

IPART RELEASES ITS FIRST HOUSEHOLD SURVEY FOR THE HUNTER, GOSFORD AND WYONG AREAS

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The Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) today released a research report, 'Residential energy and water use in the Hunter, Gosford and Wyong'. This is IPART's fifth survey of household energy and water use, and the first survey of households specifically in the Hunter and the Central Coast.

The 2008 household survey was conducted between March and July 2008 in the Hunter Water, Gosford City Council and Wyong Shire Council areas.

A total of 2,608 households were surveyed, with 1,672 from the Hunter Water Corporation area, 529 from the Gosford area and 407 from the Wyong area.

Some of the key findings from the survey are:

- ▼ Households in the Hunter, Gosford and Wyong areas consume on average less electricity, gas and water than households in the Sydney metropolitan area, and their consumption similar to that of households in the Illawarra. This reflects a range of factors, including:
 - smaller average household sizes
 - more retired couples or single person households
 - lower average household incomes, and
 - coastal climate.
- ▼ Average household electricity consumption across the Hunter, Gosford and Wyong area is 6,029 kWh per year, which is around one-fifth lower than in the Sydney metropolitan area.
- ▼ Households in the Hunter, Gosford and Wyong areas are less likely to use mains gas and more likely to use cylinder gas, compared to Sydney. Less than one third of households in the Hunter, Gosford and Wyong areas are connected to mains gas, compared to nearly 50 per cent in Sydney in 2006.
- ▼ Household water consumption in Gosford and Wyong is significantly lower than in the Hunter area. On average, households in Gosford and Wyong consumed between 166 kL and 152 kL of mains water in 2008 whereas those in the Hunter consumed 182 kL.
- ▼ Households in Gosford and Wyong are also far more likely to use bore water, grey water and water from rainwater tanks. A likely reason for this finding is that Gosford and Wyong have experienced water shortages whereas the Hunter area has not.
- ▼ Water consumption in the Hunter area (182 kL in 2008) is similar to Sydney's (183 kL in 2008) even though the Hunter area has no water restrictions and Sydney does.

- ▼ In general, lower income households consume less electricity and water than higher income households. However, a significant proportion of low income households use large amounts of electricity and water, while many high income households use small quantities.
- ▼ Payment difficulties are spread across all income groups, and decline significantly only for households with incomes exceeding \$104,000 per year. Larger households and renters are more likely to face financial difficulties in paying their bills compared to others, and are more likely to have difficulty paying their electricity bills than their water or gas bills.
- ▼ Since 2002, there has been somewhat more activity in the electricity market in the Hunter, Gosford and Wyong areas than there had been in Sydney at the time of the 2006 survey. More households have been offered market contracts for electricity, and more have accepted these offers. However, gas retailers have been less active in the Hunter, Gosford and Wyong areas than in Sydney, possibly due to the limited penetration of mains gas in these areas.

The Chief Executive of IPART, Mr. James Cox said that

“The household survey will help the Tribunal to understand the impacts of the pricing determinations on customers.

The survey is timely, given the current IPART reviews of water pricing for the Hunter, Gosford and Wyong areas. The 2008 survey reflects IPART’s commitment to investigate the demographic and socio-economic characteristics on the Central Coast, made in the final report on water prices in Gosford and Wyong in 2006.

The IPART household survey is unique in that it combines demographic and household information, such as the number and age of household members, with information on energy and water use from household bills.”

The report, *Residential energy and water use in the Hunter, Gosford and Wyong*, is available on IPART’s website <<http://www.ipart.nsw.gov.au>>.

A fact sheet is available on this report.

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