

Author name: S. Gelder

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Submission: Hunter Water (HW) and the NSW State Government (State) have an obligation to provide wastewater services to areas identified as priority sewerage backlog areas. Delivery of these priority backlog services should be considered core business to HW. Backlog schemes have historically been funded through through the Environmental Improvement Charge (EIC). Whilst the EIC was originally set to run until 2009, it was extended to enable more time for slower than anticipated delivery by HW in completing works in priority sewerage backlog areas. Aside from Wyee, there appears to be no progress or commitment by HW to provide equitably funded backlog sewerage services to Raworth and a significant number of other priority sewerage backlog areas still outstanding.

Given the significant number of priority sewerage backlog works yet to be delivered, it is appropriate that IPART consider if a further extension of the EIC is warranted.

Furthermore, clear target setting and performance monitoring of HW delivery of priority sewerage backlog works is required to ensure HW remains accountable for delivery of meaningful progress in resolving priority sewerage backlogs.

Both HW and the State have over the last 15 years have demonstrated a lack of urgency in resolving priority sewerage backlog areas, opting to extract short term dividend returns and/or fund superficial non essential works instead. Without a further extension of the EIC, and accountability for delivery, HW and the State are likely to find further excuses to abdicate responsibility, blame eachother and/or avoid accountability altogether for any further meaningful progress in delivery of priority sewerage backlog works.

The current treatment by HW of average residents in priority sewerage backlog works as if they are "large developers" is unworkable an impractical, cynically to avoid action. Average residents should be able to expect a level of customer service and support from HW to ensure priority works are delivered.