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Your submission for this review:

Belmont Desalination Plant: The estimated cost more than doubling in 3 years is a concern, is the now reported \$530M likely to be close to the final cost or should we expect more major increases before achieving final project completion? The unknown impacts of climate change on future rainfall patterns means there needs to be a source of water that is rainfall independent to provide water supply security, this is the only workable supply option currently available. Proceeding with the project is supported together with a third party oversight and review of current and future cost estimates, the construction tender assessment and acceptance, and construction delivery time and cost control. Pricing: Applying increases to the water usage price rather than the fixed charge component is supported, this is a generally fairer option and encourages water conservation to reduce household cost. Phasing in of increases is supported as proposed. Affordability: The 3% of household income test for the cost of water seems to be a reasonable approach in arriving at a baseline for assistance. While price increases are not welcome, at least the proposed 3.6% per year water usage increase with minimal change to the fixed charge is not much greater than the CPI. From the HWC 2024 Annual Report, it would be worth knowing how HWC's 2.1% efficiency improvements (operating expenditure savings) directly impact in dollar and percentage terms, if at all, in containing the increase in prices. The 2024 Annual Report also mentions \$20M in the "Supporting You" initiatives, however this includes pensioner rebates which I understand are funded separately by the NSW Treasury under the State Govt's community service obligations. While fully supporting assistance to households that are financially struggling and in genuine need, there needs to be transparency in what it is actually costing HWC in providing this support.