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October 2012

REVIEW OF PRICES FOR WATER, SEWERAGE, STORMWATER DRAINAGE AND OTHER SERVICES FOR HUNTER WATER CORPORATION

Dear Sir / Madam

Thank you for the opportunity to make comment on the Review of prices for Water, Sewerage, Storm water, drainage and other services for Hunter Water Corporation (HWC).

I wish to make the following comments:

- Industries should be encouraged and given incentives to undertake water conservation methods or Water Saving Plans such as Sydney Water. Providing water at a reduced cost to industries undermines any encouragement for recycling.
- Future water planning should involve a strong focus on conservation and demand management strategies which includes genuine public consultation and participation.
- The new Lower Hunter Water plan is being evolved before a genuine consultation and participation process has been undertaken to determine what customers are prepared to pay for.
- Whilst HWC's proposed capital expenditure on development of recycled water is welcomed, all upgrades to wastewater treatment facilities should have a sustainable approach in place to manage sewerage sludge.
- HWC has a poor record on recycling sewage. The Hunter would be much better served by increasing the use of wastewater to match national standards. It would be cheaper and better for the environment. If HWC matched national best practice, it could boost water security for households and small businesses by taking industrial consumers off the drinking water supply. A greater focus on recycling effluent and demand management/water conservation strategies would negate the need for any new large infrastructure projects.
- Water saving rules should be introduced to the Hunter as a demand management measure, such as bans on hosing down hard surfaces, sprinkler use at regulated times, etc. This would negate the need for more expensive readiness options in the future.
- Increasing usage charges while reducing fixed charges would provide stronger incentives for customers to reduce consumption and give them more control over their water bill. This would also encourage customers to invest in rainwater tanks and water efficient appliances.
- Encourage the use of storm water capture with retention basins, water tanks, etc. This would allow developers to embrace water sensitive urban design features.
- Encourage water efficient appliances and attempts to control water usage with financial incentives (rebates).
- Investigation of customer sewerage discharges and rebates for the reduction of same.
- The land acquired for Tillegra Dam is no longer required as the NSW Government has a no Tillegra Dam policy and has given a commitment that the Tillegra lands will be sold. Land sales should now commence through the implementation of a 'Whole of Government' task force and process" which would involve an independent land use plan and long term strategy for the disposal of these lands. The costs of maintaining or developing this land should not be recovered from HWC customers as the Tillegra Dam proposal was a political decision and not one based on water needs.
- Land at Mammy Johnson's Creek, not figured in HWC's documents, should also be disposed of and the monies spent on maintaining present infrastructure.

Regards

