WAMC Engagement Charter

30 September 2024









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1 Summary of WAMC Engagement Charter

This charter sets out how the 3 WAMC agencies – the Water Group in the NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW), WaterNSW and the Natural Resources Access Regulator (NRAR) – engage with customers to inform WAMC pricing proposals submitted to IPART to maximise long-term customer benefit at an efficient cost.

This charter is not a 'standalone' document. It builds on the engagement commitments of the 3 agencies as outlined in their respective stakeholder engagement strategies. The charter does not duplicate these existing strategies and policies. Instead, it describes:

- how we work together to engage with customers
- how customers' preferences influence services delivered, given the unique statutory and regulatory functions of WAMC.

The WAMC pricing proposal is a standard level pricing proposal, and the charter aligns with IPART's expectations of a customer engagement strategy for a standard level pricing proposal, as mapped in the Appendix of this document.

The decision of WAMC to target a standard pricing proposal is important – it reflects the statutory and regulatory nature of WAMC activities. For that reason, it is statutes, rather than customers' preferences, that are the key drivers of WAMC's standards of service and other requirements.

The charter describes the role of customer engagement, and how customer perspectives influence the delivery of WAMC services, given the statutory and regulatory nature of WAMC activities. It should be considered the coordinating layer for pricing engagement. It sits alongside the ongoing engagement and policies of the department, WaterNSW and NRAR, who each engage regularly with customers, community and stakeholders on their respective water management responsibilities.

This charter should be considered a supplement to:

The department	Water stakeholder and community engagement policy
	Customer service charter
	Core objectives, principles and priorities for the <u>NSW Water Strategy</u>
WaterNSW	WaterNSW Pricing Proposal 2025 – 2030 – <u>Customer and Community</u> Engagement Strategy 2023 and 2024
	Customer service charter

NRAR

- Stakeholder engagement strategy
- Proactive outreach program
- NRAR Regulatory Policy
- Core strategic priorities

2 Background

2.1 What is WAMC?

The Water Administration Ministerial Corporation (WAMC) is responsible for planning and managing water resources in NSW on behalf of the NSW Government. WAMC's core responsibilities are to plan and manage the security, health and allocation of our water resources – valued at around \$42 billion¹ – across 26 valleys and a range of water users and the environment.

Three government agencies deliver these statutory and regulatory WAMC services: the Water Group in the NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (NSW DCCEEW), WaterNSW and the Natural Resources Access Regulator (NRAR). Each agency is responsible for key functions and services that support sustainable, secure and efficient water planning, management and compliance for NSW water customers, stakeholders and communities.

The 3 agencies work together to deliver WAMC's essential water management services and key functions under the *Water Management Act 2000* (the Act):

'(To) provide for the sustainable and integrated management of the water sources of the State for the benefit of both present and future generations'²

Figure 1 below gives a high-level overview of the WAMC agency responsibilities. A summary of the WAMC services delivered by each agency is listed in the Appendix section of this document.

¹ Marsden Jacob Associates, *NSW Water Valuation Consultancy, Final report,* June 2023 <u>NRAR Water valuation report</u>

² Water Management Act (2000) - Water Management Act 2000 No 92 - NSW Legislation



Figure 1: Overview of WAMC agency responsibilities

As WAMC is the provider of monopoly services, the agencies submit a pricing proposal for these water management and planning services regularly to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART), which is responsible for determining efficient pricing for monopoly services in NSW.

2.2 Who is a WAMC customer?

We consider WAMC customers to include both water access licence holders and NSW taxpayers, who also contribute to the costs of efficient water management.

The customer base for WAMC includes all those with a licence to extract or use water in NSW, which totals around 38,000 licence and approval holders.

It also includes everyone who uses, visits and values water in NSW, but does not hold a water access licence. Individuals, groups and agencies with an interest in water use and management, including environmental outcomes, also contribute to WAMC water management services through their taxes (NSW Government contribution through government share).

For the purposes of the WAMC pricing proposal, 'customers' are therefore defined as the:

- 38,000 water access licence and approval holders, including local water utilities, councils, farmers, mining and resources sector customers, stock and domestic users, environmental water holders, Aboriginal representatives and organisations
- 8.1 million NSW citizens who have an interest in the protection of NSW's water resources and contribute to the cost of WAMC water planning and management through taxes³.

