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Your submission for this review:

In this submission I will address the proposed removal of the Community Consultative Group (CCG) as a mandatory condition of the Hunter Water Operating Licence 2021-22. This is a retrograde step for the following reasons: 1. The existence of a CCG does not preclude Hunter Water (HW) from otherwise consulting with customers 2. The benefit of a CCG to HW far outweighs its cost, including: (i) Obtaining relevant, current, frank and timely feedback from a highly representative customer cohort, and answering questions on-the-spot thereby quickly allaying customer concerns before they become systemic, which would otherwise put HW's customer charter at risk. (ii) Providing an efficient channel through which HW can communicate customer-relevant aspects of its operation, planning and strategy in terms that customers can easily access and digest, thereby improving dissemination, understanding and uptake. (iii) Enabling a market-led forum through which HW management is held directly to account to customers' needs, wants and requirements. 3. The claimed inability of HW to recruit representatives to a CCG does not argue against the requirement for a CCG. 4. The IPART Regulatory Review Workshop #2 Promoting a Customer Focus held in May 2021 claimed 3 objectives Putting customers at the center of the business Understanding customer preferences, and Exploring options for reform As one exemplar, the Water Industry Commission of Scotland (WICS) mandates a Customer Forum within its regulatory framework which by law is closely consulted in representing customer interests to the regulator. Closer to home, the Australian Energy Regulators NewReg commissions its Customer Forum to visit Victorian domestic and business customers in order to be the conduit for direct market feedback. 5. The above cases demonstrate when there is clarity of scope, transparency and genuine empowerment a CCG could bring about better outcomes for HW and its customers than would otherwise be the case.