

30<sup>th</sup> November 2004

Independent Pricing & Regulatory Tribunal  
Level 2, 44 Market St.  
SYDNEY 2000

P.O. Box Q290  
QVB Post Office  
NSW 1230

Dear Tribunal members,

I am the Secretary/Treasurer for a residential strata plan in Bexley. The strata plan consists of 5 residential villas. I am concerned at proposals to increase water charges for high usage residential customers of Sydney Water. The reason for my concern is that our strata plan has only one water meter for the 5 villas. Individual villas do not have separate water meters. The Owners' Corporation receives one water bill per quarter for the meter reading, in addition each individual owner receives an individual water bill per quarter, based on the rateable value of the property.

Water Usage charges are based on water meter readings from the single water meter, irrespective of the number of residents in the five villas. Consequently if water usage is high for our property, the cost is carried by ALL FIVE OWNERS, not just the villa that has incurred the heavy water usage. Even under the present pricing structure, this is inequitable in the extreme. If one unit is occupied by 8 residents, and another unit is occupied by just one resident (a situation that did exist only last year), the single resident owner is liable for just the same water costs as the residence containing the 8 occupants. How can even the current pricing system be considered to be fair and equitable?

2 – 3 years ago, I investigated the cost of installing individual water meters for each of the five villas, as a means of creating a fairer situation for all our owners. This would have cost the Owners' Corporation in excess of \$2000, and you can imagine it would take some years to recoup the cost, so the decision was made not to proceed with the installation of individual water meters.

About 3 months ago I attended a local forum run by my local member of the NSW Parliament, Cherie Burton, where I raised this concern. I asked her if she could indicate how Sydney Water would bill properties with only one water meter for several residences, and she indicated this was also a concern of hers, as a similar setup occurred in the property where she resided.

It is essential the Tribunal consider the situation of owners and residents in strata plans to ensure strata plans with only one water meter for multiple residences will not be charged as high water users if such a scheme is to be introduced.

Yours sincerely,  
Roger Higgins  
Secretary/ Treasurer