³ Australian Bureau of Statistics, Snapshot of Australia, 2021 - <u>Snapshot of New South Wales | Australian Bureau of Statistics (abs.gov.au)</u>

3 WAMC agencies work together to engage on pricing for water management services

3.1 Purpose of WAMC pricing engagement – inform and consult to understand what matters to customers

The International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) Australasia's *Quality Assurance Standard* states that there are projects where elements cannot be influenced by stakeholders, and 'these are the "non-negotiables" and need to be clearly communicated to stakeholders' as part of overall engagement.

By their nature, WAMC services are 'non-negotiable' as they are statutory and regulatory services that the 3 WAMC agencies must deliver under the Act.

Reflecting this 'non-negotiable' assessment of most WAMC activities, the purposes of WAMC engagement on pricing are to 'inform' and 'consult', as also described by the International Association of Public Participation Australasia's *Quality Assurance Standard*⁴.

IPART's Handbook for Water Regulation states 'customer engagement is context-dependent for each business.'

We consider 'inform' and 'consult' approaches are the most appropriate, given WAMC's statutory and regulatory context.

The WAMC context has 3 specific features to be reflected in pricing engagement:

- 1. the 'non-negotiable' nature of the statutory and regulatory services the 3 WAMC agencies must deliver under the Act
- each of the WAMC agencies undertake extensive and ongoing engagement with customers and stakeholders to inform development of their activities, including to identify expectations of how the agency best delivers customer value while also meeting their statutory and regulatory requirements
- the commitment of the 3 WAMC agencies to work together to jointly engage customers on the pricing proposal and on major investment matters and use customer insights research to reduce customer confusion about the agencies' interlinked roles and responsibilities and avoid costly duplication.

Attachment C 6

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⁴ IAP2, IAP2 Quality Assurance Standard - IAP2 Australasia, 2015

This means, WAMC pricing engagement must achieve a balance between:

- looking back at the priorities and preferences we heard from customers, communities and stakeholders during the current determination period, as documented in consultation insights such as engagement outcomes reports and voice of customer research
- **looking forward** seeking feedback on proposed water management prices for the next determination period.

WAMC agencies consider the 'look back' and 'look forward' aspects of engagement as equally important. This analysis provides robust insights and mitigates the risk of engagement fatigue. This is a particular risk for customers who regularly engage on water management and planning, as they expect WAMC agencies to be efficient and effective in how we engage.

This 2-phase approach is summarised below.

Phase 1 Analysis of views about customer priorities and of how the agencies are delivering on their statutory and regulatory requirements, as heard in the current determination Look back period Analysis of past engagements over an extended period provides robust insights and is fed back to customers for their verification. This analysis builds a fuller understanding of customers' priorities for water management and planning over an extended period, including views on how the agencies are delivering on their statutory and regulatory requirements. This includes views expressed on WAMC services, activities, service level expectations and customer preferences, as documented through intel such as engagement outcomes reports on water management and planning, voice of customer research and other ongoing feedback mechanisms. Phase 2 Seeking customers' views on priorities and potential levels of annual price increases to determine any negotiables and non-negotiables Look forward Targeted engagement to seek views on priorities to be considered through WAMC outcomes, inform customers of the non-negotiables WAMC must deliver under the Water Management Act 2000, and to seek feedback on proposed

3.2 Our engagement principles on proposed water management prices align with engagement purposes

water management prices for the next determination period

The 5 engagement principles used during this process align with WAMC's purposes for undertaking engagement. They are also consistent with the individual engagement policies and strategies of the 3 WAMC agencies.

This ensures WAMC pricing engagement will be:

- purposeful
- respectful
- transparent
- inclusive
- timely.

The table below outlines how these 5 principles are applied in the development of the WAMC pricing proposal and how they align to the 2 WAMC pricing engagement purposes.

