Strategic Investment Plan

2025-2035

Customer Experience









Summary

Outcome objectives

This Customer Experience Strategic Investment Plan sets out how we will meet our outcome to deliver a great customer experience. It is focused on four objectives aligned to customer priorities and preferences:

- Fair and affordable bills
- 2. Positive customer experience
- 3. Informed and empowered customers
- 4. Safe swimming and recreation.

Customer priorities

Through the Our Water, Our Voice engagement program, customers told us their second priority is keeping bills as fair and affordable as possible, while maintaining the quality and reliability of our water and wastewater services. They also want us to maintain good levels of customer service, provide more proactive communication to help them stay informed, and they value community amenity in and around waterways and enhancement of waterways for safe recreational activities.

Expenditure to deliver outcomes

We will invest \$2.9 billion over the 10 years to 2035 (5% of all expenditure) delivering on the customer experience outcome, ensuring our performance measures and targets are met across all objectives:

- \$1,104 million in capital infrastructure investment: Stormwater asset renewals to protect public
 safety and properties. Transforming our technology platforms to improve customer experience, including
 investing in digital water meters that will offer customers more timely and accurate insights into their
 water usage and billing.
- \$1,759 million in operating expenditure: Continue our primary contact centre and retail services, and to maintain our technology platforms to manage customer experience, support billing and hardship programs, and engage customers and stakeholders to ensure timely, accurate information that aligns with evolving customer expectations.

Ways this plan will make a difference

Fair and affordable bills

Keep water bills among the most affordable among Australian capital cities while minimising the impact of necessary investments for safe and reliable services.

Informed and empowered customers
Keep over 5 million customers informed
about outages and empowered to
manage their water use and bills through
digital channels

Help with bills

Uplift support services with NSW Government assistance, forecasting over \$1 billion for payment programs in 2025-30 to support those in need.

Improving water literacy
Help people understand water, where it
comes from, how it's managed and where
it goes, through our education programs
and tour of our Purified Water Discovery
Centre.

Positive customer experience
Maintain the same high level of service
that has placed us in the top quartile of
our peers for customer satisfaction since
2020.

Safe swimming and recreation
Improve community recreation at sites
across Greater Sydney by 2030, with
collaboration and real-time swimming
condition updates.



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Introduction

Sydney Water's Strategic Investment Plans (SIPs) show how over the next 10 years we will achieve our strategy and vision to create a better life with world-class water services. Informed by our Long Term Capital and Operational Plan (LTCOP) and insights from the customer engagement program Our Water, Our Voice, the five SIPs outline our medium-term (10-year) targets, measures, and key activities for our outcomes:

- Customer experience
- Water quality and reliability
- Environmental protection
- Accountable, agile, innovative culture
- Successful and sustainable business

These SIPs are essential for achieving our customer outcomes, balancing expenditure with risk, performance, cost, and customer price impacts. The SIPs support our price proposal to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART), business planning, and financial budgeting. They also integrate with other asset management and operational planning.

We will hold ourselves accountable for performance of these outcomes via annual reporting to customers and the regular corporate performance reporting process with the Sydney Water Executive and Board. This **Strategic Investment Plan** sets out how we will meet our **Customer Experience** outcome to deliver a great customer experience, focused on four objectives:

- 1. Fair and affordable bills
- 2. Positive customer experience
- 3. Informed and empowered customers
- 4. Safe swimming and recreation.

Through the Our Water, Our Voice engagement program, customers told us their second priority is to keep bills as fair and affordable as possible, while maintaining the quality and reliability of our water and wastewater services. They want us to maintain good levels of customer service and expressed a desire for more proactive communication to help them stay informed. They also value community amenity in and around waterways and want us to enhance waterways for safe recreational activities.

Our strategic investments are designed to be affordable, deliverable, and aligned with our risk tolerance, ensuring we meet and exceed customer and stakeholder expectations. This approach underscores our commitment to keeping customers at the heart of everything we do.





What we heard from our customers

Sydney Water is evolving and moving towards becoming a customer-led organisation in line with global best practice for water utilities. Over the last 2 years we have built on our customer engagement program by actively engaging with customers to develop outcomes aligned with their preferences and priorities. In July 2022 we started a customer engagement program called Our Water, Our Voice, the largest in Sydney Water's history, with over 13,000 customers participating over 21 months and 6 phases of engagement.

