

Submission to IPART – Prices for Review for Gosford City Council Water and Sewerage and Storm Water Services

Gosford City Council is proposing a 53% increase in water and sewerage and storm water services over 4 years, commencing 1 July 2013.

I wish to lodge an objection to this proposed hike.

I object firstly to this on the basis of water services. This relates to metered water sales (and sewerage and storm water), which is a product service and supply. As the purchaser of this product, the consumer has the right to expect a product that can be used for the purposes that it is intended. This is not the case with Gosford water at the point of receipt in our home. I am therefore object to an increased rate for metered water sales, in particular. This is also an issue of both equity and standards (ensuring that all residents get quality water).

By way of background, I do not believe that Gosford residents should be paying higher metered rates for water that is still not of a quality to drink - whether this is a problem with the method of supply (pipes) or the overall quality of the water. The method in which it is delivered counts in the service that is provided. Despite cleaning the pipes in the Peninsula area, water discolouration is a concern (including associated stomach upsets). Many people in our area of the Peninsula have turned to bottle water because of water quality issues. I have been drinking bottled water since shortly after moving to the Tascott, Point Clare and Koolewong area in 2006. Bottled water costs me \$15 for a 19 litre bottle and our household goes through two of these a week, because we use this for cooking, cat water and drinking! In its submission to IPART, Gosford City Council acknowledges that it is undertaking a proactive water mains cleaning program to improve water quality (p.35).

It also notes that 'Council has commenced the implementation of an enhanced chlorination strategy to provide improved chlorine residuals throughout the water reticulation system, in accordance with NSW Health expectations and to maintain compliance with the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines. Additionally, revisions to the Public Health Act and

Regulation require Council to develop and implement a water quality assurance program by 1 July 2014. Although Council has progressed establishment of its water quality management system, further work is required to finalise and maintain the system. (p.36).

The increase in metered water sales should not be allowed until Gosford City Council complies with such requirements, which should include an end stage analysis of water quality in homes across the Peninsula area, including the suburbs of Tascott, Point Clare and Koolewong.

I object secondly to increases in water and sewerage and storm water services on the basis of the ratio of this increase relative to rate payer/householder incomes in the Gosford Local Government area. In considering this rate rise in water and sewerage and storm water services, IPART should take into account important social and demographic indicators for the Gosford Local Government area, including the high rate of unemployment and average lower than medium incomes. On a related point, I do not believe that the proposed hikes of 53% over 4 years are justified in Gosford City Councils submission to IPART. An increase in water and sewerage and storm water services should be commensurate with the CPI, which Gosford City Council appears to be presently above based on the figures presented in its submission.

On a more personal note, the Gosford community has been great conservers of water and has adhered to the restrictions with great respect for our community's precious resource. The hike in water rates is a punishing blow for a community that has come together to conserve our precious resource in a time of need.