



Silvertown Village Committee Inc.

IPART Submission
7/10/2021

To Whom it May Concern,

I would like to make this submission regarding the Essential Water Pricing Proposal (Broken Hill) on behalf of the Silvertown Community. My name is Helen Murray and I am the Chairperson of the Silvertown Village Committee Inc.

With the current submission from Essential Water, it is refreshing to see that the diminutive “curtesy connection only” has been removed from the lexicon of that company. Whilst the people of Silvertown appreciate the services provided by Essential Water, water is the most basic of human requirements and we feel more can be done to justify the price rise being sought by Essential Water.

In recent years, due to drought and a poorly managed water system, Silvertown (and other communities) has endured some horrific water quality situations. Our water has all too frequently been anything from slightly brown through to black with a disgusting stench. The residents that of their own initiative that have installed water filters at their own expense to improve the water supply struggle to maintain their filters as with no announcements of any kind Essential Water can make changes that result in “mud” running through the lines thus silting any filters installed. This is indicative of the lack of curtesy or consultation that this company thinks it owes the residents of the Village.

The connection of the pipeline from Wentworth to Broken Hill has certainly improved the quality of our water supply, but Silvertown’s aged infrastructure still provides us with some interesting moments when a tap is turned on. Only a few months ago, our water was mud coloured for a week, leaving red dirt sediment in showers and sinks. Washing clothes was impossible.

Some years ago, I made a submission to an IPART Enquiry regarding water pricing and it is disappointing to say the least, to be doing it again and raising the same issues. Nothing much has changed for Silvertown.

The bottom line is, the people of Silvertown feel very let down by the pricing projections in Essential Waters’ Pricing Proposal, considering the lack of improvement to Silvertown’s services.



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According to Table 1: indicative residential annual water and sewer bills, of the Overview for Customers, Silvertown residents and business owners can expect to pay anything from 16.8% to 20% more for water by 2026-27 (residential chlorinated water). This could actually be more if Silvertown is considered in the Non-residential untreated water, pipeline customers (b, pipeline customers are customers who receive untreated water from the Menindee or Umberumberka pipelines).

It is concerning that through the whole 158 pages of Essential Water's document, the only mention of Silvertown is to acknowledge that Silvertown receives a water service from Essential Water and that the water is non-potable.

Another area of concern is on page 23 where the document outlines Essential Water's "Effective customer engagement allows us to understand the needs of our customers and put their preferences at the centre of our planning and operations". There is further mention of community consultation workshops and consultation with key stakeholders. Clearly the people of Silvertown are not key stakeholders, for we have never been included in any such consultation. Umberumberka Dam, just out of Silvertown, has been decommissioned since the connection of the Wentworth to Broken Hill pipeline and again, there was no consultation with, or explanation to, the people of Silvertown as to how this would affect us.

Very recently, I heard on local radio that Sunset Strip is to be provided with treated water. According to the bush telegraph, Silvertown is apparently to receive the same within two years. If this is actually the case, then it would be appreciated if Essential Water would contact the Silvertown Village Committee Inc., so this could be discussed with our community. We would all appreciate the opportunity to hear what would be involved in such a project and it may then make some sense of the price hikes we are to endure. I'm sure the people of Silvertown would be more than happy to pay increased water bills if they were being supplied with drinkable water, but at the moment, with the information before us, all we can see are higher costs and an ever-degrading system. As I pointed out in my submission some years ago, many Silvertown residents have several hundred metres between their water meter and their property boundary, so if there is a leak within that distance and it isn't noticed for some time, the water bill can be huge. Nothing has been done to relocate these water meters as was requested last time and here we are again with the same problem and another proposed price hike.

Silvertown has a high tourist visitation rate and is one of the most popular attractions in the district. It is a concern to visitors when they see the "do not drink" signs on taps at our public facilities and camping areas. The lack of potable water is no doubt affecting Silvertown's economy to some extent. People from the city expect good, clean, drinkable water and often ask if the water is actually safe.



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Like other communities in the Far West, Silvertown is in a very low rainfall area. We cannot rely on rainfall to water our gardens and grow our fruit and vegetables. We would like to have surroundings which provide shade and cooling to our homes and pleasant surroundings, without having to struggle with failing infrastructure and ever-growing costs with no signs of improvement. I have no supporting documentation to add to this submission, just the frustration of the people of Silvertown who keep putting up with a sub-standard water service whilst Essential Water's Pricing Proposal talks about replacing vehicles, furniture and maintaining buildings and the millions of dollars to upgrade infrastructure in Broken Hill which may never be of benefit to Silvertown.

Thank you for the opportunity to address this enquiry.

Kind Regards

Helen Murray
Chairperson
Silvertown Village Committee Inc.