The feedback gathered through the customer engagement process summarised below, informs our objectives, measures, targets and delivery plan. Customers told us they care about the following priorities:

Affordability: Affordability is a top priority for customers, who expect water and wastewater bills to remain manageable. They stress the importance of cost management, payment plans, avoiding future cost spikes, and access to support programs for financially vulnerable customers.

Bill preferences: Customers prefer to limit bill increases, however, understand the need for investment to maintain service levels in the context of population growth and increasing risks such as climate change. They view a flat pricing structure as the simplest and fairest option for all, combined with support for customers facing financial hardship.

Maintain levels of customer service: Customers emphasise the importance of maintaining good levels of customer service, but it's a lower priority compared to providing reliable water and wastewater services. They believe that ongoing improvements should be included without additional costs to customers.

Complex customer service needs: Certain customer groups, such as major developers, high water criticality business customers, local government, and value makers (plumbers, conveyancers, and real estate agents) have more complex service requirements. These groups interact with Sydney Water for delivering water services to their clients and expect different levels of support. For service-critical businesses and value makers, timely outage notifications are

Customer experience Ranked customer identified priorities

- ensuring bills remain affordable via cost management, payment plans and avoiding future cost spikes
- Maintaining clean, safe waterways and water recreation areas by reducing pollution
- Minimising the impact of outages both planned and unplanned
- Maintaining a standard of customer service that meets or exceeds your expectations
- 15 Ensuring better informed customers through improved/modern communications to assist with managing water use

crucial. Major developers face challenges with approval times and servicing timeframes, preferring managed relationships, efficient applications, and greater access to information for planning.



Communication: Customers desire practical, proactive communication regarding dam levels and water restrictions. Customers see the need for improved community education to boost knowledge about water and wastewater and felt Sydney Water should do more to educate the community on water-saving efforts.

Outage notifications: Customers expect timely notifications about outages consistent with Operating Licence requirements. Customers appreciate reminders closer to the date through quick, instantaneous communication methods, aligning with the customer contract's commitment to inform and help customers manage planned interruptions.

Digital expectations: Customers expect instant notifications, access to service support and response at any time, from anywhere, on any device. Customer expectations around seamless and easy digital interactions are increasing, with strong interest in engaging with Sydney Water online.

Community access and recreation Enhancing waterways for safe recreational activities and environmental protection is a high priority. Waterways that are safe to use are highly valued. Access to land for recreation and cultural practices were identified as important to First Nations customers and community. Improving access to sites not managed by Sydney Water for swimming or other recreation requires collaboration with councils and other agencies.



Opportunities



Fair and affordable bills

- Some of our customers are currently struggling with the cost-of-living pressures. We need to identify those in need and proactively reach out to them and offer the right support.
- Greater Sydney's population is growing significantly, contributing to increased cost pressures. We need to scale our services and infrastructure appropriately to service new housing and increasing development needs.



Positive customer experience

- Our customer base is growing, we need to maintain a focus on delivering high customer satisfaction without adding to our customers' bills.
- Satisfaction is much higher when we have direct contact with our customers (76%). We aspire to close the gap in the levels of customer satisfaction between those who have direct interaction with our contact centre, and those who haven't.
- Advancements in technology will raise customer expectations for quality and responsiveness. We need to anticipate and prepare for our future customers' expectations.
- Responding to the needs of our diverse customer base, each with their own unique challenges, requires different levels of service and support.



Informed and empowered customers

- Ensuring customers are kept informed is critical, yet challenging, especially with the expectation for real-time updates.
- Customers' experiences with other service providers are shaping their expectations for seamless and advanced interactions.
- We need to develop better channels for customers to connect with us for self-help and support, especially for those with more complex issues.



Safe swimming and recreation

- Customers have expressed their priority on the environment. We need to enhance recreational experiences and increase community engagement through programs like Urban Plunge and partnerships to improve the health and quality of waterways.
- Effective collaboration with councils, government agencies and community groups to enable community access to lands and waters for recreation can strengthen ancillary benefits and optimise Sydney Water's investment.



