



1 Engaging with our Customers and Community

Central
Coast
Council

- Council's customer engagement focus is 'customer centric' and aims to fulfil its customer promise of delivering consistent, simple and effortless engagement. Council continually aspires to improve by ensuring it listens and responds to the needs of the community.
- Council uses customer feedback across multiple channels to improve its services.
- In 2020, Council added deliberative forums to its existing suite of engagement tools. These have been well received and delivered informative results, representative of the Central Coast community.
- Through analysis and consultation, Council has identified eight customer personas which depict Council's key audiences and inform service planning.
- Council conducted engagement to help shape this IPART pricing submission, including a structured residential survey, website survey via our online Your Voice Our Coast consultation hub and engagement that specifically targeted our business customers.
- More than 1,250 individual respondents have informed our understanding of community priorities for water and sewerage services.

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1 Customer and community engagement

1.1 Engaging with the community

Central Coast Council (Council) is committed to involving and collaborating with the community to ensure a balanced decision-making process. Council aims to further develop engagement processes by building on existing practices and undertaking the appropriate level of engagement at the right time, using a range of methods.

This ensures that engagement is consistent, simple and helps people both understand the issue and participate if they choose to.



Council, like other councils, faces challenges from multiple sources - a growing population, changing customer and community expectations and the impacts of ageing infrastructure. The Central Coast as a region has experienced compounding impacts of natural disasters; bushfires, floods and responding to the global public health emergency caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Our community engagement approach aims to:

- Listen to customers and understand their priorities
- Facilitate community interaction with Council and encourage valuable feedback
- Educate the community about Council's water, sewerage and stormwater drainage services
- Share the challenges that face the community

- Build trusted relationships with key stakeholders.

1.1.1 Council's customers, consumers, community and other stakeholders

Council understands and acknowledges that its customers are diverse. Both business and household customers use our water, sewerage and stormwater drainage services. Council also has customers utilising its trade-waste services. Some properties are owned, some tenanted and some customers reside in shared residential properties.

Council acknowledges that the decisions it makes impacts all its customers and as such, strives to build relationships with customers and stakeholders to deliver the most effective and appropriate drinking water, sewerage, and stormwater drainage services.

Two key documents drive the approach to engaging and communicating with our customers, consumers, community and other stakeholders and these have been developed to support Council's Community Strategic Plan, which identifies engagement, communications and customer experience as key to delivering under the 'Responsible' criteria:

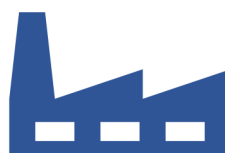
- **Customer Experience Strategy** to: 'Serve the community by providing great customer experience, value for money and quality services'
- **Engagement Framework** – to 'Communicate openly and honestly with the community to build a relationship based on transparency, understanding, trust and respect and to 'Engage with the community in meaningful dialogue and demonstrate how community participation is being used to inform decisions.

1.1.2 A profile of our customers and community

Council's customer base is large, diverse, ever growing and changing. With a current population of approximately 346,000 (ABS Statistics), Council needs to understand its existing customer base and interpret its future customer base in the wake of development.










Households
134,000 (97%) of
customers are residential



Business
5,000 (3%) of customers are
commercial or industrial

Council serves a diverse population:

-  **98% of properties receive water and wastewater services**
-  **2% of properties receive water services only**
-  **79% of residential customers live in a separate detached house**
-  **26% of the residential population is tenanted**
-  **1% annual growth in its customer base**
-  **22% of properties have rainwater tanks**
-  **50% of rainwater tanks are connected internally**

1.1.3 How we engage with our customers and community

Council's has a 'customer centric' approach for service delivery which includes engaging with its customers and community via the following channels:

- Council's bespoke platform, Your Voice Our Coast (YVOC), is an online hub for community that enables input into the projects and initiatives affecting residents in their local area and the wider region. The site provides tools for information sharing, facilitating focused conversations as well as data collection and analysis. This engagement platform centralises all the available information and provides a one stop shop for stakeholder interaction.
- Beyond the online hub Council also hosts a range of engagement activities that the community can participate in such as community drop-in sessions, surveys, online and face-to-face workshops, forums and interactive maps. Council provides project updates through e-newsletters and direct communication across traditional and digital platforms.
- A key feature of Council's Engagement Framework is the broad scope of engagement methods but also the importance of engaging our community and customers at the early planning stages. This importance process enables opportunities for customers to impart local knowledge back to Council and develop solutions in partnership. It is used on a range of projects and initiatives and is achieved via different methods including online surveys, face-to-face sessions, regular community updates, traditional media and social media platforms.
- A further key feature of our approach to engagement is at the educate level, this is where we invest in educating our community about the value of water through its Love Water website, an educational resource that engages all ages starting from early childhood. This information source is widely used by local schools.
- Customer satisfaction is undertaken annually through the Customer Experience survey, which enables Council to identify risks and opportunities, assists in decision making and strengthens community and customer relationships. A new Customer

Insights program will commence in 2021 providing deeper understanding of customer sentiment and pain points to inform our continuous improvement program.

1.1.4 Council's customer promise

Council aims to deliver a commitment of consistent, simple and easy interaction with customers and constantly strives to improve the way it listens and responds to the community. Customer service is the responsibility of everyone within Council and the Customer Charter is supported by the Customer Experience Strategy, placing customers at the centre of everything Council does.

The Customer Charter sets out the following commitments:

- **We are approachable**
 - It is easy to interact with us – we are friendly, helpful and treat everyone with respect.
- **We are responsive**
 - We respond quickly and provide updates along the way.
- **We are clear and consistent**
 - We provide customers with easy access to information across multiple channels.
- **We are collaborative and engaging**
 - We build customer relationships and seek our community's perspective.
- **We are safe and responsible**
 - When making decisions we consider community concerns and viewpoints.
- **We are invested**
 - We are working in the best interests of the community.

Delivering the commitments to the community made in the Customer Charter means Council:

- Answers calls to the Contact Centre within two minutes
- Responds to urgent issues within one business day
- Responds to non-urgent issues within five business days
- Responds to private social media messages within four hours
- Keeps customers and colleagues updated
- Records interactions in the Customer Information System (CX System)
- Tracks performance, identifies opportunities for improvement and celebrates success

Central Coast Council's Engagement Channels



Figure 1: Central Coast Council's Engagement Channels

1.1.5 Customer personas

Through analysis and consultation, Council has identified eight customer personas which depict Council's key audiences. Originally developed as part of Council's Digital Content Strategy and Customer Experience Strategy, these personas are applied broadly by Council to build empathy and understanding of customers' needs. They assist in making customer-centred decisions and in better understanding the customer experience.

Personas take our target demographics deeper and help us to know who our customers are but also how to talk to them. We develop valuable behavioural insights and opportunities to create and share relevant content that assists with behaviour change. The ongoing improvement of these personas will include incorporating Council survey data into more accurate profiles to help understand customer demography, values, priorities and motivations and will be used in our Customer Insights program. This initiative will bring Council more in line with industry leaders including South East Water. Council's current customer personas are profiled in **Appendix C**.

Further work in the persona and segmentation space is required to improve our knowledge of water resilience data. Our aim is to motivate customers to enhance their water efficiency behaviour.

1.1.6 Community engagement and education case studies

Council has engaged with the Central Coast community in various ways over the past three years through water-related promotional campaigns and education programs, attendance at events as well as the development of advisory committees and forums. These initiatives are outlined in the five below case studies.

Case Study 1 – Love Water

"Love water: Live to 150L" is Council's water conservation and resilience campaign. This campaign helps residents calculate their personal water consumption via an online tool and delivers water saving tips to assist them in achieving a water target of 150L per day. It is designed to inform and educate residents on their current water habits and consumption and motivate behavioural change.

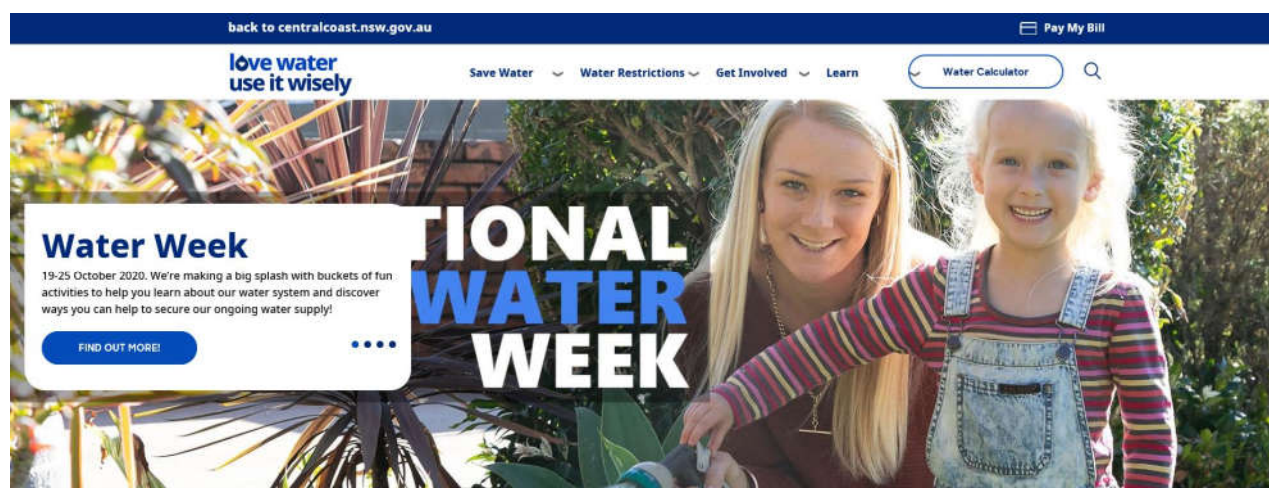


Figure 2: Love Water Webpage

Case Study 2 - Water Management Advisory Committee

In 2019, Council established an advisory committee to provide advice and feedback on the management of the Coast's water supply. The Water Management Advisory Committee is comprised of Councillors and community members chosen for their knowledge, skills, experience and passion for ensuring ongoing water security for the Coast, in line with social, economic and environmental considerations.

Bi-monthly committee meetings table issues including drought planning, the development of the Central Coast Water Security Plan, total catchment management and community education about the sustainable use of water.

This committee also promotes efficient planning and delivery of regional water supply resources within the integrated water cycle management framework. Meeting agendas and minutes are made available to the community via Council's website, following endorsement at a Council meeting.

Case Study 3 – Water Security Planning consultation – Deliberative forums

Between December 2020 and April 2021 Council sought community feedback on the Central Coast Water Security Plan – Council's plan to secure the Coast's water supply for future generations.

Council took a representative sample of the Central Coast community on a water planning journey, in the form of three deliberative forums spread over a five-month period.

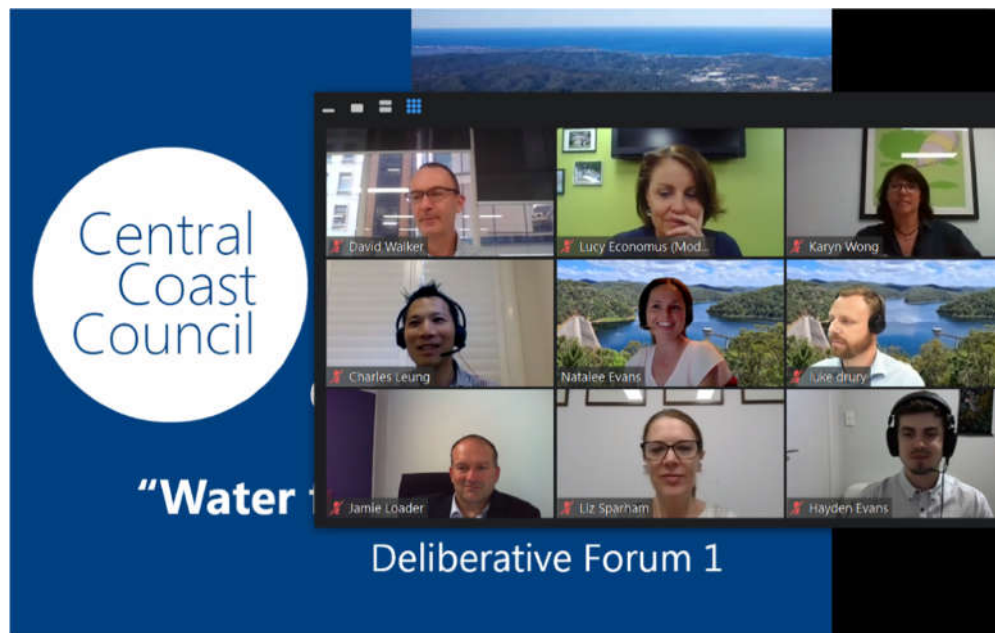


Figure 3: Council's First Deliberative Forum for the Water Security Plan.

Deliberative forums create a space for participants to discuss an issue or problem in a constructive manner. A naming and framing process prompts thoughtful consideration and discussion. Pinpointing a specific concern allows participants to weigh the pros and cons associated with practical solutions or action plans. Ideally, a consensus is reached on the 'best fit' or 'most agreeable' option.

Council used three deliberative forums to learn about participants' water values and educate them on the water supply and demand options we were considering. By the final forum, participants were empowered to determine their level of support for each of the five water portfolios Council had developed.

Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected from these forums through educational presentations, facilitated breakout groups, 'pub quizzes' and individual keypad voting. Video animations were also used to help illustrate key messages.



Figure 4: Community Consultation for the Water Security Plan



Figure 5: Community Engagement Animation about Council's Water Supply and Demand Options

As feedback from the three deliberative forums is representative of the Central Coast population, Council will combine it with ongoing investigations, modelling and analysis, to inform the development of the draft Water Security Plan.

Case Study 4 – Water Education

Council delivers a range of formal and informal water education programs for the community. Formal education includes early childhood, primary school and high school programs and informal programs include those tailored to small business, community and internal staff groups.

Council's programs are structured to address environmental needs to minimise and reduce water usage, alleviate stress on our water supply system and maintain environmental water flows. Programs also address community needs of long-term water security, a safe and secure supply of water, cost saving, self-sufficiency and ensure the public is informed, empowered and inspired to be water wise.

Council's primary and high school programs align with the NSW syllabus and include comprehensive materials and activities created in the context of the Central Coast water system. Council is currently engaging with 69 primary schools and 32 high schools. Since August 2019, four schools with 300 students have attended the Mardi Dam and Treatment Facility, participating in a 90-minute behind the scenes tour showing the process of producing clean drinking water for the Central Coast community. In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, this tour has also been made available in a virtual format.

Council's community program includes attendance at community events including Australia Day, Budgewoi Lakes Festival and Council meetings, where the community is engaged on water saving through participation in a water calculator exercise and giveaways of promotional material.

Council also developed and distributed 200 Smart WaterMark Hospitality Packs to Central Coast tourist accommodation facilities.



Figure 6: Community Engagement Stall at Budgewoi Lakes Festival

Designed to engage tourists in good water saving practices, packs included shower hangers, door hangers, information cards, and shower timers with key messaging, "Long swims, short showers – thanks for helping our water supply last longer."

Case Study 5 – National Water Week

Council actively promotes National Water Week as part of its formal education program. In 2019 in the theme of, 'It's time to change the world,' Council engaged with over 400 local children in libraries and childcare centres via an interactive story time hosted by 'Whizzy the Water Drop'. One happy participant gave the following review:

"The resource pack was the BEST! We have been reading the books with the children (the raindrop one is so sweet.) And the colouring and timers were a hit. Can't thank you enough for helping get this first topic off and running here".

The theme for National Water Week in 2020 was 'Reimagining our Water Future.' A newly devised character called Dr Hydro debuted at all Council's Education and Care Centres, performing a water cycle magic show (including a giant interactive water cycle storyboard). 225 children laughed with Dr. Hydro and learned about becoming water conscious citizens. The Dr. Hydro show is also available as an online video along with animations and story time readings of 'Story of a Raindrop' and 'Before the Glass' with special guest Whizzy at: lovewater.centralcoast.nsw.gov.au/education/early-childhood



Figure 7: Dr. Hydro's Water Cycle Magic Show

Highlights of 2020 National Water Week included the 'Working with Water' game, where gamers battle fire, flood, drought and equipment failures to supply water to more than 335,000 thirsty residents.



Figure 8: National Water Week 'Working with Water' game

2020 National Water Week activities also included a range of webinars, online tours, games, videos and water saving tips via the 'Love Water' website. Council also provided water saving resources and activities including a plant finder for gardeners, a DIY maintenance guide for residents with water tanks, a calculator to estimate personal household water use and hosted virtual tours of dams and water treatment plants. Kids' activities and resources included online water stories, animations and videos. Activities included a water audit program to help cost saving.

2. Perceptions of our overall performance

Council has engaged with its community in a number of ways over the past two years, with the following surveys and consultations considered when developing the proposals for this submission:

1. IPART Submission Engagement Survey – April 2021
2. IPART Submission Deliberate Engagement on Future Service Options – July 2021
3. WSAA National Customer Perceptions Survey
4. IPART Water Utility Customer Satisfaction Survey
5. Annual Customer Experience Survey
6. Community Consultation on Water Security Plan

2.1 IPART engagement 1 – Survey - Community feedback for IPART submission – April 2021

In early 2021, Council utilised specialist engagement consultants Woolcott Research & Engagement to conduct specific engagement with the community on the upcoming IPART pricing submission.

This project involved four distinct components:

- A structured survey with 510 Council residents
- An opt-in online survey open to Council residents through the Council's Your Voice Our Coast (YVOC) website that resulted in n=620 respondents
- A phone survey of small to medium (SME) sized business decision makers (with n=120 respondents)
- Two qualitative group discussions amongst residents aged 18+ (conducted via Zoom)

The main objectives for the IPART project were to ascertain the following (a copy of the full report findings can be found in **Appendix A**):

- Determine satisfaction with current operations
- Identify customer preferences for future water and sewerage projects and services
- Gauge support for Council determining their drainage charge and issuing this charge through general rates
- Measure support for all Council residents contributing to the funding of drainage infrastructure

- Ascertain support levels for 'scarcity pricing' (altering water usage prices during times of drought - note will not be introduced for the 2022-26 determination period)
- Ascertain support levels for 'price alignment' (introducing a common price for sewer services for all Council residents, and businesses)

The surveys were designed to identify improvement preferences from participants – both unprompted and prompted.

For the unprompted improvement preferences, survey respondents were asked to suggest up to three different things that they want Council to focus on and improve and it was found respondents were most likely to suggest that improvements should be directed towards lowering the price of water/keeping pricing at a reasonable level, as well as improving the quality of drinking water. While respondents from the structured residential survey and the SME survey suggested preferences in that order (with the cost aspect being mentioned slightly more than the water quality aspect), the reverse order emerged from the Residential – Council YVOC survey.

The set of the next most commonly mentioned improvement areas included maintaining pipes/sewer lines, providing a more efficient service, and better drainage/guttering for streets (from the Residential – Structured survey). These areas also emerged as priorities in the Residential – Council YVOC survey, though protecting the environment/conserving water and using recycled water also emerged at similar levels, while the SME survey respondents were the most likely to suggest that nothing different was required.

Following on from unprompted improvements, the survey respondents were provided with a list of five potential areas for future focus and were asked to identify their top preference for Council to focus on and improve. Respondents were also offered the opportunity of including their own priority area if they felt that none of the options offered were the top priority to focus attention on.

Respondents were most likely to suggest that improvements should be directed towards improving the quality of drinking water. The aspects with the second highest preference level tended to be reducing water main breaks and reducing sewer main breaks.

The overall findings of the research showed that apart from lowering the price of water (as emerged unprompted) water quality improvement was seen to be a key area that the community would like Council to focus attention on in the future. The research found that while not all are experiencing poor quality drinking water, many who didn't have an issue still sympathised with those experiencing quality issues.

While sewerage overflows to personal properties did not appear to be a significant issue for the survey respondents, overflows into the community seemed to be a higher concern, and as such this should be another priority area for future focus.

The concepts/potential changes that gained majority support were:

- All Central Coast residents (and businesses) contributing to the funding of drainage infrastructure
- The discontinuation of location-based sewer services pricing.

However, Council recognises the following ideas for change were not received as positively by the community and may require educational initiatives to communicate any benefits that these changes would bring to customers before they can gain wider support:

- Stormwater Drainage pricing being set by Council as part of general rates
- Scarcity pricing (increasing the price of water during times of drought).

2.2 IPART engagement 2 – Deliberate engagement on future service options – July 2021

In developing the 2022 IPART pricing submission, Council was interested in collecting views on price increases specific to meeting regulatory and environmental obligations and its ability to maintain its assets.

With the help of engagement consultants Woolcott Research & Engagement, two deliberative engagement forums were run in July 2021 with approximately 80 participants. A copy of the full report can be found in **Appendix B**.

The overriding aim of this engagement was to explore preferences for future service delivery amongst Central Coast residents regarding costed water, sewerage and stormwater drainage options for the Central Coast.

More specifically, the objectives were to:

- Explore water quality issues within the household;
- Explore sewerage service issues (sewerage overflows) both within the home and the wider community
- Obtain feedback in relation to a series of costed water supply service options
- Obtain feedback in relation to a series of costed sewerage service options

- Obtain feedback in relation to a series of costed stormwater drainage service options; and
- Determine preferences for each service option (once all costed options had been revealed).

For each service area topic, participants were provided three options:

1. **Option A** – No change to services and maintain existing pricing with a minimal increase, however, Council will only be able to respond to risk-based issues and will not meet its regulatory obligations.
2. **Option B** – Increase bills slightly to assist Council maintaining its assets with better environmental outcomes. This will decrease the risk to our community, assets and the environment.
3. **Option C** – Some topics also included a third option, Option C, that involved a more significant improvement to service levels for a higher additional cost.

Research findings - Water service options

Participants were asked to consider costed options for improvements to:

- Water quality and reliability
- Environmental safety and management
- Water conservation and engagement

Most participants appeared to be in favour of improving water services slightly (Option B), however there was some higher support (40%) for water quality and reliability being improved significantly (Option C).

Research findings - Sewerage service options

Participants were asked to consider costed options for improvements to:

- Sewerage overflows
- Treatment Plants and outfalls

Participants indicated that sewerage overflows were a significant issue and tended to express a preference for Option C. For treatment plants and outfall improvements, participants felt that the environmental implications of not doing the correct thing were seen to be significant and most expressed a clear preference for Option B. Overall, most participants were in favour of improving sewerage services across the region, even with the additional expense it would incur.

Research findings – Stormwater drainage options

Participants were asked to consider costed options for improvements to:

- Critical stormwater drainage asset inspections, cleaning and repairs
- Stormwater quality and urban channels
- Flood planning

Overall, flooding was a known issue to most participants, and it followed that they were interested in flood prevention measures. For critical stormwater drainage asset inspections, cleaning and repairs, participants indicated a clear preference for Option B. In terms of stormwater quality and urban channels, 72% indicated a preference for Option B, and for flood planning around 80% indicated a preference for either Option B or C.

Conclusions

The research findings show a large majority of all participants were supportive of the service options that would lead to improvements in their water quality, sewerage services, as well as in drainage/flood mitigation measures. In fact, the support level for the 'no change' options only varied between 5% (for water quality and reliability) and 28% (for stormwater quality and urban channels) as detailed in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Community forum result. The number in the columns represent votes for each scenario

	Option A	Option B	Option C
Water quality and reliability	5	54	40
Environmental and safety management	9	91	Not offered
Water conservation and engagement	21	79	Not offered
Sewerage overflows	10	35	54
TPs and outfalls	12	88	Not offered
Critical Stormwater Drainage Asset Inspections, Cleaning and Repairs	10	90	Not offered
Stormwater quality and urban channels	28	72	Not offered
Flood planning	22	39	40
TOTAL	117	548	134

The results show that overall there is a clear propensity for residents to accept an increase in costs in order to improve services to them and others in the community.

While there was acceptance of the need for improvements in services to be made, Council acknowledges that in many instances it was reluctant acceptance. Participants generally were previously unaware of the extent to which services had degraded, and there was genuine surprise expressed in relation to Council not being able to meet quality standards in some of the service areas. However, once the issues were revealed to them most could identify with the issues being presented – as they were likely to have had direct or indirect experiences with water quality, sewerage overflows, or flooding issues.

2.3 Water Services Association of Australia National Customer Perceptions Study

Council also engaged with its customers using the Water Services Association of Australia (WSAA) National Customer Perceptions Survey in 2019. This was Council's first time participating in this survey, spanning Australian and New Zealand water utilities. The findings from this survey will benchmark Council's move towards continuous improvements in its service delivery.

The survey sampled 9,795 customers on behalf of 35 Australian and New Zealand water utilities with results helping to establish a baseline for improving customer satisfaction across survey metrics.

The WSAA survey focused on four key metrics from a sample size of more than 400 local Central Coast residents. Metrics were measured on a scale where '0' equated to strongly disagree and '10' to strongly agree.

Council's rankings for the four-key metrics were as follows:

- Value for money ranked 5.7
- Community reputation ranked 5.7
- Overall satisfaction ranked 6.2
- Trust ranked 5.7

Key findings from this study include:

- 66% of the community indicated they receive the right amount of information from Council.
- The community displayed a high awareness of the organisation responsible for supply of water and sewerage services for the Central Coast.
- Respondents reported a satisfaction average of 7.2 with the quality of water supplied to their home.

- Respondents reported an agreement average of 6.8 that their water utility provided a reliable service and an agreement average of 5.7 that we listen and respond to their needs.

Compared to other water utilities, our customers rated Council lower than average across the four metrics. Results have helped us identify aspects of our services that require attention to better meet customer expectations.

2.4 IPART water utility customer satisfaction survey

Council was included in the IPART water utility customer satisfaction survey, developed by the Victorian Essential Services Commission (ESC), in 2020-21. This survey acts as an indicator of a water utility's customer service and ranks satisfaction of NSW water utilities against similar water utilities in Victoria. Other NSW based water utilities included in the survey were Hunter Water and Sydney Water. In this survey, Central Coast Council and Hunter Water were compared against Barwon Water in Victoria in terms of customer base and functions. Council did not perform as well as Hunter Water or Barwon Water, and its results have generally declined since the August 2020 survey. The analysis noted that more data collected in future surveys will provide greater clarity about customer perception of Council. See Table 2 for data from the 2020-2021 IPART survey.

Table 2: Extract from IPART Water Utility 2020 Customer Satisfaction Survey Results

Customer satisfaction indicator	Hunter Water	Central Coast Council	Barwon Water
	(Average over last year)	(Average over three surveys in 2020-21)	(Average over last year)
How would you rate your water / waste water provider on delivering value for money?	6.2	5.8	6.7
How would you rate your trust for your water / waste water provider?	6.8	6.0	7.1
How would you rate your water / waste water provider's reputation in the community?	6.8	5.6	7.2
How would you rate your satisfaction with your water / waste water provider as a service provider overall?	6.9	6.1	7.3

Note: Hunter Water and Barwon Water's results are the average of results obtained from surveys undertaken in June 2020, August 2020, November 2020 and February 2021. Central Coast Council's results are the average of results from surveys undertaken in August 2020, November 2020 and February 2021.

2.5 Annual customer experience survey

Council's annual Customer Experience survey enables Council to identify risks and opportunities, assist in decision making and strengthen our community and customer relationships.

The aim of the 2020 Customer Experience survey was to:

- Identify the community's overall level of satisfaction with Council performance
- Examine community perceptions of Council
- Determine satisfaction levels with current services and facilities within the community
- Identify methods of communication and engagement with Council

Customer experience data was collected through a telephone survey to 606 households and respondents were asked to rate their perceptions on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is low and 5 is high. In terms of importance, 85% of respondents rated water and sewer service as a 5 (high importance). The mean rating for water and sewer services importance was 4.74. This rating is higher than the mean 2019 rating (4.59) and higher than the regional local government area benchmark (4.27).

2.6 Community consultation on Water Security Plan

As introduced in Case Study 3, between December 2020 and April 2021 Council sought community feedback on the Water Security Plan. A sample representative of the Central Coast community was chosen to learn about their water values and educate them on Council's water supply and demand options. Five portfolios, or groups of options, were presented to the sample group and their preferences were recorded.

Three phases of community consultation consisting of deliberative forums and in-depth phone interviews, were conducted in December 2020 and February and April 2021. During the second and third phases of community consultation, Council also ran two online opt-in surveys (available to anyone), from 8 February to 21 March 2021, and from 19 April to 2 May 2021.

The Central Coast Water Security Plan will be published for final community feedback in late 2021. All feedback received from the community will be considered alongside other ongoing investigations, modelling and analysis and assist in decision making regarding future water supply investment.

After public exhibition, the plan will be finalised and provided to the NSW Department of Industry and Environment for approval.

2.7 Council's response to community feedback

Council's community engagement portfolio developed for the IPART submission identified key areas the community wants Council to focus on:

- Water quality and its reliability
- The environment
- A reduction in sewer overflows
- Maintenance of our water and sewer pipe network
- Being prompt in our response to incidents
- Keeping prices to a low and affordable level

Council's aim for its water, sewer and stormwater drainage businesses is to:

- Meet its regulatory responsibilities in relation to the environment and the quality of water provided
- Provide reliable services in relation to the reliability of water and its pressure
- Minimise sewer overflows that impact our community associated with weather events
- Minimise flooding associated with weather events
- Ensure Asset performance
- Protect our infrastructure
- Provide a safe environment for our community and staff
- Be efficient and prudent in relation to costs associated with the provision of our services

This customer feedback was considered when developing Council's capital and operational expenditure proposals for this submission (refer Technical Papers 4 and 5). Customer feedback has also informed Council proposed service levels for this submission (see Technical Paper 2).

Abbreviations

CCCWSP	Central Coast Council Water Security Plan
IPART	Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal
WSAA	Water Services Association Australia
YVOC	Your Voice Our Coast

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COMMUNITY FEEDBACK FOR IPART SUBMISSION

Research report prepared for

Central Coast Council

April 2021



Woolcott Research & Engagement is an Australian privately owned research and engagement agency that provide professional, independent and timely market research and engagement services. Our professional staff arrange, undertake and publish commissioned research and community engagement projects for industry, corporations, governments, integration agencies and individuals.

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1. Executive Summary

1.1 Background and objectives

The NSW Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) sets the maximum prices for the water, sewerage and stormwater services provided by Central Coast Council. The next pricing submission is due for lodgement with IPART in September 2021 and will determine Council's prices for those services from 1 July 2022.

The key objective of this study was to obtain representative community feedback on areas of the Central Coast Council submission to IPART.

1.2 Research methodology

This project involved four distinct components:

- A structured (representative) survey amongst n=510 Central Coast Council residents aged 18+ (labelled Residential – Structured);
- An opt-in online survey open to Central Coast Council residents through the Council's Your Voice Our Coast (YVOC) website that resulted in n=620 respondents (labelled Residential – Council YVOC);
- A phone survey of small to medium (SME) sized business decision makers with n=120 respondents (labelled SME); and,
- Two qualitative group discussions amongst residents aged 18+ (which were conducted via Zoom).

1.3 Research findings

Future priorities for water & sewerage services

Apart from lowering the price of water (as emerged unprompted) water quality improvement was seen to be a key area that the community would like Central Coast Council to focus attention on in the future.

- At the unprompted level quality improvement was mentioned by 34% of the Residential – Structured respondents, 42% of the Residential – Council YVOC respondents, and 22% of the SME respondents; and
- At the prompted level quality improvement was selected as the key priority area by 50% of the Residential – Structured respondents, 43% of the Residential – Council YVOC respondents, and 44% of the SME respondents.

The qualitative exploration also showed that while not all are experiencing poor quality drinking water, many who didn't have an issue still sympathized with those experiencing quality issues – something potentially driven or exacerbated by word-of-mouth and social media.

Performance

Central Coast Council is clearly performing well for all prompted measures.

Satisfaction was highest for ‘reliability of water supply’:

- 80% of the Residential – Structured respondents rating it 4 or 5 out of 5, while 81% of the Residential – Council YVOC respondents, and 97% of the SME respondents did likewise;
- Only 4% of the Residential – Structured respondents expressed dissatisfaction for reliability (by providing a rating of 1 or 2 out of 5), while 6% of the Residential – Council YVOC respondents, and none of the SME respondents expressed dissatisfaction in this area.

Dissatisfaction was highest (though still relatively low in overall terms) for ‘water quality’:

- 60% of the Residential – Structured respondents rating it 4 or 5 out of 5, while 57% of the Residential – Council YVOC respondents, and 64% of the SME respondents did likewise;
- 16% of the Residential – Structured respondents expressed dissatisfaction for water quality, while 23% of the Residential – Council YVOC respondents, and 10% of the SME respondents expressed dissatisfaction in this area.

Sewerage overflows to personal properties did not appear to be a major issue for the survey respondents.

- 6% of the Residential – Structured respondents had experienced such an incident, while 7% of the Residential – Council YVOC respondents, and 6% of the SME respondents also indicated that they had.

However, a larger proportion claimed to be impacted by overflows into the community.

- 24% of the Residential – Structured respondents claimed that they/their household had been impacted by this, while 30% of the Residential – Council YVOC respondents, and 20% of the SME respondents also indicated that they had been impacted;
- 43% of the Residential – Structured respondents expressed concern about flows into the environment, while 55% of the Residential – Council YVOC respondents, and 50% of the SME respondents also indicated that they were concerned (by rating this with a 4 or 5 out of 5).

From the qualitative exploration, it was evident that when overflows do occur in community spaces they appear to have high visibility – particularly in and around beach areas which are of significant concern to residents.

Drainage

There was not a clear level of support for the idea of drainage pricing being set by Council as part of general rates.

- 26% of the Residential – Structured respondents showed support, and 31% were opposed;
- 17% of the Residential – Council YVOC respondents showed support, and the majority (55%) were opposed;

- 33% of the SME respondents showed support, and 25% were opposed.

The qualitative exploration of this issue revealed that the sentiment expressed by the community on this matter is likely to have been influenced by the current economic position of Council.

However, there was majority support for the idea of all Central Coast residents contributing to the funding of drainage infrastructure:

- 57% of the Residential – Structured respondents showed support, and 15% were opposed;
- 63% of the Residential – Council YVOC respondents showed support, and 18% were opposed;
- 55% of the SME respondents showed support, and 15% were opposed.

The qualitative exploration of this issue showed that the idea of being treated equally and as one region (not divided) was seen to be a strong reason for change.

There was not a large amount of support for all business properties receiving the same drainage charge:

- 21% of the SME respondents supported this, while
- 40% were opposed to the idea.

Scarcity pricing

There were mixed reactions to the scarcity pricing concept (introduced as increasing the price of water during times of drought):

- 38% of the Residential – Structured respondents showed support, and 36% were opposed;
- 32% of the Residential – Council YVOC respondents showed support, and the majority (56%) were opposed;
- 42% of the SME respondents showed support, and 37% were opposed.

One potential barrier to acceptance to emerge from the qualitative exploration was the potential impact this price structure could have on vulnerable customers. So if this were to be introduced with safeguards in place for these customer groups, this would need to be clearly communicated to the community.

Price alignment

There was majority support for the discontinuation of location based sewer services pricing – with the idea of creating an average of the two price levels resonating with most:

- When the initial concept was revealed it was supported by 58% of the Residential – Structured respondents, 61% of the Residential – Council YVOC respondents, and 63% of the SME respondents; and,
- When the full pricing implications were revealed it was supported by 59% of the Residential – Structured respondents, 66% of the Residential – Council YVOC respondents, and 66% of the SME respondents.

While there was a lower level of support amongst residents in the former Wyong Council area (who are likely to have to pay slightly more than they are currently), the support level was still relatively high amongst that sub-group.

Again, the idea of treating all residents equally came through in the qualitative exploration of this.

1.4 Conclusions

While water quality was not an issue for many, it was clear that the community would like water quality addressed for those who currently experience 'dirty water' events.

Similarly, while sewerage overflows to personal properties did not appear to be a significant issue for the survey respondents, overflows into the community seemed to be a higher concern, and as such this should be another priority area for future focus.

The concepts/potential changes that gained majority support, and therefore should be taken further were:

- All Central Coast residents (and businesses) contributing to the funding of drainage infrastructure; and
- The discontinuation of location based sewer services pricing.

However, the following ideas for change were not received as positively by the community and may require educational initiatives to communicate any benefits that these changes would bring to customers before they can gain wider support:

- Draining pricing being set by Council as part of general rates;
- All business properties receiving the same drainage charge; and
- Scarcity pricing (increasing the price of water during times of drought).

2. Background and Objectives

2.1 Background

The Central Coast has the third largest urban water supply system in New South Wales, after Sydney and the Hunter region. The area has three dams, three weirs, three water treatment plants, over 50 reservoirs and more than 2,200 kilometres of pipelines. Water is also transported into the system by the Hunter Connection, a two-way pipeline that provides additional water for operational reasons, or during drought, for both the Central Coast and the Hunter.

The NSW Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) sets the maximum prices for the water, sewerage and stormwater services provided by Central Coast Council.

The next pricing submission is due for lodgment with IPART in September 2021 and will determine Council's prices for those services from 1 July 2022.

2.2 Objectives

Central Coast Council was seeking to engage with the community to seek feedback on areas of their submission to IPART.

The main objectives for the IPART project were therefore to:

- Determine satisfaction with current operations
- Identify customer preferences for future water and sewerage projects and services
- Gauge support for Council determining their drainage charge and issuing this charge through general rates
- Measure support for all Council residents contributing to the funding of drainage infrastructure
- Ascertaining support levels for 'scarcity pricing' (altering water usage prices during times of drought)
- Ascertaining support levels for 'price alignment' (introducing a common price for sewer services for all Council residents, and businesses)

3. Research Design

3.1 Methodology and profile of participants

This project involved four distinct components:

- A structured (representative) survey amongst n=510 Central Coast Council residents aged 18+;
- An opt-in online survey open to Central Coast Council residents through the Council's Your Voice Our Coast (YVOC) website that resulted in n=620 respondents;
- A phone survey of small to medium (SME) sized business decision makers (with n=120 respondents); and
- Two qualitative group discussions amongst residents aged 18+ (conducted via Zoom).

The Residential – Structured Survey

The aim of this survey was to conduct n=500 interviews with Central Coast Council residents aged 18+ – structured to be representative of the Central Coast Council population (with quota targets set by former LGA areas, gender, and age). This sample size provides a standard sampling error rate of plus or minus 5% at the 95% confidence interval.

Note that the establishment of quotas by former Council areas was conducted due to the need to present different pricing information to respondents depending on their location (as all residents are not currently subject to the same price structures).

The target quotas provided a solid base of respondents within each age and gender category before any post-weighting of results was applied (to the latest available ABS population statistics for the Central Coast LGA).

The residential target quotas recommended for the former Gosford City area were as follows:

Table 1: Age and gender target quotas and sample achieved for the former Gosford Council area

	Proportion of Population aged 18+ years	Target Quota Range out of n=256	Actual Sample Achieved (unweighted)
GENDER			
Male	48%	n=115-145	n=95
Female	52%	n=115-145	n=144
AGE			
18 to 34 years	23%	n=45-70	n=68
35 to 49 years	24%	n=45-70	n=66
50 to 69 years	34%	n=80-105	n=64
70 years or more	19%	n=40-60	n=41

The residential target quotas recommended for the former Wyong Council area were as follows:

Table 2: Age and gender target quotas and sample achieved for the former Wyong Council area

	Proportion of Population aged 18+ years	Target Quota Range out of n=256	Actual Sample Achieved (unweighted)
GENDER			
Male	49%	n=115-145	n=96
Female	51%	n=115-145	n=175
AGE			
18 to 34 years	24%	n=45-70	n=98
35 to 49 years	24%	n=45-70	n=67
50 to 69 years	33%	n=80-105	n=75
70 years or more	19%	n=40-60	n=31

Fieldwork for this survey was carried out between 2 and 28 March 2021.

While the initial intent was to conduct a roughly equal proportion of interviews via telephone and online, due to the amount of information that needed to be provided to respondents to allow them to make an informed response to the questions being posed of them, it was decided that an online approach was preferable for this investigation.

As such, while a mixed mode approach was still adopted, the majority of interviews (n= 452 of the 510 carried out) were conducted online where respondents could read the information and view the pricing aspects at their own pace.

Online respondents were sourced from an online panel provider. Screening questions were applied to ensure that the respondents were residents of the area (see questionnaire in Appendix B).

The telephone interviews were conducted from electronic listings of publicly available landline and mobile phone numbers. The sample of potential contacts extracted was specific to the geographic area of the Central Coast Council. It was then randomised, and subject to the same screening criteria as the potential online respondents.

As has been indicated, while target quotas were set to provide a solid base of respondents in each age / gender category, some post-weighting was used to make minor corrections to the composition of the sample to ensure it was representative of the population. The resultant age and gender profile of these Residential – Structured respondents is detailed below.

