



Association of Hydraulic Services Consultants Australia
NEW SOUTH WALES CHAPTER INC.

Date: 8th August 2018

Addressee: Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal
PO Box K35 Haymarket Post Shop NSW 1240

Attn: The Tribunal

Subject: **Maximum Prices to Connect, Extend or Upgrade a Service for Metropolitan Water Agencies**

Dear Tribunal Representatives,

The AHSCA NSW Inc. represent the majority of Consultants/Engineers responsible for the design and inspection of hydraulic/Plumbing designs around NSW. We have read through the Draft Water Report dated June 2018 and would like to make some minor comments, specifically in relation to Section 5 – Prices for upgrading existing services for firefighting.

As our members are responsible for the bulk of fire Hydrant and Hose Reel designs and a large portion of Sprinkler designs in NSW, we would like to put forward how we see these proposed changes affecting our industry.

Firstly, we would like to make it clear that any proposal that offers to improve the pressure and flow available in authority water mains is a positive step forward for anyone living in NSW. The less we need to rely on private water storage tanks and pumps to fight fires the better off we believe everyone will be.

Private fire tanks and pumps are cost prohibitive to both buy and maintain. They take up valuable re-estate and often become an ongoing burden for the body corporates and owners of many facilities. On some projects, the cost of supplying these systems can be upwards of \$500,000. The cost of maintaining them can be \$10,000-\$20,000 a year and that's if they don't fail.

We have seen an increase in inferior pump sets entering the market in recent years that can often fail within 7 years or less of installation. This can then lead to a \$20,000 -30,000 pump replacement.

On top of the costs of replacement and even more important are the lives of our fire fighters. Mechanical devices such as pumps are always at risk of failure, particularly if not properly maintained. Whilst the legislation in NSW enforcing the maintenance of these systems is thorough and clear, it is not uncommon to see systems in poor condition, such that many fire fighters would be reluctant to place any significant level of trust in these systems.

We believe that services maintained by authorities are typically far more reliable than most private facilities, largely due to the level of professionalism of their staff and the funds available to them to maintain these systems. We believe Fire fighters would have a much higher level of comfort attending a fire that can utilise adequate flow and pressure direct from the authorities main, over a poorly maintained private fire tank and pump set/s.

The next challenge is as outlined in you report, who will pay for the upgrades! Whilst we agree with the proposal to spread the cost of these upgrades across multiple properties, we believe you may face some challenges in getting existing sites to pay.

A solution to this challenge, we believe, could be to issue a fire audit on all properties in the region requiring an upgrade. This would trigger everyone to work together to resolve the issue.

If only one or two properties require the amplification of a water main we do not believe it will be possible for the body corporates to pay for the amplification and we believe there should always be several properties involved to spread the cost. A payment system should be incorporated where by the body corporate is only responsible for a certain percentage of the upgrade, otherwise it will not be cost effective.

The upgrade of any water main is typically a major benefit to the given water authority. In our opinion they should also share the responsibility of paying for a portion of the upgrade. Infrastructure always degrades over time and the water mains in question, would at some point in the future have required replacement. The replacement of the water main will naturally delay this issue for the authority and as such we believe the costs should be shared.

Another point worth making is that the cost of upgrading the water mains is often easily offset by the cost savings gained by the removal of private fire tanks and pumps. Our members regularly recommend amplifying an existing water main to their clients, purely to remove the need for private tanks and pumps.

We believe the size and condition of our water mains is as critical to firefighting as our dams. We don't expect private properties to build their own dams, so wherever possible we should not expect people to put in expensive tanks and pumps that will forever be a burden to the owner of the site and a potential risk for our firefighters. If upgrading the water main reduces this risk, we should be doing our best as a society to make this happen.

Thankyou for taking the time to prepare this report and we hope our comments, whilst minor in nature, help to provide a better outcome for what we are all trying to achieve collectively on this issue.

Yours faithfully

Nick Soden



President AHSCA NSW Inc.

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