Expenditure

Total proposed expenditure in the Customer Experience SIP is \$2.9 billion over the 10 years from 2025 to 2035. Around 15% of this expenditure will go towards maintaining and upgrading digital infrastructure to improve customer experience, operational efficiency, and proactive maintenance. Around 10% will support customer engagement and communication, as well as education on future water sources, and 21% investment in replacing current meters with digital meters that enable greater transparency of water use.

Budget summary 2025-2035

Forecast expenditure (\$2024-25 in millions)	Category	2025-30	2030-35	Total 10yr
Payment assist and other hardship programs (~\$1,000 million 2025-30)	-	NSW Gov	ernment assis	stance
Billing and payment services including meter reading	Opex	233	265	499*
Stormwater asset renewals and flood risk management	Capex	280	213	494*
Retail services including customer contact, developer services, commercial accounts	Opex	198	196	394
Stormwater operations and maintenance (existing drainage assets)	Opex	75	75	150
Digital investment to support customer experience including (for 2025-30): • Field mobility platform, Flow \$3 million • Developer transformation program \$11 million • Customer empowerment, CxP	Digital invest	47	44	91
Digital core opex supporting customer experience	Opex	163	186	348*
Other customer services such as scheduling and dispatch, commercial products	Opex	39	39	79*
Smart water metering	Capex	293	307	600
Customer and stakeholder engagement and communications and community education	Opex	142	146	288
Enhanced waterway coordination / maintain catchment group memberships	-	Refer other items - minor expenditure		
Infrastructure portfolio adjustment (estimate)	Capex	(48)	(29)	(76)*
Opex adjustments (Right-of-use assets and unregulated activities)	Opex	1	1	2
Total capex for customer experience outcome	Capex	569	534	1,103
Total opex for customer experience outcome	Opex	851	908	1,759



Key:

Fair and affordable bills

Positive customer experience

Informed and empowered customers

Positive customer experience

Swimming and recreation sites

Overall outcome level

Percentage of total (10 yr)

Notes:

- Years indicated refer to financial years (i.e. 2025–30 refers to the period between 1 July 2025 and 30 June 2030).
- Dollar amounts are presented in FY24-25 'real' terms (without inflation) as at 1 July 2024.
- · Capex forecasts are more certain for near term activities that have progressed past planning stages.
- Opex includes controllable and non-controllable costs.
- Digital investment includes project capex and an operational component that can't be capitalised ('propex') this is already included in the digital core opex only the capex component of digital investment is added to the total capex.
- Allocation of adjustments and efficiencies are estimates as these are applied at portfolio level. Corporate level adjustment for opex efficiencies allocated to the Successful and sustainable business SIP.
- *Total differs by one due to rounding

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Our investment approach

Objective	Fair and affordable bills	Positive customer experience	Informed and empowered customers	Safe swimming and recreation		
Commitment to customers	We provide value for money, keep bills affordable and support those in need			We support improved community access to lands and waters for safe recreation and swimming		
Customer priorities	Priority 2: Ensure bills remain affordable via cost management, payment plans and avoiding future cost spikes.	customer service that meets or exceeds customers' expectations.		Priority 3: Maintaining clean, safe waterways and water recreation areas by reducing pollution		
Why this is important to our customers	Customers feel strongly that water and wastewater bills must remain affordable for all as water is a fundamental need and support the use of hardship programs to support those who may be struggling financially.		feel more informed.	local waterways for amenity physical and		
Service level aim	Maintain	Maintain	Improve	Maintain		
	Proactive and directed information and education about payment assist programs	and enable contributions to be paid easily	(including water conservation) to improve our customers understanding of water and	Enhance waterway coordination to improve customer waterway outcomes (Urban Plunge, events and activations at Sydney Water and external sites)		
		applications		catchment groups and coastal management		
	Keep bills low by managing our assets and water network efficiently		in water management principles and options	program committees to support improved waterway coordination		
	water network emolerity	Continue stormwater drainage services to protect people and property				
	Support household water conservation through education and efficiency programs	Receive proactive outbound notifications automatically	Continue to inform and engage customers and stakeholders in the decision-making process			
		Leverage Internet of Things (IOT) and digital devices	P100033			
	Pricing reviewed as part of commencing new price period to support financial sustainability while maintaining affordability	businesses and commercial operations	Provide smart meters for most customers to help them manage water usage (conserve water) and assist with early leak detection (beyond the meter)	As above		
		streamlined customer services				



