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Your submission for this review:

Dear IPART Team, Im writing to share my concerns about the proposed Sydney Water price increases for 2025-2030 outlined in your May 2025 Draft Report. As a Sydney Water customer, Im worried about the impact of these price hikes on my household budget, especially since we havent had a drought in over five years, and I feel were still paying for decisions made during the last drought, like the desalination plant. Id like to explain why I think these increases arent justified and ask you to reconsider them. First, Im frustrated that water prices didnt go back down after the drought ended in February 2020. During the drought, the variable water usage charge jumped from \$2.11 per kilolitre to \$2.35, and even hit \$3.18 when dam levels dropped below 60%. I understand those increases were meant to encourage water conservation, but once the drought broke and dam levels recovered, the price stayed high. Its now \$2.67 per kilolitre, and your draft proposes pushing it to \$3.50 by 2029-30 (Draft Report, Page 8, Decision 22). With no drought for over five years, I dont see why were still paying scarcity-level prices, let alone facing further increases. Id urge you to cap the usage charge at the current \$2.67 or, better yet, bring it back to the pre-drought \$2.11 to reflect the fact that water isnt scarce right now. Second, Im concerned about the costs of the Sydney Desalination Plant (SDP). It was built to help during droughts, but its barely been needed since 2020, yet I suspect its costs are still being passed on to us. Your decision to stop the SDP cost pass-through mechanism (Decision 16, Page 15) is a step in the right direction, as it pushes Sydney Water to use cheaper water sources (Question 3, Page 17). But I think you should go further and ensure no SDP-related costs are included in the \$10.7 billion capital expenditure (Decision 6, Page 14) unless a drought actually hits. It feels unfair to keep paying for a facility thats sitting idle when dam levels are fine. Third, affordability is a huge issue for me and, from what I read, for many others too (Page 12). Your report says 477 submissions highlighted cost-of-living pressures, and Im feeling that pinch myself. Even though youve lowered Sydneys proposed 18% bill increase to 4.6% a year (Page 8), thats still a lot when you add it to other rising costs. My bills already gone from \$1,220 this year to \$1,293 next year, and up to \$1,527 by 2029-30 (Page 8). For families like mine, or small businesses, this adds up fast, especially since weve been paying higher rates since the drought ended without any relief. Your suggestions to expand rebates (Recommendations 3 and 4, Page 16) are good, but they wont help everyone. I think you should freeze prices or offer broader concessions to ease the burden (Question 7, Page 17). Finally, I support your decision to cut \$957 million from the Pretreatment Program because it wasnt well justified (Question 1, Page 17). Id ask you to apply the same scrutiny to other big-ticket items, like the SDP costs in the capital budget. With no drought, we shouldnt be funding projects that are more about what if than immediate needs. I also agree with stakeholders who want more transparency about where our moneys going (Page 12). Can you please provide a clear breakdown of SDP costs and explain why theyre necessary when water supply isnt an issue? In response to your specific questions: Question 1 (Page 17): Im comfortable with excluding most of the Pretreatment Program costs, as we shouldnt pay for speculative projects. The same logic applies to the SDPs costs should be deferred until we actually need it. Question 3 (Page 17): I support removing the SDP cost pass-through because it stops us subsidizing an underused facility. The risk is that customers keep paying for something we dont need, and the benefit is that Sydney Water has to find cheaper water sources. Question 7 (Page 17): The proposed prices arent affordable, especially after five years of high rates since the 2020 drought ended. Please consider capping or lowering the usage charge and expanding rebates to help more households. To wrap up, Im asking you to rethink these price increases. Weve had no drought since 2020, yet prices never dropped after the last one, and now were facing even higher bills. The desalination plant feels like a waste when waters plentiful, and affordability is a real struggle for many of us. Please cap the water usage charge, cut out unnecessary SDP costs, and prioritize keeping bills manageable. I appreciate the chance to have my say and hope youll consider these points before your final report in September. Thank you for your time and for looking into this. Kind regards