Customer engagement level (IAP2)	Engagement purposes	WAMC engagement principles	WAMC engagement commitments
Inform	Inform customers of the non-negotiable fundamentals the agencies must deliver under the Act and of the agencies' requirement to deliver WAMC responsibilities under the Act in the 2025–2030 pricing proposal	Purposeful Engagement activities will help customers and stakeholders to better understand NSW Government roles and responsibilities under the Water Management Act 2000, how customers pay for these services, and how the WAMC agencies are continuing to improve service delivery, protect water resources and be efficient in our delivery of water management and planning services. Communicate to customers that the level of WAMC services and activities are 'nonnegotiable'. This will help build customers' understanding and manage their expectations around the level of input they can have on service	WAMC agencies will work harder to build customer awareness of water management services they pay for – we have heard customers want to better understand the WAMC services that are partly funded through the WAMC water management charges.

Customer engagement level (IAP2)	Engagement purposes	WAMC engagement principles	WAMC engagement commitments
		delivery or service level investments.	
Consult	Understand views customers have already provided to us in the current determination period as part of 'business as usual', WAMC project- led engagement. Seek views and preferences on: • services • service improvements • preferred investment levels where there is flexibility, or where feedback could genuinely influence decisions • proposed costs for water management and planning services, including options to manage bill impacts for customers.	Respectful Engagement activities will acknowledge the needs, experience, perspective and expertise of participants. We will provide a safe environment for everyone to engage. Planning for engagement will begin with analysis of views and preferences previously communicated through project-led engagements. Transparent We will explain the engagement process, provide information to enable meaningful participation and set clear expectations with customers about the level of influence they have on the WAMC pricing proposal. WAMC outcomes will be informed by customer priorities heard through engagement, and we will be accountable for delivering those outcomes. Inclusive We will identify and enable the participation of	wamc will jointly monitor and share customer views about our delivery of NSW water management services and confidence in water management. Wamc will use this to inform the delivery of activities and the pricing proposal. Wamc will jointly undertake voice of customer, community and stakeholder research to avoid duplication and minimise costs. Wamc agencies, in their respective ongoing engagement, will continue to be respectful, transparent, inclusive and timely. Wamc commits to engage with customers on the pricing proposal and for major investments, and on the cost implications of policy changes for customers.

Customer engagement level (IAP2)	Engagement purposes	WAMC engagement principles	WAMC engagement commitments
		customers and stakeholders, including non-licensed community members, who are considered WAMC customers. Timely We will provide sufficient time for meaningful consultation, outline timeframes up front and conduct engagement activities in an efficient manner.	

3.3 WAMC pricing engagement commitments

3.3.1 WAMC will work harder to build customer awareness of the water management services customers pay for.

During our engagement on the 2025–2030 WAMC pricing proposal, customers told us they want to better understand the WAMC services that are partly funded through WAMC water management charges.

WAMC and the 3 WAMC agencies commit to better support customers' understanding, build customer awareness of the water management services they pay for, and be more transparent about the services licensed customers pay for.

We commit, where possible, to provide information on the cost of new policies and programs when we engage with customers about these initiatives.

In our joint communications and engagement on WAMC services we will:

- include clear statements that the prices paid by licence holders pay for some of the costs of these services
- include feedback questions (where relevant) to identify customer awareness levels of the water management services they partly pay for, e.g. 'Are you aware the prices paid by water access licence holders pay for some of the costs to develop water sharing plans?'

• where possible, provide information on the cost of new policies and programs when we engage with customers about these initiatives, noting that in the initial stages, the detail about costs may be indicative only and need to be refined throughout the engagement.

3.3.2 WAMC commits to engage with customers on the pricing proposal and on the cost implications of proposed major investments, new policies and programs.

WAMC has engaged with customers in the development of the 2024 WAMC pricing proposal for 2025–2030 and commits to engage with customers on future pricing proposals, for major investments and on the cost implications of new policies or programs.

Consistent with WAMC's pricing engagement purposes, we will use the IAP2 participation level of 'inform' and 'consult' to ensure customers' preferences influence the development of the proposal to the extent possible given WAMC's regulatory and statutory context. This is reflected in and documented in the WAMC Engagement Outcomes Report for IPART – 2025–2030 pricing proposal.