Objective 1: Fair and Affordable Bills

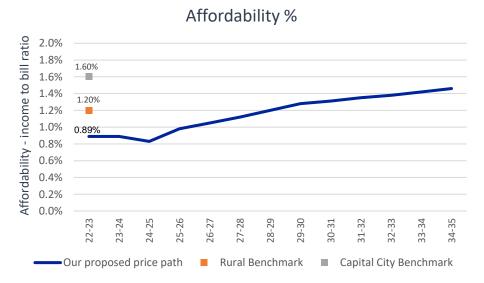
We provide value for money, keep bills affordable and support those in need. (Customer priority 2) We will:

- keep our operations efficient
- prioritise investments that align with our strategy and customer needs through robust analysis
- apply principles of intergenerational fairness and price-smoothing to limit bill impacts on customers
- simplify bills to make them easier to understand
- promote and provide payment support options for those in need.

Performance measure	Aim	Baseline	Targets			
		23-24	24-25	25-26	29-30	34-35
Affordability: Average residential customer bill as a percentage of average disposable income for the Greater Sydney Region.	Maintain affordability within water industry benchmark, specifically keeping bills within the Australian benchmark.	0.89%	0.83%	0.98%	1.28%	1.46%

Rationale and historical context

This new affordability measure was developed in consultation with the Customer and Community Reference Group (CCRG). The target is based on the proposed price scenario and the weighted annual disposable income, calculated by dividing the average household water bill (200 kilolitre (kL)) by the weighted annual disposable income for all Local Government Areas (LGAs) in our operating area. Sydney Water currently has the lowest income-to-bills ratio 0.89 among all water utilities in Australia's capital cities, making it the most affordable. Despite this, the income disparity in Greater Sydney means some people still face financial hardship. Existing financial hardship support programs and safeguards help mitigate price changes, and we expect demand for these programs to grow.



Affordability calculation was done using Water Service Association of Australia's (WSAA) method i.e Average residential customer bill as a percentage of the average disposable income for people in the Sydney Region. Real \$ used for the calculation.



Strategy for improvement

Our key activities for maintaining affordability include:

- Managing expenditures through cost efficiency programs and by setting targets for financial performance. Benchmarking our costs against other water service providers, will ensure we remain competitive
- **Maintaining single-block tariff pricing** and implementing gradual bill increases. We will also explore alternative pricing structures to ensure future affordability, with customer support
- Aligning all investments and expenditures with our business strategy and customer outcomes, maintaining high-quality services through prudently managing assets and the network (refer other SIPs)
- Utilising Smart meters to empower customers to manage their consumption effectively and educating customers on available support and promote water conservation through efficiency programs such as WaterFix (refer objective 3)
- Funding new infrastructure via developer contributions
- **Expanding our hardship support programs** to better target specific LGAs and customer segments that are likely to be at risk of financial hardship.

Success factors

- Prices impacts are kept manageable.
- The plan is financially sustainable with current price adjustments.
- A fair return for shareholders and state credit ratings are maintained.
- Compliance with Sydney Water credit policy.
- Treasury grants additional funding for hardship programs.

- Pricing proposal not accepted by IPART.
- Slow wage growth.
- Greater than anticipated negative response to price increases.
- Unforeseen events (like COVID-19) interrupt the ability to recover debt.

Objective 2: Positive customer experience

We are inclusive and helpful, treating all our customers fairly and with respect. (Customer priority 12) We will:

- · maintain high standards of customer service
- meet performance benchmarks for service interruptions
- · communicate timely notifications for planned outages

Performance measure	Aim	Baseline	Targets			
		23-24	24-25	25-26	29-30	34-35
Customer Satisfaction Score: Measured position compared to the top-quartile (Top Q) of benchmarked peers in the quarterly Brand Tracker Customer Survey (an external survey), based on a customer rating for overall service satisfaction of 8 or more out of 10.	Maintain customer satisfaction within the top quartile of benchmarked peers, aligned to our five-year historical average performance.	Тор Q	Top Q	Top Q	Top Q	Top Q

Rationale and historical context

Sydney Water typically ranks in the top quartile of our peer industries for customer satisfaction and ranks highly in the Water Services Association of Australia (WSAA) customer perceptions survey. Sydney Water's Brand Tracker program measures customer satisfaction performance with our general population of customers. Currently, approximately 50% of our customers rate us between 8-10 on a 10-point scale each month. The majority of these customers have not had an interaction with Sydney Water outside of paying their bills. However, customers who have engaged directly with our personnel, typically though our contact centre, are more likely to be highly satisfied, with up to 76% of those customers rating us between 8-10 on the 10-point scale.

