



20 October 2019

Hunter Water Board Submission.

I feel the residences, businesses, and other interested parties will be disadvantaged by the proposed increases sought by Hunter Water Board. I have found that Sydney Water is decreasing its costs in some of its charges to its consumers. The people of Sydney Water area have had a cheaper product than the Hunter for a long time. People of the Newcastle region have been hit with increases from Newcastle City Council of over \$200.00 plus in past 2 years and further increases to total over \$500 plus inflation yet to come. With the same increases expected from Hunter Water I am afraid that I and many other fixed, and low-income householders will be forced to relocate from their lifelong homes. Low to middle income earners with children will be hit hard also. I can limit the amount of water I use, but when coping with a young family it is hard to do so, between juggling the responsibilities of parenting etc. Not to mention the workplace has not seen any increase in wages and with the drought etc., expenditure is increasingly putting pressure on household budgets.

Hunter Water survey was done with 700 people. They have stated that people are happy to pay increases to water charges in their proposal, that public response is favourable. This survey can be questioned, as surveys are manipulated to get the desired outcome to enable corporations and governments to increase fees or reduce services, whilst appearing to value public consultation, but unaccepting of real needs of the majority.

Hunter Water has stated the following;

“Customers with a lower usage tend to prefer a higher usage charge.”

This opinion is false as I have a low water usage now as small house holder, in the past have below residential average water consumption, even when I had a family, but I have high fixed charges. The sewage service \$218.00, water service \$33.74, Drainage, \$26.76 and environmental improvement charges contribute to the larger amounts of my bill. I recycle my wastewater, to save money and limit the use of good drinking water going onto the garden etc. I cannot not reduce my water consumption any further to save money without it being a hygiene issue. Tank water is not an alternative to drinking water as I live in a high air pollution area.

Why is it that Sydney can provide cheaper charges compared to Hunter Water? The table below demonstrates price differences.

Drink Water 2018-19	Sewage	Water Usage	
Hunter Water \$24.66	\$209.04	\$ 2.34KL to \$2.37 KL	
Sydney Water \$20.19	\$151.88	\$2.08 to \$2.11 kl Salination \$2.24	

Hunter water states that infrastructure is needed to explain into the future, with large scale developments and high rise in the CBD. These costs should be sought from developers not the residential customer in an establish area that had no upkeep on existing infrastructure by Hunter Water for over 20 years plus. New buildings and amenities should be built to capitalise on water saving. Proper planning and budgeting should have been carried out over the past years to allow Hunter Water to update and expand its infrastructure without a sudden hit to its consumer’s pockets.

It is also unfair that residences and business of the Hunter have given the State Treasury a \$100 million dividend. This is milking the people of the Hunter as pointed out by our local member Sonia Horney MP to fund Sydney projects.

My 90-year-old parents have no sewage at their dwelling of over 60 years, there is a sewage line about to run one side of the street as a community service to 6-8 residents by a property developer who is extending the sewage line from their development site. My father has requested for years to have this utility. During this time Hunter Water has neglected this area whilst collecting revenue. Yet over on the main road, some distance away, sewage was installed for McDonalds number of years ago. To date my parents, they still have no sewage on their property.

I am against changing the billing cycle from 4 to 3 monthly, this cycle of billing has work for years without complaint. I do question why we need to pay in advance for services? This is a smoke screen to hide increasing charges as not to alarm the consumer of what they will be paying in the future. Hunter Water has admitted by this excerpt from proposal "here would be additional costs incurred for new billing systems" It is of no benefit, adding to administration costs of an extra bill, it's only benefit will be to hide increased charges from the public and acquiring money in advance. Postage costs were stated for changing to emailing, but the human impact, is jobs, the mail person in the mail room, and the postman, another couple of taken from the community. I recently had computer problems and lost some Emails not to mention the large influx of emails everyone must deal with daily, leaves one to accidentally delete. The Hunter has a median age of 65 years, high proportion of older people in the population. Technology can be a struggle even a simple task as emailing and online banking. I've witnessed how my parents struggle with technology. I feel this introduction to email accounts can be delayed.

I don't need a SMS to tell me of water restrictions there is radio TV and social media which is cheap. No restraint was show recently with a fridge magnet that will be in the bin at the end of water restrictions creating more waste, at least paper is sustainable for billing. Hunter Water spent money on a TV campaign recently before restrictions came in, shame it didn't spend the same amount of airtime explaining about the increase water rates. Money saved could be forward into next year's budget

I am against the proposed increases it is outrageous and to many households and business it is unsustainable. I feel that Hunter Water has already started to spend more than appropriate on its budget and

is now wanting the people of the Hunter to make financial sacrifices. Thank you for listening to my objections and hope you will take them into consideration on the proposed increases by Hunter Water.

Regards