Table 3: Gender and Age (Residential - Structured)

	Total (n=510) %	Former Wyong Council Area (n=271) %	Former Gosford Council Area (n=239) %
GENDER			
Male	49	49	49
Female	51	51	51
AGE			
18 to 24 years	8	10	7
25 to 34 years	16	15	16
35 to 49 years	24	24	24
50 to 59 years	14	14	14
60 to 69 years	19	19	19
70 to 84 years	16	16	17
85 years or more	3	3	2

S1. Are you... SR.

S2. Which of the following age groups best describes you? SR.

BASE: All respondents (n=510)

The Residential – Council YVOC Survey

An online version of the questionnaire designed for the Residential – Structured study was also made available on the Council’s Your Voice Our Coast website. Respondents are therefore self-selected, and as the survey was open to all residents, there were no quotas or targets set in any way – meaning that the outcomes are not necessarily representative of the wider population.

There were a total of n=620 respondents to the survey.

The survey was promoted via:

- the ‘Your voice – Our Coast’ website
- media releases
- ‘Coast Connect’ articles
- print advertising
- radio
- electronic direct mails (EDM’s)
- online discussion groups
- internal communications

- letters

A more detailed report outlining the promotional channels in more detail can be found in Appendix C.

All fieldwork for this survey was carried out between 1 and 28 March 2021.

The resultant age and gender profile of these Residential – Structured respondents is detailed below. As can be seen in Table 4, the respondents to the Residential – Council YVOC survey have a much older age skew than is the case for the Residential – Structured survey.

Table 4: Gender and Age (Residential – Council YVOC)

	Total (n=620) %	Former Wyong Council Area (n=269) %	Former Gosford Council Area (n=333) %
GENDER			
Male	50	54	47
Female	47	44	50
Other/Prefer not to indicate	3	3	3
AGE			
18 to 24 years	-	-	-
25 to 34 years	3	1	4
35 to 49 years	18	15	20
50 to 59 years	20	22	18
60 to 69 years	32	33	32
70 to 84 years	25	26	25
85 years or more	1	1	1

S1. Are you... SR.

S2. Which of the following age groups best describes you? SR.

BASE: All respondents (n=620)

The Small to Medium Enterprise (SME) Survey

The questionnaire designed for the Residential – Structured survey was also adapted for application amongst small to medium sized business decision makers within the bounds of the Central Coast Council area. In total n=120 of these interviews were conducted.

All interviews were carried out via telephone (CATI) using publicly available business numbers from an electronic equivalent of the Yellow Pages. Fieldwork was carried out between 30 March and 8 April 2021.

The questionnaire used for this audience has been included in Appendix B.

The Qualitative Group Discussions

While the quantitative surveys detailed above provide a robust measure of resident (and business) sentiment in relation to the issues posed of them, it was decided that a small-scale qualitative exercise should be carried out to supplement that quantitative studies. The outcomes of this qualitative exploration were therefore intended to provide feedback with a more in-depth focus in order to uncover some of the reasoning behind popularly held views on each given issue.

We conducted two (2) group discussions (via Zoom) amongst a cross section of community residents. Again, due to the nature of the areas of questioning we conducted one group amongst residents of the former Gosford Council area, and the other amongst residents of the former Wyong Council area.

Age quotas were also set for each group discussion to ensure that a good cross-section of people was achieved in each.

Each group discussion ran for approximately an hour and twenty minutes, allowing sufficient ‘talk time’ for the participants in relation to each subject area.

Participants were sourced through a market research recruiter that has a range of Central Coast residents on their database who have expressed an interest in participating in market research studies. A screening questionnaire was employed to ensure that the group participants met the criteria for our study.

As is standard practice for a study of this nature, participants were offered an incentive (of \$80) to take part in the project, in appreciation for their time and to cover any expenses incurred.

3.3 Interpreting the quantitative findings in this report

Percentages have been rounded to whole numbers and as a result, for some closed-ended questions (where a total of 100 per cent may be expected), total percentages may not add to exactly 100 per cent. For any open-ended questions, or the closed-ended questions that allowed for multiple answer responses, the total often exceeds 100% as respondents can provide an answer that has multiple themes within it – each of which are then represented.

While most quantitative results have been presented throughout this report by both age group and former Council location, there were a relatively small number of respondents in the 18 to 34 year old age category for the Residential – Council YVOC survey. As such a base size warning accompanies these results, and the commentary that has been included for any trends or differences by age does not include the results from this age group (for the Residential – Council YVOC survey).

Detailed Research Findings

4. Priorities for Water & Sewerage Services

4.1 Unprompted Improvement Preferences

Survey respondents were asked to suggest up to three different things that they want Central Coast Council to focus on and improve. While they were given the opportunity to provide three different priority areas, they were only required to provide one.

As can be seen in Table 5, respondents from each data source were most likely to suggest that improvements should be directed towards lowering the price of water/keeping pricing at a reasonable level, as well as improving the quality of drinking water. While respondents from the structured residential survey and the SME survey suggested preferences in that order (with the cost aspect being mentioned slightly more than the water quality aspect), the reverse order emerged from the Residential – Council YVOC survey.

The set of the next most commonly mentioned improvement areas included maintaining pipes/sewer lines, providing a more efficient service, and better drainage/guttering for streets (from the Residential – Structured survey). These areas also emerged as priorities in the Residential – Council YVOC survey, though protecting the environment/conserving water and using recycled water also emerged at similar levels, while the SME survey respondents were the most likely to suggest that nothing different was required.

Table 5: Improvement Preferences - Unprompted

	Residential – Structured (n=489) %	Residential – Council YVOC (n=578) %	SME (n=109) %
Lower the cost/keep price reasonable	36	37	24
Clean/safe/drinkable water/improve water quality	34	42	22
Maintaining pipes/sewer lines	17	14	3
Provide a better/more efficient/reliable service	14	16	7
Better drainage/gutters for streets/flood prone areas	13	12	6
Protecting the environment/sustainability/conservation of water	8	19	5
Continuity of water supply/appropriate storage	7	11	9
Regular/better maintenance NFD	6	4	-
Cleanliness NFD	6	2	1
Improve water pressure	5	3	6
Quality NFD	5	2	1
Nothing/all good	4	2	18
Smell/odour from treatment plant/tap water	3	4	2
Reusing/recycling water	3	12	5
Improve the taste of water	3	2	-
Better communication/updates/information	3	2	-
More accurate/clearer pricing/billing	2	-	-
Other	10	16	6
Don't know	4	-	6

Q. When you think about your water and sewerage services, what are the three things you want Central Coast Council to focus on and improve on the most?

Base: Respondents with a water and/or sewer connection (Residential - Structured n=489; Residential – Council YVOC n=578; SME n=109)

NOTE: NFD = No Further Detail provided

Looking at the results from the Residential - Structured survey in more detail (see Table 6) it can be seen that the older respondents were less likely to mention keeping the cost of water (18% for 70+ year olds, compared to 36% of all respondents), and were more likely (than younger respondents) to see a need to maintain the pipes/sewer lines (22% for 70+ year olds, compared to 17% of all respondents and 14% of 18 to 34 year olds).

The younger respondents were the most likely to mention protecting the environment/conservation of water (12% of 18 to 34 year olds, compared to 8% of all respondents), and cleanliness – presumably of water – (10% of 18 to 34 year olds, compared to 6% of all respondents).

Table 6: Improvement Preferences – Unprompted (Residential – Structured)

	Total (n=489) %	18 to 34 y.o (n=153) %	35 to 49 y.o (n=131) %	50 to 69 y.o (n=132) %	70+ y.o (n=72) %	Former Wyong (n=259) %	Former Gosford (n=230) %
Lower the cost/keep price reasonable	36	41	41	39	18	33	38
Clean/safe/drinkable water/improve water quality	34	35	34	36	31	32	37
Maintaining pipes/sewer lines	17	14	14	18	22	12	22
Provide a better/more efficient/reliable service	14	15	14	17	7	14	14
Better drainage/gutters for streets/flood prone areas	13	13	18	12	10	13	14
Protecting the environment/sustainability/conservation of water	8	12	7	8	3	10	6
Continuity of water supply/appropriate storage	7	3	3	10	10	7	7
Regular/better maintenance NFD	6	5	9	7	3	6	6
Cleanliness NFD	6	10	12	3	-	6	6
Improve water pressure	5	3	3	7	6	3	7
Quality NFD	5	1	7	5	5	6	4
Nothing/all good	4	6	1	4	5	5	3
Smell/odour from treatment plant/tap water	3	5	4	3	2	4	2
Reusing/recycling water	3	2	3	4	5	2	4
Improve the taste of water	3	5	2	3	2	2	4
Better communication/updates/information	3	6	2	2	-	1	4
More accurate/clearer pricing/billing	2	3	3	2	-	2	2
Other	10	11	9	10	8	10	9
Don't know	4	4	2	3	6	4	3

Q. When you think about your water and sewerage services, what are the three things you want Central Coast Council to focus on and improve on the most?

Base: Respondents with a water and/or sewer connection (Residential - Structured n=489)

NOTE: NFD = No Further Detail provided

Looking at the results from the Residential – Council YVOC survey in more detail (see Table 7) it can be seen that the respondents from the former Gosford Council area were the most likely to mention improving the water quality (49%, compared to 33% of the former Wyong Council area respondents).

Those aged 35 to 49 were the most likely to mention water quality/cleanliness (51%, compared to 42% of all respondents, as well as maintaining pipes/sewer lines (21%, compared to 14% for all respondents).

Table 7: Improvement Preferences – Unprompted (Residential – Council YVOC)

	Total (n=578) %	18 to 34 y.o (n=18)* %	35 to 49 y.o (n=105) %	50 to 69 y.o (n=299) %	70+ y.o (n=156) %	Former Wyong (n=249) %	Former Gosford (n=311) %
Clean/safe/drinkable water/improve water quality	42	22	51	41	38	33	49
Lower the cost/keep price reasonable	37	50	36	38	35	37	37
Protecting the environment/sustainability/conservation of water	19	11	20	20	17	20	18
Provide a better/more efficient/reliable service	16	33	11	15	19	16	16
Maintaining pipes/sewer lines/drains	14	17	21	14	10	12	15
Better drainage/gutters for streets/flood prone areas	12	6	26	9	10	12	13
Continuity of water supply/appropriate storage	11	11	9	10	12	13	9
Recycle/ or tertiary treat sewage/ proper processes/no overflows	8	-	8	9	8	10	7
Reusing/recycling water	6	-	2	8	6	7	5
Regular/better maintenance NFD	4	11	5	5	3	3	5
Smell/odour from treatment plant/tap water	4	6	6	5	1	6	3
Connect all properties to sewer/or stop charging for a service they don't have	3	11	4	2	4	3	4
Improve water pressure	3	-	1	3	4	4	2
Better communication/updates/information	2	6	4	2	1	-	4
Improve the taste of water	2	-	3	2	2	2	2
Nothing/all good	2	-	3	2	3	3	2
Quality NFD	2	6	2	3	1	2	2
Cleanliness NFD	2	-	-	2	3	2	1
Other	16	11	16	17	13	15	17
Don't know	-	-	-	-	1	-	-

Q. When you think about your water and sewerage services, what are the three things you want Central Coast Council to focus on and improve on the most?

Base: Respondents with a water and/or sewer connection (Residential – Council YVOC n=578)

NOTE: NFD = No Further Detail provided

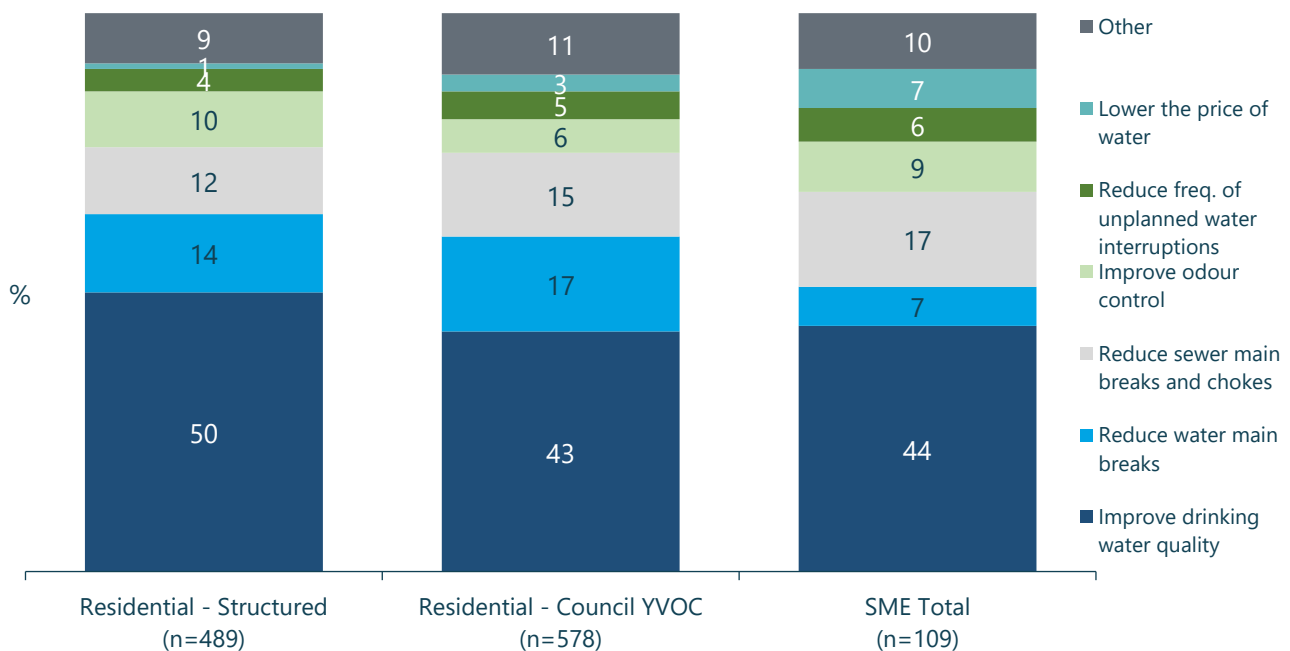
4.2 Prompted Improvement Preferences

Following on from unprompted improvements, the survey respondents were provided with a list of five potential areas for future focus, and were asked to identify their top preference for Central Coast Council to focus on and improve. Respondents were also offered the opportunity of including their own priority area – should they feel that none of the options offered were the top priority to focus attention on. Note that the suggestion to ‘lower the price of water’ emerged from respondents (i.e. it was not one of the pre-determined areas).

As can be seen in Figure 1, respondents from each data source were most likely to suggest that improvements should be directed towards improving the quality of drinking water – which varied between 43% amongst the Residential – Council YVOC respondents, to 50% amongst the Residential – Structured survey respondents.

The aspects with the second highest preference level tended to be reducing water main breaks and reducing sewer main breaks.

Figure 1: Improvement Preferences – Prompted



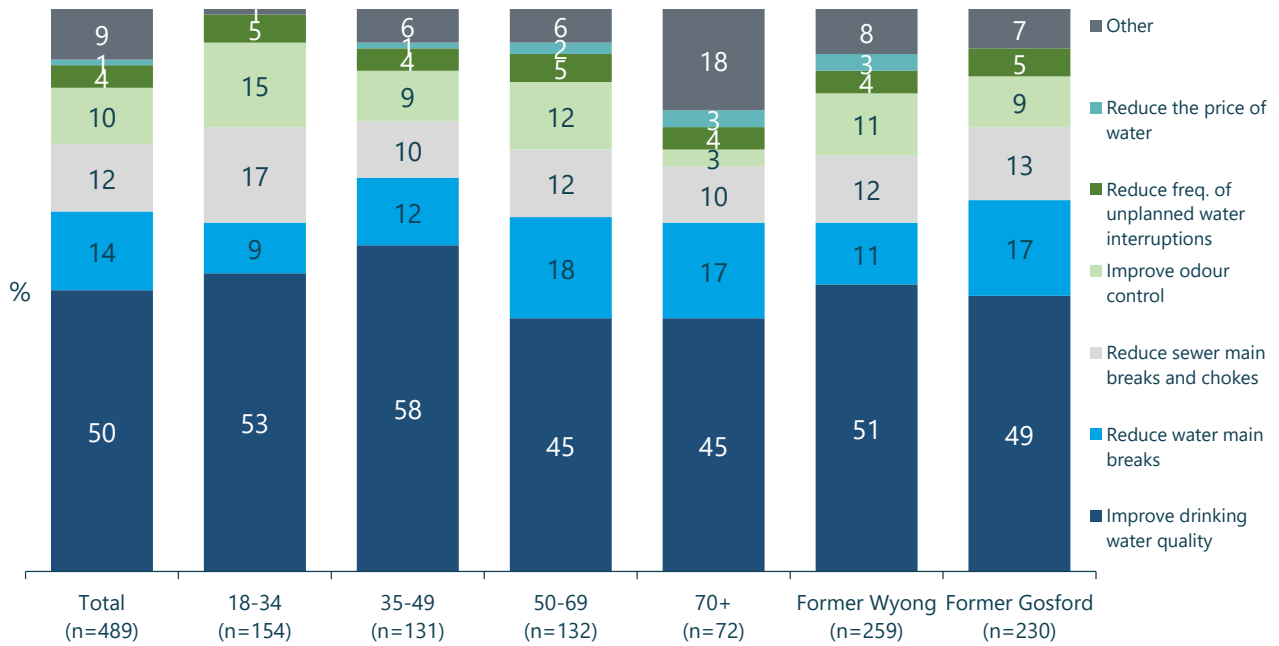
Q. Of the following options, what would you like Central Coast Council to focus and improve on the most in relation to the water & sewer assets? ROTATE ORDER

Base: Respondents with a water and/or sewer connection (Residential - Structured n=489; Residential – Council YVOC n=578; SME n=109)

Looking at the results from the Residential - Structured survey in more detail (see Figure 2) it can be seen that the highest preference level for improving the drinking water quality was amongst the 35 to 49 year old respondents (58%), while it was lower amongst those aged 50+ (45%).

While improving drinking water quality was highest amongst all sub-groups, the older respondents were more likely (than the younger respondents) to prioritise reducing water main breaks – as were respondents from the former Gosford Council area.

Figure 2: Improvement Preferences – Prompted (Residential – Structured)



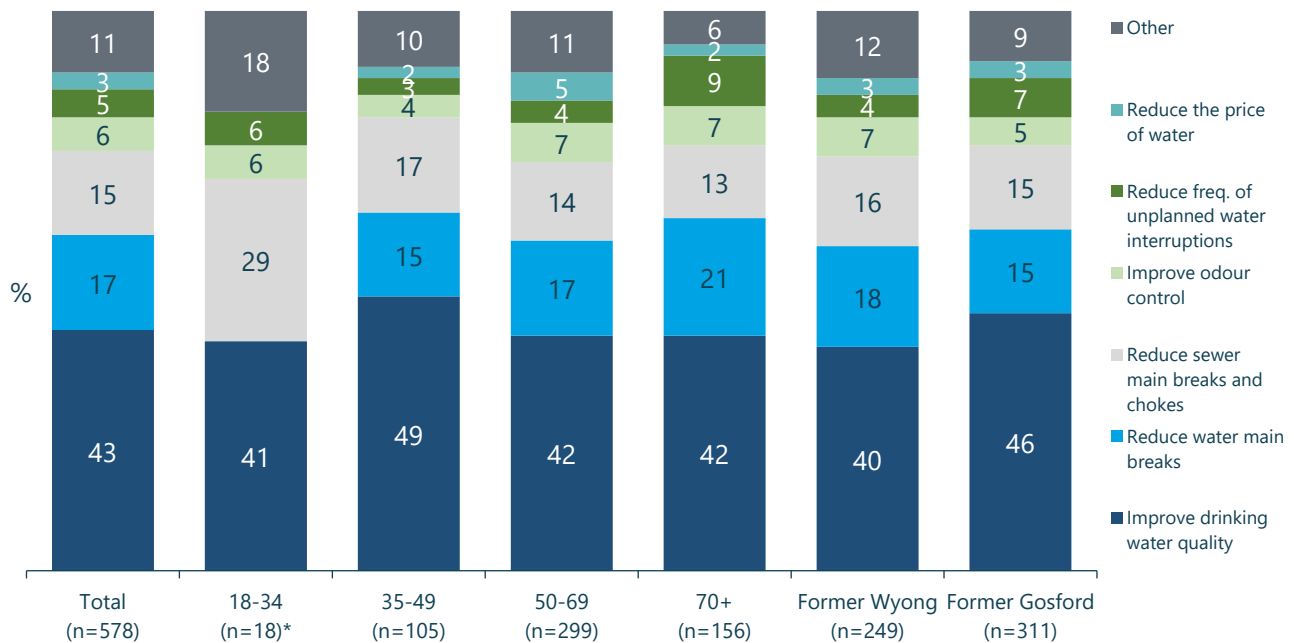
Q. When you think about your water and sewerage services, what are the three things you want Central Coast Council to focus on and improve on the most?

Base: Respondents with a water and/or sewer connection (Residential - Structured n=489)

Looking at the results from the Residential – Council YVOC survey in more detail (see Figure 3) it can be seen that the highest preference level for improving the drinking water quality was amongst the 35 to 49 year old respondents (49%), while it was lower amongst those aged 50+ (42%).

The older respondents were the most likely to indicate that reducing water main breaks was a main priority (21%), which was the aspect with the second highest preference level amongst the Residential – YVOC respondents.

Figure 3: Improvement Preferences – Prompted (Residential – Council YVOC)



Q. When you think about your water and sewerage services, what are the three things you want Central Coast Council to focus on and improve on the most?

Base: Respondents with a water and/or sewer connection (Residential – Council YVOC n=578)

In the group discussions that were conducted, the group participants were also asked to suggest where Central Coast Council should focus on and improve for the future. These participants tended to suggest the following:

- Ways of ensuring that there is enough water available for the future (such as building new dams and recycling water);
- Improving the quality of water (as some residents were known to have ‘dirty’ drinking water);
- Providing incentives for households to supplement their use of town water (through encouraging use of water tanks);
- Reducing the potential of flooding (as some areas were ‘known’ to be prone to flooding);
- Addressing the cost/price of water and water services;
- Maintaining existing infrastructure.

The group participants were then presented with the prompted list (as appears in the quantitative questionnaire) and were asked which areas they thought that the Central Coast Council should focus on in the future.

The outcomes of the discussions that followed tended to be very similar to what had emerged without prompting, with water quality being seen as one of the top priorities that needed to be addressed. While not all had a personal experience with poor water quality, there appeared to be awareness of water quality issues in the region.

Within one of the groups, the need to reducing sewer main breaks and chokes was also seen to be a priority.

“I work in real estate and we get a lot of tenants calling with overflow issues” Former Gosford Council area resident

Within the other group, reducing water main breaks was seen to be more important due to the visible water wastage that occurs with this issue.

5. Perceptions of Performance

5.1 Water Service Performance

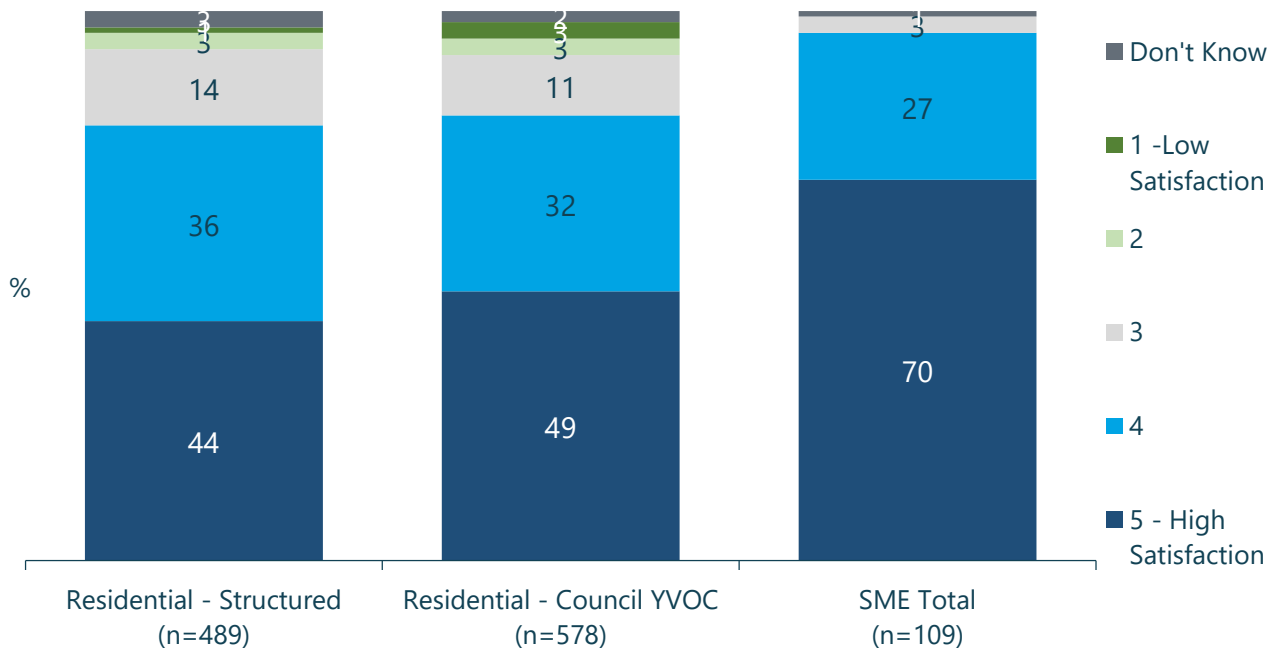
Survey respondents were asked to indicate their level of satisfaction with several aspects of water service performance using a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is low satisfaction and 5 is high satisfaction.

Reliability water supply (lack of interruptions)

The survey respondents within each survey displayed a high level of satisfaction with the reliability of the water supply (see Figure 4). Satisfaction with reliability was highest amongst the SME respondents (97% giving a rating of 4 or 5 out of 5), and lowest amongst the Residential – Structured respondents (80%) – though still very high in outright terms.

There was minimal dissatisfaction expressed in relation to water reliability – with 6% being the highest amongst the Residential- Council YVOC respondents.

Figure 4: Satisfaction with: Reliability of water supply



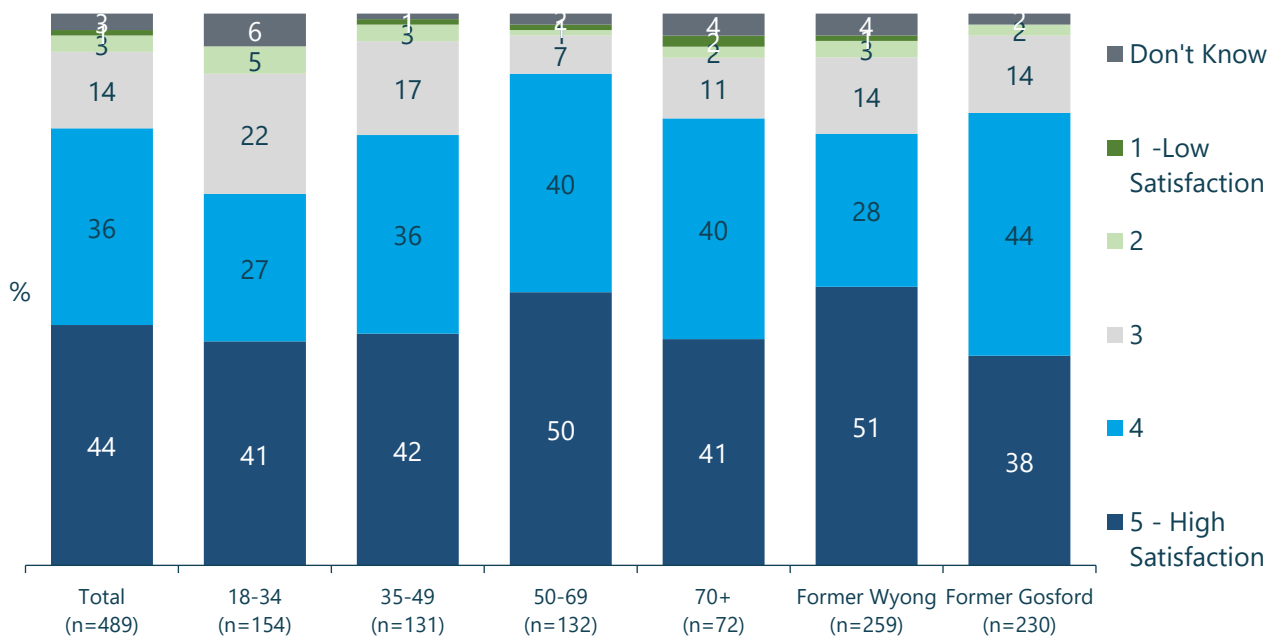
Q. Thinking about the last 12 months, how satisfied have you been with the following (where 1 is low satisfaction and 5 is high satisfaction):

Base: Respondents with a water and/or sewer connection (Residential - Structured n=489; Residential – Council YVOC n=578; SME n=109)

Looking at the results from the Residential - Structured survey in more detail (see Figure 5) it can be seen that satisfaction with reliability was highest amongst the 50 to 69 year olds (90% giving a rating of 4 or 5 out of 5). The younger respondents had the lowest overall level of satisfaction with water reliability (68% of the 18 to 34 year olds gave a rating of 4 or 5 out of 5 – though only 5% expressed dissatisfaction).

While respondents from the former Gosford Council area expressed a slightly higher overall level of satisfaction in this service area (82%, compared to 79% for the former Wyong Council area residents), those in the former Wyong Council area were the most likely to provide a 5 out of 5 rating for water reliability (51%).

Figure 5: Satisfaction with: Reliability of water supply (Residential – Structured)



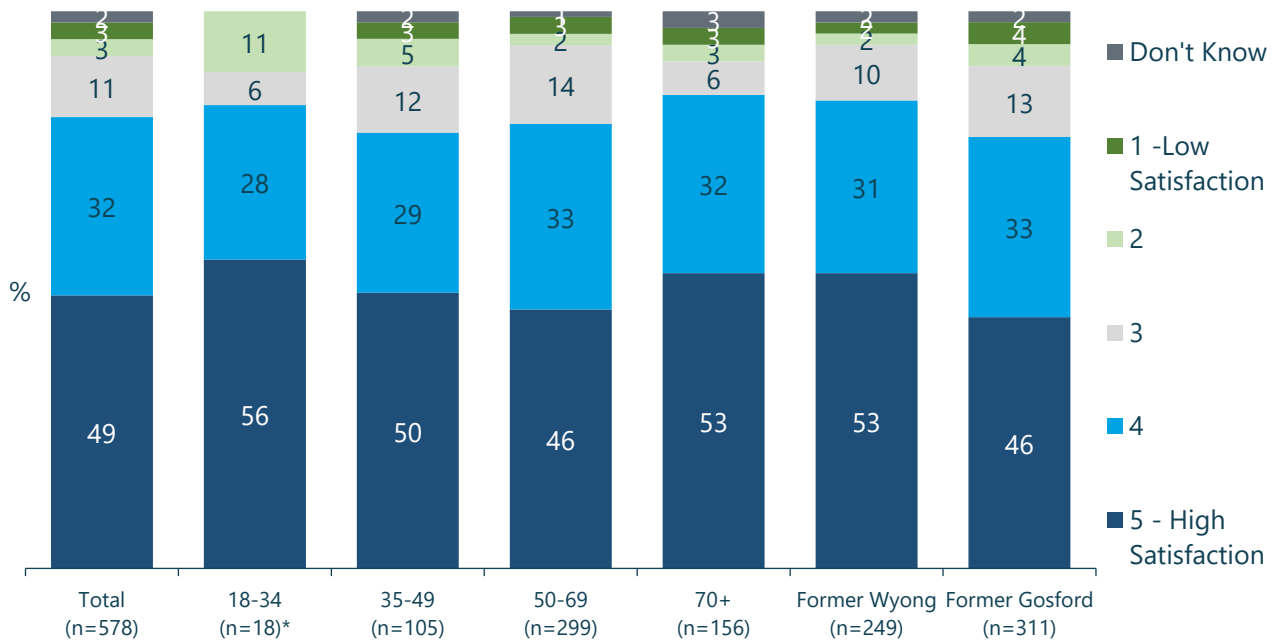
Q. Thinking about the last 12 months, how satisfied have you been with the following (where 1 is low satisfaction and 5 is high satisfaction):

Base: Respondents with a water and/or sewer connection (Residential - Structured n=489)

Looking at the results from the Residential – Council YVOC survey in more detail (see Figure 6) it can be seen that satisfaction with reliability was highest amongst 70+ year olds (85% giving a rating of 4 or 5 out of 5).

Respondents in the former Wyong Council area had a higher satisfaction level than those in the former Gosford Council area (84% and 79% total satisfaction respectively).

Figure 6: Satisfaction with: Reliability of water supply (Residential – Council YVOC)



Q. Thinking about the last 12 months, how satisfied have you been with the following (where 1 is low satisfaction and 5 is high satisfaction):

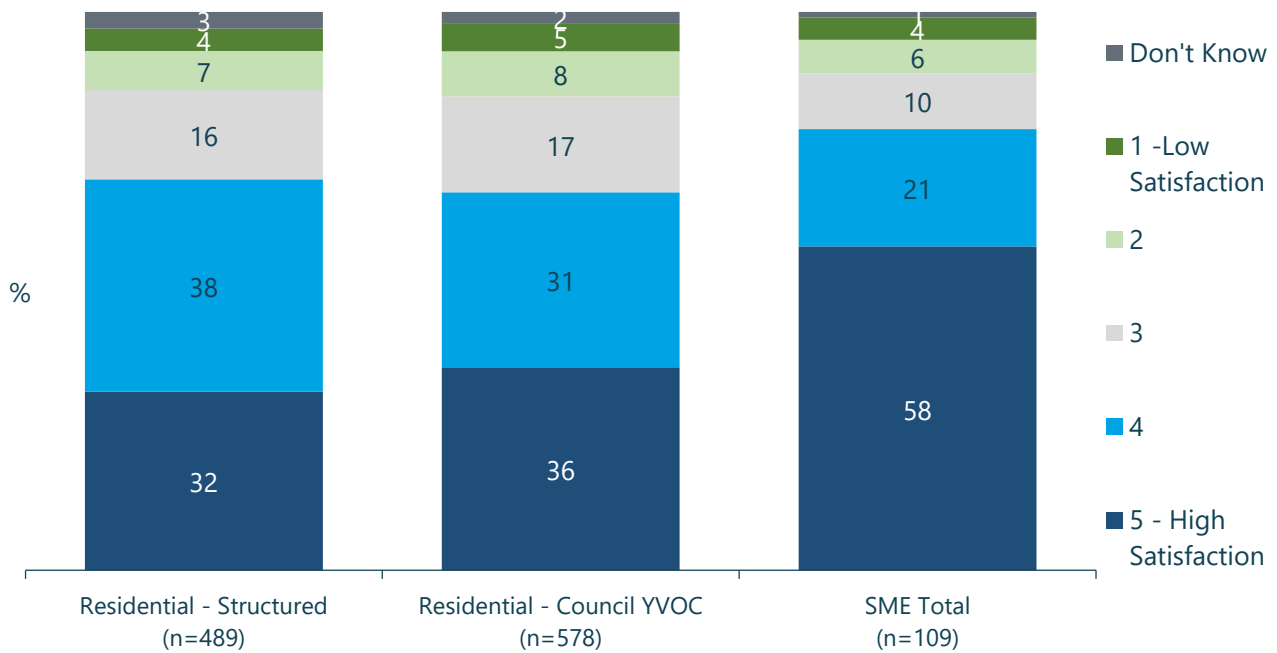
Base: Respondents with a water and/or sewer connection (Residential – Council YVOC n=578)

Water pressure

There was also a fairly high level of satisfaction with the water pressure. Satisfaction with water pressure was highest amongst the SME respondents (79% giving a rating of 4 or 5 out of 5), and lowest amongst the Residential – Council YVOC respondents (67%) – though still very high in outright terms.

Dissatisfaction levels with water pressure were at around the 1 in 10 level, being highest amongst the Residential – Council YVOC respondents (13%).

Figure 7: Satisfaction with: Water pressure



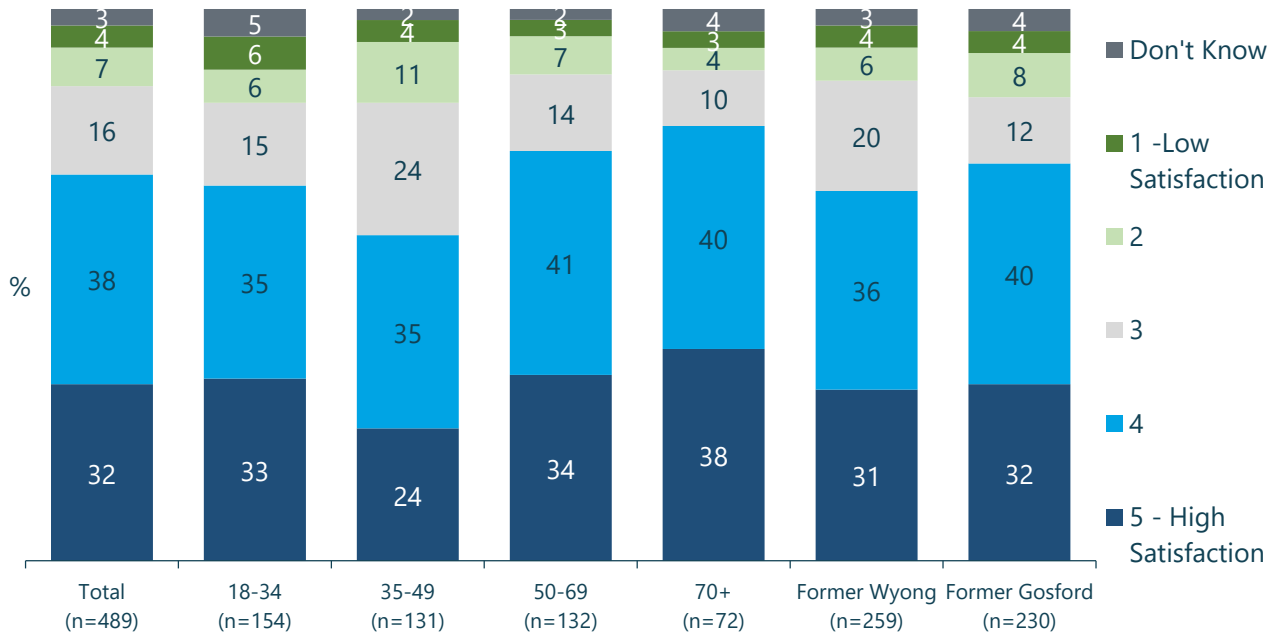
Q. Thinking about the last 12 months, how satisfied have you been with the following (where 1 is low satisfaction and 5 is high satisfaction):

Base: Respondents with a water and/or sewer connection (Residential - Structured n=489; Residential – Council YVOC n=578; SME n=109)

Looking at the results from the Residential - Structured survey in more detail (see Figure 8) it can be seen that satisfaction with water pressure was highest amongst the 70+ year olds (78% giving a rating of 4 or 5 out of 5), and lowest amongst the 35 to 49 year olds (59% gave a 4 or 5 out of 5 rating – though only 15% expressed dissatisfaction).

Respondents from the former Gosford Council area expressed a slightly higher overall level of satisfaction in this service area (72%, compared to 67% for the former Wyong Council area residents).

