

WaterNSW Pricing Determination 2025-30

Submission – Colin McCrabb

Topics:

1. Do you agree with the draft decision to set a 3-year determination period?
2. In your view, what should WaterNSW focus on over the next 3 years?
3. Should WaterNSW's proposed safety-related costs (including dam, crane and electrical safety) be included in WaterNSW Greater Sydney's prices from 1 October 2025?
4. Are there any other matters we should consider in making our decision to carry forward decisions from the WaterNSW Greater Sydney 2020 price review?
5. Should WaterNSW's proposed safety-related costs (including dam, crane and electrical safety) be included in WaterNSW Rural Valleys prices from 1 July 2025?
6. Should IPART further adjust WaterNSW's current Rural Valley prices to account for changes in water sales volumes from the 2021 price review (ie, 3,964,658 ML/year) to this draft decision (ie, 3,806,128 ML/year)?
7. Should the Yanco Creek levy remain constant in nominal terms at \$0.90 per ML or be changed (for example, indexed to CPI)?
8. Are there any other matters we should consider in making our decision to carry forward decisions from the WaterNSW Rural Valleys 2021 price review?
9. Do you agree that IPART's draft pricing decisions are likely to provide adequate revenue to support WaterNSW's financeability for up to 3 years?

Submission responses to listed topics:

1. Determination period 3 years

Submission: I feel that this period is not long enough as we are being constantly being asked to make submissions on government determinations and plans. The MDBA pricing will be determined after the WaterNSW pricing is determined, so another round of submissions.

2. WaterNSW focus over next 3 years

Submission: Improved efficiency and delivery of outcomes. Improving the IWAS system to make it more flexible and up to date.

Greater Sydney prices include safety

Submission: Yes for the Greater Sydney area these should be included as the potential consequences are substantial. Also there is an ability to “socialise” the costs over a much greater customer base.

3. Greater Sydney matters of consideration

Submission: No comment

4. Regional water prices include safety

Submission: The customer base is much smaller, and if the real costs were passed onto water users, irrigators, councils etc, then the price increases would be exorbitant. The general public uses and benefits from the water storages and waterways but is not directly charged for the access and usage of these assets, unlike consumptive users. So, I feel that it is unfair that all of the irrigators are the ones the bear the total cost for safety.

5. Rural valley pricing include a % to cover shortfall in water use

Submission: This reduced water usage within the Rural Valleys is greatly influenced by the Federal Govt buy backs and the reduction of water being used for agricultural production. Consumptive users are being priced out of water, with the increasing cost of water, reduced allocations, and increased production costs, drought in southern valleys and reduced returns for produce, they are being squeezed from both ends, ie costs and reduced returns. The Federal Government should be encouraged to pay for the impacts their buy back policies are having on consumptive water pricing.

6. Should the YCS remain at 2005 price of \$.90/ML or increase with inflation

Submission: I feel that the levy for the YCS should be linked to CPI or inflation to allow for increased costs of operations conducted by YACTAC.

The YCS levy has provided funding for works along the Yanco, Columbo, Billabong and Forest Creeks, to improve the natural environment of these waterways.

This has included:

- funding of an extensive willow removal program along these creeks,
- ongoing weed eradication programs, in the waterways and riparian areas.
- Funding of monitoring of flora and aquatic species within the YCS
- Match dollar for dollar programs, such as removal of invasive species and native fish stocking programs.
- Involvement of local schools and highlighting the environmental values of the YCS

Any other matters. For example the cost shifting for irrigators to pay for nearly all costs of storage and movement of water, ignoring water used for recreation, tourism, towns etc. Should irrigators pay WaterNSW land tax as well as dividend to NSW govt annually. Why is dam safety only paid by irrigators.

Submission: The cost shifting for irrigators to pay for nearly all of the costs of storage and movement of water is abhorrent as irrigators are an easy target. The general community gains many financial and social benefits from the use of the storages and waterways for recreational use, tourism and the existence of towns along these waterways.

The costs associated around these storages and waterways need to be socialised across the whole community, as they are also the beneficiaries. If all the costs were to be born by the irrigators an unseen consequence would be the severe and rapid deterioration of the mental health in rural communities. Irrigators, and their communities are struggling, the constant demands on our finances and time, plus bureaucratic interference for no productive gains is having a large impact on the mental health and resilience of our farmers and their communities.

Water NSW is delivering fewer services and making themselves harder to contact. Any move to Sydney based operations would be extremely detrimental to the rural water users. From personal experience dealing with WaterNSW staff in Sydney, regarding rural water ordering issues, is they have little or no concept of issues we are dealing with, eg very long lead times for orders. The IWAS system, whilst useful needs to be made more flexible and user friendly. There is no ability to cancel orders once placed, yet with 28 day ordering times there needs to be more flexibility for users.

We are not seeing enough staff on the ground in rural areas, or they are unable to be contacted easily, especially when trying to pass on information that will be of interest, operationally, along the system.

7. Will this determination provide WaterNSW enough funding to operate in the next 3 years?

Submission: If not they should be trying to source funding from other areas than the consumptive users, who are easy to charge since they are metered. The general public benefit from assets, storages etc that they operate.

