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Submission: Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the decision on the prices of Sydney Water 2016-2020. While the proposed overall reduction in prices is welcome, I am concerned about the change to a higher fixed service charge and lower usage charge for two reasons. Firstly, a lower usage charge does not encourage Australians to value and regard treated water as a scarce and expensive resource, whereas a higher price does. In a drought-stricken country, we must limit our usage, even when water is not in short supply. Secondly, a higher fixed charge means that those of us who are on fixed incomes or low incomes face a large cost before we consume any water - and have no way of reducing it. It would be fairer and smarter to reduce the fixed charge so that water is affordable for all, and have a higher usage price, which consumers can avoid by limiting their consumption. Overall, I believe that all increases in charges approved by IPART should be held at or below increase in the cost of living or the inflation rate, so that those on fixed incomes do not continue to see their standard of living eroded, especially in old age.

Yours faithfully,

Helen Flaherty