Figure 8: Satisfaction with: Water pressure (Residential – Structured)



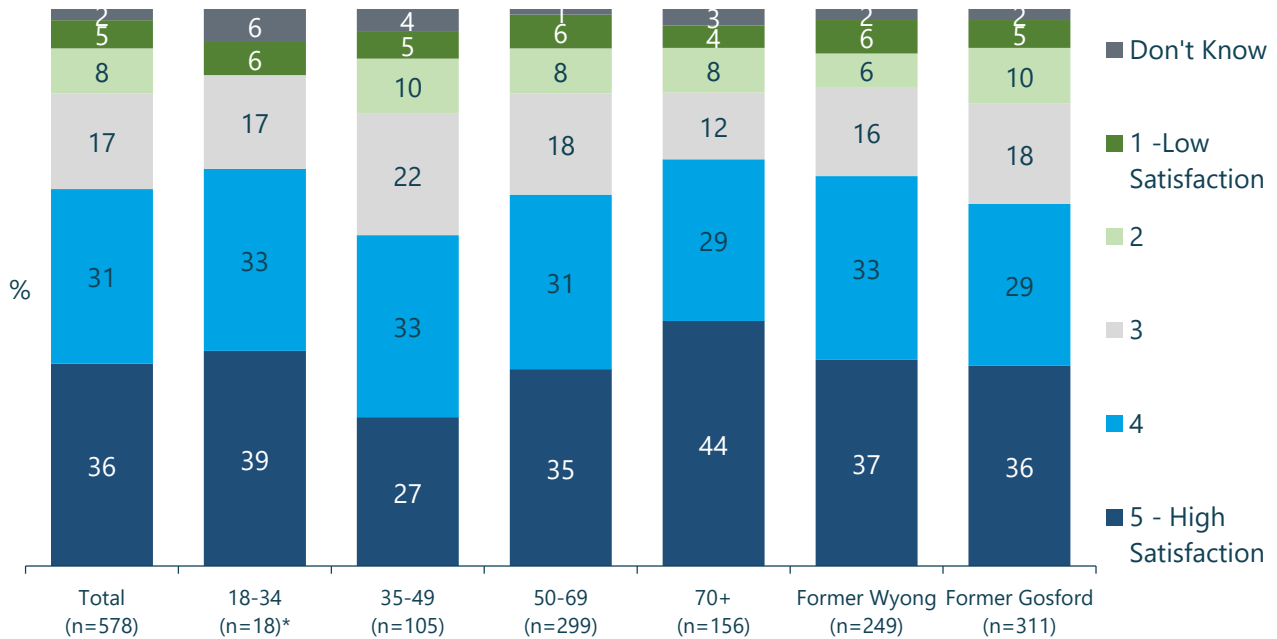
Q. Thinking about the last 12 months, how satisfied have you been with the following (where 1 is low satisfaction and 5 is high satisfaction):

Base: Respondents with a water and/or sewer connection (Residential - Structured n=489)

Looking at the results from the Residential – Council YVOC survey in more detail (see Figure 9) a pattern emerged with age. Satisfaction levels for water pressure was highest amongst the 70+ year olds (73% giving a rating of 4 or 5 out of 5) and lowest amongst the 35 to 49 year olds (60%).

Unlike the Residential – Structured results, the Residential – Council YVOC outcomes show a slightly higher overall satisfaction level amongst the respondents in the former Wyong Council (70%, compared to 65% in the former Gosford Council area).

Figure 9: Satisfaction with: Water pressure (Residential – Council YVOC)



Q. Thinking about the last 12 months, how satisfied have you been with the following (where 1 is low satisfaction and 5 is high satisfaction):

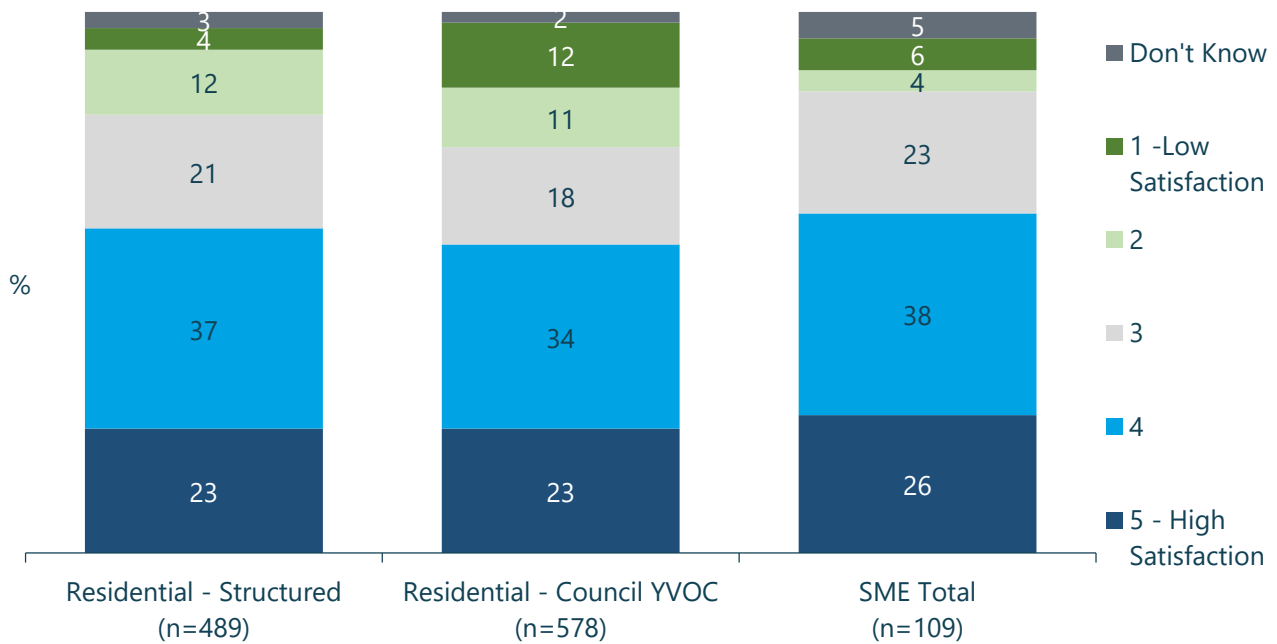
Base: Respondents with a water and/or sewer connection (Residential – Council YVOC n=578)

Water quality (including taste and clarity)

The majority of respondents also indicated satisfaction with the water quality. While there was not a great deal of variation, satisfaction with water quality was highest amongst the SME respondents (64% giving a rating of 4 or 5 out of 5), and lowest amongst the Residential – Council YVOC respondents (57%).

Dissatisfaction levels varied between 10% (SME respondents) and 23% (Residential – Council YVOC respondents).

Figure 10: Satisfaction with: Water quality



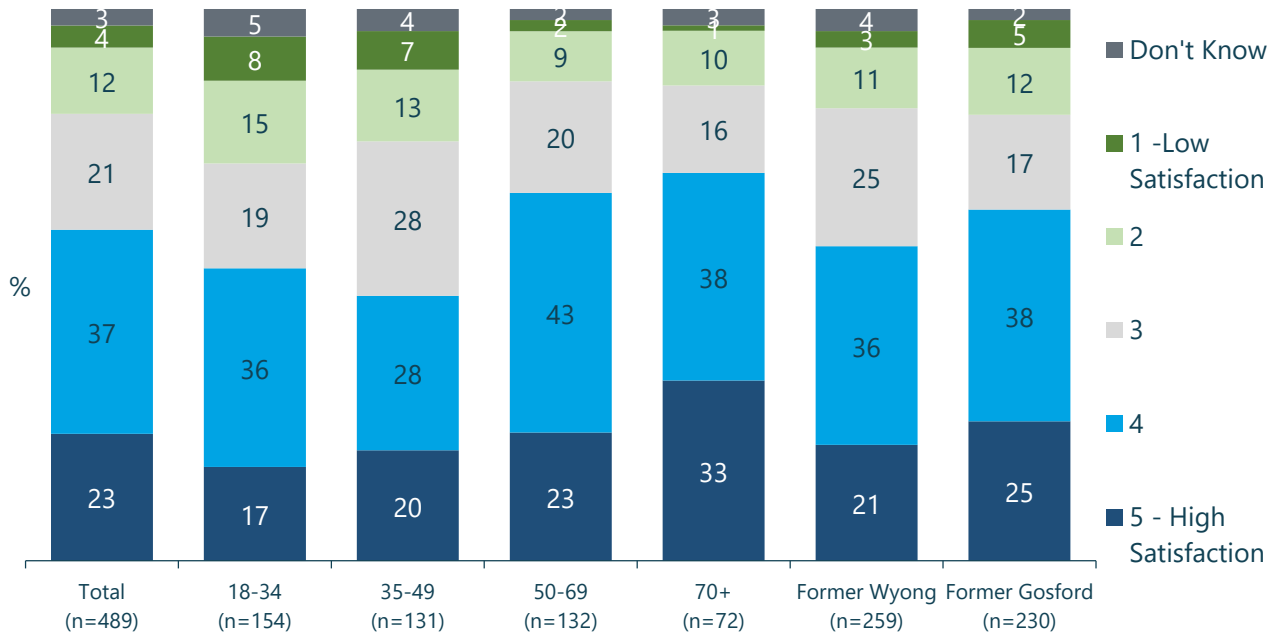
Q. Thinking about the last 12 months, how satisfied have you been with the following (where 1 is low satisfaction and 5 is high satisfaction):

Base: Respondents with a water and/or sewer connection (Residential - Structured n=489; Residential – Council YVOC n=578; SME n=109)

Looking at the results from the Residential - Structured survey in more detail (see Figure 11) it can be seen that satisfaction with water pressure was highest amongst the 70+ year olds (71% giving a rating of 4 or 5 out of 5), and lowest amongst the 35 to 49 year olds (48% gave a 4 or 5 out of 5 rating – though only 15% expressed dissatisfaction), with dissatisfaction being highest amongst the 18 to 34 year olds (23%).

Respondents from the former Gosford Council area expressed a slightly higher overall level of satisfaction in this service area (63%, compared to 57% for the former Wyong Council area residents).

Figure 11: Satisfaction with: Water quality (Residential – Structured)



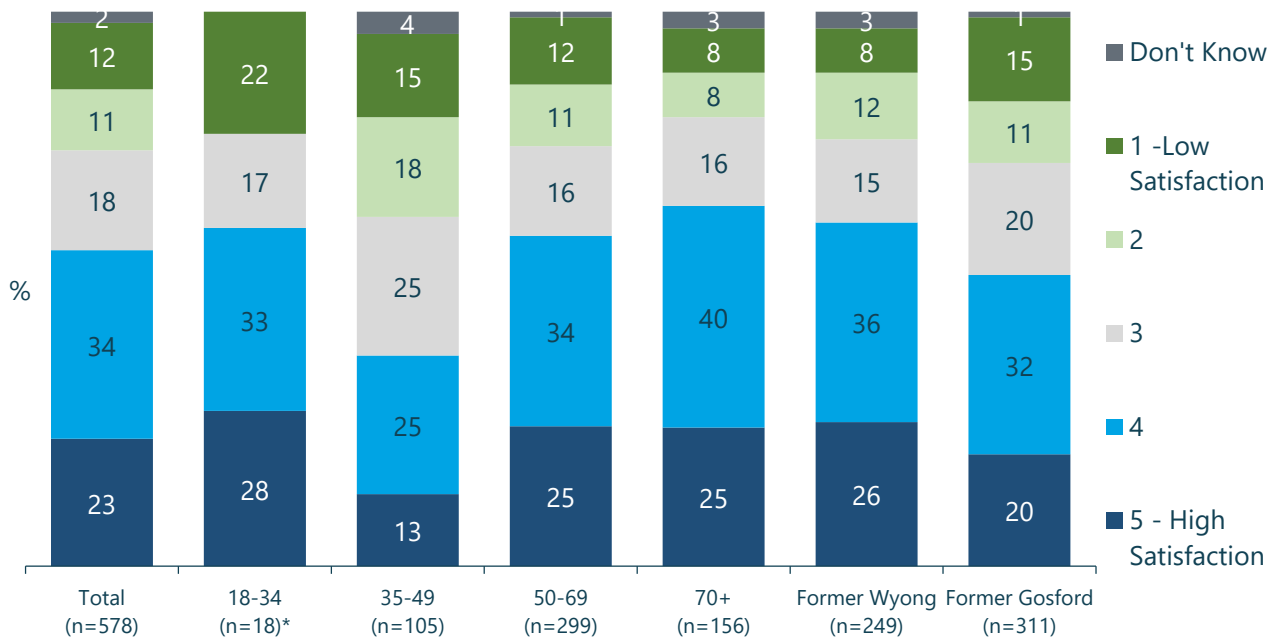
Q. Thinking about the last 12 months, how satisfied have you been with the following (where 1 is low satisfaction and 5 is high satisfaction):

Base: Respondents with a water and/or sewer connection (Residential - Structured n=489)

Looking at the results from the Residential – Council YVOC survey in more detail (see Figure 12) a pattern emerged with age. Satisfaction levels for water quality were highest amongst the 70+ year olds (65% giving a rating of 4 or 5 out of 5) and lowest amongst the 35 to 49 year olds (38%). Dissatisfaction levels were also highest amongst the 35 to 49 year olds (33%).

Unlike the Residential – Structured results, the Residential – Council YVOC outcomes show a higher overall satisfaction level with water quality amongst respondents in the former Wyong Council (62%, compared to 52% in the former Gosford Council area).

Figure 12: Satisfaction with: Water quality (Residential – Council YVOC)



Q. Thinking about the last 12 months, how satisfied have you been with the following (where 1 is low satisfaction and 5 is high satisfaction):

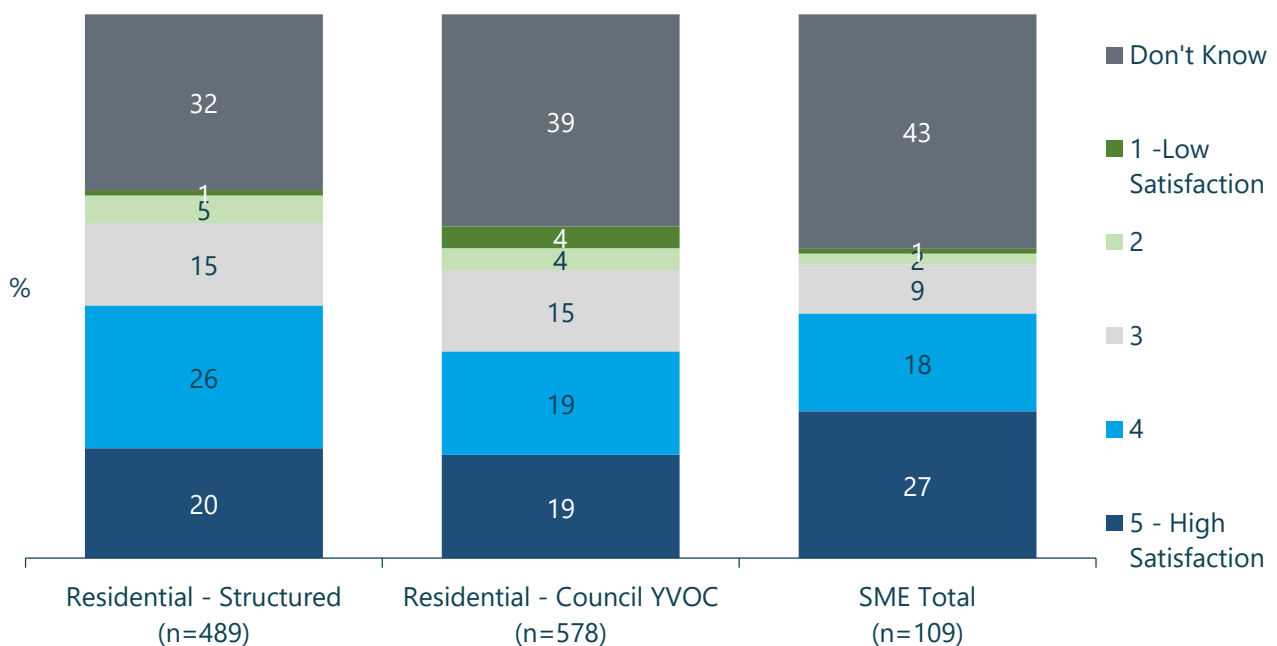
Base: Respondents with a water and/or sewer connection (Residential – Council YVOC n=578)

Response time to fix interruptions

While satisfaction with the response time to fix interruptions was the lowest of the service areas measured, this can be seen to be due to the relatively large proportion of respondents who indicated a ‘don’t know’ response for this service attribute (between 32% for the Residential - Structured survey, and 43% for the SME survey).

So while satisfaction levels varied between 38% (amongst the SME respondents) and 46% (amongst the Residential – Structured respondents), it is important to note that there was little dissatisfaction expressed in relation to response times – which only varied between 3% (for the SME respondents) and 8% (for the Residential – Council YVOC respondents).

Figure 13: Satisfaction with: Response time to fix interruptions



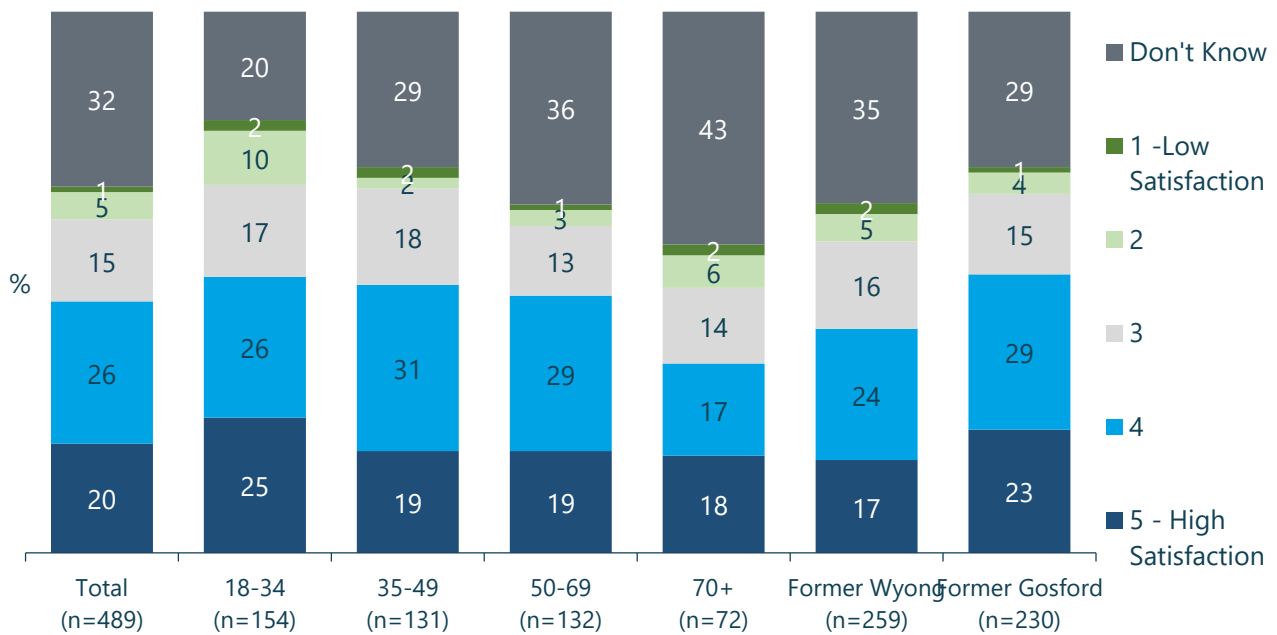
Q. Thinking about the last 12 months, how satisfied have you been with the following (where 1 is low satisfaction and 5 is high satisfaction):

Base: Respondents with a water and/or sewer connection (Residential - Structured n=489; Residential – Council YVOC n=578; SME n=109)

Looking at the results from the Residential - Structured survey in more detail (see Figure 14) it can be seen that satisfaction with response times decreased with increasing age – being rated highest by the 18 to 34 year olds (51%) and lowest by the 70+ year olds (35% giving a rating of 4 or 5 out of 5). However, the proportion of ‘Don’t Know’ responses also increased with increasing age.

Respondents from the former Gosford Council area expressed a slightly higher overall level of satisfaction in this service area (52%, compared to 41% for the former Wyong Council area residents) – again, primarily as a result of the proportion of ‘Don’t Know’ responses in each location.

Figure 14: Satisfaction with: Response time to fix interruptions (Residential – Structured)

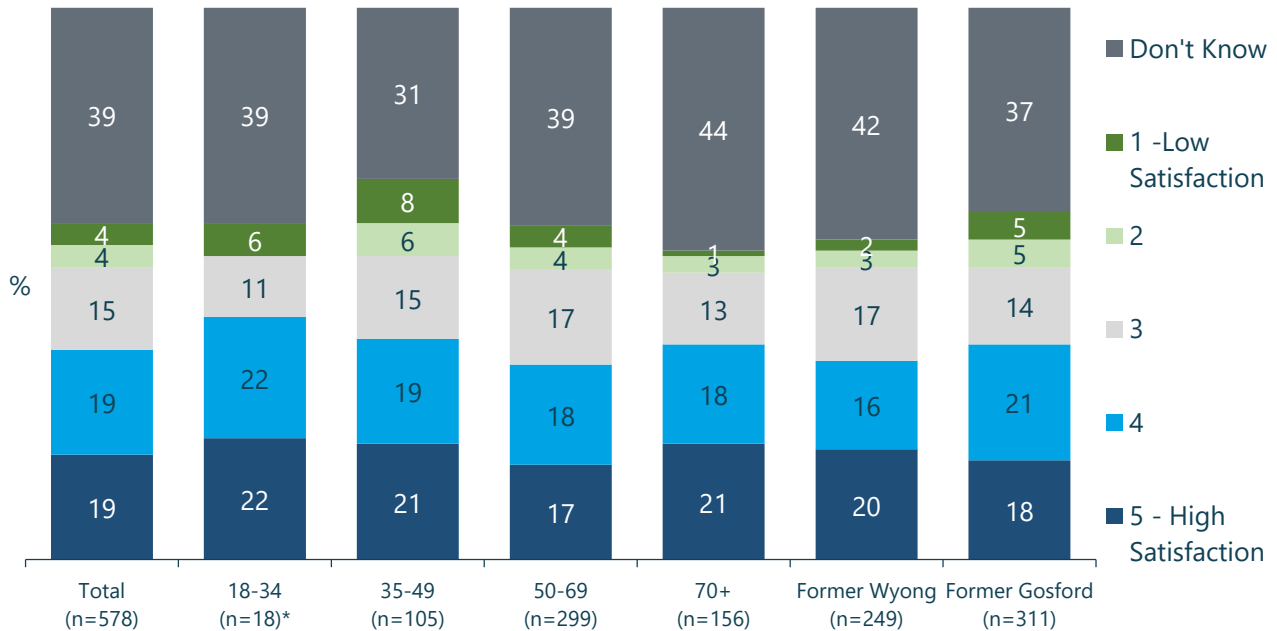


Q. Thinking about the last 12 months, how satisfied have you been with the following (where 1 is low satisfaction and 5 is high satisfaction):

Base: Respondents with a water and/or sewer connection (Residential - Structured n=489)

Looking at the results from the Residential – Council YVOC survey in more detail (see Figure 15) it can be seen that the overall satisfaction levels with response times were fairly consistent across the age and location sub-groups. Dissatisfaction was also consistently low, peaking at 14% amongst those aged 35 to 49.

Figure 15: Satisfaction with: Response time to fix interruptions (Residential – Council YVOC)



Q. Thinking about the last 12 months, how satisfied have you been with the following (where 1 is low satisfaction and 5 is high satisfaction):

Base: Respondents with a water and/or sewer connection (Residential – Council YVOC n=578)

Qualitative outcomes - Performance

Overall, the group participants were quite happy with Central Coast Council's performance in relation to water supply and management.

During the discussions, there were specific references to emerge of participants having good water pressure, and having clear and good tasting water.

However, a few participants had experienced water quality issues. Both groups raised the issue of 'dirty water' or 'rusty water' being experienced by one of the group members. Interestingly, even those that did not experience it themselves saw this as something that should be a priority to be addressed.

"I see a lot of posts on the Central Coast local Facebook page about dirty water and while mine is fine I'm concerned others don't have good quality water in the Peninsula area." Former Gosford Council area resident

"One of my girlfriends out Gorokan way, had water that looks brown. It looked like mud in her bathtub. There was no notification." Former Wyong Council Resident

Water mains breaks were also mentioned as an issue by a few of the group participants.

"You see so much water wasted through water main breaks." Former Wyong Council area resident

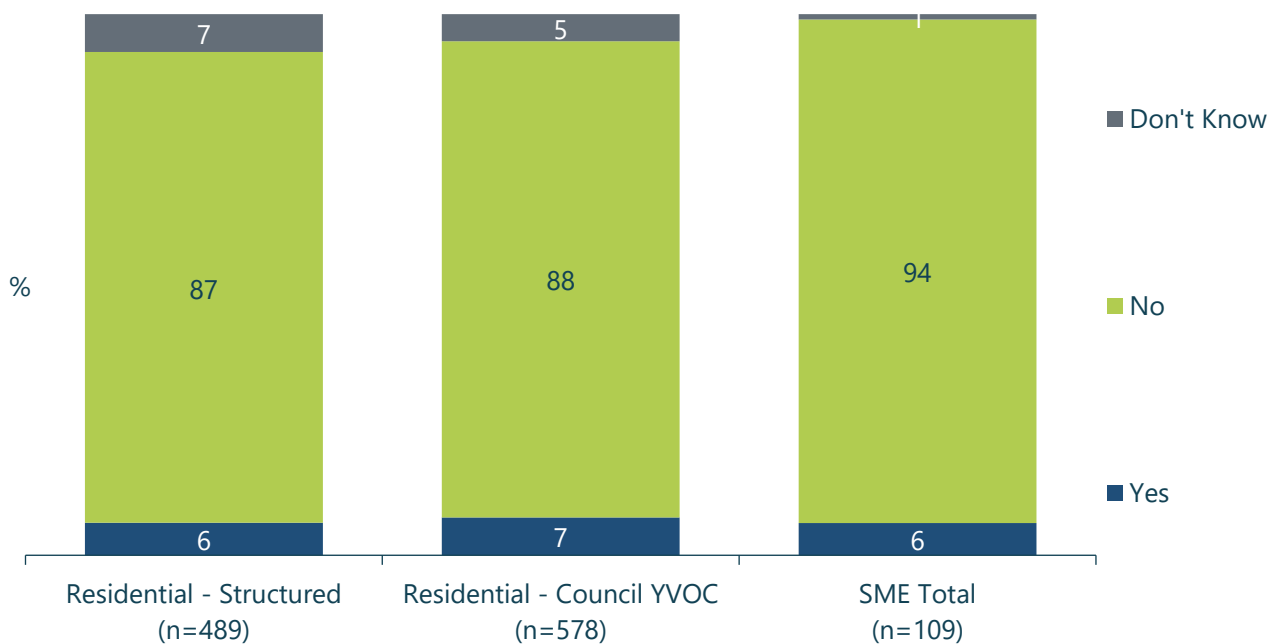
5.2 Sewerage Service Performance

Survey respondents were asked to indicate if they had been impacted by sewerage overflows within their own household, or in the community.

Overflows on the property

A small minority of respondents indicated that they had been impacted by sewerage overflows on their property in the last 12 months. This varied between 6% (amongst the Residential – Structured and SME respondents) to 7% (amongst the Residential – Council YVOC respondents).

Figure 16: Experienced sewerage overflows on their property



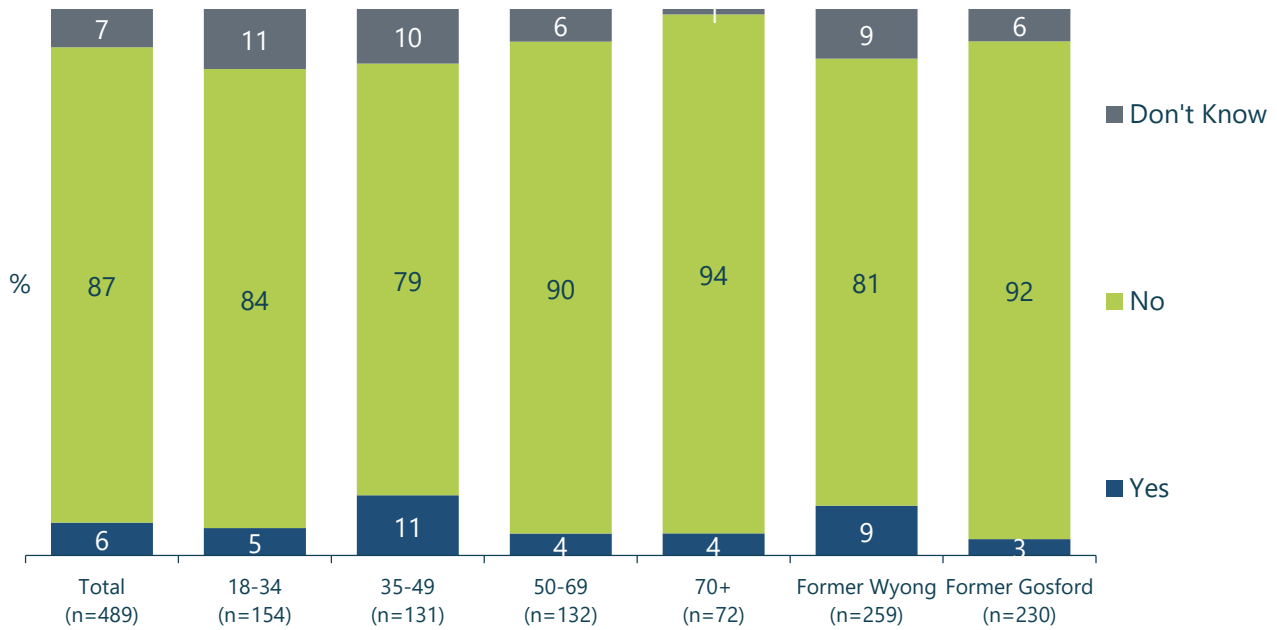
Q. Now, thinking about sewerage services in the last 12 months, please indicate if your household has been impacted by the following:

Base: Respondents with a water and/or sewer connection (Residential - Structured n=489; Residential – Council YVOC n=578; SME n=109)

Looking at the results from the Residential - Structured survey in more detail (see Figure 17) it can be seen that the claimed incidence levels for having had a sewerage overflow on their property in the last 12 months varied (by age) between 4% (amongst the 50 to 69 and 70+ year olds) and 11% (amongst the 35 to 49 year olds).

Respondents from the former Wyong Council area expressed a slightly higher incidence level of such a disturbance (9%, compared to 3% for the former Wyong Council area residents).

Figure 17: Experienced sewerage overflows on their property (Residential – Structured)



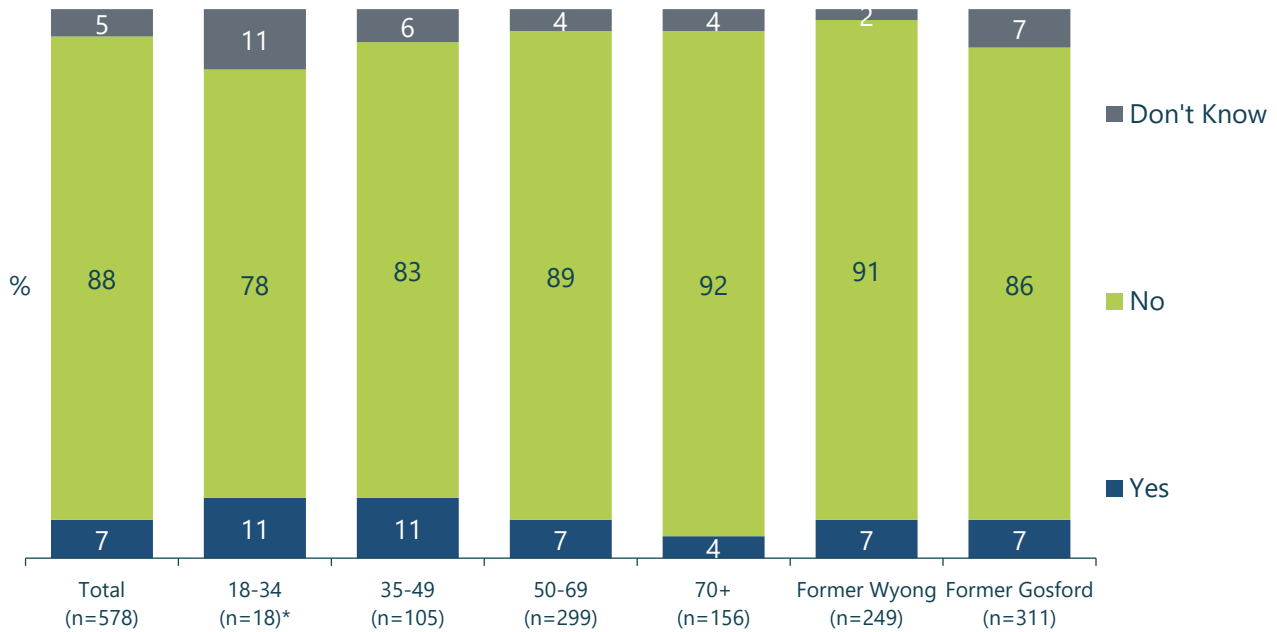
Q. Now, thinking about sewerage services in the last 12 months, please indicate if your household has been impacted by the following:

Base: Respondents with a water and/or sewer connection (Residential - Structured n=489)

Looking at the results from the Residential – Council YVOC survey in more detail (see Figure 18) there was again little variation, with the claimed incidence levels for having had a sewerage overflow on their property in the last 12 months varying (by age) between 4% (amongst the 70+ year olds) and 11% (amongst the 35 to 49 year olds).

There was no reported difference between respondents from the former Council areas (7% for both).

Figure 18: Experienced sewerage overflows on their property (Residential – Council YVOC)



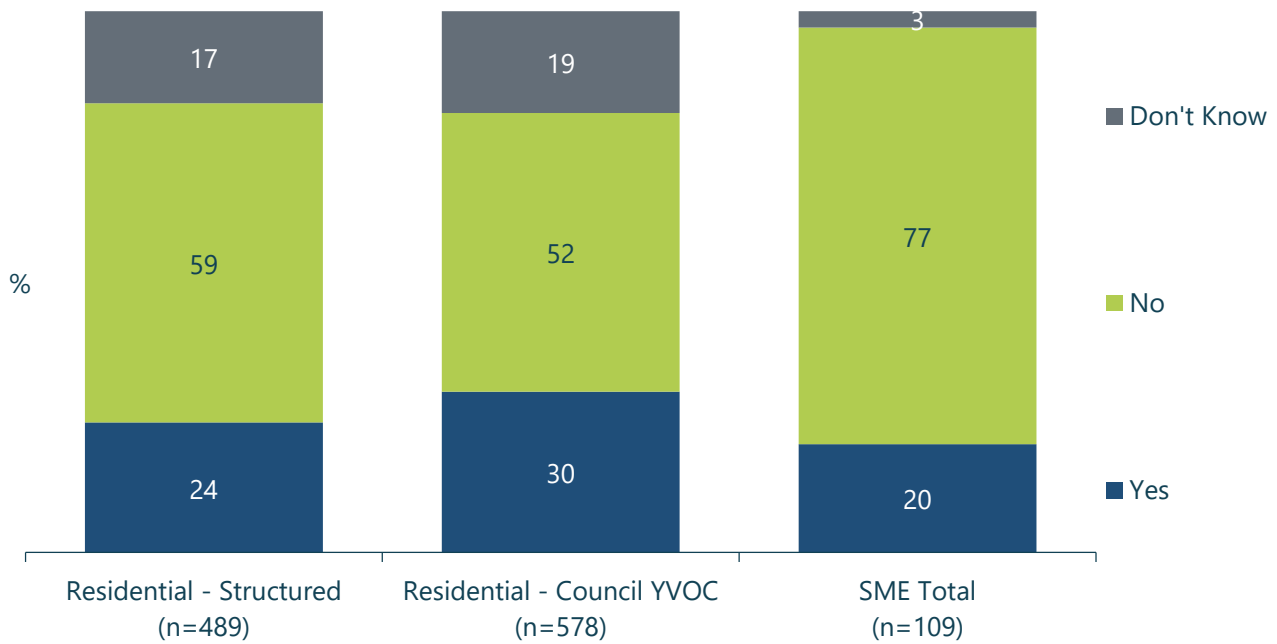
Q. Now, thinking about sewerage services in the last 12 months, please indicate if your household has been impacted by the following:

Base: Respondents with a water and/or sewer connection (Residential – Council YVOC n=578)

Overflows in the community

Incidence of being impacted by sewerage overflows in the community in the last 12 months was somewhat higher. This varied between 20% (amongst the SME respondents) and 30% (amongst the Residential – Council YVOC respondents).

Figure 19: Experienced sewerage overflows on their property



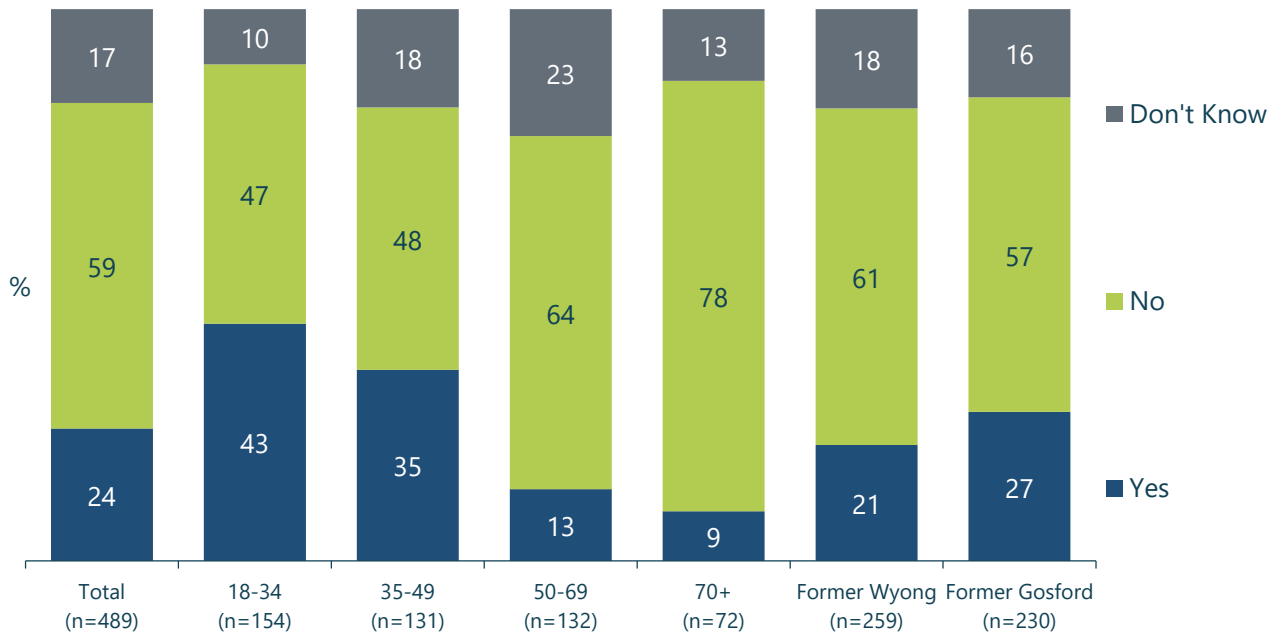
Q. Now, thinking about sewerage services in the last 12 months, please indicate if your household has been impacted by the following:

Base: Respondents with a water and/or sewer connection (Residential - Structured n=489; Residential – Council YVOC n=578; SME n=109)

Looking at the results from the Residential - Structured survey in more detail (see Figure 20) it can be seen that there is a clear trend of the claimed incidence levels decreasing with increasing age – with this being highest amongst the 18 to 34 year olds (43%), and lowest amongst the 70+ year olds (9%).

Respondents from the former Gosford Council area expressed a slightly higher incidence level of such a disturbance (27%, compared to 21% for the former Wyong Council area residents).

Figure 20: Experienced sewerage overflows on their property (Residential – Structured)



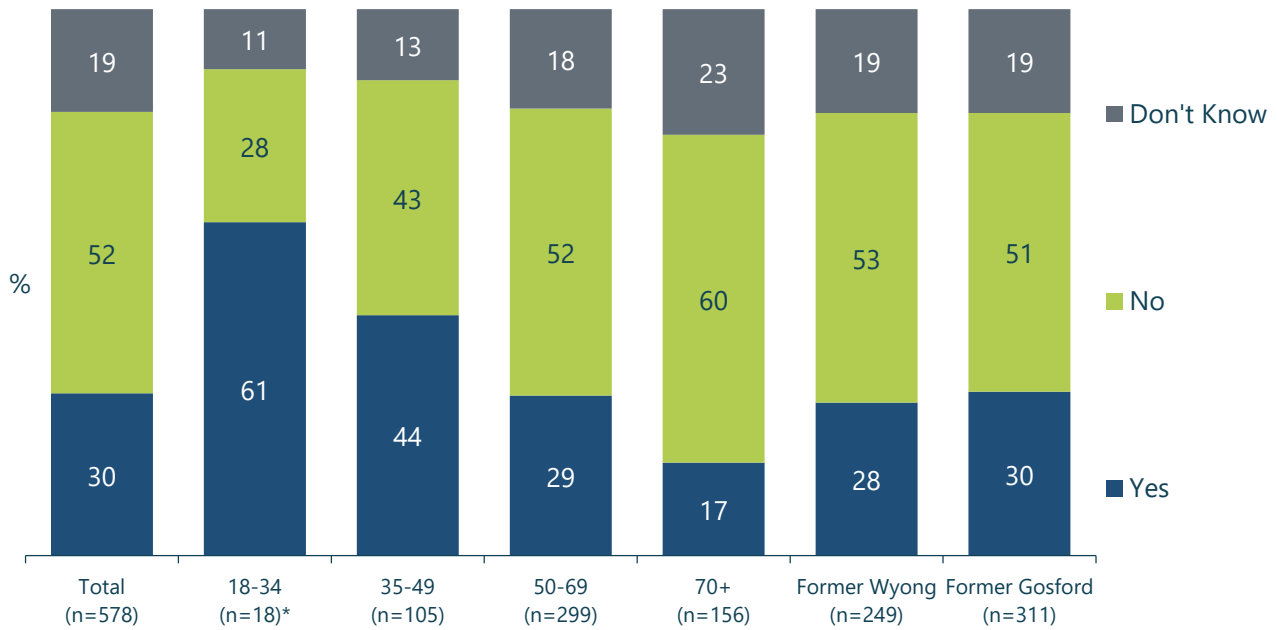
Q. Now, thinking about sewerage services in the last 12 months, please indicate if your household has been impacted by the following:

Base: Respondents with a water and/or sewer connection (Residential - Structured n=489)

Looking at the results from the Residential – Council YVOC survey in more detail (see Figure 21) the same pattern by age can be seen quite clearly. Excluding the 18 to 34 year old group (due to the small sample size), this varied between 44% (amongst the 35 to 49 year olds) and 17% (amongst the 70+ year olds).