We anticipate that as our customer base grows and advancements in technology progresses, experience with other utilities will raise the expectations of our customers, therefore more investment will be required to ensure we maintain the current level of customer satisfaction.

Target: Sydney Water customers' satisfaction scores remains in the top 25% compared to industry peers



Strategy for improvement

We will drive improvements in customer satisfaction by:

• Investing in **digital capabilities** to streamline workflows, improve efficiency, and ensure consistent customer experiences (i.e. implementation of our Field Mobility Platform (Flow) improvements to

field scheduling, inventory management and customer engagement for our reactive and planned maintenance work across our network and facilities)

- Enhancing our customers' experience, by providing an accessible, reliable and valued service
 experience for all customers, particularly through proactive notifications, self-service options. We will
 leverage Sydney Water's contact centre new cloud-based system to improve customer service
 reliability and resilience, and new business telephony system to enhance our ability to analyse data
 and improve customer service
- These actions will be supported by improved monitoring of our water and wastewater networks (covered in the Water quality and reliability and Environmental protection SIPs)
- Delivering improvements to our **customer communications**, **services for developers** and other customer groups, including a digital investment to transform the developer experience, facilitating improved interaction and collaboration
- Maintain and provide like-for-like replacement of stormwater assets, protecting people and properties by providing drainage services, and managing flood risk.

Success factors

- Acceptable service levels are delivered.
- Majority of customers preferring digital engagement channels by 2035.
- Investment in the appropriate technology to enhance customer service performance.
- Services support customers and developers to plan for and deliver growth.

- Higher population growth would require more support to maintain service levels.
- Failing to meet service promises erodes customer trust.
- Weather and unpredictable events can impact performance and satisfaction.
- Customers may not fully recognise the value of services beyond water and wastewater, (eq. Net Zero initiatives).

Objective 3: Informed and empowered customers

We will keep customers informed and include communities in the decision-making process. (Customer priority 15)
We will:

- expand community education and leverage our PRW Discovery Centre
- enhance customer communications and engagement programs
- offer new digital channels to connect at anytime.

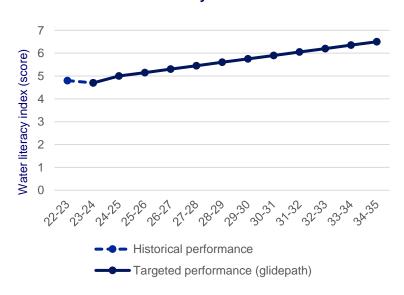
Performance measure	Aim	Baseline	Targets			
		23-24	24-25	25-26	29-30	34-35
Water literacy: Literacy score	Improve water literacy	4.9	5.0	5.15	5.75	6.5
(out of 10) from the quarterly	during the price period to					
Water Literacy Tracker (an	achieve a long-term shift in					
external survey) testing	perception.					
customers' understanding of						
water, where it comes from, how						
it's managed, and where it goes.						

Rationale and historical context

Customers' views on water use and services have changed in recent times and will continue to evolve over the next decade. Sydney Water has improved the way we keep customers informed. New business systems have improved our ability to connect with our retail residential and business customers and work collaboratively to keep customers informed about planned and unplanned events. Over the past few years, we have successfully delivered a customer platform allowing customers to access self-service digital services 24/7.

We'll maintain our service levels in the revised Operating Licence and customer

Water Literacy Index Score



contract including to respond to outages and provide advance information to all of our customers.

Our target reflects the investment required to improve customer water literacy, which will facilitate support for alternate water sources including PRW and separately, empower customers to manage their water usage and bills through digital channels. We aim to increase the percentage of customers who choose to engage with us through digital channels.

