

## Feedback sought on proposed lower Central Coast water prices

The Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) has released a draft report and determination that would lower water bills for all Central Coast households from 1 July 2019.

IPART's draft decision, now open for consultation, includes an 8.5% reduction in the revenue to be collected by the Central Coast Council from all water, sewerage and stormwater charges, and a \$105 per year cap on residential and farmland stormwater prices.

IPART Chair, Dr Paul Paterson, said if the draft determination is adopted, all residential customers would have lower water bills as a result of reduced operating and capital costs.

"The exact savings would depend on the level of water usage. The annual water bill for a typical household in the former Gosford Council area would fall by about \$330 in 2019-20, and a typical bill for a household in the former Wyong Council area would fall by \$150 per year," Dr Paterson said.

"Most prices would then increase in line with inflation over the following two years, until they are reviewed again in 2022."

"Prices for a small number of non-residential users would increase to better reflect the costs of providing services. Where this is the case, we have proposed a gradual transition to avoid bill shock."

IPART is also recommending changes to improve the equity and cost-reflectivity of the Council's water, sewerage and stormwater prices, following analysis of Council's proposals and community feedback.

"A key decision to improve equity is to modify the Council's proposal for area-based stormwater charges and apply a fixed charge cap of \$105 per year, adjusted for inflation, for residential, farmland and other low-impact properties," Dr Paterson said.

Another key difference between IPART's draft decisions and the Council's proposal includes maintaining separate sewerage prices for the former Gosford and Wyong areas, to reflect different sewerage catchments and costs.

Dr Paterson said IPART is confident that the Council will continue to be able to meet the standards expected by customers and required under regulation, and become more efficient in its service delivery over time.

**Submissions on the Draft Report and Determination will be received until 24 April.** IPART will complete its review and release its final determinations for Central Coast Council water, sewerage and stormwater prices in late-May 2019.