There was no real difference between respondents from the former Council areas (28% for the former Wyong area, and 30% for the former Gosford area respondents).

Figure 21: Experienced sewerage overflows on their property (Residential – Council YVOC)



Q. Now, thinking about sewerage services in the last 12 months, please indicate if your household has been impacted by the following:

Base: Respondents with a water and/or sewer connection (Residential – Council YVOC n=578)

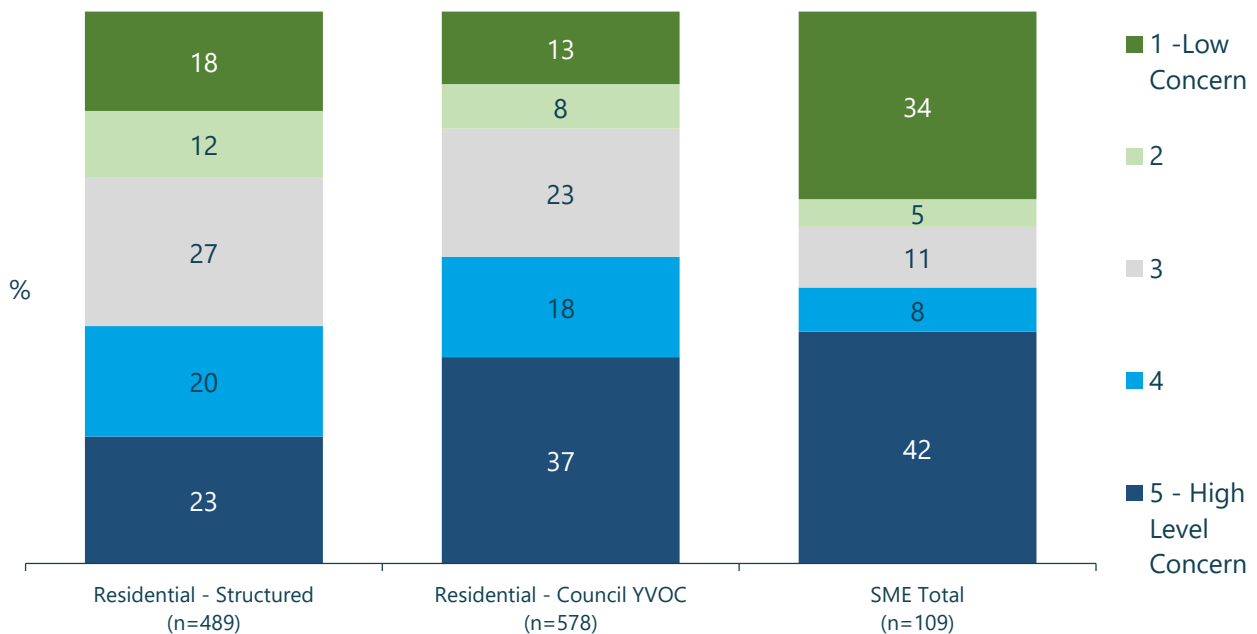
Concern over the frequency of sewerage overflows into the natural environment

The survey respondents were asked, based on what they had experienced themselves or heard about from others, how concerned they are about the frequency of sewerage overflows (caused by blockages and chokes in the sewer system) that flow into the natural environment (e.g. bushland, river, beaches or lakes). A score of 1 indicated low concern, while a score of 5 indicated high concern (see Figure 22).

The proportion of respondents indicated that they were concerned in total (those who gave a rating of 4 or 5 out of 5 for this) varied between 43% (amongst the Residential - Structured respondents) to 55% (amongst the Residential – Council YVOC respondents).

The SME respondents were fairly polarised on this issue, with 50% indicating that they were concerned (in total), and 39% indicating that they were unconcerned.

Figure 22: Concern relating to overflows into the community



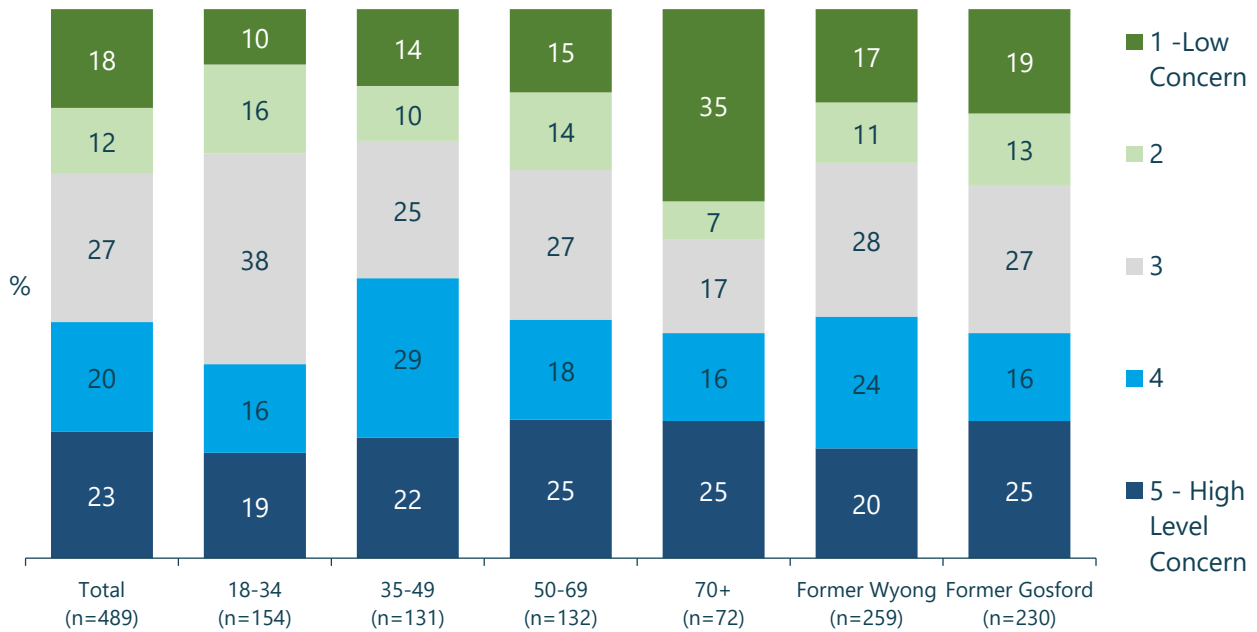
Q. Based on what you have experienced yourself or heard about from others, how concerned are you by the frequency of sewerage overflows (caused by blockages and chokes in the sewer system) that flow into the natural environment (e.g. bushland, river, beaches or lakes):

Base: Respondents with a water and/or sewer connection (Residential - Structured n=489; Residential – Council YVOC n=578; SME n=109)

Looking at the results from the Residential - Structured survey in more detail (see Figure 23) it can be seen that respondents aged 35 to 49 were the most likely to indicate concern over overflows into the community (51% gave a rating of 4 or 5 out of 5) while the 70+ year olds were the most likely to indicate low/no concern in this area (42% gave a rating of 1 or 2 out of 5).

Concern was fairly consistent by location.

Figure 23: Concern relating to overflows into the community (Residential – Structured)



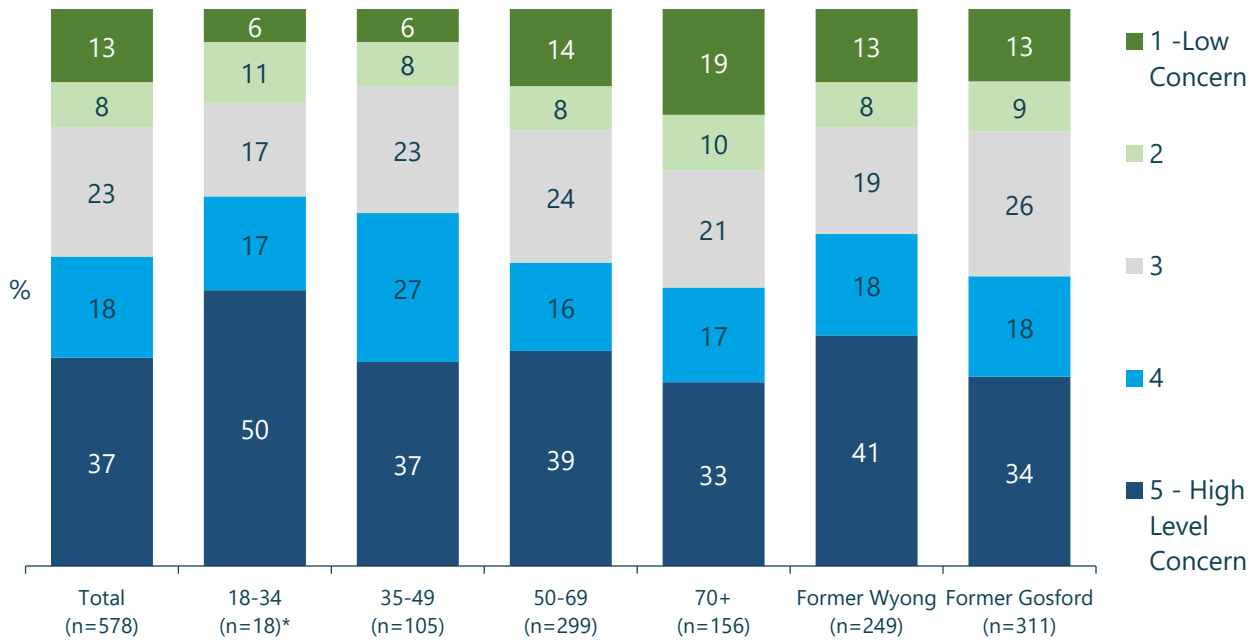
Q. Based on what you have experienced yourself or heard about from others, how concerned are you by the frequency of sewage overflows (caused by blockages and chokes in the sewer system) that flow into the natural environment (e.g. bushland, river, beaches or lakes):

Base: Respondents with a water and/or sewer connection (Residential - Structured n=489)

Looking at the results from the Residential – Council YVOC survey in more detail (see Figure 24) it can be seen that concern level decrease with increasing age. Excluding the 18 to 34 year old group (due to the small sample size), total concern varied between 64% (amongst the 35 to 49 year olds) and 50% (amongst the 70+ year olds).

Respondents in the former Wyong Council area showed slightly more concern than those in the former Gosford Council area (59% and 51% respectively).

Figure 24: Concern relating to overflows into the community (Residential – Council YVOC)



Q. Based on what you have experienced yourself or heard about from others, how concerned are you by the frequency of sewage overflows (caused by blockages and chokes in the sewer system) that flow into the natural environment (e.g. bushland, river, beaches or lakes):

Base: Respondents with a water and/or sewer connection (Residential – Council YVOC n=578)

Qualitative outcomes – Sewerage overflows

When the issue of sewerage overflows was prompted within the group discussions there was a considerable degree of concern expressed about the impact that these overflows can have – particularly in relation to beaches after heavy rain.

“When there is heavy rainfall it seems to overload the local pumping station.” Former Gosford Council area resident

“I have seen the odd bit of toilet paper floating at the beach. And sometimes it is closed because of the sewerage getting into the water. It’s not ideal. You would expect that in poorer countries, not in Australia.” Former Wyong Council area resident

Two participants indicated that they had had a personal experience at their own property.

- For one of these, the immediate response by Central Coast Council was praised, but the follow-up for ‘filling the hole’ and ‘laying turf’ down was said to be delayed (they assumed due to Council’s current financial situation).
- The other participant mentioned that they had an experience with a sewerage overflow when there was flooding in the area.

“We get sewerage overcharge into our garage. Once every 6-12 months. Whenever there is a lot of flooding in Tuggarah.” Former Wyong Council area resident.

5.3 Water and Sewerage Service Performance

Survey respondents were asked to think about their water and sewerage services over the past 12 months, and were asked to indicate their satisfaction in two performance areas – using a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is low satisfaction and 5 is high satisfaction.

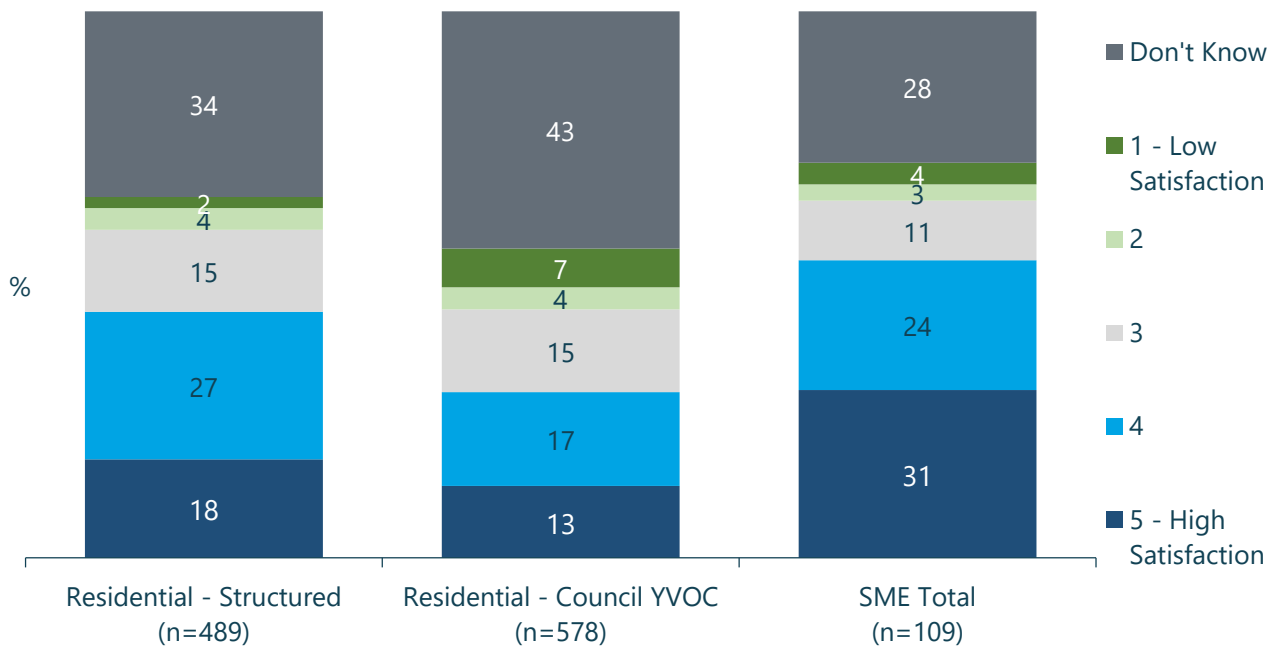
Being easy to deal with

While satisfaction with Central Coast Council being ‘easy to deal with’ does not appear to be particularly high, many respondents were unable to rate this aspect (between 28% and 43% indicated that they were unable to do so).

Total satisfaction levels (that is scores 4 and 5 out of 5) varied between 40% (amongst the Residential – Council YVOC respondents) to 55% (amongst the SME respondents).

Importantly, dissatisfaction levels only varied between 6% (amongst the Residential – Structured respondents) and 11% (amongst the Residential – Council YVOC respondents).

Figure 25: Satisfaction with: Being easy to deal with

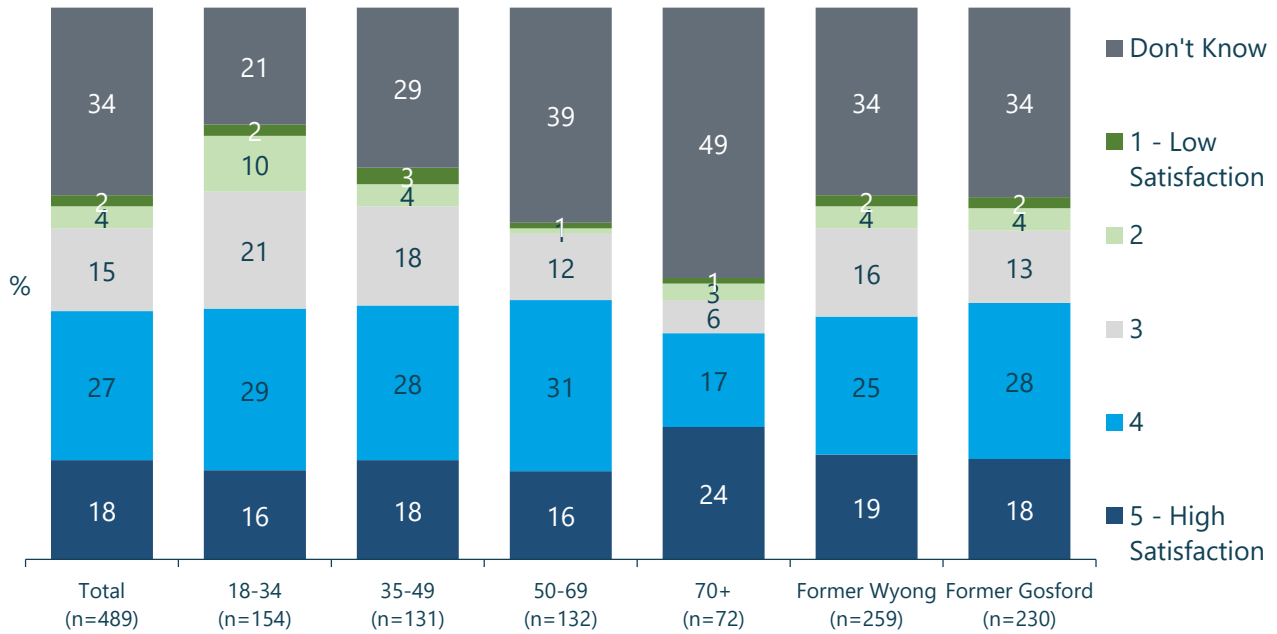


Q. Still thinking about the last 12 months, how satisfied have you been with your water and sewerage supplier in the following ways (where 1 is low satisfaction and 5 is high satisfaction):

Base: Respondents with a water and/or sewer connection (Residential - Structured n=489; Residential – Council YVOC n=578; SME n=109)

Looking at the results from the Residential - Structured survey in more detail (see Figure 26) it can be seen that satisfaction levels were quite consistent by age and location, with the proportion of 'Don't Know' responses varying considerably – from 21% (amongst the 18 to 34 year olds) to 49% (amongst the 70+ year olds).

Figure 26: Satisfaction with: Being easy to deal with (Residential – Structured)



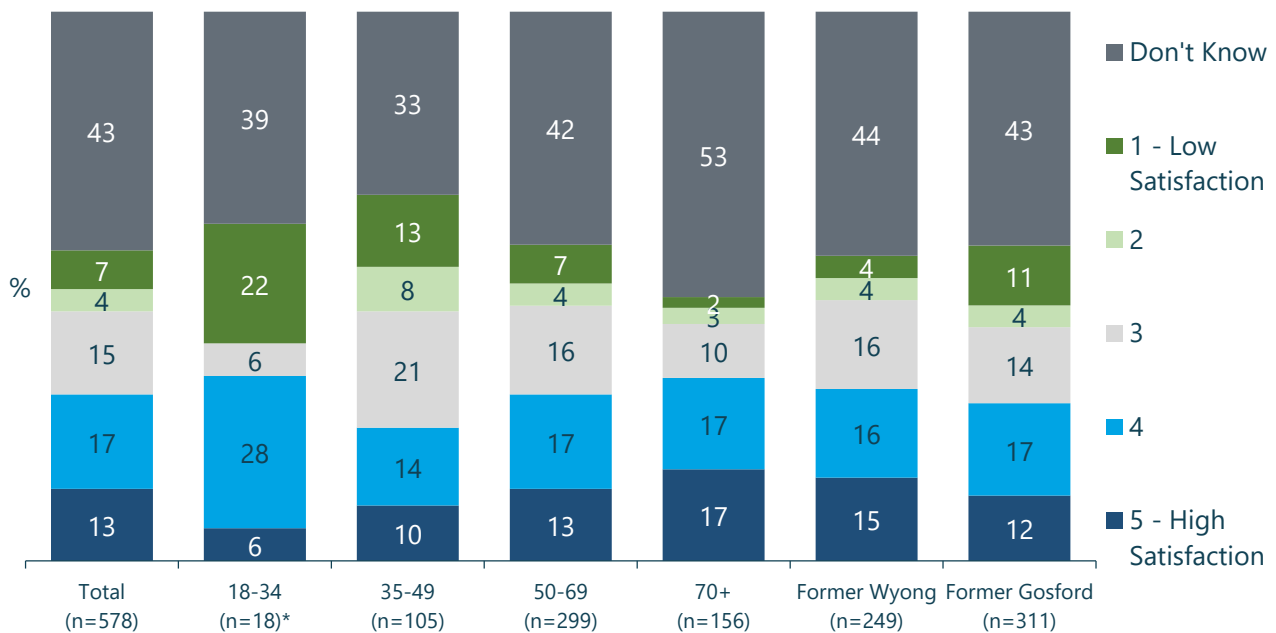
Q. Still thinking about the last 12 months, how satisfied have you been with your water and sewerage supplier in the following ways (where 1 is low satisfaction and 5 is high satisfaction):

Base: Respondents with a water and/or sewer connection (Residential - Structured n=489)

Looking at the results from the Residential – Council YVOC survey in more detail (see Figure 27) there was a little more variation evident, with satisfaction by age varying between 34% (amongst the 70+ year olds) and 42% (amongst the 50 to 69 year olds) – excluding the 18 to 34 year old group (due to the small sample size), Again, the proportion of ‘Don’t Know’ responses increased with increasing age.

While relatively small in overall terms, the proportion of dissatisfied respondents was higher amongst the former Gosford Council area respondents than it was amongst the former Wyong Council area respondents (15% and 8% respectively).

Figure 27: Satisfaction with: Being easy to deal with (Residential – Council YVOC)



Q. Still thinking about the last 12 months, how satisfied have you been with your water and sewerage supplier in the following ways (where 1 is low satisfaction and 5 is high satisfaction):

Base: Respondents with a water and/or sewer connection (Residential – Council YVOC n=578)

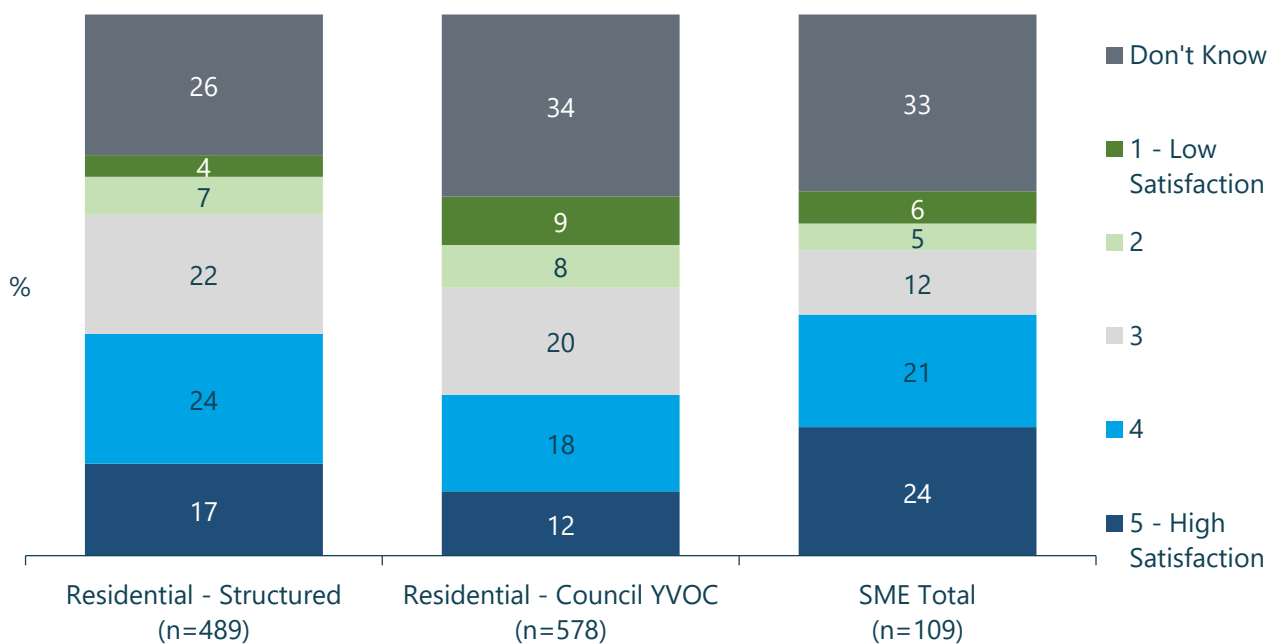
Having information available in relation to any outages/service interruptions

While satisfaction with Central Coast Council ‘having information available in relation to any outages/service interruptions’ does not appear to be particularly high, this is again primarily due to many respondents being unable to rate this aspect (between 26% and 34% indicated that they were unable to do so).

Total satisfaction levels varied between 30% (amongst the Residential – Council YVOC respondents) to 45% (amongst the SME respondents).

Dissatisfaction was just above the one in ten level (11% for both the Residential – Structured and SME respondents, and 17% for the Residential – Council YVOC respondents).

Figure 28: Satisfaction with: Having information available in relation to any outages/service interruptions



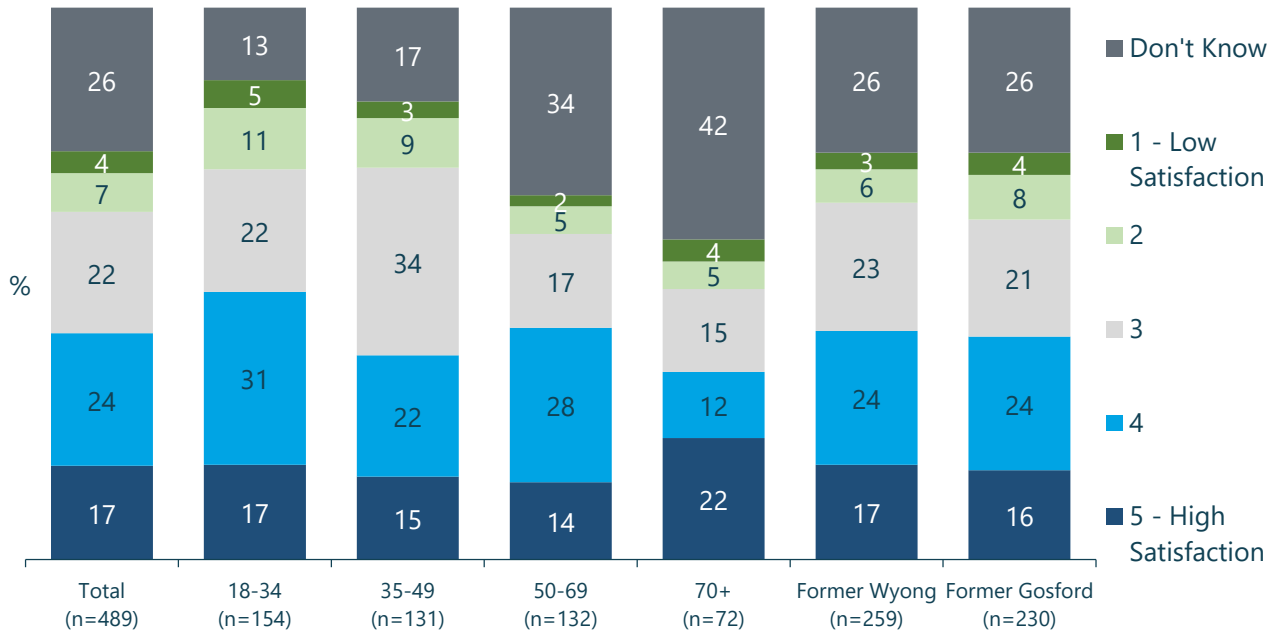
Q. Still thinking about the last 12 months, how satisfied have you been with your water and sewerage supplier in the following ways (where 1 is low satisfaction and 5 is high satisfaction):

Base: Respondents with a water and/or sewer connection (Residential - Structured n=489; Residential – Council YVOC n=578; SME n=109)

Looking at the results from the Residential - Structured survey in more detail (see Figure 29) it can be seen that satisfaction by age ranged from 34% (amongst the 70+ year olds) to 48% (amongst the 18 to 34 year olds). However, the 'Don't Know' responses varied between 13% (amongst the 18 to 34 year olds) to 42% (amongst the 70+ year olds).

There were no real differences by location.

Figure 29: Satisfaction with: Having information available in relation to any outages/service interruptions (Residential – Structured)



Q. Still thinking about the last 12 months, how satisfied have you been with your water and sewerage supplier in the following ways (where 1 is low satisfaction and 5 is high satisfaction):

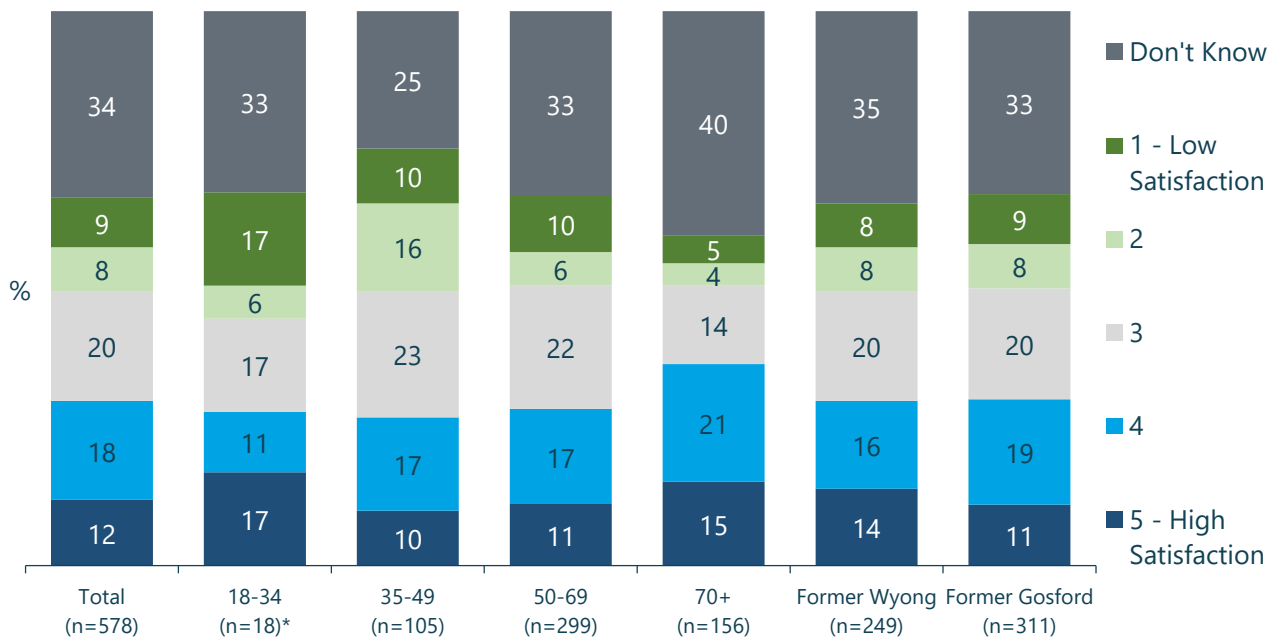
Base: Respondents with a water and/or sewer connection (Residential - Structured n=489)

Looking at the results from the Residential – Council YVOC survey in more detail (see Figure 30) it can be seen that satisfaction by age ranged from 27% (amongst the 35 to 59 year olds) to 36% (amongst the 70+ year olds) – excluding the 18 to 34 year old group (due to the small sample size).

The ‘Don’t Know’ responses were also sizable amongst the Residential – Council YVOC sample, varying between 25% (amongst the 35 to 59 year olds) and 40% (amongst the 70+ year olds).

There were no real differences by location.

Figure 30: Satisfaction with: Having information available in relation to any outages/service interruptions (Residential – Council YVOC)



Q. Still thinking about the last 12 months, how satisfied have you been with your water and sewerage supplier in the following ways (where 1 is low satisfaction and 5 is high satisfaction):

Base: Respondents with a water and/or sewer connection (Residential – Council YVOC n=578)

6. Drainage

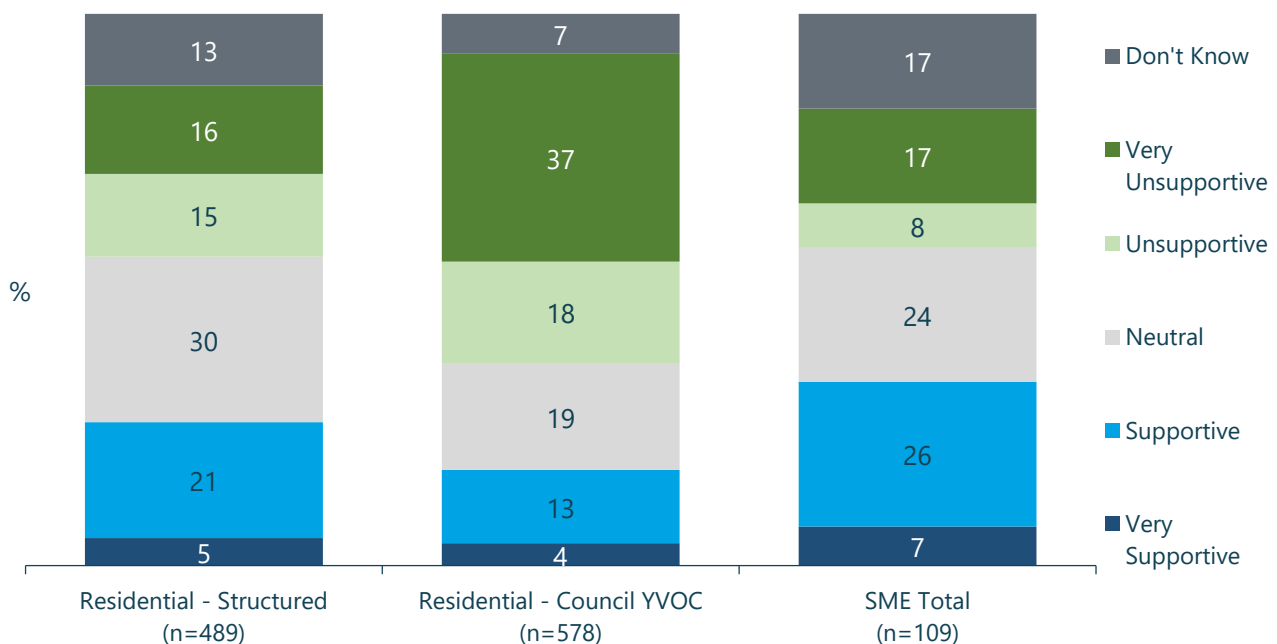
6.1 The Determination and Issuing of Drainage Charges

Survey respondents were asked to indicate their level of support for moving the stormwater drainage charge from the water bills to general Council rates – using a scale from very supportive to very unsupportive.

While the Residential - Structured respondents and the SME respondents were reasonably polarised in their response to the idea of Central Coast Council determining their drainage charge and issuing this charge through general rates – the majority of the Residential – Council YVOC respondents were opposed to it.

Within the Residential – Structured survey 26% of respondents supported the idea, while 31% opposed it, and in the SME survey the balance was switched slightly in the other direction (with 33% supporting it and 25% opposing it), yet in the Residential – Council YVOC survey the majority of respondents opposed this idea (55%, with only 17% support indicated).

Figure 31: Support for a change in the determination and issuing of drainage charges



Q. At the moment the stormwater drainage charge is included in your water bill and the pricing is determined by IPART. IPART have suggested that Council investigates the possibility of having the pricing set by Central Coast Council as part of the general rates, to be in-line with how other Councils charge for this. In principle, if the amount was to remain at a similar level, how supportive would you be for the stormwater drainage fee to be set by Central Coast Council under general Council rates? Would you be...

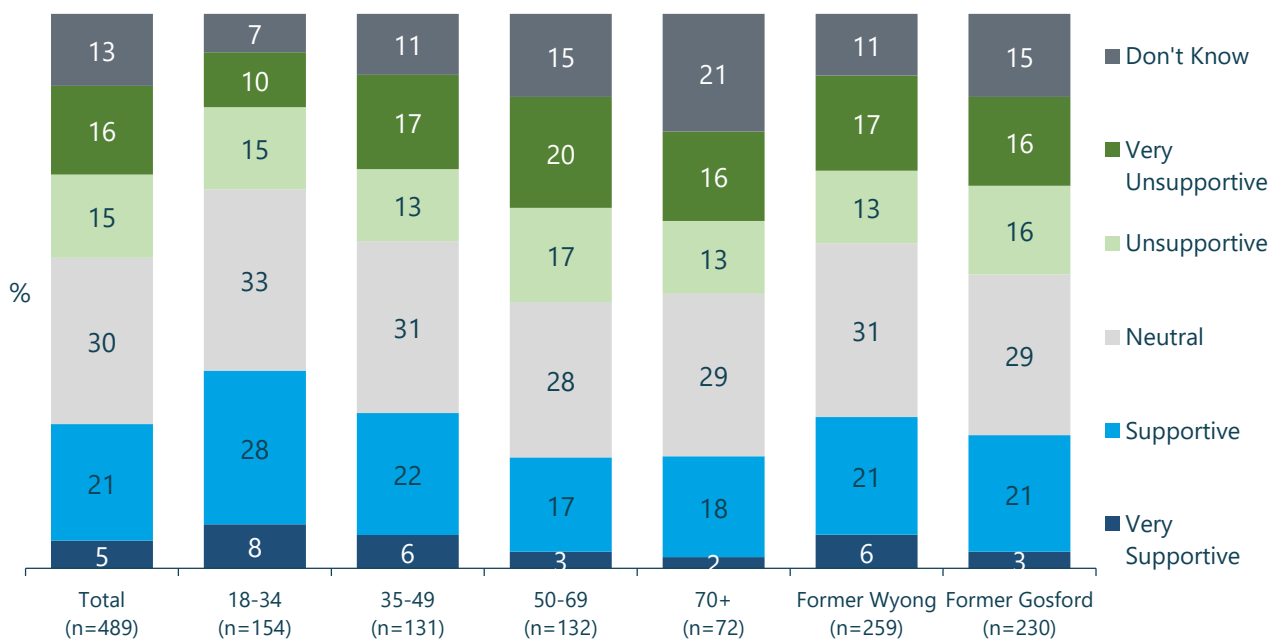
Base: Respondents with a water and/or sewer connection (Residential - Structured n=489; Residential – Council YVOC n=578; SME n=109)

Looking at the results from the Residential - Structured survey in more detail (see Figure 32) it can be seen that support by age ranged from 20% (amongst the 50 to 69 and the 70+ year olds) to 36% (amongst the 18 to 34 year olds). However, the proportion opposed varied between 25% (amongst the 18 to 34 year olds) to 37% (amongst the 50 to 69 year olds).

There were only minor differences by location.

Support amongst those from lower income households was not greatly different, with 23% of those from households with a stated income of under \$42K indicating that they were supportive of this idea, while 27% were unsupportive.

Figure 32: Satisfaction with: Support for a change in the determination and issuing of drainage charges (Residential – Structured)



Q. At the moment the stormwater drainage charge is included in your water bill and the pricing is determined by IPART. IPART have suggested that Council investigates the possibility of having the pricing set by Central Coast Council as part of the general rates, to be in-line with how other Councils charge for this. In principle, if the amount was to remain at a similar level, how supportive would you be for the stormwater drainage fee to be set by Central Coast Council under general Council rates? Would you be...