Through our engagement with customers on the 2024 WAMC pricing proposal for 2025–2030, we have also heard that customers want confidence that past engagement insights, and views previously expressed to us about WAMC activities throughout the determination period, have fed into the development of the next WAMC pricing proposal.

This is why the WAMC pricing engagement approach recognises and builds on the extensive and ongoing customer and stakeholder engagement undertaken by each of the WAMC agencies to inform the development of their activities. This includes identifying expectations of how the agency best delivers customer value while also meeting their statutory and regulatory requirements.

As described in the commitments below, WAMC agencies will renew our focus on engaging jointly and sharing information to better understand customers' preferences. This is critical to our WAMC pricing engagement effort of:

- looking back at the priorities and preferences we heard from customers, communities
 and stakeholders during the current determination period, as documented in consultation
 insights such as engagement outcomes reports, and other intel such as voice of customer
 research
- **looking forward** seeking feedback on proposed water management prices for the next determination period.

3.3.3 WAMC will jointly monitor and share customer views about our delivery of, and confidence in, NSW water management services and will use these insights to inform the delivery of activities and the pricing proposal.

We have heard through our engagement on the WAMC pricing proposal for 2025–2030 that customers expect the WAMC agencies to share and maintain quality data to inform water management decisions, including our information about customers. We will address these customer expectations to build confidence in water management and to inform the delivery of activities and pricing proposals by:

- being more efficient and joined-up in our tracking and sharing of customers' views, to give
 confidence in how we deliver water management services over any determination period.
 For example, the first NSW joint water sector program was implemented in early 2023 –
 and will be replicated every 2 years which will contribute to a more coordinated,
 efficient way of outcomes reporting and support agency-led engagement.
- improving the use of existing customer feedback tools to help us track customer views
 over time, and how we share this information between the 3 WAMC agencies. Existing
 tools include in-person and online post-event feedback surveys and Have Your Say
 feedback forms used on relevant draft water management strategies and plans, which we
 will target to include standardised questions/statements posed in the Voice of Customer
 survey.

For example:

Metric/service delivery area	Question/statement
Information and communication	The information provided was easy to understand.
Trust and confidence	I believe that the feedback I have given in the session today will be considered as part of the overall decision-making.
Engagement sentiment	I value having the opportunity to engage about water planning and management, and other water-related issues that affect me.

3.3.4 WAMC will jointly undertake voice of customer, community and stakeholder research to avoid duplication and minimise costs.

We have heard through our engagement with customers on the WAMC pricing proposal for 2025–2030 that customers expect us to engage jointly on pricing matters to avoid duplication and minimise costs.

We commit that together we will undertake a yearly or biyearly NSW water sector research program involving customers, community (non-licensed customers) and stakeholders to:

- gather both qualitative and quantitative insights on views and experiences of our water management services, including in relation to service improvements we are delivering within that regulatory period
- better understand expectations of NSW Government priorities for water management and planning
- understand broader community priorities for water management from non-licensed customers who partly pay for water management charges through their taxes (government share)
- identify broad priorities for water management to be further considered through more targeted engagement, including to inform development of WAMC outcomes to be delivered in the following regulatory period.

Key modules and metrics of the voice of customer project within the broader NSW water sector research program include a randomised licenced customer survey. This survey seeks feedback in relation to a range of water management services and service delivery issues which we recognise are important to customers at any given time. These include:

- information and communications
- trust and confidence
- · customer services
- engagement
- pricing for water management and planning.

3.3.5 WAMC agencies, in their respective ongoing engagement, will continue to be purposeful, respectful, transparent, inclusive and timely.

WAMC agencies, as part of ongoing engagement on their respective activities, will continue to use open approaches to consult with, inform, promote awareness and access the views and knowledge

of stakeholders and the community on water management, where detailed or technical knowledge is not a prerequisite for meaningful participation.

