Survey responses raised concerns about affordability, trust in Central Coast Council Water and service delivery and quality.

263

Responses to our Issues Paper Survey

69%	Of those that self-identified as receiving financial assistance (60) strongly disagreed that the proposed typical household bills are affordable with little or no impact on their living standard (41).
57%	Are either not satisfied or very dissatisfied with the water and wastewater service received from CCC Water for the money paid (145).
76%	Think CCC Water's service has worsened or not improved over the 4 years since the last determination (192).
38%	Either strongly agreed/agreed (98) or strongly disagreed/disagreed (98) with the statement "I prefer a higher variable usage charge because it gives me more control over my bill".
39%	Prefer a price increase phased in gradually through 5 annual increases in comparison to a larger step in 2026 with inflation only increases after that (99).
52%	Of those aware of CCC Water's progress, quarterly and annual performance reports (53) believe they are not adequate to hold CCC Water accountable to its customers (28).

What is most important to you about CCC Water's prices?

The top 3 values were:

- Affordability and impacts on the cost of living
- Better manages infrastructure (ensures services don't deteriorate)
- Improved environmental outcomes (e.g. cleaner waterways, less sewer overflows)

This summarises the responses to our survey which may not be representative of the attitudes of the whole Central Coast
Note: Some responses did not answer all survey questions. Percentages may not correlate with the total 263 responses.

We asked for any other feedback you had about CCC Water's proposal. Responses emphasised the following themes:

Key themes	Anonymised survey responses
Affordability	• The **current cost of living crisis and period of wage stagnation** which has put pressure on communities already struggling. As a result, increases in water and wastewater charges should not outstrip CPI and/or wage growth. – The burden of rising essential costs on **pensioners** or those on **fixed incomes** whose incomes have not increased in relation to prices. – The Central Coast as a region characterised by moderate to low to very low-income levels. – "**Water is essential for life**, people should not have to struggle to pay for a drink of water and a shower". • Expansion of water and wastewater services is driven largely by the region's growth – those who benefit should foot the bill. – For example, **state/federal funding** should be secured for service expansions to accommodate development initiatives • Some respondents questioned the need to build large infrastructure projects such as the planned desalination plant during a cost-of-living crisis.
CCC Water's performance and service quality	• **"Better tasting"** and **"clean"** water for drinking and household use. Water quality should not cause health issues or household inconveniences like dirtying laundry or the necessary installation of water filters in order to use the water. • There are **drastic differences in water and wastewater service quality** depending on region in Central Coast. Specific regions mentioned with poor service quality include Kilcare Heights, Niagara Park and Davistown. • Many emphasised service **quality has not improved** over the last determination – "The proposed price increase by Central Coast Council water and wastewater services appears disconnected from any tangible upgrade in service quality." – "Rate payers bailing them out again and again is not the answer, nor is it fair." • "Rate changes need to be **performance based**" • "What is the barrier to Central Coast Council obtaining their water licence? I would prefer a separate entity to run the water utility and for council to focus on local council issues."
Transparency and accountability – Trust in CCC Water	• Concerns around the council's historic **financial mismanagement** which remains potentially ongoing – "Central Coast Council will continually ask for price rises and still under deliver the basics that they should deliver" • Emphasis on wanting to understand where water and wastewater money was being spent e.g. in the North or South regions, specific suburbs. • The importance of "**authentic (customer) consultation**". – "Central Coast Council is a massive bureaucracy largely unanswerable to ratepayers and only consults the community when it's forced to" – "Their community feedback survey will not reflect our opinion as it was very **badly written and biased**…Do not believe that Central Coast Council's community survey was accurate…It was slanted to conclude we all wanted them to increase their prices hugely" – "If you need more money, you should be more transparent about why you need it and stop sending nose leading surveys that give you the answer you want." – "**Central Coast Council conduct surveys to a few select people** and skew the results to hide their failings and wastage" • **Straightforward communication** on water-business related news which is easy to understand and find. – "I'd rather great communication via email. They can email me a bill, but I never seem to get any updated information around changes, pricing, community newsletters or anything to do with not just with water, but anything in general." – "The council reports are often late being presented and **difficult to understand** to a layperson which most of us are." • Holistic and consistent **reporting** – "Lots of gloss in reporting however it appears to be a highlights reel that ignores the bloopers"
Trust in IPART	• "IPART is just a **rubber stamp**", giving Central Coast Council what it wants rather than what the customers really need.