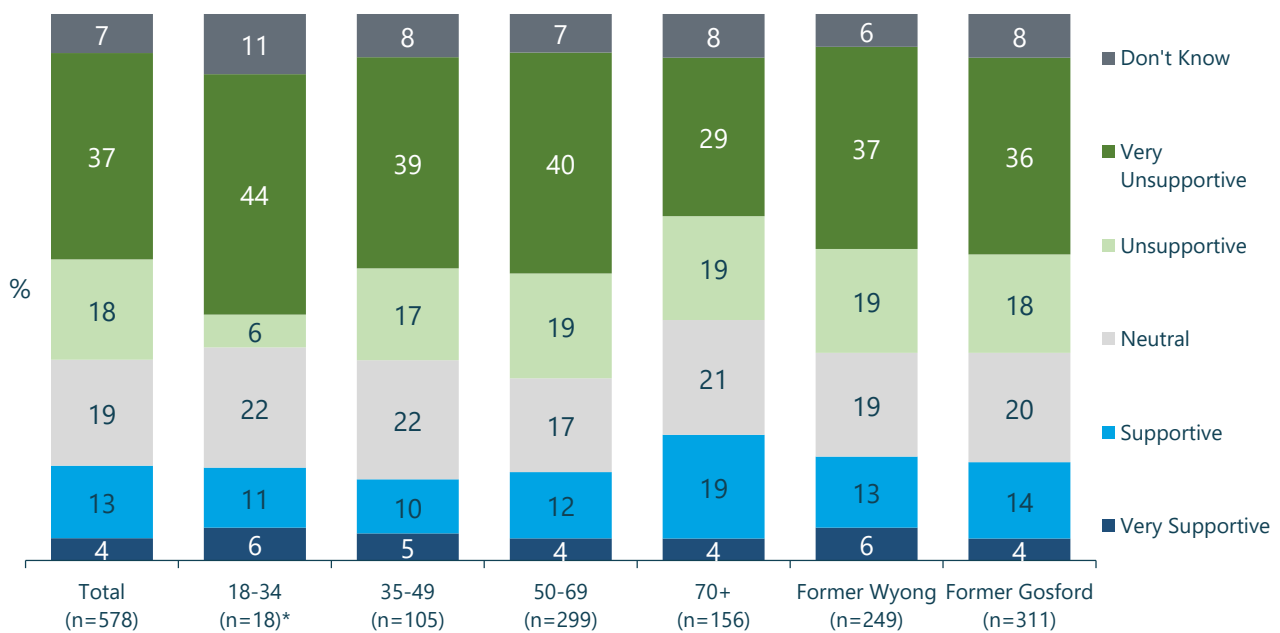
Base: Respondents with a water and/or sewer connection (Residential - Structured n=489)

Looking at the results from the Residential – Council YVOC survey in more detail (see Figure 33) it can be seen that support by age was relatively low across all sub-groups – peaking at only 23% amongst the 70+ year olds. However, opposition to this idea was consistently high – peaking at 59% amongst the 50 to 69 year olds

There were no real differences by location.

Support amongst those from lower income households was inline with the general support level, with 15% of those from households with a stated income of under \$42K indicating that they were supportive of this idea, while 55% were unsupportive.

Figure 33: Satisfaction with: Support for a change in the determination and issuing of drainage charges (Residential – Council YVOC)



Q. At the moment the stormwater drainage charge is included in your water bill and the pricing is determined by IPART. IPART have suggested that Council investigates the possibility of having the pricing set by Central Coast Council as part of the general rates, to be in-line with how other Councils charge for this. In principle, if the amount was to remain at a similar level, how supportive would you be for the stormwater drainage fee to be set by Central Coast Council under general Council rates? Would you be...

Base: Respondents with a water and/or sewer connection (Residential – Council YVOC n=578)

Qualitative outcomes – Drainage charge determination and billing

The outcome in the group discussions was very similar. Some didn't mind whether they paid the drainage charge as part of their water bill or rates as it would be the same level (the amount was seen to be the key factor in this response).

*"Whether you pay Peter or Paul it's not going to be any cheaper. I don't see any issue with it."
Former Wyong Council area resident*

However, due to the recent financial issues experience by Council, others were against this idea as they lacked confidence and trust in Council's ability to manage the drainage budget and to minimise the cost to the community.

"If council has control could they just charge whatever they want?" Former Gosford Council area resident

"Council has to recognise that they suffer from a huge credibility issue at the moment." Former Gosford Council area resident

"I think recently we've seen how well the Council manages their money and frankly I don't trust them to put the rates up higher than they need to be." Former Wyong Council area resident

It was mentioned by some renters that if it was moved to the rates bill then their landlord would probably put their rent up to account for any increase in the rates that the landlord would have to pay (assuming the tenant was currently paying the water bill).

A couple of participants also expressed frustration about paying a charge for drainage when they don't have kerbs and guttering in their area. They were convinced that this meant there was no drainage service in their area, and so they shouldn't be paying for it.

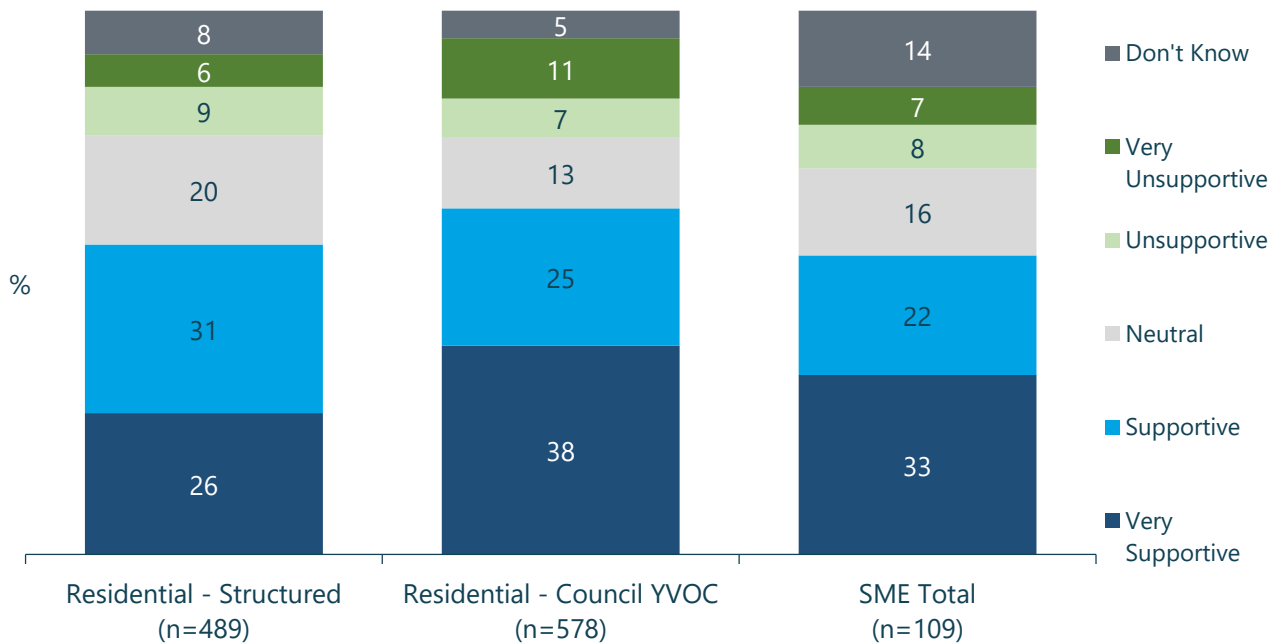
6.2 Contributions to the Cost of Drainage Infrastructure

Survey respondents were informed that some residents currently don't contribute to the cost of drainage infrastructure, and were asked to indicate their level of support for all Central Coast residents contributing to this cost through a drainage charge.

The majority of all respondents showed support for the idea of all residents/property owners contributing to the funding of drainage infrastructure. This varied from 55% of the SME respondents to 63% of the Residential – Council YVOC respondents.

Opposition to this idea was relatively limited – varying between 15% (amongst both the Residential – Structured and SME respondents) to just 18% (amongst the residential – Council YVOC respondents).

Figure 34: Support for all residents contributing to the cost of drainage infrastructure



Q. At the moment, due to the way drainage charges were originally set up, a small proportion of the Council's population does not contribute to the funding of drainage infrastructure. To what extent do you support the idea of all property owners within the Central Coast region contributing towards that cost? Would you be...

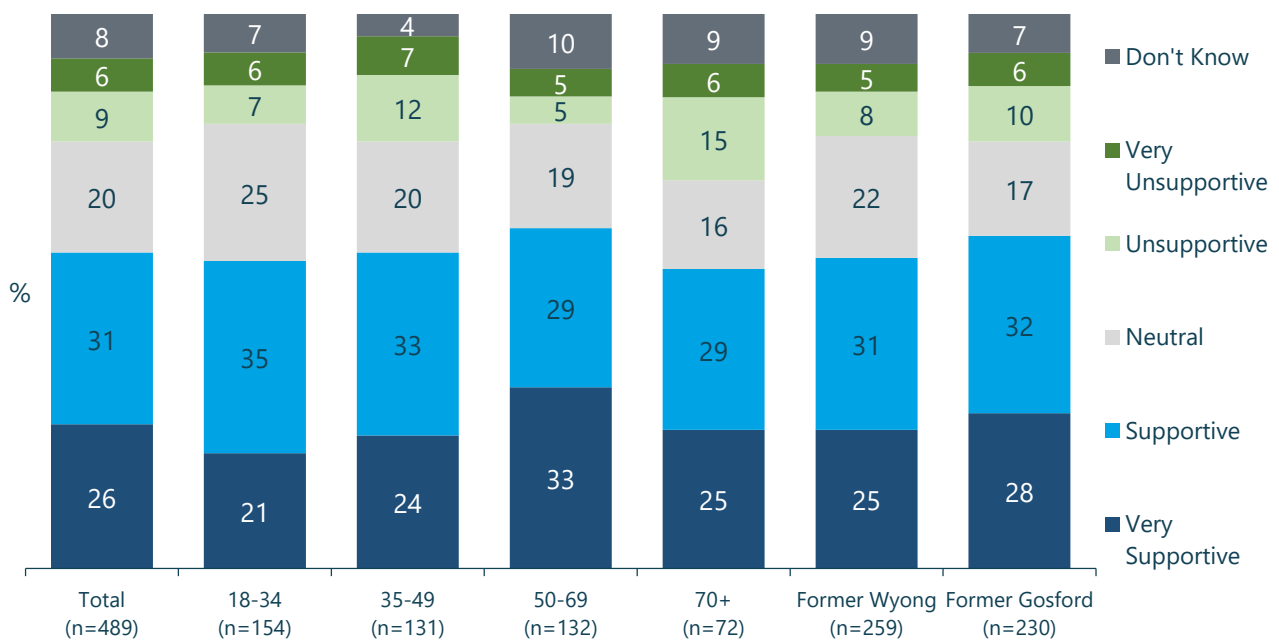
Base: Respondents with a water and/or sewer connection (Residential - Structured n=489; Residential – Council YVOC n=578; SME n=109)

Looking at the results from the Residential - Structured survey in more detail (see Figure 35) it can be seen that support was fairly consistent across all sub-groups depicted.

The highest level of support was from the 50 to 69 year old respondents (62%), while the highest level of opposition was amongst those aged 70+ (at only 21%).

Support amongst those from lower income households was slightly lower, with 52% of those from households with a stated income of under \$42K indicating that they were supportive of this idea, while 21% were unsupportive.

Figure 35: Satisfaction with: Support for a change in the determination and issuing of drainage charges (Residential – Structured)



Q. At the moment, due to the way drainage charges were originally set up, a small proportion of the Council's population does not contribute to the funding of drainage infrastructure. To what extent do you support the idea of all property owners within the Central Coast region contributing towards that cost? Would you be....

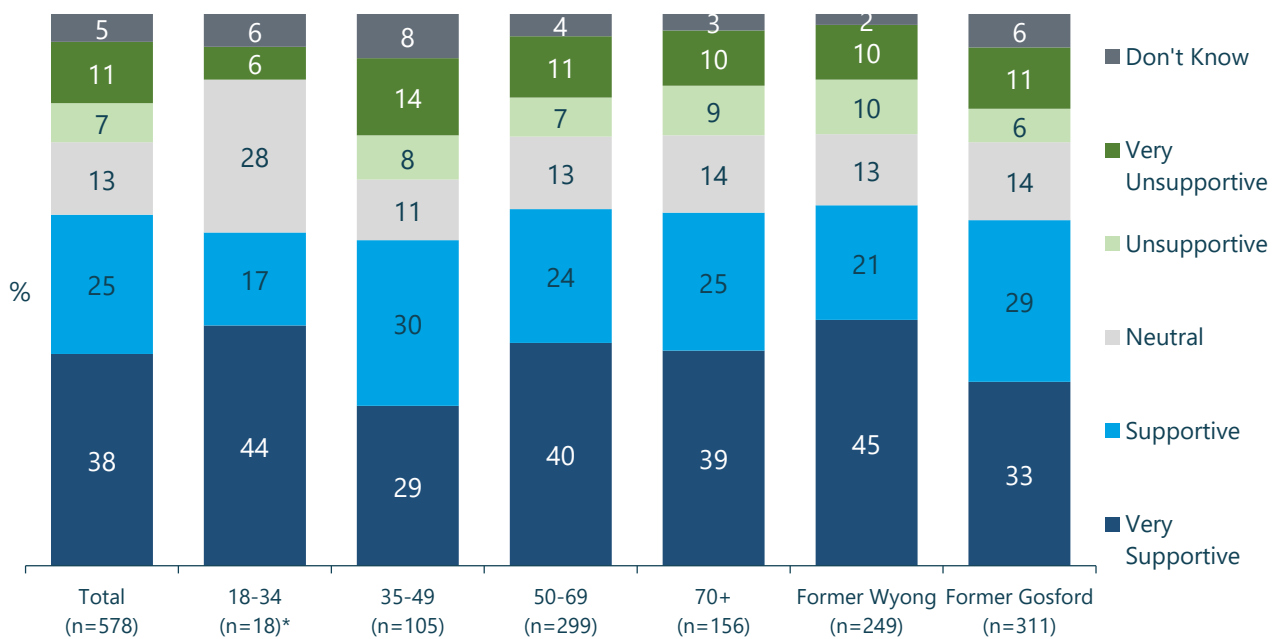
Base: Respondents with a water and/or sewer connection (Residential - Structured n=489)

Looking at the results from the Residential – Council YVOC survey in more detail (see Figure 36) it can be seen that support was also fairly consistent across all sub-groups depicted.

The highest level of support was from the former Wyong Council area respondents (66%), while the highest level of opposition was amongst those aged 35 to 59 (at only 22%).

Support amongst those from lower income households was slightly lower, with 57% of those from households with a stated income of under \$42K indicating that they were supportive of this idea, while 24% were unsupportive.

Figure 36: Satisfaction with: Support for a change in the determination and issuing of drainage charges (Residential – Council YVOC)



Q. At the moment, due to the way drainage charges were originally set up, a small proportion of the Council's population does not contribute to the funding of drainage infrastructure. To what extent do you support the idea of all property owners within the Central Coast region contributing towards that cost? Would you be....

Base: Respondents with a water and/or sewer connection (Residential – Council YVOC n=578)

Qualitative outcomes – Common drainage charge for all customers

Within the group discussions there was strong support for the idea of all property owners within Central Coast region to be contributing towards drainage costs.

Raising this idea in both groups led to questions being raised about why some customers have not been contributing to this cost to date – and they wanted to know who isn't paying and why they weren't paying.

"If they have drainage then they should pay!" Former Wyong Council area resident

There was also some confusion about what 'drainage' actually was and what the charge covered - and again a couple of the group participants questioned why they are currently paying a drainage service fee when they don't have kerbs and guttering in their area.

"I think a lot more work has to be done on this before they charge. In lots of places they don't even have a drain, just grass! Why are we paying for something that doesn't even exist?" Former Wyong Council area resident

One participant recognised the confusion relating to this service area.

"I don't think people understand how the money is spent and what benefit they are getting from that." Former Gosford Council area resident

Ultimately though, participants recognised that the charge needed to be made, and they were happy for everyone to contribute for the greater good and wellbeing of the community.

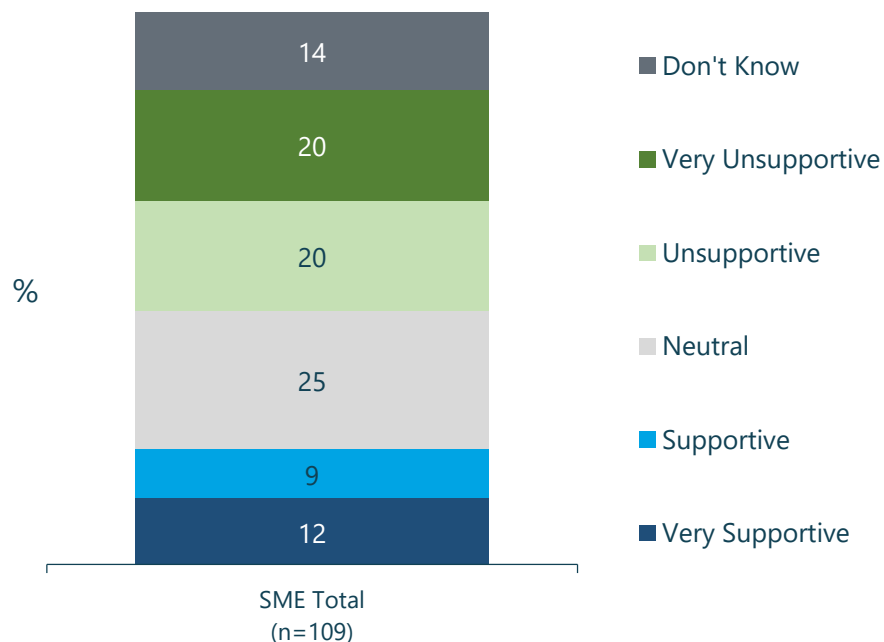
6.3 Support for all business properties receiving the same drainage charge

The SME survey respondents were informed that if a business resides in a 'business only / non-residential' complex, then the drainage charge is based on the total land size of the complex. It is then divided up based on the number of businesses in the complex. However, if a business resides in a complex that also includes residential premises, then each property is charged a set amount. They were then asked to indicate their level of support for all business properties being charged the same set amount.

Looking at the results from these SME respondents (see Figure 37) it can be seen that support was relatively low (21% in total) while opposition was more marked (40% in total).

A relatively large proportion of respondents were neutral in their response, or did not know whether or not to support/oppose it (39% in total).

Figure 37: Satisfaction with: Support for all business properties having the same drainage charge



Q. Currently if a business resides in a 'business only / non-residential' complex, then the drainage charge is based on the total land size of the complex. It is then divided up based on the number of businesses in the complex. If a business resides in a complex that also includes residential premises, then each property is charged a set amount. To what extent do you support all business properties being charged the same set amount? Would you be....

Base: Respondents with a water and/or sewer connection (SME n=109)

7. Scarcity Pricing

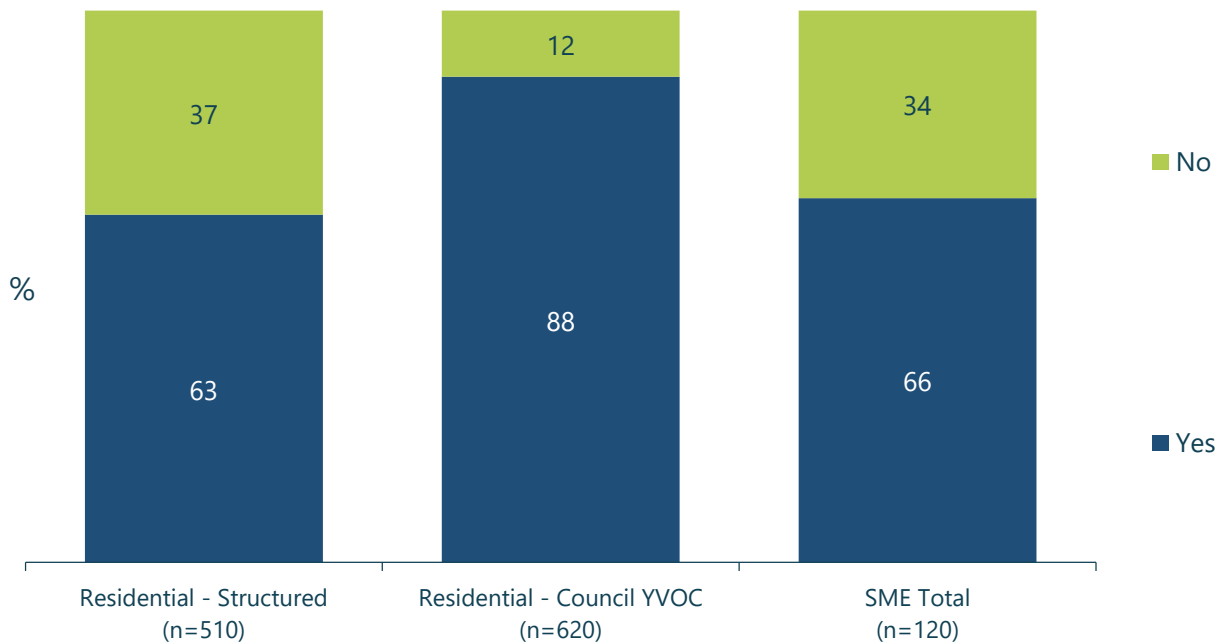
7.1 Bill Detail Awareness

Survey respondents were informed that there is both a Fixed and Usage component to their water bill, and were asked to indicate if they were previously aware of this.

As is shown in Figure 38, the majority of all respondents indicated that they were aware that there were both fixed and usage based charges on a standard water bill. However, more than a third of Residential – Structured respondents (37%) were unaware of these separate components.

The Residential – Council YVOC respondents had the highest level of prior awareness of this (88%).

Figure 38: Awareness of bill details



Q. Central Coast Council charges customers for water and sewerage services. Prices for these services are set by IPART, who is the independent pricing regulator in NSW. For their water services, customers pay a FIXED charge per property, and a USAGE charge that varies with the volume of water used by the property. So customers can control their overall bill by varying the amount of water that they use. Were you aware of this?

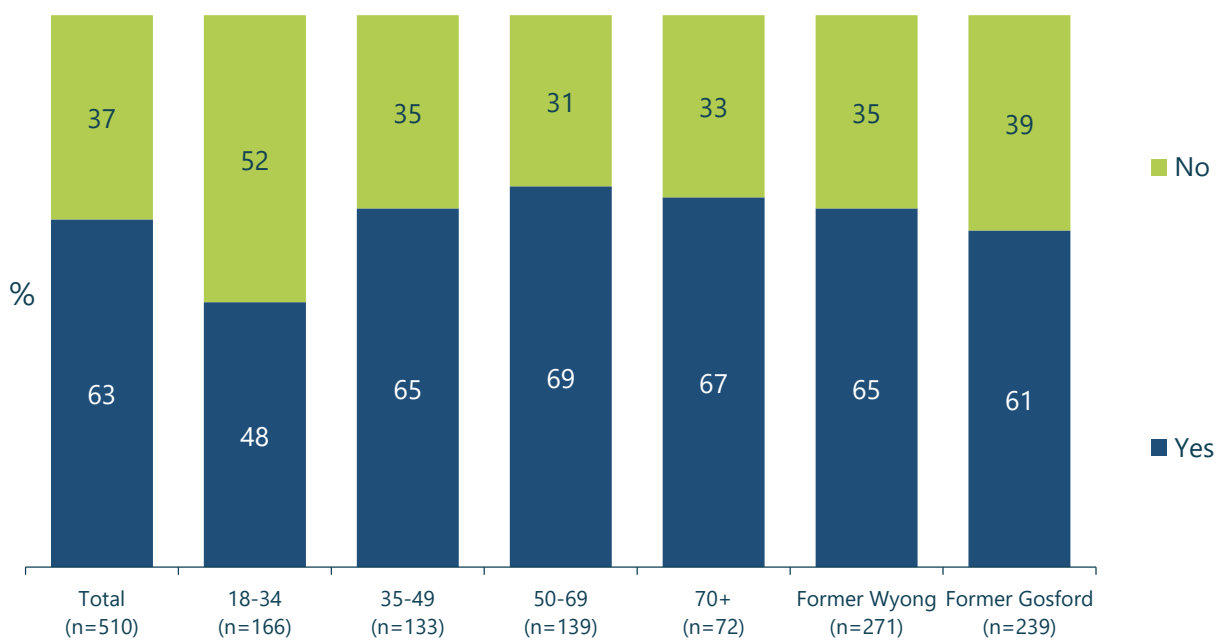
Base: All respondents (Residential - Structured n=510; Residential – Council YVOC n=620; SME n=120)

Looking at the results from the Residential - Structured survey in more detail (see Figure 39) it can be seen that awareness was reasonably high for all age groups – with the exception of the 18 to 34 year old respondents with more than half 52% indicating they were unaware.

Awareness was also relatively consistent by location (65% in the former Wyong Council area, and 61% in the former Gosford Council area).

There was a marginally lower level of awareness amongst those from lower income households, with 60% of those from households with a stated income of under \$42K indicating that they were aware of fixed and usage charges on water bills.

Figure 39: Awareness of bill details (Residential – Structured)



Q. Central Coast Council charges customers for water and sewerage services. Prices for these services are set by IPART, who is the independent pricing regulator in NSW. For their water services, customers pay a FIXED charge per property, and a USAGE charge that varies with the volume of water used by the property. So customers can control their overall bill by varying the amount of water that they use. Were you aware of this?

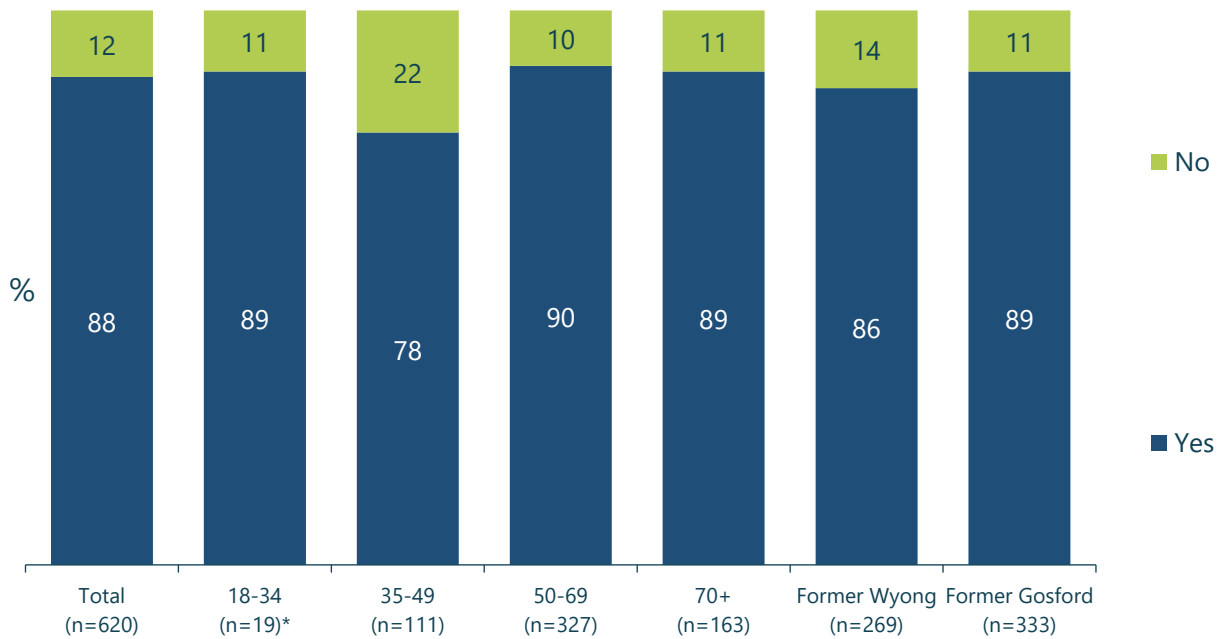
Base: All respondents (n=510)

Looking at the results from the Residential – Council YVOC survey in more detail (see Figure 40) it can be seen awareness was much higher amongst these survey respondents.

Awareness was also relatively consistent by age group – with the exception of the 35 to 49 year olds (78%, compared to 83% in total).

There was a slightly lower level of awareness amongst those from lower income households, with 83% of those from households with a stated income of under \$42K indicating that they were aware of fixed and usage charges on water bills.

Figure 40: Awareness of bill details (Residential – Council YVOC)



Q. Central Coast Council charges customers for water and sewerage services. Prices for these services are set by IPART, who is the independent pricing regulator in NSW. For their water services, customers pay a FIXED charge per property, and a USAGE charge that varies with the volume of water used by the property. So customers can control their overall bill by varying the amount of water that they use. Were you aware of this?

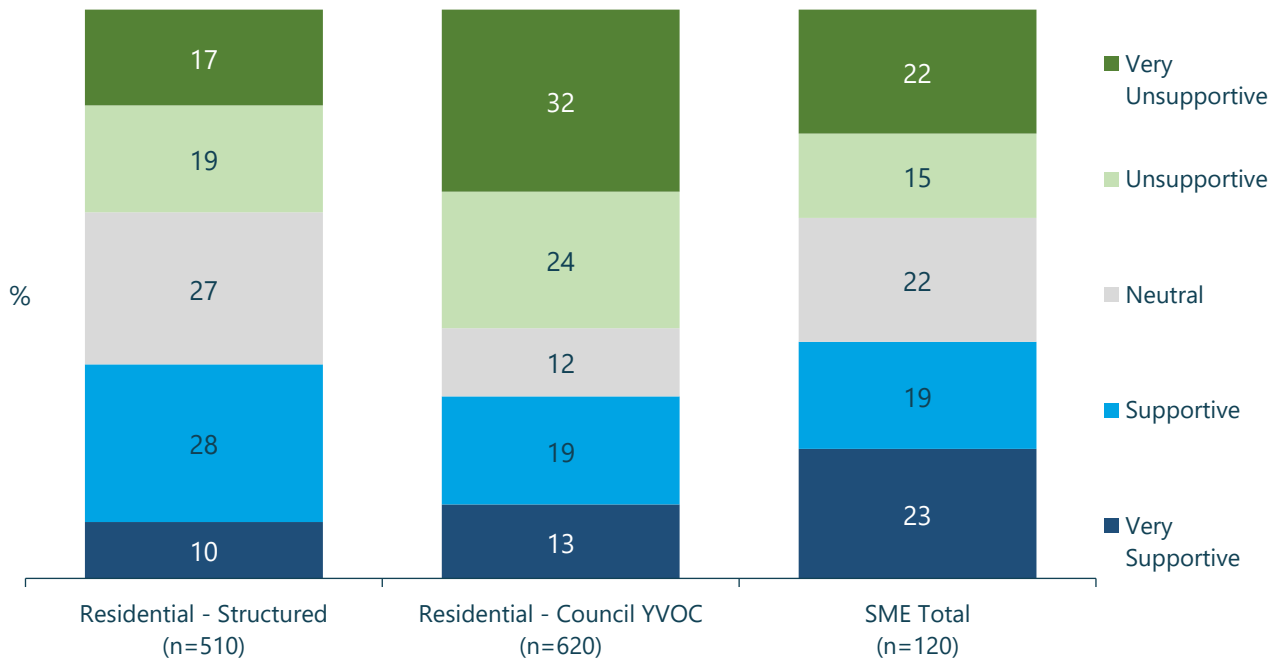
Base: All respondents (n=620)

7.2 Support for Scarcity Pricing

Survey respondents were provided with information relating to the scarcity pricing concept (including that there would be an increase in the usage charge for water during times of drought) and were asked to indicate a level of support/opposition for the idea.

As is shown in Figure 41, while there were fairly mixed reactions to the idea of increasing the usage charge for water during times of drought amongst both the structured residential and SME respondents (38% of Residential – Structured respondents supported the idea and 36% opposed it, while 42% of the SME respondents supported it and 37% opposed it), the majority of the Council - YVOC respondents were opposed to it (56%, with 32% indicating support).

Figure 41: Support for scarcity pricing



Q. In response to our variable climate, some other water providers have moved towards a pricing system that involves increasing the USAGE charge for water during times of drought. This means is that when water reserves run low, there is an increase in the USAGE price for water. Increasing the USAGE price then encourages residents to use less water – it generally doesn’t result in an increase in revenue for the provider because people use less and the cost to supply water also increases when water reserves are low. Central Coast Council is interested in knowing how supportive you would be of the introduction of this pricing system. They are proposing that when the dam levels fall below 50% the USAGE price for water increases. If a business didn’t reduce their consumption pattern, this could result in an increase of around \$10 per quarter on the average bill when dam levels are lower - however, the exact USAGE and FIXED charges would be determined by IPART. How supportive are you of Central Coast Council introducing this pricing system (increased usage charge during times of drought)?

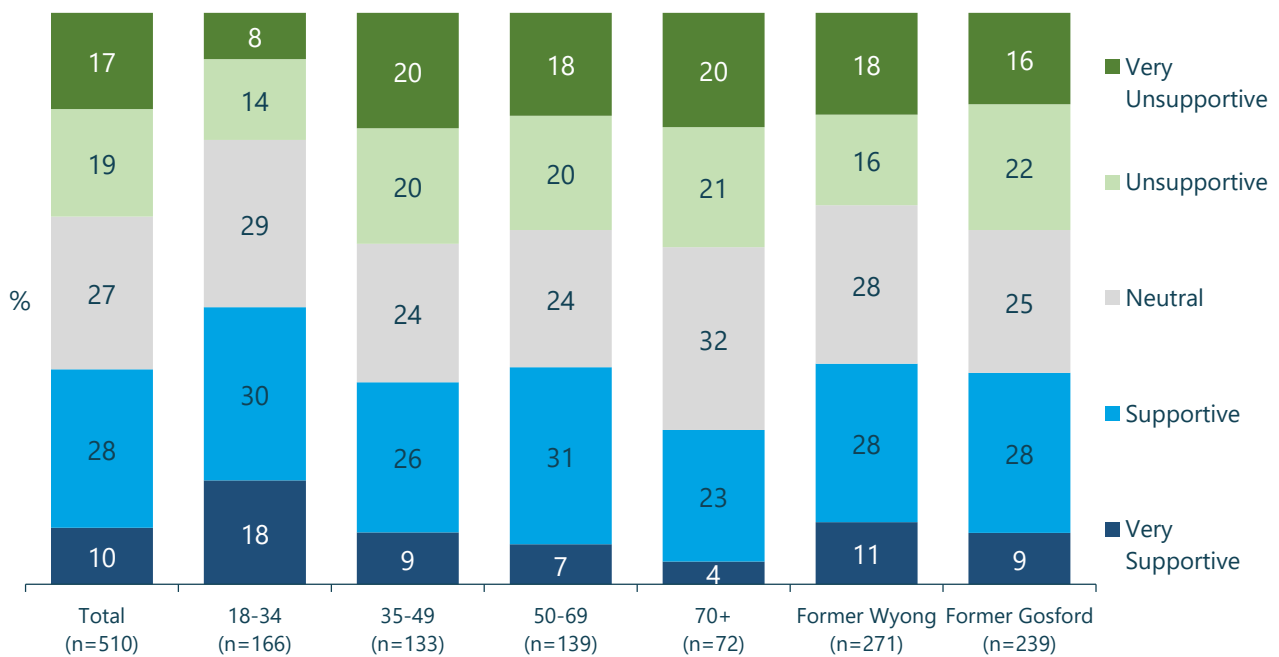
Base: All respondents (Residential - Structured n=510; Residential – Council YVOC n=620; SME n=120)

Looking at the results from the Residential - Structured survey in more detail (see Figure 42) it can be seen that support for the scarcity pricing concept was highest amongst the 18 to 34 year old respondents (48%), and lowest amongst the 70+ year old respondents (27%). Not surprisingly the opposition levels were highest for those aged 70+ (41%) and lowest for those aged 18 to 34 (22%).

Support and opposition levels were fairly even by location.

Support expressed by those from lower income households was inline with the total community, with 35% of those from households with a stated income of under \$42K indicating that they were supportive, while 33% were opposed to it.

Figure 42: Support for scarcity pricing (Residential – Structured)



Q. How supportive are you of Central Coast Council introducing this pricing system (increased usage charge during times of drought)?

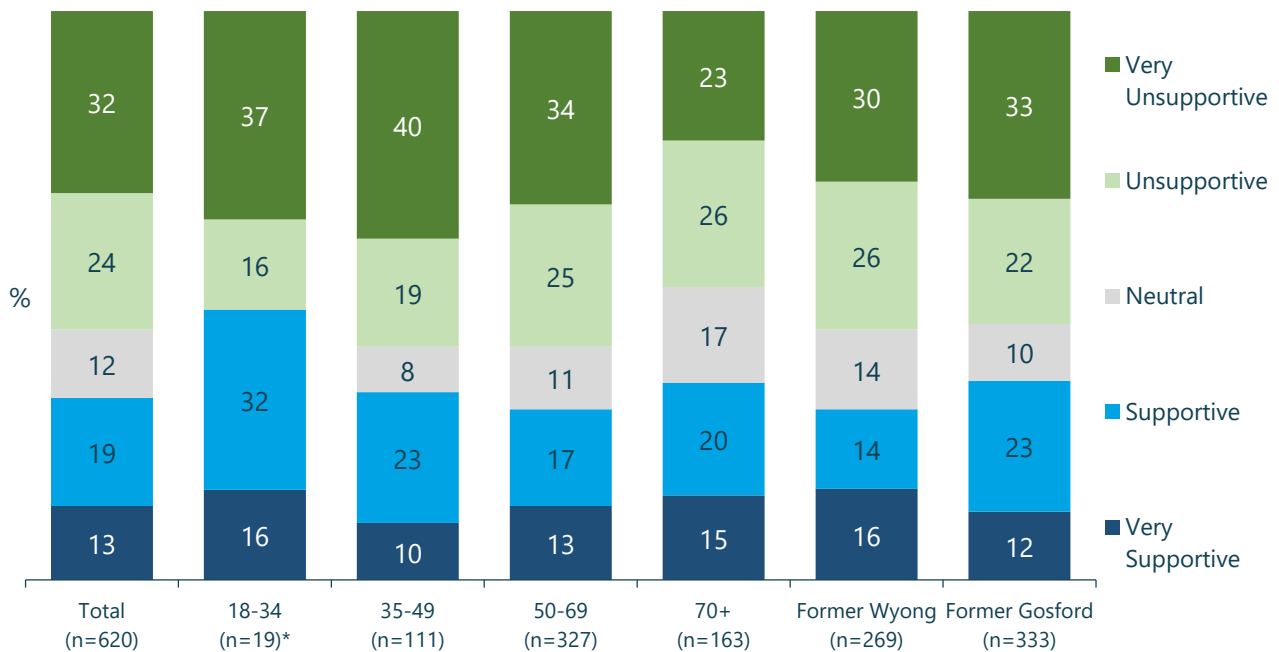
Base: Respondents with a water and/or sewer connection (Residential - Structured n=489)

Looking at the results from the Residential – Council YVOC survey in more detail (see Figure 43) it can be seen that (excluding the 18 to 34 year old group due to the small sample size) support was relatively low amongst all age groups – peaking at only 35% amongst those aged 70+, while opposition was highest amongst those aged 35 to 49 and 50 to 69 (59% for each).

Again, support and opposition were fairly even by location – though there was a slightly higher level of support amongst the former Gosford Council area respondents than the former Wyong Council area respondents (35% and 30% respectively).

There was a slightly lower level of support expressed by those from lower income households, with 25% of those from households with a stated income of under \$42K indicating that they were supportive, while 60% were opposed to it.

Figure 43: Support for scarcity pricing (Residential – Council YVOC)



Q. How supportive are you of Central Coast Council introducing this pricing system (increased usage charge during times of drought)?

Base: Respondents with a water and/or sewer connection (Residential – Council YVOC n=578)

Qualitative outcomes – Scarcity pricing

The group participants also expressed mixed views in relation to the concept of Central Coast Council increasing the usage price of water during times of drought.

On one hand, some thought it would be a good way of increasing awareness of water usage, recognising its value and encouraging people to be more conscious of their water use and thereby save water.

“I think it is an excellent idea, it makes people more aware. If you use it you pay more.” Former Gosford Council area Resident

On the other hand, there was much concern about the potential impact that an increase in the usage price may have on larger families, those on lower incomes, and vulnerable customer in general (such as pensioners). It was thought that other water saving measures could be put in place first (such as water restrictions and more household water tanks) and that this sort of approach may be best left as a back-up.

“I strongly disagree. I think it is taxing the poor. People still need to use a certain amount of water to live.” Former Wyong Council area resident

There was a single suggestion, which many others then agreed with, that ideally households should pay more for usage over a certain pre-set threshold level which could be established for different household sizes – so that if households used more than a typical household of their size they would then be subject to higher prices (i.e. they would be charged more if they are using ‘excess’ water).

In addition, another participant objected to the idea that Council could alter the cost of water – even though they clearly understood the reason behind this concept. They suggested that water is a natural resource that Council shouldn’t have ownership of, and they interpreted the scarcity pricing concept as one that imposed on their view here.

However, once the pricing details of the concept were revealed to the group participants (\$10 a quarter on average) there was slightly more acceptance of the concept in one group, however the participants in the other group remained unsupportive.

“\$10 is nothing to worry about.” Former Gosford Council area resident

There did seem to be consensus that if it were to be adopted, the dam levels falling to 50% was a good level to change the usage price - as when storage falls below that level people started to become concerned about future supply.

The group participants who were in favour of the idea still wanted some provisions made for vulnerable customers and those on low incomes.

Again, at this stage in the discussion process, there were suggestions that other options should be considered ahead of an option like this, such as investing in more dams, making better connections between existing infrastructures, and promoting use of rainwater tanks etc.

Those opposed to the idea tended to feel that people were quite responsible with their water use anyway, and that incentives are a better motivator than penalties in encouraging behavioural change.

8. Price Alignment

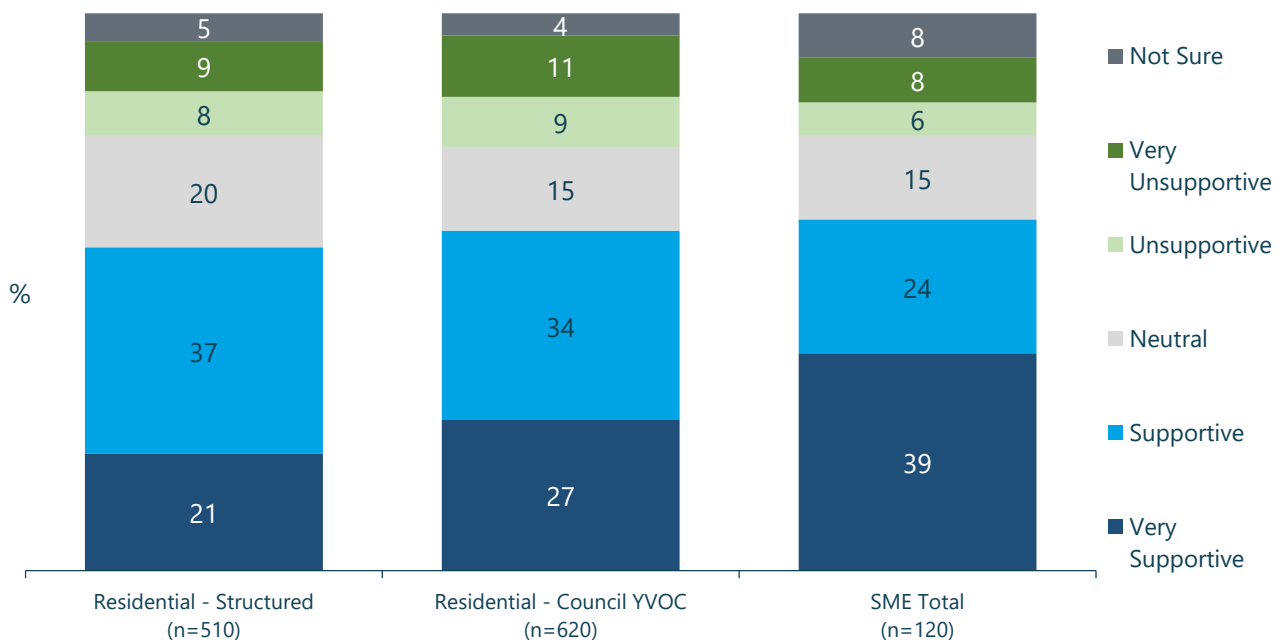
8.1 Reactions to the Price Alignment Concept

Survey respondents were informed that there are different sewerage service prices that customers pay depending on their location (based on the former Wyong and former Gosford Council areas), and were asked to indicate if they were supportive of these prices being aligned so that all customers paid the same amount for this service.

As is shown in Figure 44, the majority of all respondents indicated that they were supportive of the idea of introducing a single sewerage service price for all customers. Support varied between 58% (amongst the Residential – Structured respondents) to 63% (amongst the SME respondents).

The proportion of those opposed to this idea varied between 14% (amongst the SME respondents) to 20% (amongst the Residential – Council YVOC respondents).

Figure 44: Reactions to the general price alignment concept



Q. As you may know, Central Coast Council was formed from the amalgamation of the former Gosford and Wyong Councils. Each of the former Councils had responsibility for the provision of water and sewerage services to their residents. Now that they have been combined they have aligned the prices for water rates, but there are still different sewerage service charges. Historically, residents of the former Gosford City Council paid higher service charges as Gosford Council received more revenue to invest in infrastructure. To support the vision of ‘One – Central Coast’, Central Coast Council is interested to know how supportive you would be for a single price for sewerage services to be introduced for all Central Coast residents in the future, so that any future investment in sewerage services will be based on asset expenditure requirements, not on previous local government area boundaries. How supportive are you of the idea of introducing a single price so that all Central Coast Council residents pay the same amount for their sewerage services?

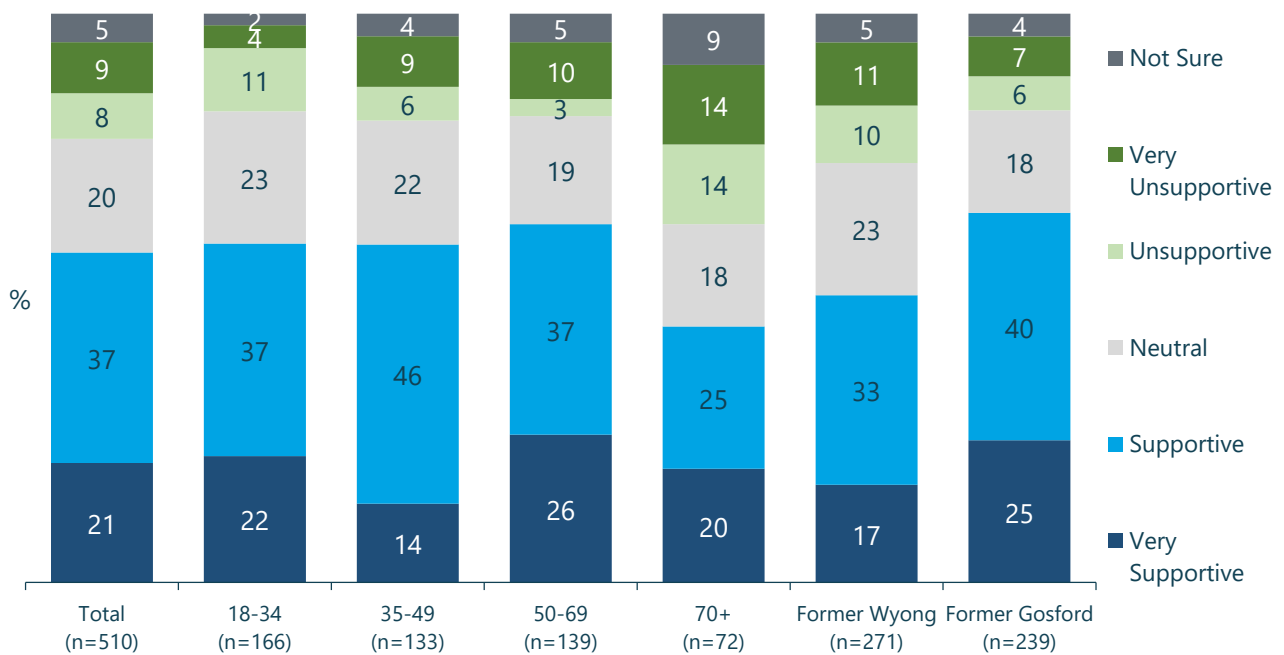
Base: All respondents (Residential - Structured n=510; Residential – Council YVOC n=620; SME n=120)

Looking at the results from the Residential - Structured survey in more detail (see Figure 45) it can be seen that the 70+ year old age group were the only ones without majority support for this concept (45% supported it while 28% opposed it).

It can also be seen that, while there was majority support in both instances, support was higher in the former Gosford Council area than it was in the former Wyong Council area where notably prices were likely to increase under this concept (65% and 50% respectively).

There was a lower level of support expressed by those from lower income households, with 45% of those from households with a stated income of under \$42K indicating that they were supportive, while 26% were opposed to it.

Figure 45: Reactions to the general price alignment concept (Residential – Structured)



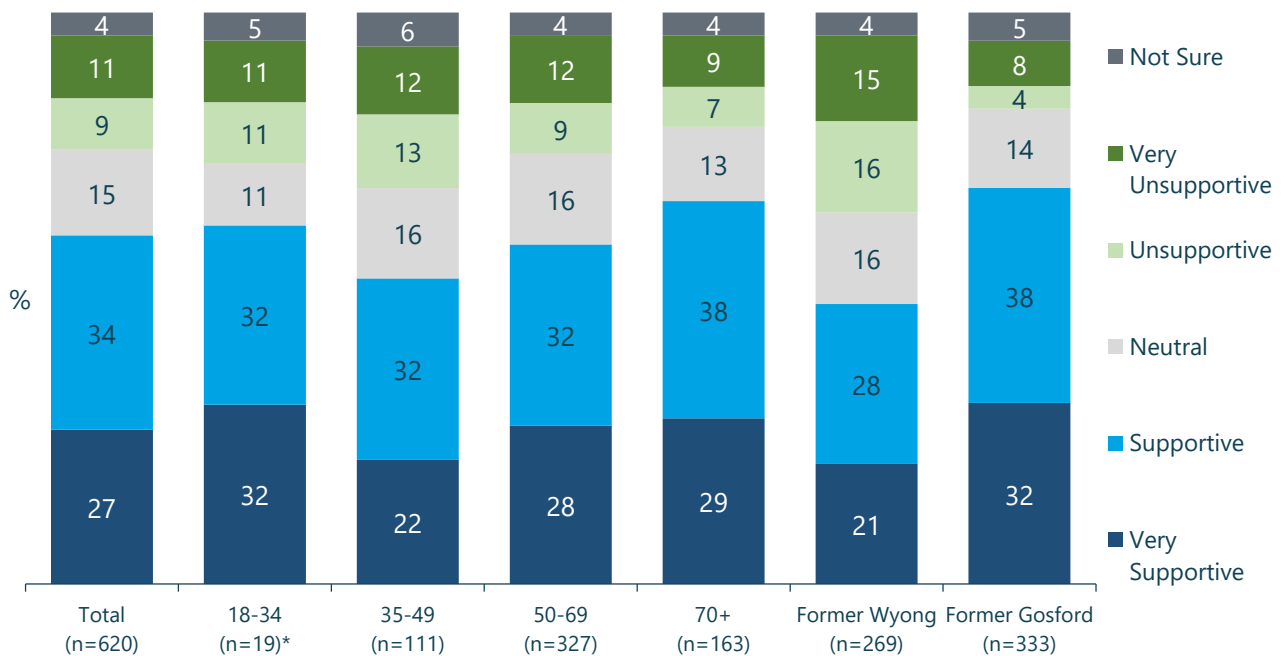
Q. How supportive are you of the idea of introducing a single price so that all Central Coast Council residents pay the same amount for their sewerage services?
Base: All respondents (n=510)

Looking at the results from the Residential – Council YVOC survey in more detail (see Figure 46) it can be seen (excluding the 18 to 34 year old group due to the small sample size) that support actually increased with increasing age – peaking at 67% (amongst the 70+ year olds).

The difference between former Council areas was also more pronounced for this study, with those in the former Gosford Council areas showing greater support than those in the former Wyong Council area (60% and 49% respectively) – with 31% of those in the former Wyong Council area indicating that they were opposed to the idea.

There was a slightly lower level of support expressed by those from lower income households, with 56% of those from households with a stated income of under \$42K indicating that they were supportive of price alignment, while 27% were opposed to it.

Figure 46: Reactions to the general price alignment concept (Residential – Council YVOC)



Q. How supportive are you of the idea of introducing a single price so that all Central Coast Council residents pay the same amount for their sewerage services?

Base: All respondents (n=620)

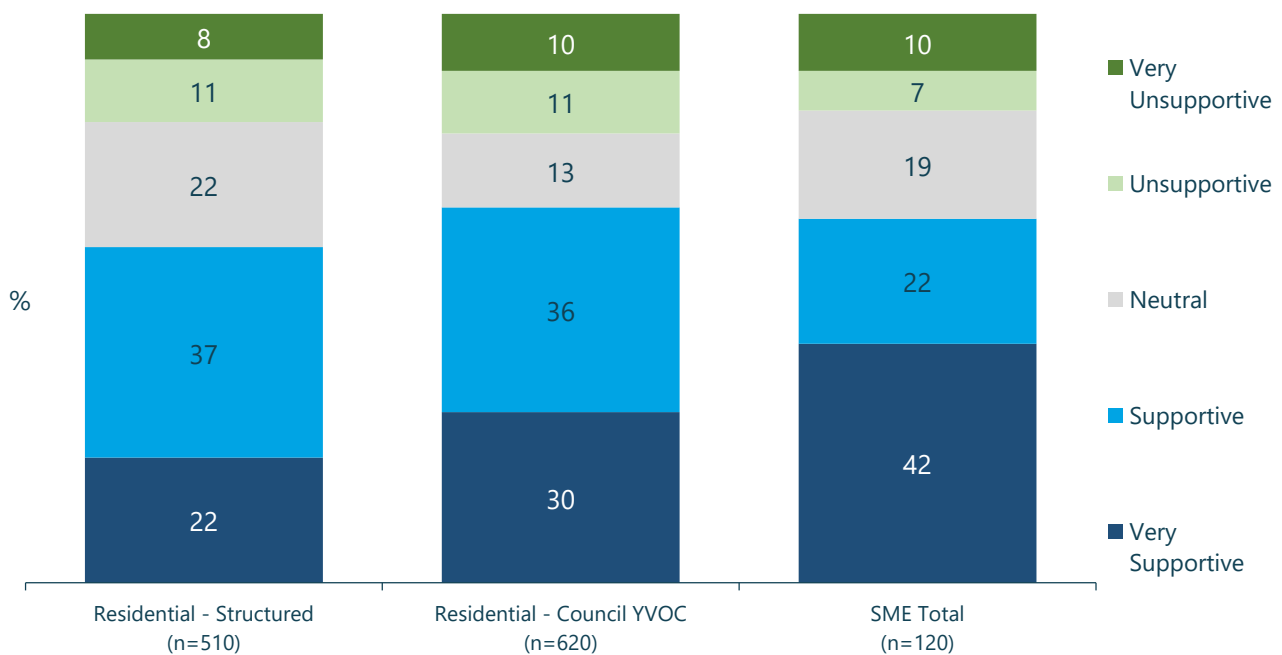
8.2 Reactions to Further Detail of the Price Alignment Concept

Survey respondents were informed of a possible price implication for them based on their location (and meter size for the SME respondents). They were again asked to indicate their level of support after knowing more about the price implications. Interestingly, support levels did not alter much after the price element was revealed.

As is shown in Figure 47, the majority of all respondents still indicated that they were supportive of the single sewerage service price for all customers once they knew about how it may impact their bill. Support varied between 59% (amongst the Residential – Structured respondents) to 66% (amongst the Residential – Council YVOC respondents).

The proportion of those opposed to this price alignment idea varied between 17% (amongst the SME respondents) to 21% (amongst the Residential – Council YVOC respondents).

Figure 47: Reactions to detail of the price alignment concept



Q. To give you a better idea of the likely impact on your own household, customers in the previous Wyong LGA may pay a slightly higher price to offset the lower charges for the previous Gosford LGA. At the moment the prices are as follows (based on residential houses): Former Gosford Council area = \$99.66 (per quarter), and Former Wyong Council area = \$91.55 (per quarter). The proposal would be for a single price. As an example - an average of the two would be \$95.60. How supportive are you of this?

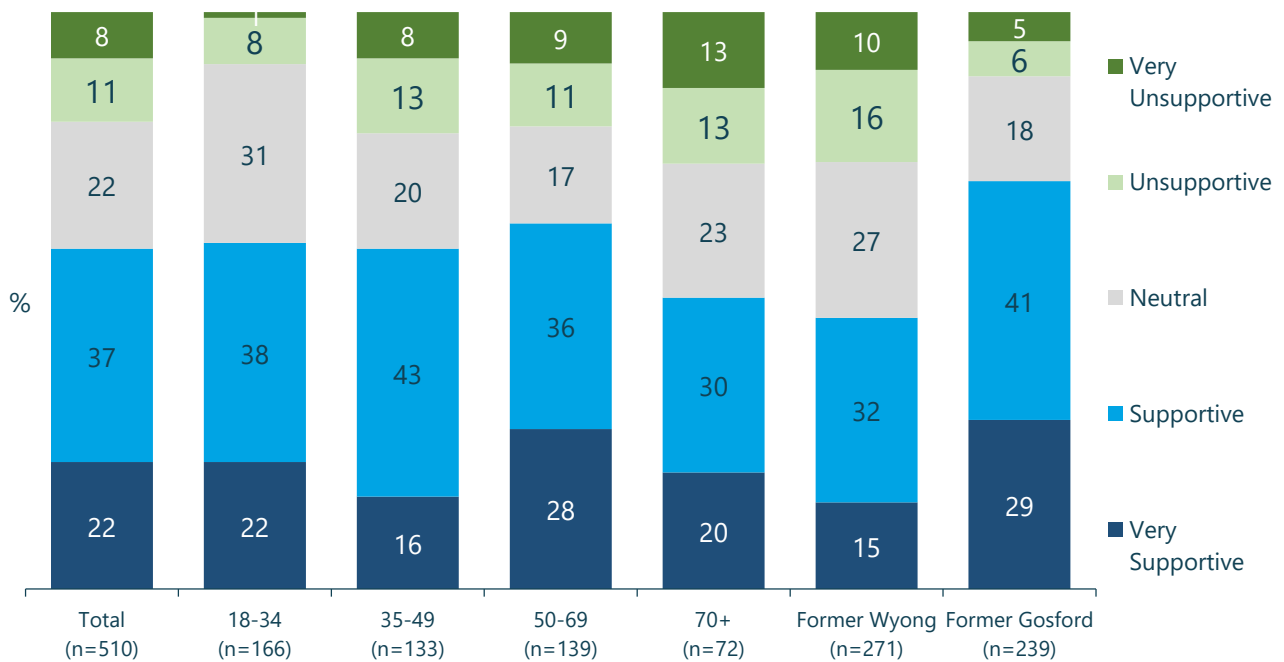
Base: All respondents (Residential - Structured n=510; Residential – Council YVOC n=620; SME n=120)

Looking at the results from the Residential – Structured survey in more detail (see Figure 48) it can be seen that the 70+ year old age group again displayed the lowest support level for this concept, though half did show support (50% supported it while 26% were opposed to it).

It can also be seen that support amongst those in the former Wyong Council area only decreased marginally once the price implication for them was revealed (50% were supportive of the general concept, while 47% were supportive once they were aware of the pricing aspect). Support amongst those in the former Gosford Council area increased and while there was majority support in both instances, support was higher in the former Gosford Council area than it was in the former Wyong Council area where prices were likely to increase under this concept (65% and 50% respectively).

There was a lower level of support expressed by those from lower income households, with 46% of those from households with a stated income of under \$42K indicating that they were supportive, while 24% were opposed to it.

Figure 48: Reactions to detail of the price alignment concept (Residential – Structured)



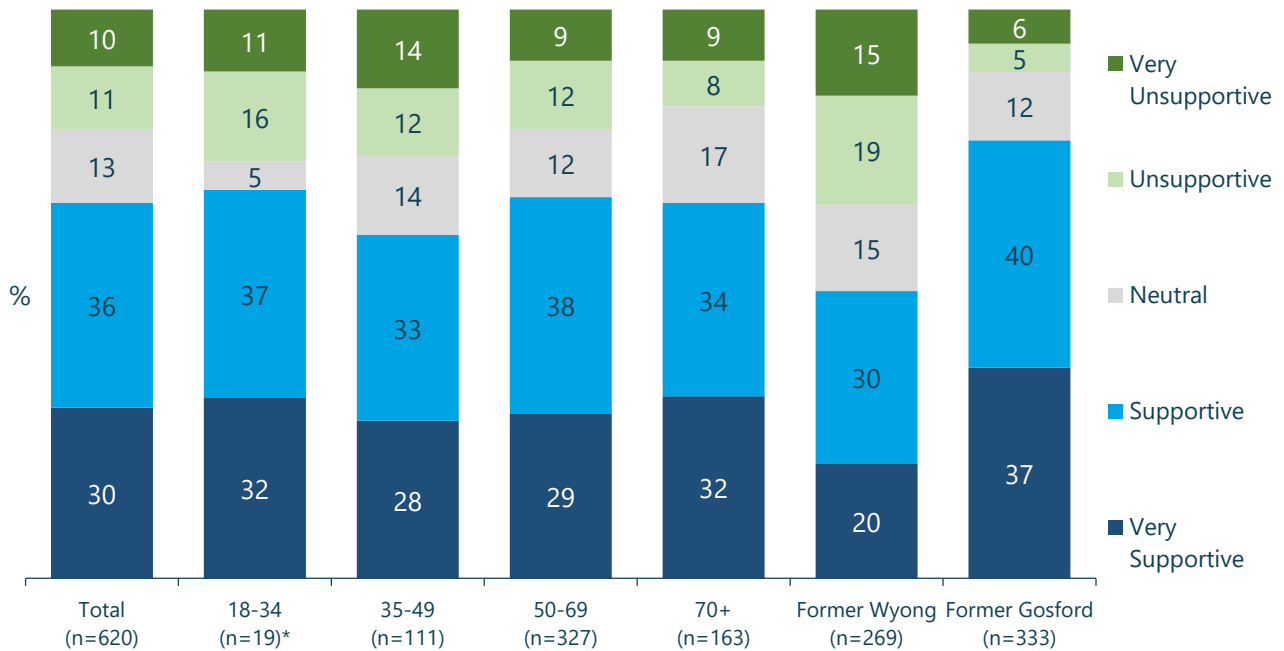
Q. As an example - an average of the two would be \$95.60. How supportive are you of this?
Base: All respondents (n=510)

Looking at the results from the Residential – Council YVOC survey in more detail (see Figure 49) it can be seen that support did not vary much from the levels that were displayed for the general concept (before the price implications were revealed). The largest changes were for the 50 to 69 year olds (that had an increase in support from 60% to 67%), and the former Gosford Council area residents (that had an increase in support from 70% to 77%).

There was no real change in support amongst the former Wyong Council area (49% showed support for the general concept, and 50% showed support once the price implications were revealed).

There was a lower level of support expressed by those from lower income households, with 55% of those from households with a stated income of under \$42K indicating that they were supportive, while 30% were opposed to it.

Figure 49: Reactions to detail of the price alignment concept (Residential – Council YVOC)



Q. As an example - an average of the two would be \$95.60. How supportive are you of this?
 Base: All respondents (n=620)

Qualitative outcomes – Price alignment

All of the group participants indicated that they were in favour of the concept of aligning the prices (both in the group of residents from the former Wyong Council area, and in the group amongst residents from the former Gosford Council area).

The discussion in this area tended to revert to the current financial issues being faced by Council, with suggestions being made that Council has effectively been operating as two Councils by maintaining two Council buildings etc. which, it was assumed, was a contributor to the high running costs that they had been made aware of.

From that point, most participants concluded that they would be better off if all residents were treated equally, and so they were in favour of the single pricing concept that aligned with a real vision for all Central Coast Council residents to be treated the same way.

“It is one Council so it would makes sense. I would say take the average of the two.” Former Wyong Council area resident

“It sounds fair enough, everyone pays the same amount.” Former Wyong Council area resident

Some who had initially expressed hesitancy in their acceptance of the idea later suggested that they were totally accepting once they knew the price implication – indicating that it was a relatively small monetary amount involved.

“It is \$4! Who cares?” Former Wyong Council area resident.

8. Summary & Conclusions

8.1 Summary of Findings

As has been indicated, due to the methodological approach and the resultant profile of respondents, the results of the Residential – Council YVOC survey are not necessarily representative of the Central Coast Council population. As such, we would recommend that greater weight be given to the results from the Residential – Structured survey. However, both (along with the outcomes of the SME survey) are presented here for further consideration.

Future priorities for water & sewerage services

Apart from lowering the price of water (as emerged unprompted) water quality improvement was seen to be a key area that the community would like Central Coast Council to focus attention on in the future.

- At the unprompted level this was mentioned by 34% of the Residential – Structured respondents, 42% of the Residential – Council YVOC respondents, and 22% of the SME respondents; and
- At the prompted level this was selected this as the key priority area by 50% of the Residential – Structured respondents, 43% of the Residential – Council YVOC respondents, and 44% of the SME respondents.

The qualitative exploration also showed that while not all are experiencing poor quality drinking water, many who didn't have an issue still sympathized with those experiencing quality issues – something potentially driven or exacerbated by word-of-mouth and social media.

Performance

Central Coast Council is clearly performing well for all prompted measures.

Satisfaction was highest for 'reliability of water supply':

- 80% of the Residential – Structured respondents rating it 4 or 5 out of 5, while 81% of the Residential – Council YVOC respondents, and 97% of the SME respondents did likewise;
- Only 4% of the Residential – Structured respondents expressed dissatisfaction for reliability (by providing a rating of 1 or 2 out of 5), while 6% of the Residential – Council YVOC respondents, and none of the SME respondents expressed dissatisfaction in this area.

Dissatisfaction was highest (though still relatively low in overall terms) for 'water quality':

- 60% of the Residential – Structured respondents rating it 4 or 5 out of 5, while 57% of the Residential – Council YVOC respondents, and 64% of the SME respondents did likewise;
- 16% of the Residential – Structured respondents expressed dissatisfaction for water quality, while 23% of the Residential – Council YVOC respondents, and 10% of the SME respondents expressed dissatisfaction in this area.

Sewerage overflows to personal properties did not appear to be a major issue for the survey respondents.

- 6% of the Residential – Structured respondents had experienced such an incident, while 7% of the Residential – Council YVOC respondents, and 6% of the SME respondents also indicated that they had.

However, a larger proportion claimed to be impacted by overflows into the community.

- 24% of the Residential – Structured respondents claimed that they/their household had been impacted by this, while 30% of the Residential – Council YVOC respondents, and 20% of the SME respondents also indicated that they had been impacted;
- 43% of the Residential – Structured respondents expressed concern about flows into the environment, while 55% of the Residential – Council YVOC respondents, and 50% of the SME respondents also indicated that they were concerned (by rating this with a 4 or 5 out of 5).

From the qualitative exploration, it was evident that when overflows do occur in community spaces they appear to have high visibility – particularly in and around beach areas which are of significant concern to residents.

Drainage

There was not a clear level of support for the idea of draining pricing being set by Council as part of general rates.

- 26% of the Residential – Structured respondents showed support, and 31% were opposed;
- 17% of the Residential – Council YVOC respondents showed support, and the majority (55%) were opposed;
- 33% of the SME respondents showed support, and 25% were opposed.

The qualitative exploration of this issue revealed that the sentiment expressed by the community on this matter is likely to have been influenced by the current economic position of Council.

However, there was majority support for the idea of all Central Coast residents contributing to the funding of drainage infrastructure:

- 57% of the Residential – Structured respondents showed support, and 15% were opposed;
- 63% of the Residential – Council YVOC respondents showed support, and 18% were opposed;
- 55% of the SME respondents showed support, and 15% were opposed.

The qualitative exploration of this issue showed that the idea of being treated equally and as one region (not divided) was seen to be a strong reason for change.

There was not a large amount of support for all business properties receiving the same drainage charge:

- 21% of the SME respondents supported this, while
- 40% were opposed to the idea.

Scarcity pricing

There were mixed reactions to the scarcity pricing concept (introduced as increasing the price of water during times of drought):

- 38% of the Residential – Structured respondents showed support, and 36% were opposed;
- 32% of the Residential – Council YVOC respondents showed support, and the majority (56%) were opposed;
- 42% of the SME respondents showed support, and 37% were opposed.

One potential barrier to acceptance to emerge from the qualitative exploration was the potential impact this price structure could have on vulnerable customers. So if this were to be introduced with safeguards in place for these customer groups, this would need to be clearly communicated to the community.

Price alignment

There was majority support for the discontinuation of location based sewer services pricing – with the idea of creating an average of the two price levels resonating with most:

- When the initial concept was revealed it was supported by 58% of the Residential – Structured respondents, 61% of the Residential – Council YVOC respondents, and 63% of the SME respondents; and
- When the full pricing implications were revealed it was supported by 59% of the Residential – Structured respondents, 66% of the Residential – Council YVOC respondents, and 66% of the SME respondents.

While there was a lower level of support amongst residents in the former Wyong Council area (who are likely to have to pay slightly more than they are currently), the support level was still relatively high amongst that sub-group.

Again, the idea of treating all residents equally came through in the qualitative exploration of this.

8.2 Conclusions

As supported by the qualitative exploration, the three surveys all indicate that Central Coast Council should focus attention on improving water quality for the small proportion of the population that are currently experiencing 'dirty water' events. This sentiment emerged as a priority in both an unprompted and prompted sense. Water quality was also the service area with the highest dissatisfaction levels:

- 16% of the Residential – Structured respondents expressed dissatisfaction with water quality; and 23% of the Residential – Council YVOC respondents, and 10% of the SME respondents also expressed dissatisfaction.

While sewerage overflows to personal properties did not appear to be a major issue for the survey respondents, overflows into the community seemed to be slightly more problematic, and as such this should be another priority area for future focus:

- 24% of the Residential – Structured respondents claimed that they/their household had been impacted by this, while 30% of the Residential – Council YVOC respondents, and 20% of the SME respondents also indicated that they had been impacted; and
- 43% of the Residential – Structured respondents also expressed concern about flows into the environment, while 55% of the Residential – Council YVOC respondents, and 50% of the SME respondents also indicated that they were concerned.

There was not a strong level of support for the idea of drainage pricing being set by Council as part of general rates, and as such we would not recommend pursuing this within the current environment of distrust with Council management. Nor was there support (amongst SME respondents) for all business properties receiving the same drainage charge. An educational initiative around the reason and benefits of changes, and transparency around how costs are allocated would help to improve trust and understanding of Council and water spending.

However, there was majority support for the idea of all Central Coast residents (and businesses) contributing to the funding of drainage infrastructure, and this is something that should be taken further:

- 57% of the Residential – Structured respondents showed support;
- 63% of the Residential – Council YVOC respondents showed support; and
- 55% of the SME respondents showed support.

The scarcity pricing concept (introduced as increasing the price of water during times of drought) also failed to gain significant support. Should Council wish to take this idea further we would recommend developing strategies to overcome the main barriers that emerged (e.g. implementing a system that provides exemptions to vulnerable customers and communicating this clearly).

Given that there was majority support for the discontinuation of location based sewer services pricing and so this idea should be progressed:

- When the initial concept was revealed it was supported by 58% of the Residential – Structured respondents, 61% of the Residential – Council YVOC respondents, and 63% of the SME respondents; and

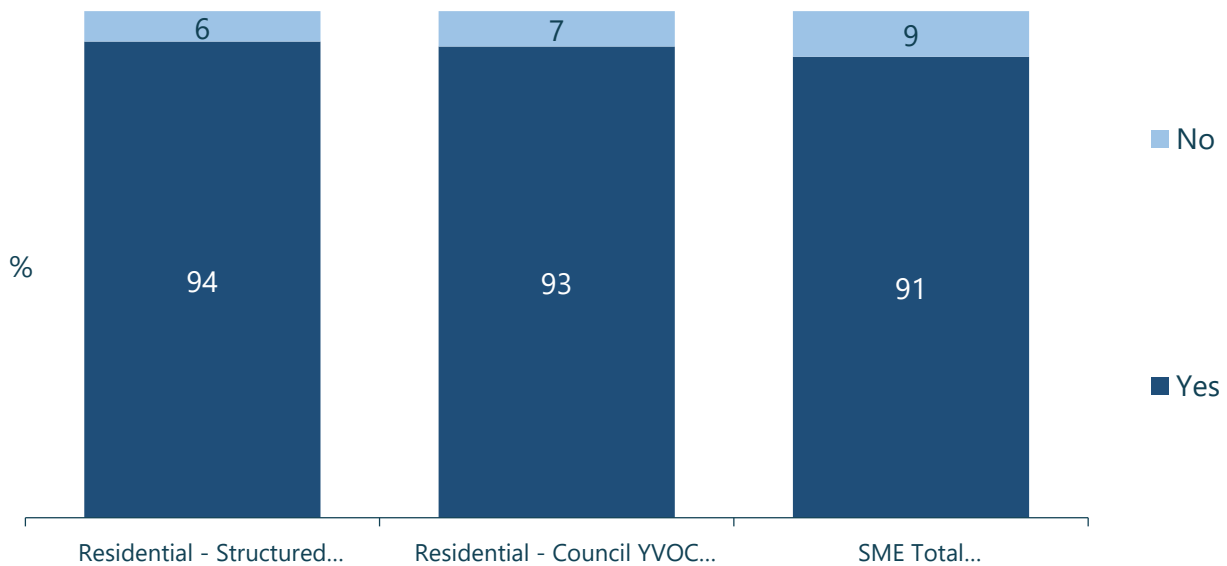
- When the full pricing implications were revealed it was supported by 59% of the Residential – Structured respondents, 66% of the Residential – Council YVOC respondents, and 66% of the SME respondents.

Appendices

Appendix A: Respondent Details

A.1 Connections to Town Water & Sewer

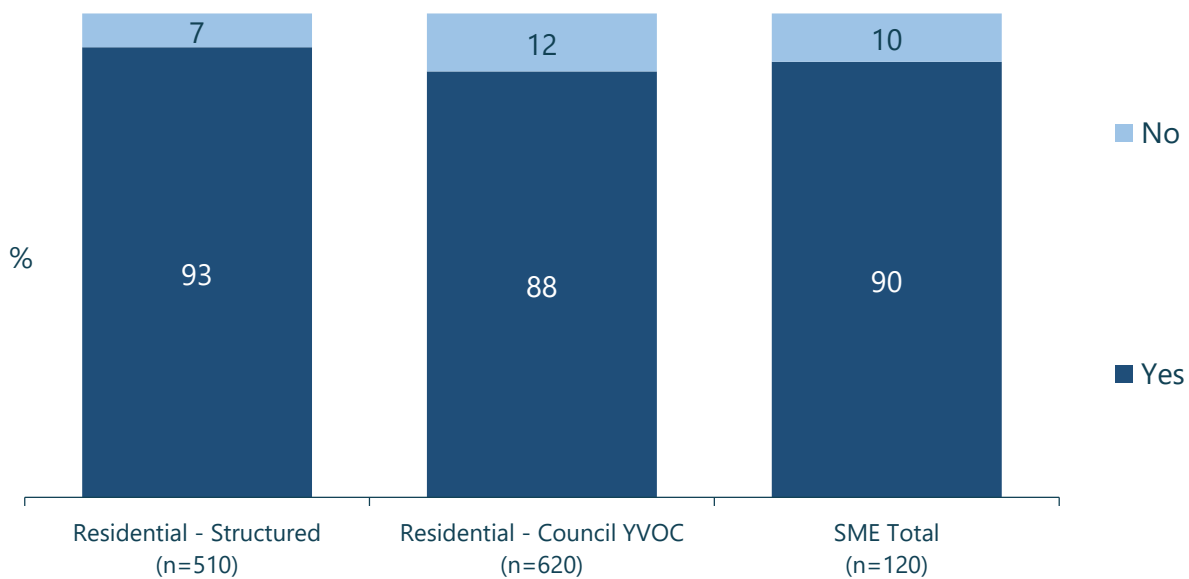
Figure 50: Connection to town water



Q. Is your household/business connected to town water?

Base: All respondents (Residential - Structured n=510; Residential – Council YVOC n=620; SME n=120)

Figure 51: Connection to town sewer

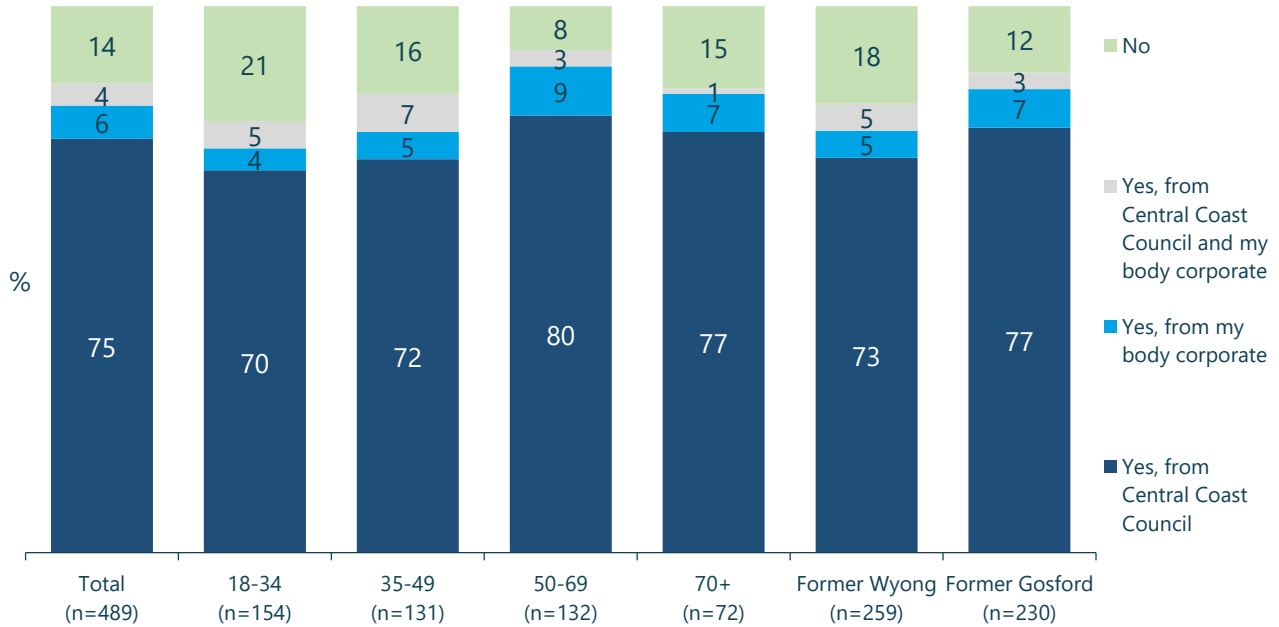


Q. Is your household/business connected to the sewer?

Base: All respondents (Residential - Structured n=510; Residential – Council YVOC n=620; SME n=120)

A.2 Receive Water Bills and Approximate Water Usage Level

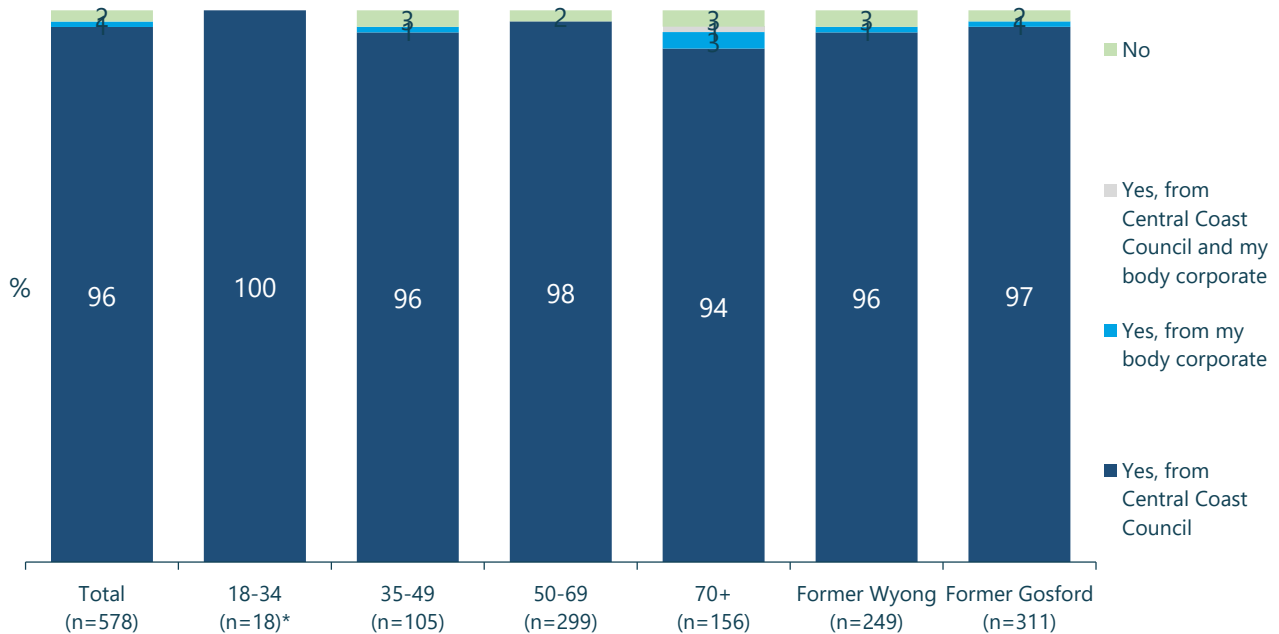
Figure 52: Receive water bills (Residential – Structured)



Q. Do you receive water/sewerage bills from Central Coast Council and/or your body corporate?

Base: All respondents (Residential - Structured n=510)

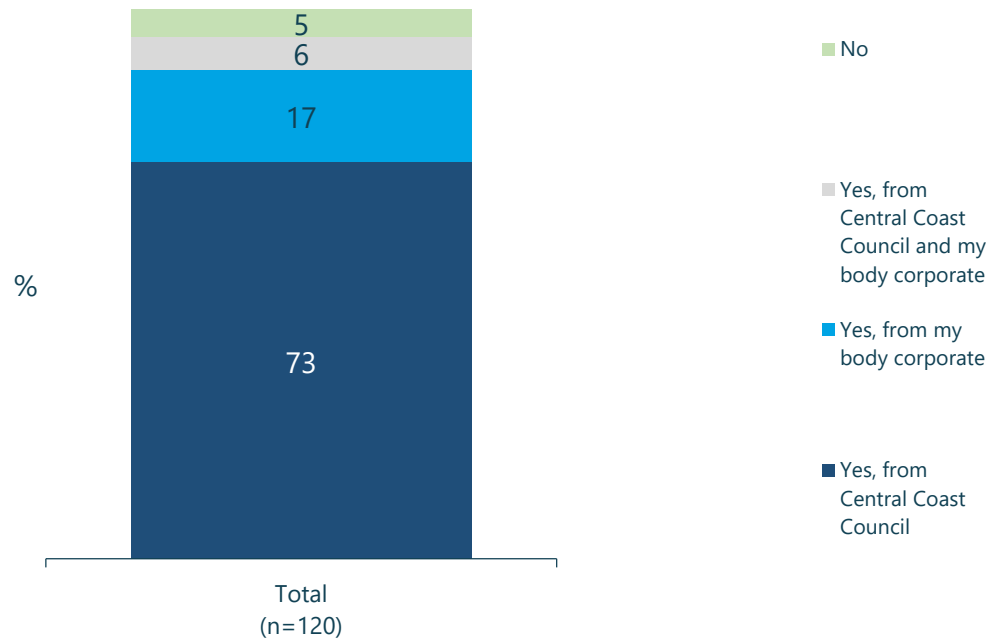
Figure 53: Receive water bills (Residential – Council YVOC)



Q. Do you receive water/sewerage bills from Central Coast Council and/or your body corporate?

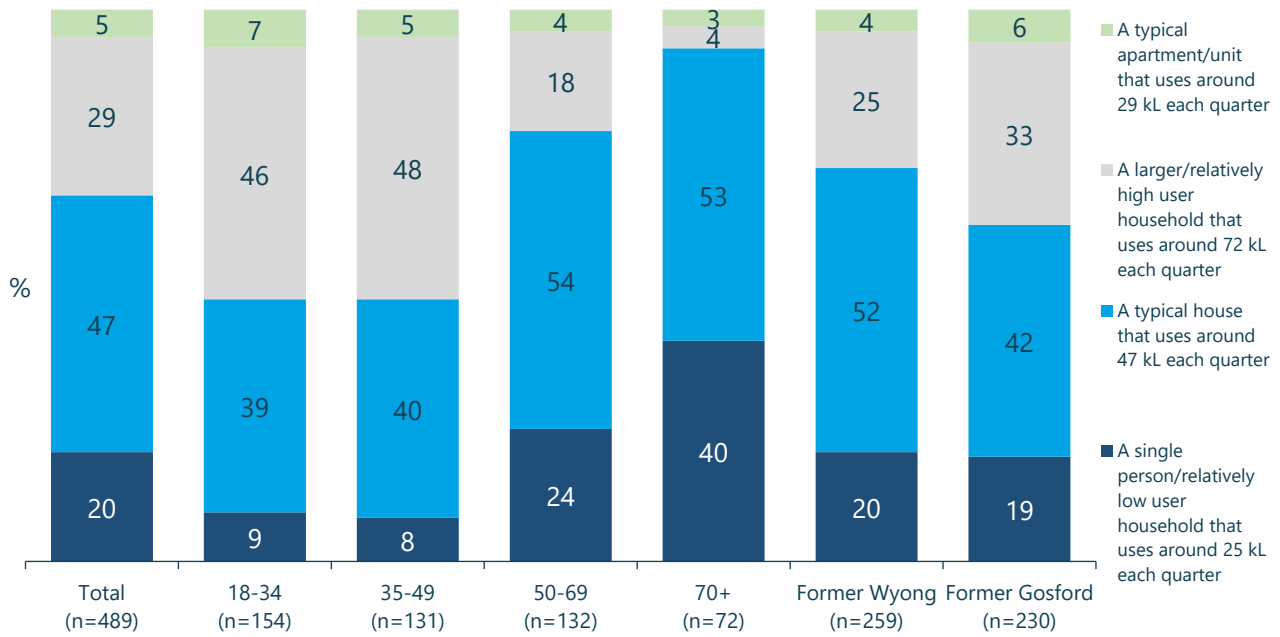
Base: All respondents (Residential – Council YVOC n=620)

Figure 54: Receive water bills (SME)



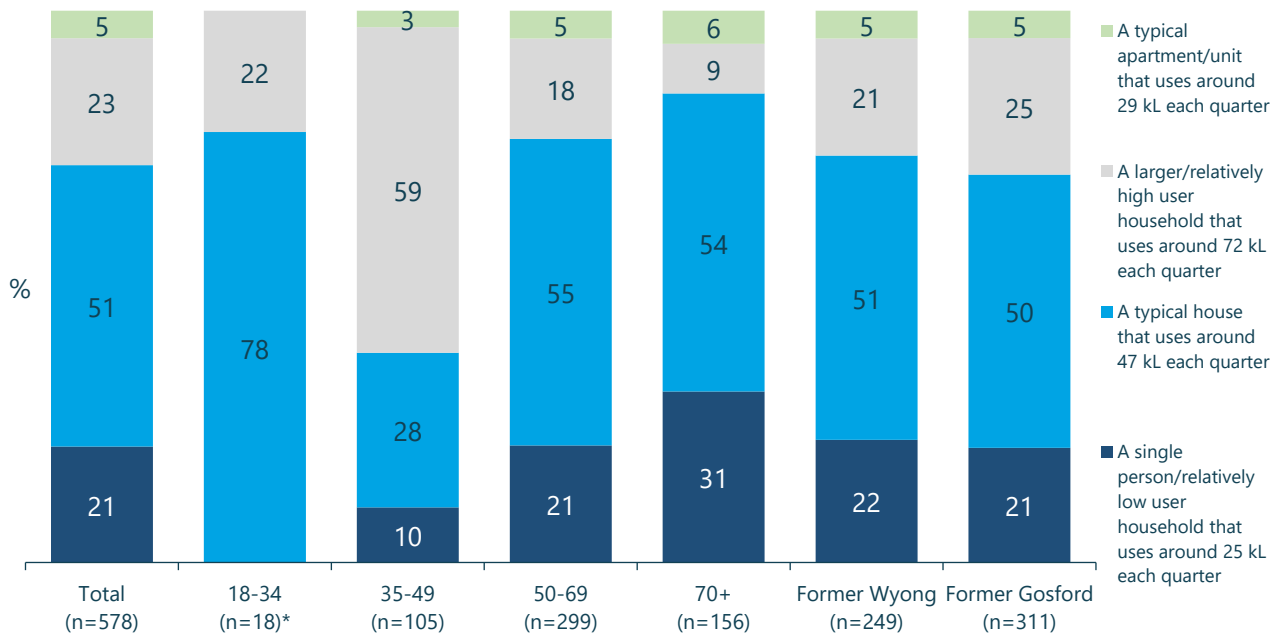
Q. Which of the following best describes the water bills you receive for your business?
Base: All respondents (SME n=120)

Figure 55: Approximate water usage level (Residential – Structured)



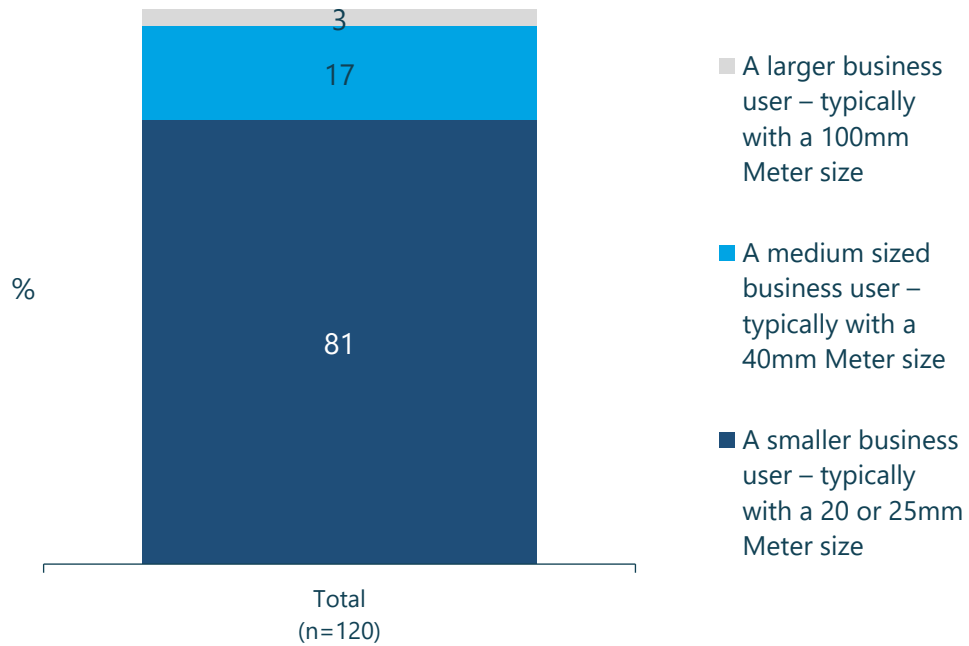
Q. Which of the following would be the closest to representing your own household type?
Base: All respondents (Residential - Structured n=510)

Figure 56: Approximate water usage level (Residential – Council YVOC)



Q. Which of the following would be the closest to representing your own household type?
Base: All respondents (Residential – Council YVOC n=620)

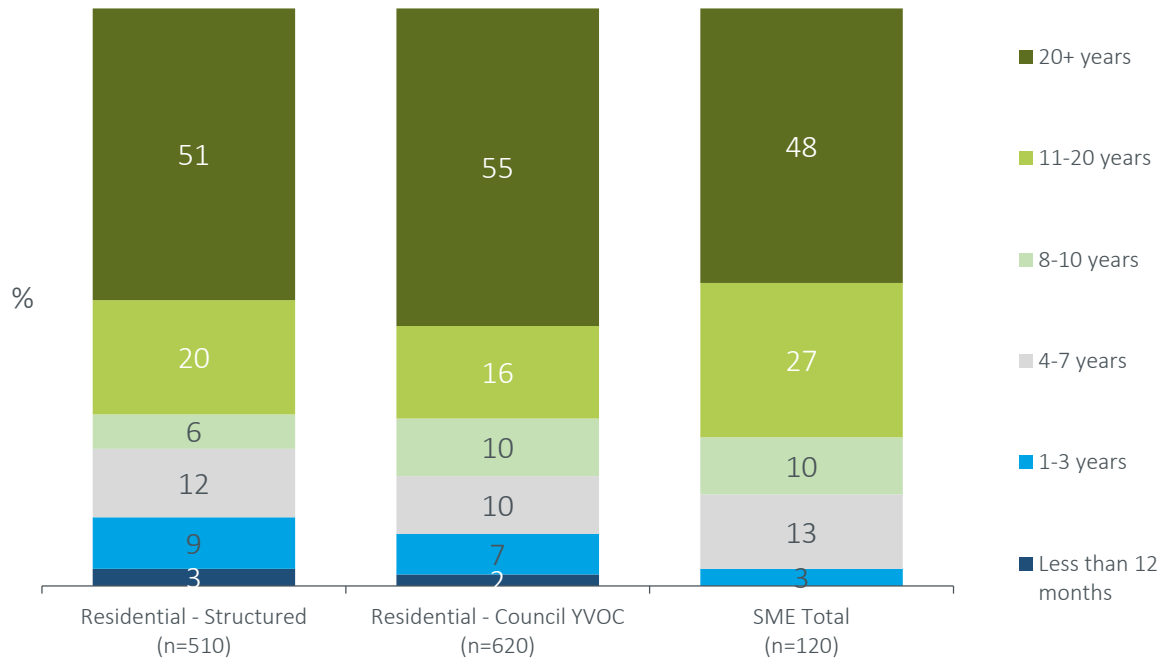
Figure 57: Approximate water usage level (SME)



Q. Which of the following would be the closest to representing your own business type?
Base: All respondents (Residential – Council YVOC n=620)

A.3 Length of Residence/Business Operation

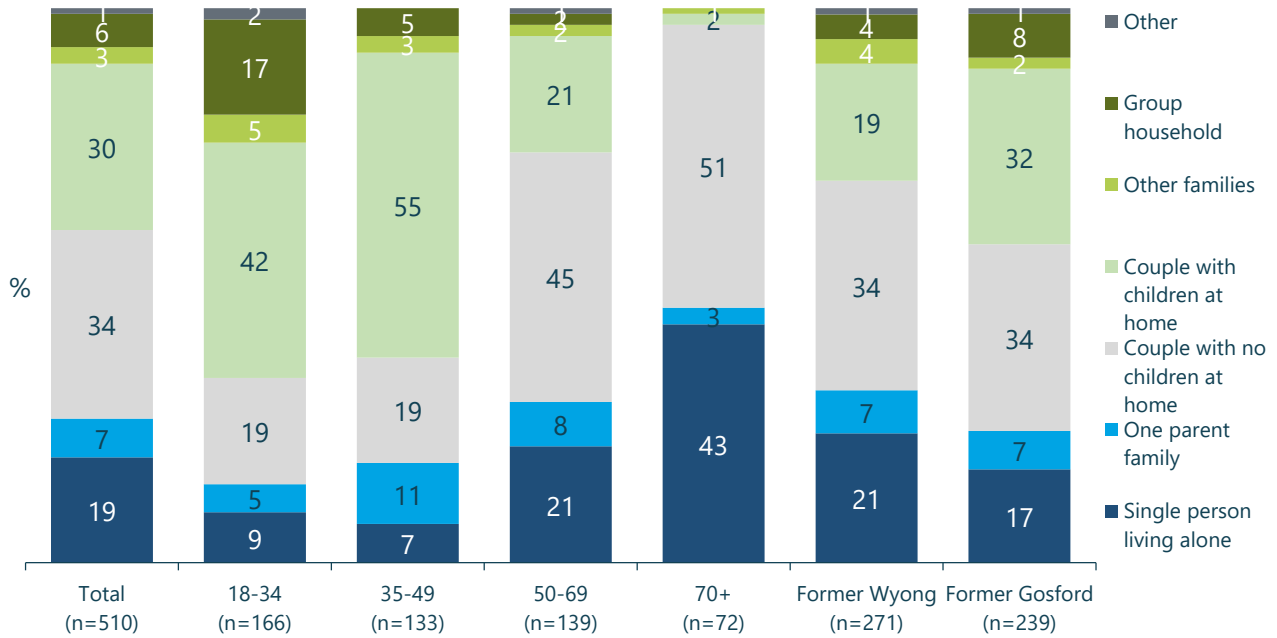
Figure 58: How long respondents have lived in or operated their business on the Central Coast



Q. How long have you lived on the Central Coast/has your business operated on the Central Coast?
Base: All respondents (Residential - Structured n=510; Residential – Council YVOC n=620; SME n=120)

A.4 Household & Business Composition

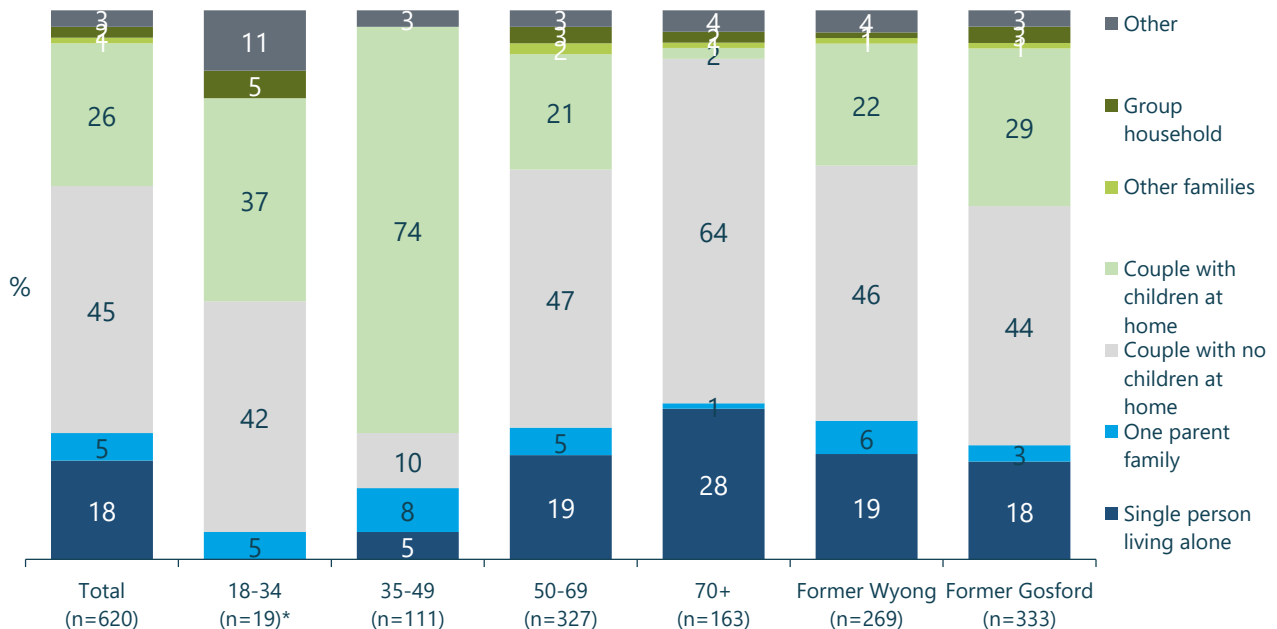
Figure 59: Household composition (Residential – Structured)



Q. What is your household type?

Base: All respondents (Residential - Structured n=510)

Figure 60: Household composition (Residential – Council YVOC)



Q. What is your household type?

Base: All respondents (Residential – Council YVOC n=620)

Table 8: Business composition/industry (SME)

	Total (n=120) %
Construction	19
Retail Trade	12
Health Care and Social Assistance	8
Manufacturing	8
Accommodation and Food Services	8
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	8
Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services	6
Education and Training	6
Financial and Insurance Services	5
Rental, Hiring and Real Estate Services	5
Transport, Postal and Warehousing	2
Arts and Recreation Services	3
Wholesale Trade	1
Other	11

Q. In which industry do you operate?

Base: All respondents (SME n=120)

A.5 Employment Status and Income Category

Table 9: Employment status (Residential – Structured)

	Total (n=510) %	18 to 34 y.o (n=166) %	35 to 49 y.o (n=133) %	50 to 69 y.o (n=139) %	70+ y.o (n=72) %	Former Wyong (n=271) %	Former Gosford (n=239) %
Full time	33	46	59	21	2	34	32
Part time	16	18	17	19	5	13	18
Casual	4	8	4	4	-	5	3
Contract	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
Self-employed	4	5	4	4	1	4	3
Actively looking for work	3	6	3	3	-	2	4
Not looking for work	1	-	1	4	-	1	2
Retired	31	-	2	38	92	30	31
Not able to work	1	-	3	2	-	2	1
Student	3	10	1	1	-	4	2
Home duties	4	5	7	3	-	3	5

Q. What is your employment type?

Base: All respondents (Residential - Structured n=510)

Table 10: Employment status (Residential – Council YVOC)

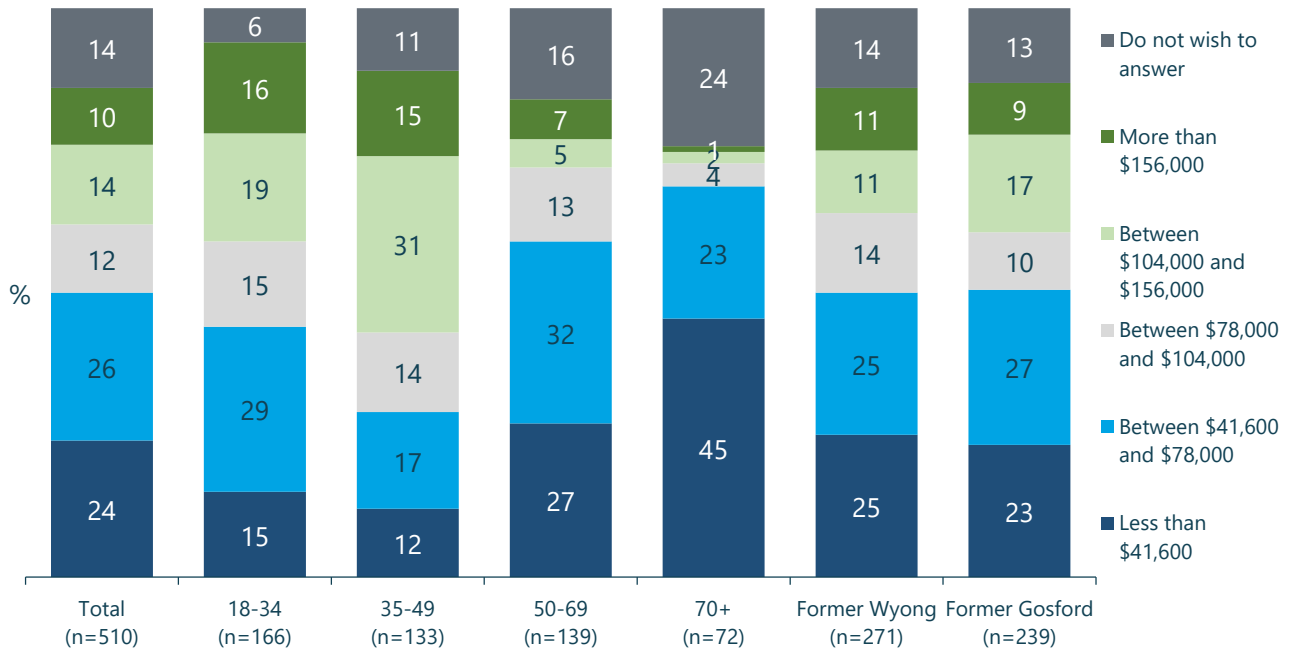
	Total (n=620) %	18 to 34 y.o (n=19)* %	35 to 49 y.o (n=111) %	50 to 69 y.o (n=327) %	70+ y.o (n=163) %	Former Wyong (n=269) %	Former Gosford (n=333) %
Full time	28	74	63	26	1	26	28
Part time	7	11	14	7	2	9	6
Casual	3	5	3	4	2	4	3
Contract	1	-	2	1	-	-	2
Self-employed	8	5	11	10	2	6	11
Actively looking for work	2	-	-	3	1	2	2
Not looking for work	1	-	1	1	-	1	1
Retired	46	-	1	41	91	49	43
Not able to work	2	-	1	4	1	1	3

Student	-	5	-	-	-	-	-
Home duties	2	-	5	2	-	2	2

Q. What is your employment type?

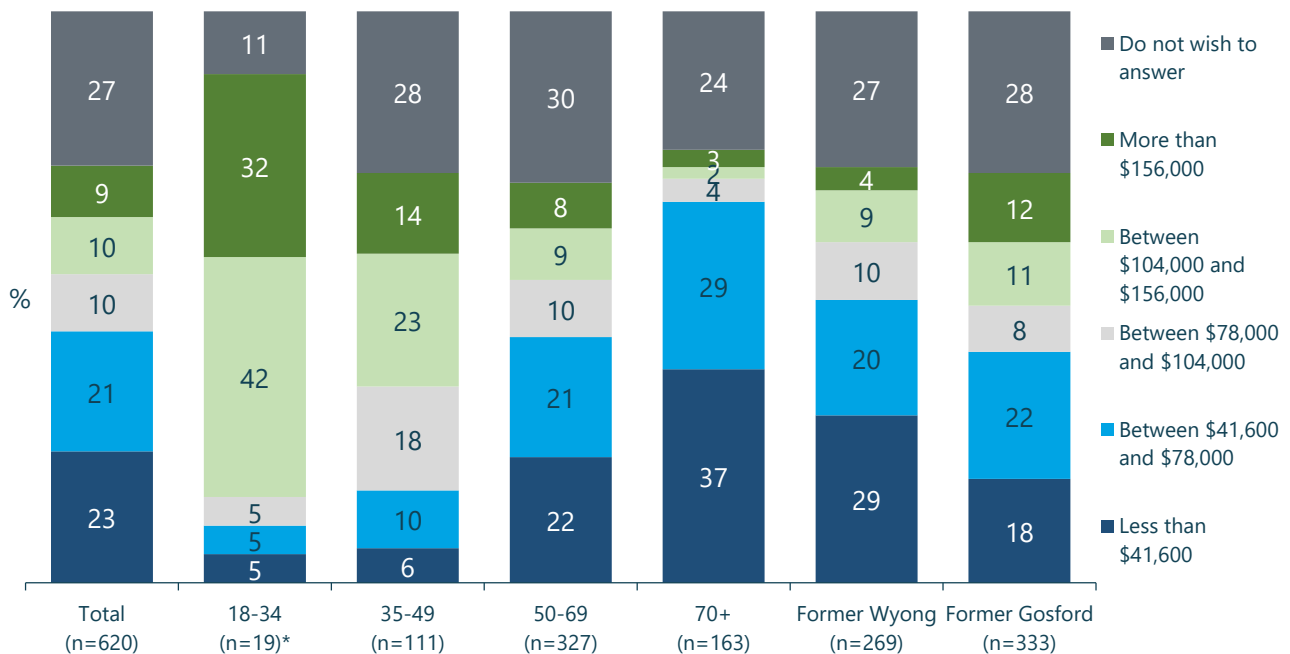
Base: All respondents (Residential – Council YVOC n=620)

Figure 61: Household income (Residential – Structured)



Q. What is your approximate annual household income?
Base: All respondents (Residential - Structured n=510)

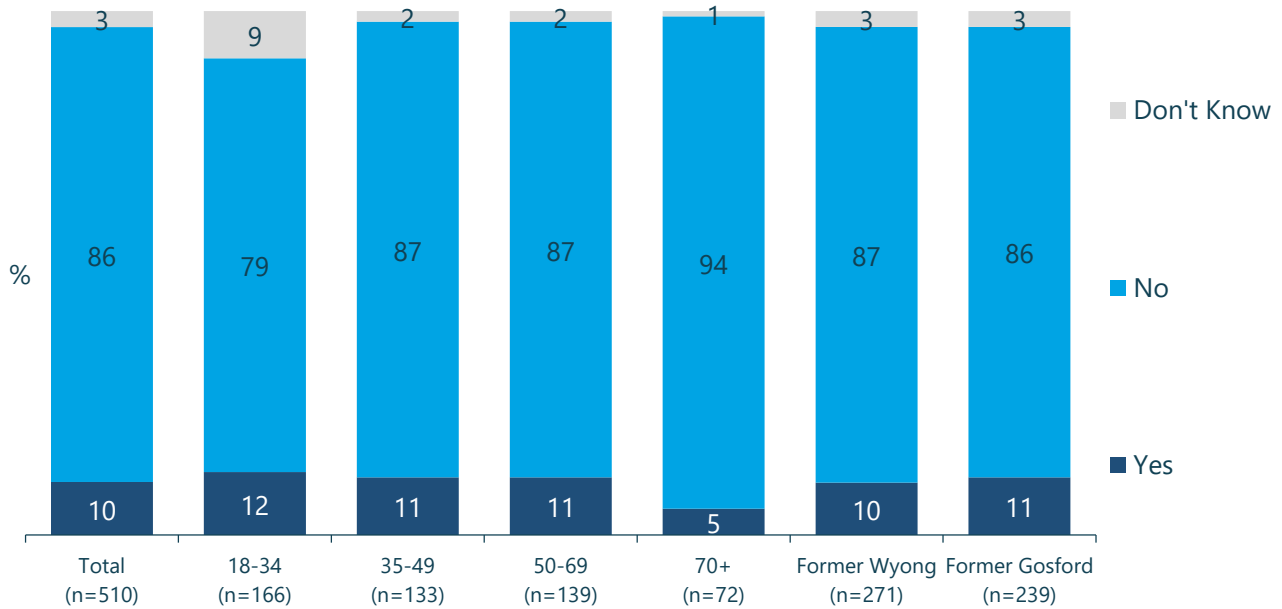
Figure 62: Household income (Residential – Council YVOC)



Q. What is your approximate annual household income?
Base: All respondents (Residential – Council YVOC n=620)

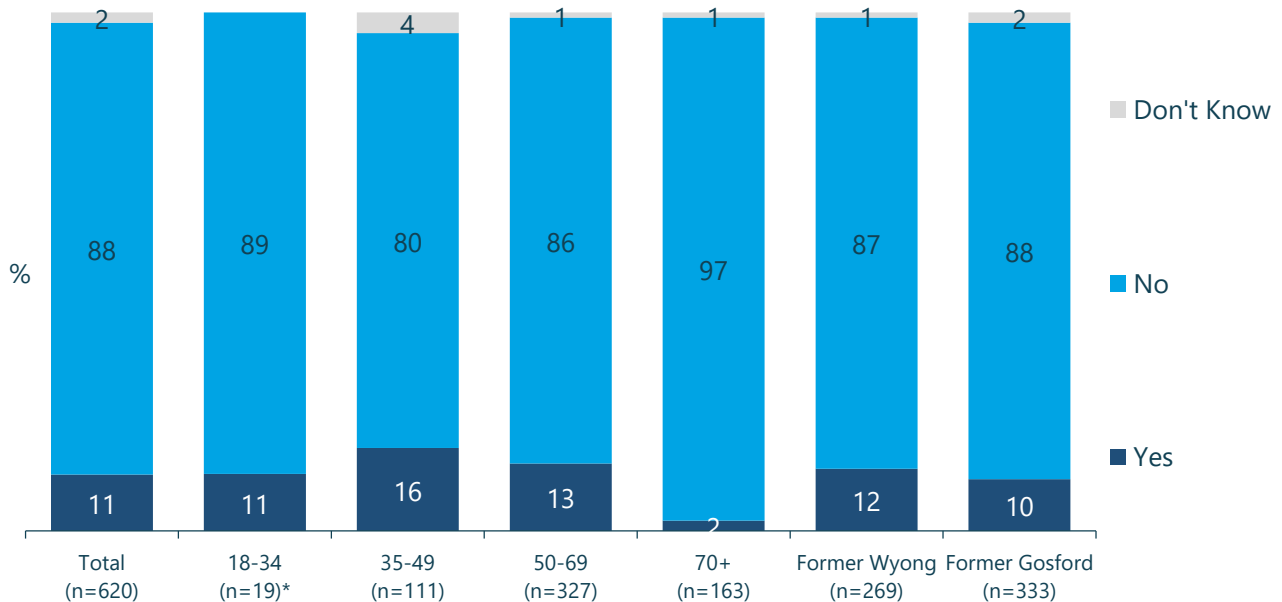
A.6 Vulnerable Customer Indicators

Figure 63: Experienced difficulty paying water bills (Residential – Structured)



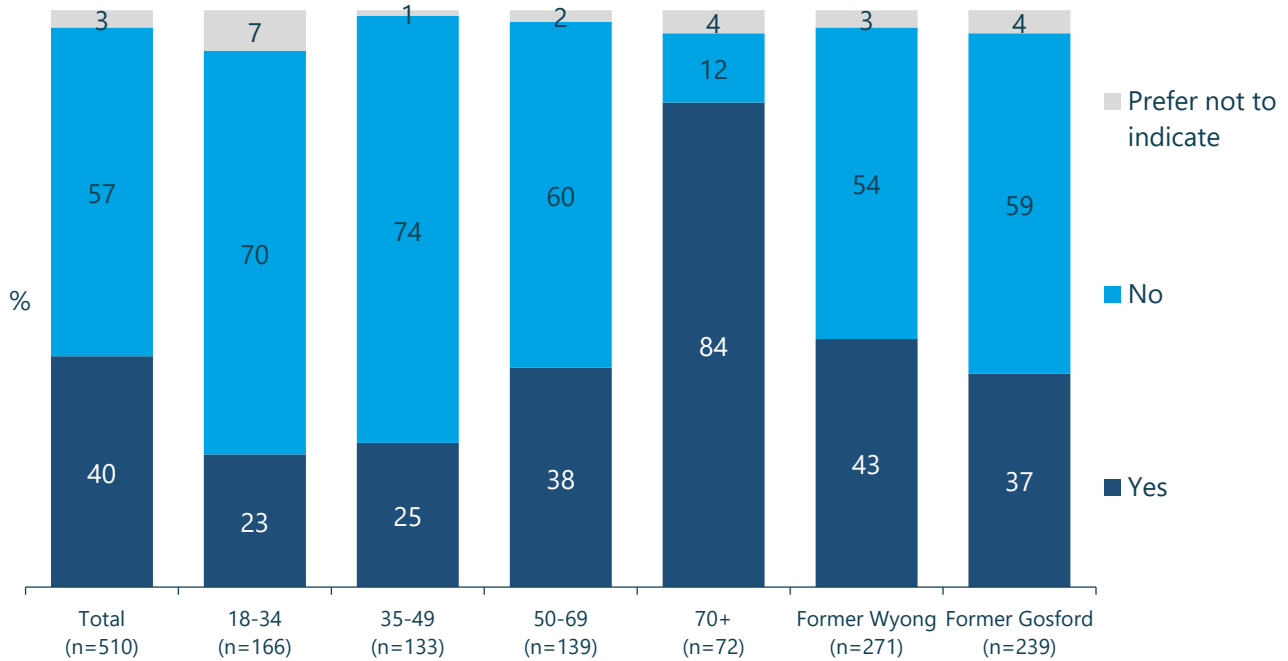
Q. In the last 12 months, have you had any difficulty paying your water bills, e.g. had to ask for an extension or paid late, been on a special payment plan, been disconnected, delayed other payments or borrowed money to pay?
Base: All respondents (Residential - Structured n=510)

Figure 64: Experienced difficulty paying water bills (Residential – Council YVOC)



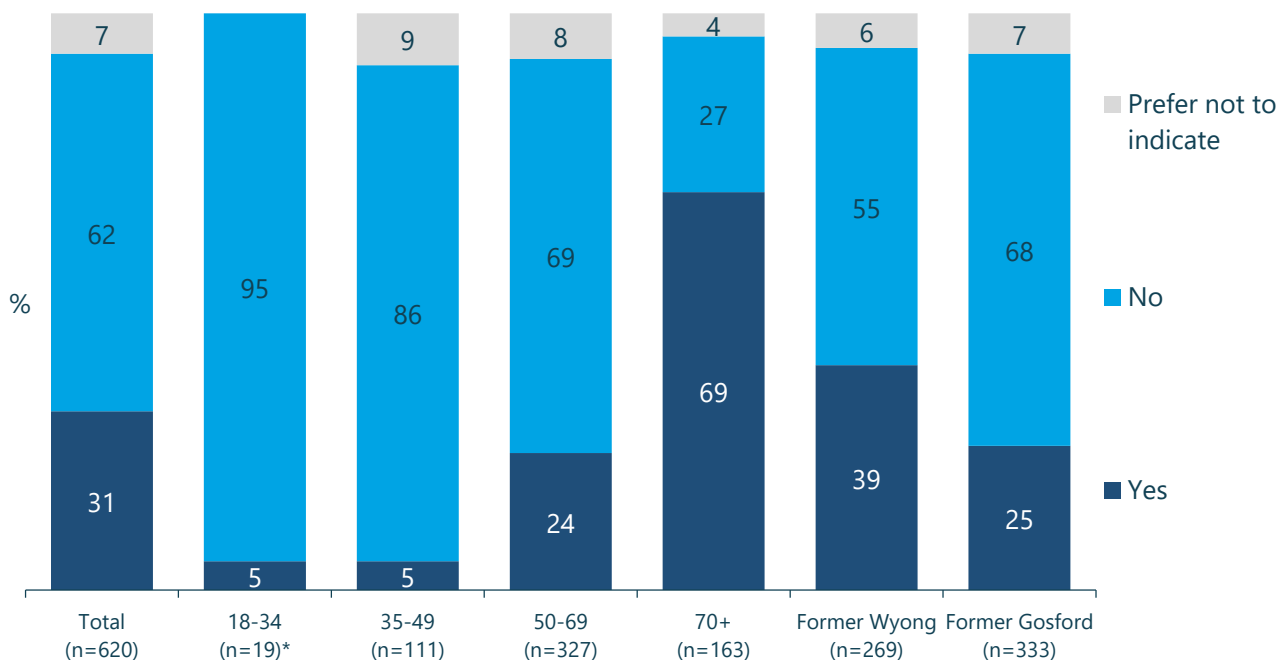
Q. In the last 12 months, have you had any difficulty paying your water bills, e.g. had to ask for an extension or paid late, been on a special payment plan, been disconnected, delayed other payments or borrowed money to pay?
Base: All respondents (Residential – Council YVOC n=620)

Figure 65: Concession card holder (Residential – Structured)



Q. Do you currently hold a concession card/low income healthcare card?
Base: All respondents (Residential - Structured n=510)

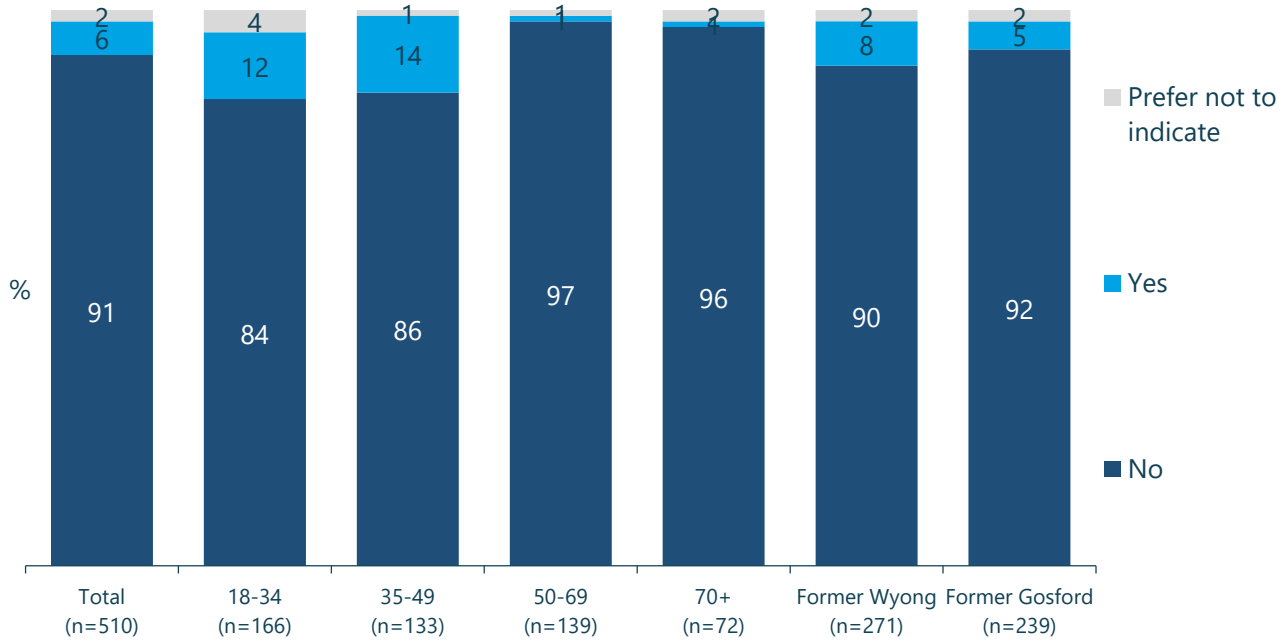
Figure 66: Concession card holder (Residential – Council YVOC)



Q. Do you currently hold a concession card/low income healthcare card?
Base: All respondents (Residential – Council YVOC n=620)

