour, the proposed drought pricing should be explicitly linked to the investment plan itself explicitly linked to climate change – if not, the council can continue to enjoy a free ride every time there is a drought and not invest what it should to mitigate things long term.

9. Should customers pay the same wastewater charge across the Gosford and Wyong areas? If so, would you prefer this to happen in one go, or should we increase the charge paid by Wyong customers gradually over several years? 21

Council rates have recently been harmonised and the anger and noise has since died down. In for a penny in for a pound – go ahead and harmonise asap.

AS REGARDS the dynamic & tradeoff between Service and Usage charges, it is clear from this proposal that households are to be slugged with a 173% fixed charge increase that will be proportionately a significant fixed cost increase for the average household. Referencing my earlier comments – by fixing a high lump sum rather than encouraging economy in consumption this is a counterproductive proposal in terms of affecting consumer behaviours. It also does nothing to alleviate trust concerns – households are being treated as cash cows with no safeguards to ensure the funds raised will be used effectively. In sum, I'd advocate for a smaller fixed charge and staggered consumption rates (or such like).

*10. What do you think about the stormwater services the council provides, and the proposed prices? 22 No comment*

**“Our water price review is different to our review on council rates”.** The obvious observation here is that the two issues are very definitely connected from a ratepayer's point of view and cover similar issues relating to governance, transparency, assurance etc. Since IPART are involved in both issues it would actually make more sense to combine the two into one review (or at least harmonise their timing to avoid the distinct impression that what the council can't get away with this time they will try again in the next round - and IPART will play along by pretending the two have no connection between them. The result being a never-ending barrage of lobbying and propaganda and a never- ending spiral of price increases.