

Submission for Increases for Water Bills

To Whom It May Concern

Dear Sir/Madam

It has come to my attention that there are to be substantial increases to water charges from Hunter Water Corporation. This is of great concern as people are doing as much as they can to conserve water due to the cost and the fact that the country is in drought.

For some years now, people have been collecting water in garbage bins so as to reduce water consumption, catching water in the shower whilst waiting for warm water to come through, joining our country friends in reducing flushing of toilets by not flushing when the waste is only liquid; at times showering second daily; having a wash in a dish on alternate days; spending less time in the shower; turning off taps when brushing teeth; minimising the use of water in any way one can think of, such as washing vegetables in a smaller plastic mixing bowl rather than a kitchen sink; rinsing off dishes in the same size bowl to reduce the use of water going down the sink; washing hands by turning on the tap with the wrist, wetting hands, turning the tap off again using the wrist, soaping the hands up and turning the tap off again using the wrist to wash hands, turning the tap on again to rinse the soap off the hands; also using aqueous gel to clean hands and rinsing hands off using a dribble of water. I have seen people have a shower that releases so little water that it is almost impossible to rinse oneself off. In addition, watering of food plants in the yard takes place once a week on the whole, perhaps twice when absolutely necessary.

As a one person household living in a house, it doesn't mean that water consumption equals that of a family. The increased charges are forcing people out of their homes when they are doing their level best to conserve water. Are people expected to have one shower per week? In the Hunter, the cost of water is more than the cost of beer which I neither buy nor consume. This has been the situation for many decades.

There has been a great deal of development in the region, such as subdividing housing blocks, so that two or more houses are on a block where there was previously only one residence on a block. There has been an enormous number of high rise buildings and units being constructed in the area. It is believed that investment in these types of dwellings is coming from investors from outside of the Region, such as Sydney. As the occupants of each of these styles of residences are paying for water and fixed charges, Hunter Water Corporation is now receiving more revenue than ever.

Newcastle people do not and, never have earned the high wages that are earned by the people who reside in Sydney. As such, the proportion of cost for water in the Hunter is not fair in relation to what Sydney residents pay. This concept is little understood by those who live in Sydney or those who are not used to the difference in the Newcastle economy to other areas in New South Wales. It places great pressure on the local residents to be expected to subsidise the wealthier suburbs of Sydney for the cost of water. This in turn places the burden of the cost for water in a disproportionate manner to other wealthier areas of New South Wales, particularly Sydney.

People on a fixed income cannot afford such a substantial rise in water rates or an extra large bill to pay during the year. For Hunter Water Corporation to expect more revenue in the face of an enormous level of development in the area is outrageous. It should be incumbent on developers to

pay for any added infrastructure required, not the long term residents who pay their way fairly. In short, the long term residents should not have to fund new development.

I respectfully request that the pricing for water usage and fixed charges for the residents of Newcastle and the Hunter Region be reconsidered to arrive at a fairer outcome in relation to affordability for the cost of water.

Thank you.