Strategy for improvement

To enhance water literacy, we will:

- Promote the PRW Education Centre, maintain sponsorships, expand community education
 programs and target specific groups like schools, the Culturally and Linguistically Diverse community
 (CALD), First Nation customers, business customers, and government stakeholders. Educational
 campaigns via advertising and social media will address barriers to alternative water sources, while
 marketing efforts will shift to informative content
- Boost digital engagement by targeting specific customer categories and expanding customer
 empowerment to offer digital options and channels, such as self-service portals for developers and the
 My Account customer portal. Invest to maintain and sustain ongoing enhancements to the Customer
 Experience Platform (CxP)
- Replace existing mechanical customer water meters with digital meters (smart meters) to
 facilitate improved customer experience, better water network management and water conservation
 efforts. This is in line with the preferences our customers have told us (see the 15 customer priorities
 from Phase 1 Our Water Our Voice)
- **Undertake continuous engagement** with our community advocates to ensure ongoing customer input into our decision-making process.

Success factors

- "Always on" approach to community education on water sources and water conservation are maintained.
- Objectives and targets are deliverable and affordable under current assumptions.

- Favourable weather conditions may result in ambivalence about the urgency to consider new water supply sources.
- Any event that impacts customer trust could damage Sydney Water's reputation and reduce the impact of education and communication messages.
- Community or customers may not accept recommended alternative water solutions.
- Educating the population is likely to be challenging, but critical for future water resilience planning.



Objective 4: Safe swimming and recreation

We support improved community access to lands and waters for safe swimming and recreation.

(Customer priority 3)

We will:

- provide real-time information on safe swimming conditions via digital platforms
- continue assessing appropriate sites on Sydney Water property for community recreational use
- proactively work with government, councils, community groups, including First Nations communities, to identify priority locations for improved public access and shared use
- maintain membership of collaborative catchment groups and coastal management program committees.

Performance measure	Aim	Baseline	Targets			
		23-24	24-25	25-26	29-30	34-35
Public access and recreation: Annual increase in number of sites with improved community access for recreation (including swimming). This includes sites managed by Sydney water for temporary or long-term access and sites managed by councils or other agencies.	Maintain a modest increase of sites suitable for community access and recreation, at least one site per year.	1 extra site	≥2 extra site	≥1 extra site	≥1 extra site	≥0 extra site

Rationale and historical context

The measure is based on expectations for improving waterway health and shared community use of our lands to support the recreation needs of the city. We will measure the number of sites with improved recreational access to land and waterways, in addition to Beachwatch and Riverwatch swim sites.

Our targets are consistent with our historical progress in establishing partnerships with councils and other landowners who are seeking to open new swimming and aquatic recreation sites,

Increase in sites suitable for for community access



including our work on Urban Plunge since 2022 and ongoing partnership with Parramatta River Catchment Group. Our existing position statement on shared community use of Sydney Water property and our upcoming land management responsibilities as part of our trunk drainage role in Western Sydney have been factored into our targets. While Sydney Water's management of wastewater and stormwater can

affect waterway recreation, councils, New South Wales (NSW) government agencies and others play a role in managing urban development and access.

Strategy for improvement

Key activities to promote safe swimming and recreation include:

- Measuring the number of sites with improved recreational access to land and waterways, in addition to existing Beachwatch and Riverwatch swim sites
- Continuing our Riverwatch program so customers know when it is safe to swim and working work with the NSW Government on monitoring recreational water quality
- Continuing enhanced waterway coordination through the Urban Plunge program and collaboration with catchment groups and coastal management programs. Over 10 years we aim to **deliver four water recreation sites across Greater Sydney**. This includes partnering with the NSW Government's "Places to Swim" program to deliver sites in Western Sydney, activating public access at the Upper South Creek Advanced Water Recycling Centre site, and potentially improving access to the Mill Stream/Botany Wetlands corridor. We are working with Greater Sydney Parklands to improve access to lands around Liverpool Offtake Reservoir, and we are working with Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure to improve public recreation, including swimming areas, at Prospect Reservoir, in a way that does not risk essential water supply operations or water quality.
- **Delivering the programs to prevent pollution** captured under the Environmental Protection SIP which are helping to improve waterway health.

Success factors

- Enhanced coordination of waterway management activities.
- Effective relationships with government and stakeholders.
- Continued support and membership of collaborative catchment groups and coastal management programs committees.

- Sydney Water does not own or operate the swim sites, limiting our ability to open new sites independently.
- Difficulty identifying and fixing sources of pollution at some sites.
- Swimming potentially poses risks to essential water supply operations or drinking water quality.