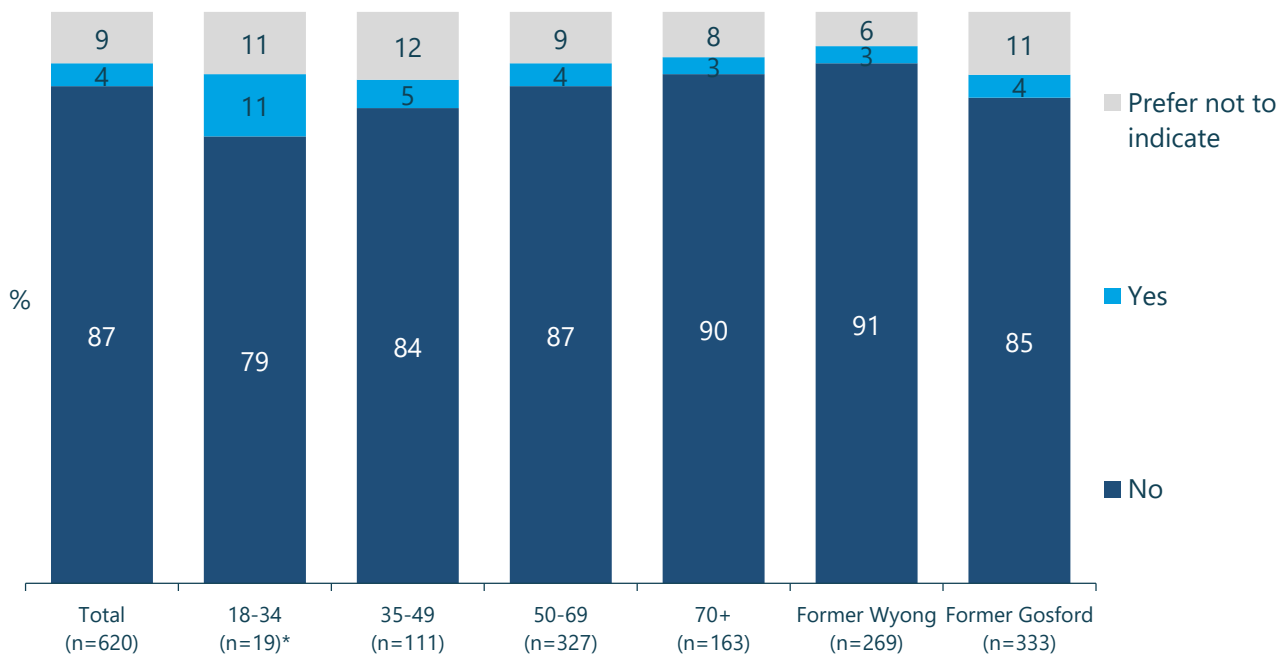
A.7 Indigenous Status and Language Status

Figure 67: Indigenous status (Residential – Structured)



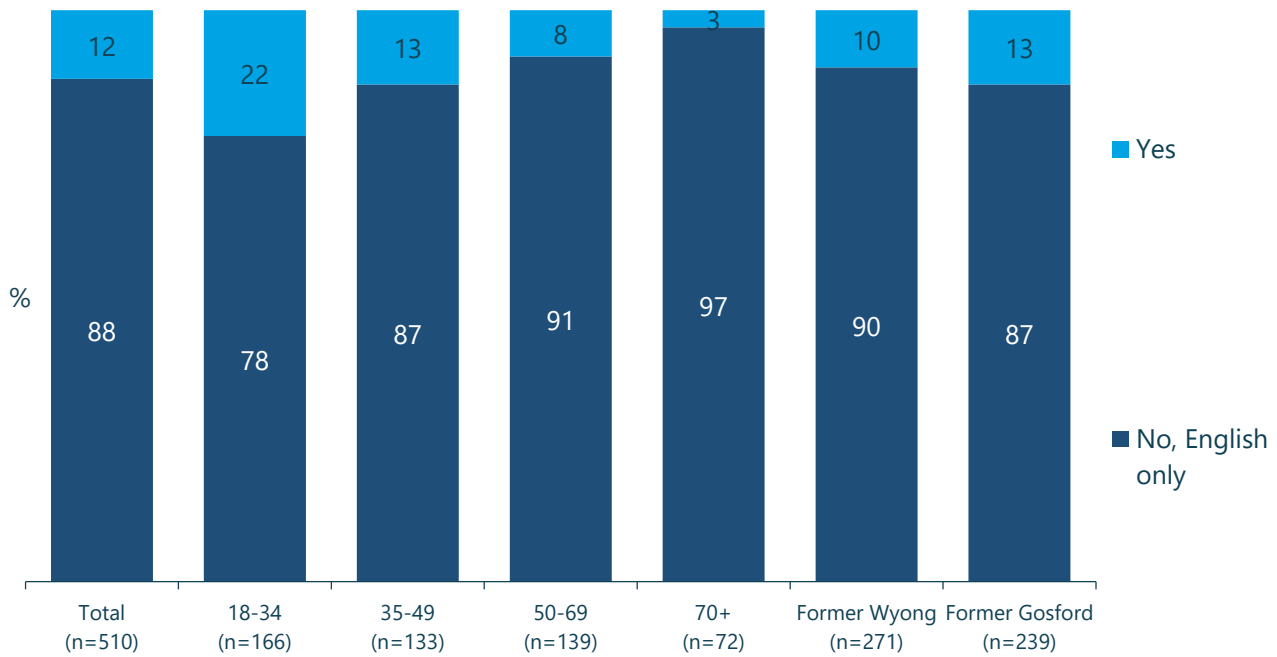
Q. Are you of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin?
Base: All respondents (Residential - Structured n=510)

Figure 68: Indigenous status (Residential – Council YVOC)



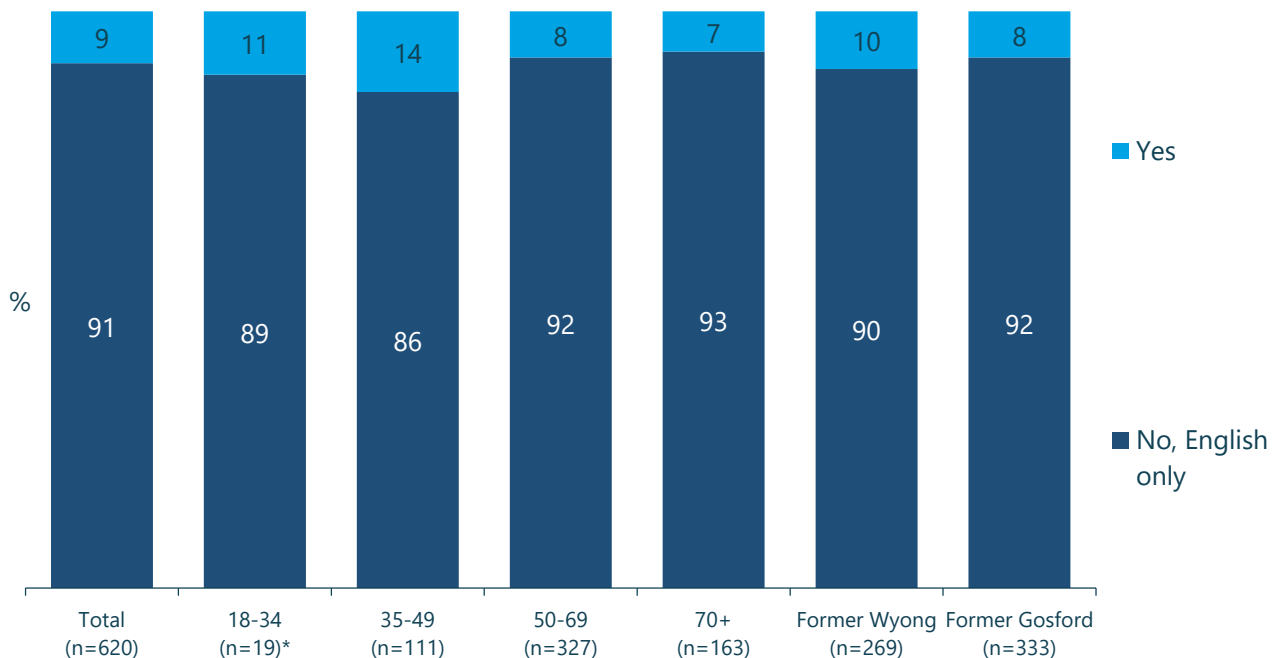
Q. Are you of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin?
Base: All respondents (Residential – Council YVOC n=620)

Figure 69: Language status (Residential – Structured)



Q. Do you speak a language other than English at home?
Base: All respondents (Residential - Structured n=510)

Figure 70: Language status (Residential – Council YVOC)



Q. Do you speak a language other than English at home?
Base: All respondents (Residential – Council YVOC n=620)

Appendix B: Questionnaires

Central Coast Council Residential Questionnaire

Survey Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to complete this important survey.

Central Coast Council is asking residential and business customers to provide feedback in relation to the water, sewerage and stormwater services that they provide.

This community feedback will be used to help Council make an informed pricing submission to the independent regulator for NSW (IPART).

Pricing submissions to IPART for water, sewerage and stormwater prices is a process Council undertakes every 3-4 years (in line with the requirements and timings which are set by IPART).

This is a separate process to Council's application to IPART for a Special Variation on rates, which is part of Council's Business Recovery Plan. For more information on this process, please visit yourvoiceourcoast.com.

Please complete this questionnaire on behalf of your household. It will take around 15 minutes to complete.

Any information provided here will not be stored in association with your personal details. Your responses will remain anonymous, and your answers will only be used in conjunction with other respondents to determine overall trends and community sentiment.

Please use the '>>' (next) button in the lower right hand side of the screen to move to the next question. You can also use the '<<' (back) button to go back, but please DO NOT use your browser's back button.

If you have any questions about this survey, please contact Woolcott Research on (02) 9261 5221 (during office hours) or at info@woolcott.com.au.

A. Screening Question

S1. Are you... SR. CHECK QUOTAS

- | | |
|------------------------|---|
| Male | 1 |
| Female | 2 |
| Non-gender-specific | 3 |
| Prefer not to indicate | 4 |

S2. Which of the following age groups best describes you? SR. CHECK QUOTAS

- | | |
|------------|---|
| 18-24 | 1 |
| 25-34 | 2 |
| 35-49 | 3 |
| 50-59 | 4 |
| 60-69 | 5 |
| 70-84 | 6 |
| 85 or over | 7 |

S3. What suburb do you live in: _____ CHECK QUOTAS

S4. Do you, or does anyone in your household, work for any of the following organisations?

- Water supply or sewerage services
- Market research
- IPART (the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal)
- NSW Health in a role related to water quality regulation
- NSW Environment Protection Authority

- | | | |
|-----|---|-------------------|
| Yes | 1 | THANK & TERMINATE |
| No | 2 | |

B. General Questions

1. Is your household connected to town water?

- | | |
|-----|---|
| Yes | 1 |
| No | 2 |

2. Is your household connected to the sewer?

- | | |
|-----|---|
| Yes | 1 |
| No | 2 |

IF NO TO Q1 AND Q2 THEN SKIP TO SECTION F

3. Do you receive water/sewerage bills from Central Coast Council and/or your body corporate? SR.

Yes, from Central Coast Council	1
Yes, from my body corporate	2
Yes, from Central Coast Council and my body corporate	3
No	4

4. IF CODE 4 AT Q1: Does your landlord charge you all or part of your water/sewerage bill as a specific charge separate from the rent? SR.

Yes 1 CONTINUE
 No 2 TERMINATE

5. Which of the following would be the closest to representing your own household type?

A single person/relatively low user household that uses around 25 kL each quarter	1
A typical house that uses around 47 kL each quarter	2
A larger/relatively high user household that uses around 72 kL each quarter	3
A typical apartment/unit that uses around 29 kL each quarter	4

(current usage charge per kl is \$2.07)

C. Priorities for water and sewerage services

6. When you think about your water and sewerage services, what are the three things you want Central Coast Council to focus on and improve on the most? REQUIRE AT LEAST ONE ANSWER

a. _____
 b. _____
 c. _____

7. Of the following options, what would you like Central Coast Council to focus and improve on **the most** in relation to the water & sewer assets? ROTATE ORDER ANCHORING OTHER AT THE BOTTOM. SR

- A. Improve drinking water quality
- B. Reduce frequency of unplanned water interruptions
- C. Reduce water main breaks
- D. Improve odour control
- E. Reduce sewer main breaks and chokes
- F. Other (please specify)

D. Performance

8. Thinking about the last 12 months, how satisfied have you been with the following (where 1 is low satisfaction and 5 is high satisfaction):

	Low				High	Don't Know
Water quality (including taste and clarity)	1	2	3	4	5	6
Reliability of water supply (lack of flow interruptions)	1	2	3	4	5	6
Response time to fix interruptions	1	2	3	4	5	6
Water pressure	1	2	3	4	5	6

9. Now, thinking about sewerage services in the last 12 months, please indicate if your household has been impacted by the following:

	Yes	No	Don't Know
Sewage overflows on the property	1	2	3
Sewage overflows in the community (beach or lake displaying 'no swimming' signs)	1	2	3

10. Based on what you have experienced yourself or heard about from others, how concerned are you by the frequency of sewage overflows (caused by blockages and chokes in the sewer system) that flow into the natural environment (e.g. bushland, river, beaches or lakes):

- No concern 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- High level concern 5

11. Still thinking about the last 12 months, how satisfied have you been with your water and sewerage supplier in the following ways (where 1 is low satisfaction and 5 is high satisfaction):

	Low				High	Don't Know
Being easy to deal with	1	2	3	4	5	6
Having information available in relation to any outages/service interruptions	1	2	3	4	5	6

E. Drainage

12. At the moment the stormwater drainage charge is included in your water bill and the pricing is determined by IPART. IPART have suggested that Council investigates the possibility of having the pricing set by Central Coast Council as part of the general rates, to be in-line with how other Councils charge for this. In principle, if the amount was to remain at a similar level, how supportive would you be for the stormwater drainage fee to be set by Central Coast Council under general Council rates?

- Very supportive 1
- Supportive 2
- Neutral 3
- Unsupportive 4
- Very unsupportive 5
- Don't know 6

13. At the moment, due to the way drainage charges were originally set up, a small proportion of the Council's population does not contribute to the funding of drainage infrastructure. To what extent do you support the idea of all property owners within the Central Coast region contributing towards that cost?

- Very supportive 1
- Supportive 2
- Neutral 3
- Unsupportive 4
- Very unsupportive 5
- Don't know 6

F. Scarcity Pricing

14. Central Coast Council charges customers for water and sewerage services. Prices for these services are set by IPART, who is the independent pricing regulator in NSW.

For their water services, residential customers pay a FIXED charge per household, and a USAGE charge that varies with the volume of water used by the household. So customers can control their overall bill by varying the amount of water that they use. Were you aware of this?

Yes	1
No	2

15. In response to our variable climate, some other water providers have moved towards a pricing system that involves increasing the USAGE charge for water **during times of drought**. This means is that when water reserves run low, there is an increase in the USAGE price for water. Increasing the USAGE price then encourages residents to use less water – it generally doesn't result in an increase in revenue for the provider because people use less and the cost to supply water also increases when water reserves are low.

Central Coast Council is interested in knowing how supportive you would be of the introduction of this pricing system. They are proposing that when the dam levels fall below 50% the USAGE price for water increases. If a household didn't reduce their consumption pattern, this could result in an increase of around \$10 per quarter on the average household bill when dam levels are lower - however, the exact USAGE and FIXED charges would be determined by IPART.

How supportive are you of Central Coast Council introducing this pricing system (increased usage charge during times of drought)?

Very supportive	1
Supportive	2
Neutral	3
Unsupportive	4
Very unsupportive	5

G. Price Alignment

16. As you may know, Central Coast Council was formed from the amalgamation of the former Gosford and Wyong Councils. Each of the former Councils had responsibility for the provision of water and sewerage services to their residents. Now that they have been combined they have aligned the prices for water rates, but there are still different sewerage service charges.

Historically, residents of the former Gosford City Council paid higher service charges as Gosford Council received more revenue to invest in infrastructure.

To support the vision of ‘One – Central Coast’, Central Coast Council is interested to know how supportive you would be for a single price for sewerage services to be introduced for all Central Coast residents in the future, so that any future investment in sewerage services will be based on asset expenditure requirements, not on previous local government area boundaries.

How supportive are you of the idea of introducing a single price so that all Central Coast Council residents pay the same amount for their sewerage services?

- Very supportive 1
- Supportive 2
- Neutral 3
- Unsupportive 4
- Very unsupportive 5
- Not sure 6

17. To give you a better idea of the likely impact on your own household, customers in the previous Wyong LGA may pay a slightly higher price to offset the lower charges for the previous Gosford LGA .

At the moment the prices are as follows (based on residential houses):

	Price (per quarter)
	\$
Former Gosford Council area	99.66
Former Wyong Council area	91.55

The proposal would be for a single price. As an example - an average of the two would be \$95.60.
How supportive are you of this?

Very supportive	1
Supportive	2
Neutral	3
Unsupportive	4
Very unsupportive	5

H. Demographic Questions

18. Which of the following best describes the dwelling where you are currently living? SR

I/We own/are currently buying this property	1
I/We currently rent this property	2

19. How long have you lived on the Central Coast? SR

Less than 12 months	1
1-3 years	2
4-7 years	3
8-10 years	4
10+ years	5
20+ years	6

20. What is your household type? SR

Single person living alone	1
One parent family	2
Couple with no children at home	3
Couple with children at home	4
Other families	5
Group household	6
Other (please specify)	7

21. What is your employment type?

Full time	1
Part time	2
Casual	3
Contract	4
Self-employed	5
Actively looking for work	6
Not looking for work	7
Retired	8
Not able to work	9
Student	10
Home duties	11

22. What is your approximate annual household income?

Less than \$41,600	1
Between \$41,600 and \$78,000	2
Between \$78,000 and \$104,000	3
Between \$104,000 and \$156,000	4
More than \$156,000	5
Do not wish to answer	6

23. Do you currently hold a concession card/low income healthcare card

Yes	1 (CODE AS VULNERABLE)
No	2
Prefer not to indicate	3

24. In the last 12 months, have you had any difficulty paying your water bills, e.g. had to ask for an extension or paid late, been on a special payment plan, been disconnected, delayed other payments or borrowed money to pay?

Yes	1 (CODE AS VULNERABLE)
No	2

Don't know 3

25. Are you of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin? MR (CODES 2&3 ONLY)

No 1

Yes, Aboriginal 2

Yes, Torres Strait Islander 3

Prefer not to say 4

26. Do you speak a language other than English at home? SR

Yes 1

No, English only 2

Thank you very much for your time.

Central Coast Council SME Questionnaire

Survey Introduction

Good afternoon/evening, I'm [PROVIDE NAME] from Woolcott Research. We are doing an important study for Central Coast Council to obtain feedback from business owners and managers in relation to the water, sewerage and stormwater services that they provide.

This feedback will be used to help Council make an informed pricing submission to the independent regulator for NSW (known as IPART).

Pricing submissions to IPART for water, sewerage and stormwater prices are mandatory, and occur every 3-4 years.

This is a totally separate process to Council's application to IPART for a Special Variation on Council rates, which is part of Council's Business Recovery Plan.

Do you have time to complete the survey now?

IF NO: Arrange call-back.

A. Screening Question

S1. Firstly, can I confirm whether you are an owner or manager of the business I am calling? SR

- | | | |
|------------------------|---------------|--|
| Yes, owner/ proprietor | 1 | |
| Yes, senior manager | 2 | |
| No, other employee | 3 - TERMINATE | |

S2. And to make sure we speak with a good cross-section of the business community, approximately how many staff does your business employ...

- | | | |
|---------------------------|---|-----------|
| Non employing/sole trader | 1 | |
| 1-4 Employees | 2 | |
| 5-19 Employees | 3 | |
| 20-199 Employees | 4 | |
| 200+ Employees | 5 | TERMINATE |

S3. And what is the postcode of your business address? _____ CHECK
QUOTAS

B. General Questions

1. Is your business connected to town water?

- Yes 1
- No 2

2. Is your business connected to the sewer?

- Yes 1
- No 2

IF NO TO Q1 AND Q2 THEN SKIP TO SECTION F

3. Which of the following best describes the water bills you receive for your business? READ OUT. SR.

The business gets bills from Central Coast Council	1
The business gets bills from the body corporate for the premises	2
The business gets bills from Central Coast Council and from the body corporate for the premises	3
No	4

4. IF CODE 4 AT Q3: Does your landlord/managing agent charge you all or part of your water/sewerage bill as a specific charge separate from the rent? SR.

- Yes 1 CONTINUE
- No 2 TERMINATE

5. Which of the following would be the closest to representing your own business type? RAED OUT

A smaller business user – typically with a 20 or 25mm Meter size	1
A medium sized business user – typically with a 40mm Meter size	2
A larger business user – typically with a 100mm Meter size	3

(current usage charge per kl is \$2.07)

C. Priorities for water and sewerage services

6. When you think about your water and sewerage services, what are the three things you want Central Coast Council to focus on and improve on the most? REQUIRE AT LEAST ONE ANSWER

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____

7. Of the following options, what would you like Central Coast Council to focus and improve on **the most** in relation to the water & sewer assets? ROTATE ORDER ANCHORING OTHER AT THE BOTTOM. SR

- A. Improve drinking water quality
- B. Reduce frequency of unplanned water interruptions
- C. Reduce water main breaks
- D. Improve odour control
- E. Reduce sewer main breaks and chokes
- F. Other (please specify)

D. Performance

8. Thinking about the last 12 months, how satisfied have you been with READ OUT FIRST OPTION (where 1 is low satisfaction and 5 is high satisfaction). And how about.... ? READ OUT NEXT OPTION.

	Low				High	Don't Know
Water quality (including taste and clarity)	1	2	3	4	5	6
Reliability of water supply (lack of flow interruptions)	1	2	3	4	5	6
Response time to fix interruptions	1	2	3	4	5	6
Water pressure	1	2	3	4	5	6

9. Now, thinking about sewerage services in the last 12 months, please indicate if your business has been impacted by RAED OUT FIRST OPTION. And have you been impacted by..... RAED OUT NEXT OPTION.

	Yes	No	Don't Know
Sewage overflows on the property	1	2	3
Sewage overflows in the community (beach or lake displaying 'no swimming' signs)	1	2	3

10. How concerned are you by the frequency of sewage overflows (caused by blockages and chokes in the sewer system) that flow into the natural environment (e.g. bushland, river, beaches or lakes). Please use a scale from 1 to 5 where 1 means you have no concern, and 5 means you are highly concerned, based on what you have experienced yourself or heard about from others.

- No concern 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- High level concern 5

11. Still thinking about the last 12 months, how satisfied have you been with your water and sewerage supplier in terms of..... READ OUT FIRST OPTION (where 1 is low satisfaction and 5 is high satisfaction)? And how about.....READ OUT NEXT OPTION?

	Low				High	Don't Know
Being easy to deal with	1	2	3	4	5	6
Having information available in relation to any outages/service interruptions	1	2	3	4	5	6

E. Drainage

12. Currently if a business resides in a 'business only / non-residential' complex, then the drainage charge is based on the total land size of the complex. It is then divided up based on the number of businesses in the complex. If a business resides in a complex that also includes residential premises, then each property is charged a set amount. To what extent do you support all business properties being charged the same set amount? Would you be.... READ OUT SCALE

- Very supportive 1
- Supportive 2
- Neutral 3
- Unsupportive 4
- Very unsupportive 5
- Don't know 6

13. At the moment the stormwater drainage charge is included in your water bill and the pricing is determined by IPART. IPART have suggested that Council investigates the possibility of having the pricing set by Central Coast Council as part of the general rates, to be in-line with how other Councils charge for this.

In principle, if the amount was to remain at a similar level, how supportive would you be for the stormwater drainage fee to be set by Central Coast Council under general Council rates?

Would you be.... READ OUT SCALE

Very supportive	1
Supportive	2
Neutral	3
Unsupportive	4
Very unsupportive	5
Don't know	6

14. At the moment, due to the way drainage charges were originally set up, a small proportion of the Council's population does not contribute to the funding of drainage infrastructure. To what extent do you support the idea of all property owners within the Central Coast region contributing towards that cost? Would you be.... READ OUT SCALE

Very supportive	1
Supportive	2
Neutral	3
Unsupportive	4
Very unsupportive	5
Don't know	6

G. Price Structure

15. Central Coast Council charges customers for water and sewerage services. Prices for these services are set by IPART, who is the independent pricing regulator in NSW.

For their water services, business customers pay a FIXED charge per property, and a USAGE charge that varies with the volume of water used by the property. So customers can control their overall bill by varying the amount of water that they use. Were you aware of this?

Yes	1
No	2

H. Scarcity Pricing

16. In response to our variable climate, some other water providers have moved towards a pricing system that involves increasing the USAGE charge for water **during times of drought**. This means is that when water reserves run low, there is an increase in the USAGE price for water. Increasing the USAGE price then encourages residents to use less water – it generally doesn't result in an increase in revenue for the provider because people use less and the cost to supply water also increases when water reserves are low.

Central Coast Council is interested in knowing how supportive you would be of the introduction of this pricing system. They are proposing that when the dam levels fall below 50% the USAGE price for water increases. If a business didn't reduce their consumption pattern, this could result in an increase of around \$10 per quarter on the average bill when dam levels are lower - however, the exact USAGE and FIXED charges would be determined by IPART.

How supportive are you of Central Coast Council introducing this pricing system (increased usage charge during times of drought)?

Very supportive	1
Supportive	2
Neutral	3
Unsupportive	4
Very unsupportive	5

I. Price Alignment

17. As you may know, Central Coast Council was formed from the amalgamation of the former Gosford and Wyong Councils. Each of the former Councils had responsibility for the provision of water and sewerage services to their residents and businesses. Now that they have been combined they have aligned the prices for water rates, but there are still different sewerage service charges.

Historically, businesses of the former Gosford City Council paid higher service charges as Gosford Council received more revenue to invest in infrastructure.

To support the vision of 'One – Central Coast', Central Coast Council is interested to know how supportive you would be for a single price for sewerage services to be introduced for all Central Coast businesses in the future, so that any future investment in sewerage services will be based on asset expenditure requirements, not on previous local government area boundaries.

How supportive are you of the idea of introducing a single price so that all Central Coast Council businesses pay the same amount for their sewerage services? Would you be.... READ OUT SCALE

Very supportive	1
Supportive	2
Neutral	3
Unsupportive	4
Very unsupportive	5
Not sure	6

18. To give you a better idea of the likely impact on your own business, customers in the previous Wyong LGA may pay a slightly higher price to offset the lower charges for the previous Gosford LGA .

IF CODE 1 AT Q5:

At the moment the sewerage service charge for the former Gosford Council area for a commercial connection with a 25mm Meter size is \$186.86 per quarter, while the price in the former Wyong area is lower at \$123.17 per quarter.

How supportive are you of the creation of a single price for all businesses? As an example - an average of the two would be around \$155. Would you be.... READ OUT SCALE.

Very supportive	1
Supportive	2
Neutral	3
Unsupportive	4
Very unsupportive	5

IF CODE 2 AT Q5:

At the moment the sewerage service charge for the former Gosford Council area for a commercial connection with a 40mm Meter size is \$478 per quarter, while the price in the former Wyong area is lower at \$315 per quarter.

How supportive are you of the creation of a single price for all businesses? As an example - an average of the two would be around \$386. Would you be.... READ OUT SCALE.

Very supportive	1
Supportive	2
Neutral	3
Unsupportive	4
Very unsupportive	5

IF CODE 3 AT Q5:

At the moment the sewerage service charge for the former Gosford Council area for a commercial connection with a 100mm Meter size is \$ 2,989 per quarter, while the price in the former Wyong area is lower at around \$1,970 per quarter.

How supportive are you of the creation of a single price for all businesses? As an example - an average of the two would be around \$2,480. Would you be.... READ OUT SCALE.

Very supportive	1
Supportive	2
Neutral	3
Unsupportive	4
Very unsupportive	5

J. Demographic Questions

19. In which industry do you operate? SR

Accommodation and Food Services	1
Administrative and Support Services	2
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	3
Arts and Recreation Services	4
Construction	5
Education and Training	6
Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services	7
Financial and Insurance Services	8
Health Care and Social Assistance	9

Information Media and Telecommunications	10
Manufacturing	11
Mining	12
Other	13
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	14
Public Administration and Safety	15
Rental, Hiring and Real Estate Services	16
Retail Trade	17
Transport, Postal and Warehousing	18
Wholesale Trade	19

20.	How long has your business been operating on the Central Coast? SR	
	Less than 12 months	1
	1-3 years	2
	4-7 years	3
	8-10 years	4
	10+ years	5
	20+ years	6

Thank you very much for your time.

Appendix C: YVOC Promotional Activities

Promotional Activities for the Council YVOC Survey

Central Coast Council carried out promotion of the survey on the Your Voice Our Coast website to ensure the community and stakeholders were aware of the opportunity to participate.

<p>Your Voice – Our Coast website</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Page launched on 1 March • 1-28 March (consultation): 1,112 page visits • yourvoiceourcoast.com/all-projects/its-time-talk-water-sewer-and-stormwater-prices
<p>Media Releases</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 March 2021 – Council invite community to provide feedback on water, sewer and stormwater prices • 25 March 2021 – Council reminds community to have their say on water, sewer and stormwater prices • Copies of the media releases can be found in Appendix C1
<p>Coast Connect articles</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Electronic newsletters reaching 11,000+ residents • 3 March, feature article: It's time to talk water, sewer and stormwater prices • 10 March, article: It's time to talk water, sewer and stormwater prices • 17 March, article: Tell us your water, sewer and stormwater values • 25 March 2021, link to survey: Water, sewer and stormwater prices survey closing soon - Have Your Say • Copies of the articles can be found in Appendix C2
<p>Print advertising</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newspaper advertising with a total print run of 170,000 • Central Coast Chronicle – ½ page advertisement – 3 March 2021 • Coast Community News – ½ page advertisement – 5 March 2021

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pelican Post – ½ page advertisement – 11 March 2021 • Copies of the advertisements can be found in Appendix C3
Radio	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Radio advertising, running from 1-28 March • Reaches 140,000 residents
Electronic direct mails (EDMs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two EDMs were distributed • Copies of the EDMs can be found in Appendix C4
Online discussion groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15 March 2021, online discussion group 1 – 10 participants • 17 March 2021, online discussion group 2 – 10 participants
Internal communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal communications to 2000+ Council employees
Letters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1,455 letters distributed to residents who live in the non-declared drainage area • 123 letters and emails to category 3 customers (high-users of water) • A copy of the letters can be found in Appendix C5

Appendix C.1 – Media Releases

1 March 2021

Council invite community to provide feedback on water, sewer and stormwater prices

Central Coast Council is calling on the community to have their say on water, sewer and stormwater pricing.

Water, sewer and stormwater prices are set by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART), who undertake a review of pricing every three to four years (the period is determined by IPART).

This latest review by IPART requires Council to propose pricing for these services by September 2021 that will take effect from 1 July 2022 until 30 June 2026.

Council Director Water and Sewer, Jamie Loader said community feedback is a crucial part of putting together Council's submission.

"We want to find out what's important to you about how we provide water, sewer and stormwater services to the Central Coast," said Mr Loader.

"We will then balance this information with our assessment of how much it costs to produce water, treat sewage and ensure that stormwater is managed.

"We want to assure the community this does not mean prices go up automatically, they could in fact go down or remain the same.

"IPART will independently consider Council's submission, which will include community feedback, and will set a fair price for customers."

Council Administrator, Dick Persson AM said that he wanted the community to understand that this submission to IPART for water, sewer and stormwater prices is completely separate to the application for a rate rise that Council recently lodged.

"Council applied to IPART for a 15% rate rise to help with Council's financial recovery. This process is called a Special Variation application and is a one-off application as part of our Business Recovery Plan," Mr Persson said.

"Water, sewer and stormwater prices are required to be separately reviewed every three to four years and that is what this process is for.

"I encourage everyone to get involved in how Council will deliver what is one of the very essential services we can and must deliver."

Community members can have their say by completing an online survey at yourvoiceourcoast.com.

ENDS

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25 March 2021

Council reminds community to have their say on water, sewer and stormwater prices

Central Coast Council is reminding the community to jump online and fill out the survey on water, sewer and stormwater pricing by 28 March.

Water, sewer and stormwater prices are set by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART). The latest review by IPART requires Council to propose pricing for these services by September 2021 that will take effect from 1 July 2022 until 30 June 2026.


Community feedback is a crucial part of putting together Council's submission to IPART.

Community members can have their say by completing an online survey at yourvoiceourcoast.com by 28 March 2021.

Council are required to prepare and lodge this submission on water, sewer and stormwater prices due to timing previously set by IPART – it has not been brought forward in line with Council's application to IPART for a Special Variation on rates.


Appendix C.2 – Coast Connect

3 March, feature article: *It's time to talk water, sewer and stormwater prices*



Coast Connect

3 March 2021




It's time to talk water, sewer and stormwater prices

Every few years Council reviews how much it costs to produce drinking water, treat sewage and manage stormwater.

Part of this involves us checking in with you to make sure your views are considered.

The time to have your say has come again – tell us what's important to you about how we provide these services and how they should be priced.


[Fill in our online survey >](#)



Referendum: Reduction of Councillors and wards

Council resolved to hold a Constitutional Referendum for the reduction of Councillors (from 15 to 9) in conjunction with the September 2021 Local Government Elections. First we want to know what you think.

[Have Your Say >](#)



Administrator appoints new CEO

Council Administrator, Mr Dick Persson AM has announced Mr David Farmer as Council's new Chief Executive Officer. Mr Farmer has had up to 40 years' experience in Local Government and will commence in April.

[Read more >](#)

10 March, article: It's time to talk water, sewer and stormwater prices



Have your say on Councillor and ward numbers

Council resolved to hold a Constitutional Referendum for the reduction of Councillors (from 15 to 9) in conjunction with the September 2021 Local Government Elections. First we want to know what you think.

Have Your Say >



It's time to talk water, sewer and stormwater prices

Every few years Council reviews how much it costs to provide water, sewer and stormwater services. This involves making sure your views are considered. Tell us what's important to you about how we provide these services.

Fill in our online survey >

17 March, article: Tell us your water, sewer and stormwater values



Tell us your water, sewer and stormwater values

Every few years Council reviews how much it costs to provide water, sewer and stormwater services for the region. Part of this involves finding out what's important to you about how we provide these services.

Fill in our online survey >



How do you use our open spaces?

We are developing an Active Lifestyles Strategy for the region and want to hear how you currently use open spaces, what you value and what you want to see in the future to encourage healthy and active outdoor lifestyles.

Help plan an active future >

25 March 2021, link to survey: [Water, sewer and stormwater prices survey closing soon](#)

Contact us

Gosford Office

49 Mann Street
Gosford NSW 2250
Ph: 1300 463 954

Wyong Office

2 Hely Street
Wyong NSW 2259
Ph: 1300 463 954

Email us

ask@centralcoast.nsw.gov.au

Important links

[Water, sewer and stormwater prices survey closing soon - Have Your Say](#)

[Rates Harmonisation – Overview and FAQs](#)

[Be part of Graffiti Removal Day on Sunday 28 March](#)

[IGNITE Business Launchpad program for youth](#)

[We're planning a new fenced off-leash area at Helen Reserve, Gorokan](#)



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[Web version](#) / [Unsubscribe](#) / [Preference Centre](#)

Appendix C.3 – Print Advertising

Central Coast Chronicle – ½ page advertisement – 3 March 2021

Coast Community News – ½ page advertisement – 5 March 2021

Pelican Post – ½ page advertisement – 11 March 2021



HAVE YOUR SAY

Central Coast, it's time to talk water, sewer and stormwater prices.

Did you know your water, sewer and stormwater prices are set by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART)?

Central Coast Council is currently preparing a submission for IPART's next review of the prices for the Coast and we want to ensure your views are considered.

We want to find out what's important to you about how we provide water, sewer and stormwater services.

This information will then be used to form our submission to IPART.

Have your say by completing our online survey.

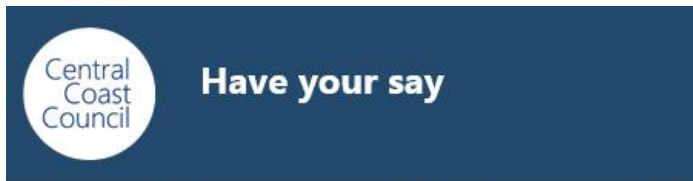
Council are required to prepare and lodge this submission on water, sewer and stormwater prices due to timing previously set by IPART – it has not been brought forward in line with Council's application to IPART for a Special Variation on rates.

yourvoiceourcoast.com

Central Coast Council

Appendix C.4 – EDMs

2 March – It's time to talk water, sewer and stormwater prices



It's time to talk water, sewer and stormwater prices

Hey Alexis,

Every few years Council reviews how much it costs to produce drinking water, treat sewage and manage stormwater.

Part of this involves us checking in with you to make sure your views are considered.

The time to have your say has come again.

Tell us what's important to you about how we provide water, sewer and stormwater services.

[Fill in our survey](#)

Contact us

Gosford Office

49 Mann Street
Gosford NSW 2250
Ph: 1300 463 954

Wyangong Office

2 Hely Street
Wyangong NSW 2259
Ph: 1300 463 954

Important links

[Have your say on other community projects](#)

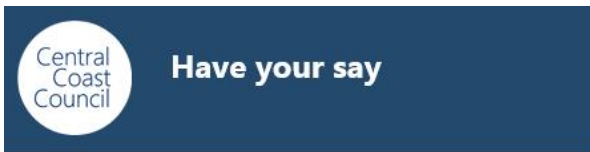
[Water usage calculator](#)

[How to resolve neighbourhood concerns](#)

[How we manage our coastline](#)

[Stay up to date as we respond to COVID](#)

18 March – Help us plan the Coast’s water future



Planning the Coast’s water future

Hey Alexis,

We just wanted to remind you that you can still have your say on two important water projects that Council are currently working on.

Survey 1: Water, sewer and stormwater prices

Every few years Council reviews how much it costs to produce drinking water, treat sewage and manage stormwater. Part of this involves us checking in with you to make sure your views are considered. The time to have your say has come again. Tell us what’s important to you about how we provide water, sewer and stormwater services.

[Take our short survey](#)

Survey 2: Our future water supply

We are currently investigating and considering nine different options to secure the future of water on the Coast – including dams, desalination, environmental flow substitution, recycled water and more! Tell us what you think about our shortlist of options for our long-term water supply.

[Take our short survey](#)

Contact us

Gosford Office

49 Mann Street
Gosford NSW 2250
Ph: 1300 463 954

Wyong Office

2 Hely Street
Wyong NSW 2259
Ph: 1300 463 954

Important links

[Have your say on other community projects](#)

[Water usage calculator](#)

[How to resolve neighbourhood concerns](#)

[How we manage our coastline](#)

[Stay up to date as we respond to COVID](#)

Appendix C.5 – letters and emails

1,455 letters distributed to residents who live in the non-declared drainage area



12 March 2021

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Dear resident,

It's time to talk about water, sewer and stormwater prices

On the Central Coast, water, sewerage and stormwater prices are set by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART).

As such, every three to four years, Central Coast Council is required to review how much it costs to produce drinking water, treat sewage and manage stormwater for our community.

This latest review requires Council to propose pricing to IPART for these services by September 2021. Any change will take effect from 1 July 2022 and be in place until 30 June 2026.

This submission to IPART for water, sewer and stormwater prices is separate to the application for a rate rise that Council recently lodged to IPART for a 15% rate rise to help with Council's financial recovery. This process is called a Special Variation application and is a one-off application as part of our Business Recovery Plan.

Stormwater drainage charge

As your property is not currently located within a declared drainage area, we are proposing that your property will continue to not be levied the stormwater drainage charge during the next 4-year IPART determination commencing on 1 July 2022.

Have your say

We want to find out what's important to you about how we provide water, sewer or stormwater services and how they should be priced.

You can have your say by completing an online survey at yourvoiceourcoast.com



Wyong Office: 2 Hely St / PO Box 20 Wyong NSW 2259 | P 02 4350 5555
Gosford Office: 49 Mann St / PO Box 21 Gosford NSW 2250 | P 02 4325 8222
E ask@centralcoast.nsw.gov.au | W www.centralcoast.nsw.gov.au | ABN 73 149 644 003

123 letters and emails to category 3 customers (high-users of water)



2 March 2021



Dear General Manager,

It's time to talk about water, sewer and stormwater prices

On the Central Coast, water, sewer and stormwater prices are set by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART).

Every few years, Central Coast Council is required to review how much it costs to produce drinking water, treat sewage and manage stormwater for our community.

This latest review requires Council to propose pricing to IPART for these services by September 2021. