

## CHANGES PROPOSED TO SYDNEY WATER OPERATING LICENCE

The Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) is proposing 77 draft recommendations for Sydney Water's operating licence, including changes to improve service standards as Sydney grows, not to hinder competition and to provide more support for vulnerable customers.

Comments are now being sought on the proposals as part of IPART's review of Sydney Water's operating licence, which specifies the terms and conditions Sydney Water must meet in providing water, sewerage and stormwater services. These include water quality, service interruptions, customer service and water conservation.

IPART Chair, Dr Peter Boxall said the proposed changes include amended standards for measuring and reporting service interruptions, based on Sydney Water's consultation with its customers on their preferences and willingness to pay for service improvements.

The changes proposed include:

- setting a water continuity standard with a target and a tolerance band so that the number of properties unaffected by unplanned water interruptions that last for more than five hours is more than 9,800 properties per 10,000 properties in a financial year
- requiring Sydney Water to address areas of low water pressure at existing properties and limiting new connections where water pressure may be compromised
- reducing barriers to entry for private water businesses by requiring Sydney Water to provide services and information
- setting a new performance indicator for water conservation to measure water usage in litres per capita per day, and requiring Sydney Water to report on this indicator, and
- requiring Sydney Water to develop and implement a family violence policy by 1 July 2020 that protects customer information, facilitates access to payment difficulty programs and provides referrals to specialist services.

IPART is also recommending the retention of the existing Priority Sewerage Program obligations, following submissions from Northern Beaches Council, the NSW Department of Planning and Environment, and the Scotland Island Residents Association.

"IPART is seeking feedback on a broad range of proposed amendments to Sydney Water's operating licence, from maintaining drinking water quality to new measures to protect the private information of customers experiencing family violence," Dr Boxall said.

“The package we are putting forward includes consideration of a range of stakeholder submissions, and we now seek further feedback to ensure this approach achieves the best outcomes for consumers without increasing the burden and costs of regulation.”

IPART is seeking submissions on the draft licence until 15 February 2019. A public forum to discuss the proposed licence will be held in Sydney on Tuesday, 5 February 2019. The Draft Operating Licence, Customer Contract, Reporting Manual, Draft Report, summary Fact Sheet and details of the public forum are available at IPART's website.

Once in place, the new licence would be subject to a compliance monitoring regime, with penalties applicable for contravention.