In relation to ongoing engagement for a specific WAMC activity, each agency will apply its organisation's engagement policy or strategy, namely:

The	Water stakeholder and community engagement policy
department	<u>Customer service charter</u>
	 Core objectives, principles and priorities for the <u>NSW Water Strategy</u>
WaterNSW	WaterNSW Pricing Proposal 2025–2030 – <u>Customer and Community Engagement</u> Strategy 2023 and 2024
	Customer service charter
	Corporate Strategic Plan
NRAR	Stakeholder Engagement Strategy
	Proactive outreach program
	NRAR Regulatory Policy
	Core strategic priorities

Common features of each agency's engagement policy or strategy include commitments to:

- report back on engagement outcomes, including explaining any decisions which were not made and why
- publish engagement timelines and proposed engagement activities on our websites and in agency e-newsletters (email updates), so it is clear to customers, communities and stakeholders how we will engage and how they can give feedback on water management and planning services
- communicate publicly and regularly through e-newsletters to ensure customers, community
 members and stakeholders have clear, accessible and transparent updates on water
 management and planning activities, policies, service improvements and opportunities to
 have their say. These e-newsletters are open to anyone to subscribe to
- apply the principles of plain language in our communications and engagement so that our information is accessible, regardless of the knowledge of water management and planning held by any participant.

4 Appendix

4.1 IPART's Water Regulation Handbook requirements for a standard-level pricing proposal customer engagement strategy

Where and how addressed Expectations for a 'standard'-level pricing proposal Develop The business has a published customer The charter has been published. Each customer WAMC agency also has an engagement engagement strategy which: engagement strategy available on each agency's sets out how it seeks to understand strategy website. what matters to customers and identifies the outcomes that Section 3.1 of the charter sets out how WAMC seeks to understand maximise long-term customer benefit at an efficient cost what matters to customers. considers the level of influence Section 3.3 of the charter sets out customers have in how services are the level of influence customers delivered have in relation to pricing and ongoing operations. identifies the role of customer **Sections 3.3.2 and 3.3.5** of the engagement in understanding customer preferences charter identifies the role of customer engagement in commits to engage with customers understanding customer on the pricing proposal and for preferences in relation to pricing major investments. and ongoing operations, The strategy should be well structured respectively. and easy for customers to follow, and Section 3.3.2 of the charter articulate clear roles and responsibilities commits to engage with customers of customers, regulator(s) and business. on the pricing proposal and for major investments.

4.2 Summary of WAMC responsibilities by agency

Activity	Summary of activity/service	Responsible agency
Surface water monitoring	The collection and provision of quantity, quality, algal and ecological information for monitoring, use, assessment and management of surface water	WaterNSW

Activity	Summary of activity/service	Responsible agency	
Groundwater monitoring	The collection and provision of water level, pressure, flow and quality information for monitoring, use, assessment and management of groundwater	WaterNSW	
Groundwater quantity monitoring	The provision of a groundwater level, pressure and flow monitoring system, including design, site calibration, data collection, entry, audit, quality assurance, archiving, and information provision, and the maintenance and operation of groundwater monitoring bores		
Groundwater quality monitoring	The provision of a groundwater quality monitoring program, including design, sample collection, laboratory testing and analysis, test result quality assurance to accepted standards, and test result encoding to make it available for data management and reporting		
Groundwater data management and reporting	The data management and reporting of groundwater quantity are information, including compilation, secure storage, management publishing of data to customers, stakeholders and the general p	t and	

Activity	Summary of activity/service	Responsible agency
Water take monitoring	The provision of metering services, the collection of water take data and its recording on water allocation accounts for unregulated and groundwater licence holders	WaterNSW
Water take data collection	The electronic and manual collection, transmission and initial recording of water take data from licence holders for unregulated and groundwater	

	sources, and operation and maintenance of government owned meter and telemetry facilities
Water take data management and reporting	The data management and reporting of water take for unregulated and groundwater sources, including compilation, secure storage, management and publishing of data to authorised parties

Activity	Summary of activity/service	Responsible agency
Water modelling and impact assessment	The development and use of water system models for water sharing and water management applications, resource impact and water balance assessments, and annual general purpose water resource accounts for NSW water sources	
Surface water modelling	The development, upgrade and application of surface water resource management models for use in water planning and to assess performance in terms of statutory requirements, interstate agreements, regional water supply optimisation and third-party impacts on NSW stakeholders	
Groundwater modelling	The development, upgrade and use of groundwater resource management models for water sharing and management applications, and for resource impact and balance assessments	
Water resource accounting	The development and update of water resource accounts and in NSW water sources for use by external stakeholders, and for integration planning, management and evaluation processes	

Activity	Summary of activity/service	Responsible agencies
Water management implementation	The preparation and implementation of the procedures and systems required to deliver the provisions of water sharing plans, and operational oversight to ensure plan compliance, the available water determinations and the assessment of compliance with long-term extraction limits	
Systems operation and water availability	The preparation and implementation of the procedures and systems required to deliver the provisions of water management plans, and operational oversight to ensure	The department

management	plan compliance, the available water determinations and the assessment of compliance with long term extraction limits	
Blue-green algae monitoring	The provision of an algal risk management system, including oversight, coordination and training, the issue of algal alerts and notifications and the development of algal risk management plans	WaterNSW
Environmental water management	The development and collaborative governance of environmental flow strategies and assessments, and the use of environmental water to achieve environmental outcomes	The department
Water plan performance assessment and evaluation	The assessment, audit and evaluation of the water management plans' appropriateness, efficiency and effectiveness in achieving economic, social and environmental objectives	The department

Activity	Summary of activity/service	Responsible agency
Water management planning	The development, review, amendment and extension or replacement of water management plans, regional planning and management strategies, and development of the water planning and regulatory framework	The department
Water plan development (coastal)	The development, review, amendment and extension or replacement of water management plans, and the consultation activities associated with developing these plans for coastal water sources	
Water plan development (inland)	The development, review, amendment and extension or replacement of water management plans, the development of additional planning instruments to comply with the Commonwealth <i>Water Act 2007</i> , and the consultation activities associated with developing these plans for inland water sources	
Floodplain management plan development	The development, review, amendment and extension or replacement of floodplain management plans, in collaboration with the Office of Environment and Heritage	
Drainage management plan development	The development, review, amendment and extension or replace drainage management plans, to address water quality problem with drainage systems	

Regional planning and management strategies	The development, evaluation and review of regional water strategies, metropolitan water plans and other planning instruments, including the associated stakeholder engagement
Development of water planning and regulatory framework	The development of the operational and regulatory requirements and rules for water access
Cross-border and national commitments	The development of interstate water sharing arrangements and the implementation of operational programs to meet national and interstate commitments

Activity	Summary of activity/service	Responsible agency
Water management works	The undertaking of water management works to reduce the impacts arising from water use or remediate water courses	The department

Activity	Summary of activity/service	Responsible agencies
Water regulation management	The development, operation and management of the administration of licences, approvals, their associated transactions and compliance management and enforcement	
Regulation systems management	The management, operation, development and maintenance of the register for access licences, approvals, trading and environmental water	WaterNSW
Consents management and licence conversion	Transcribing of water sharing provisions into licence conditions and the conversion of licences to the NSW Water Management Act 2000	WaterNSW
Compliance management	The on-ground and remote monitoring activities (including investigations and taking statutory actions) to ensure compliance with legislation, including licence and approval conditions Education and extension activities to enable and encourage people to actively comply with water legislation and	NRAR

Activity	Summary of activity/service	Responsible agencies
	approval conditions as both an effective and cost-efficient means of raising compliance rates	

Activity	Summary of activity/service	Responsible agencies
Water consent transactions	The technical requirements for, and administration of, water consent transactions	
	Transactions undertaken on a fee-for-service basis, including dealings, assessments, changes to conditions and new applications for water licences and approvals	WaterNSW The department

Activity	Summary of activity/service	Responsible agencies
Business and customer services	The customer, business and revenue collection services supporting the operation of the department	
Customer management	All customer liaison activities, including responding to calls to licensing and compliance information lines and producing communication and education materials such as website content and participation in customer forums	WaterNSW The department
Business governance and support	The business systems and processes that support organisation-wide activities, including asset management, annual reporting and pricing submissions to IPART	All
Billing management	The management of billing requirements and subcontracted billing, revenue collection and debtor management service delivery, and responding to queries on billing activities	WaterNSW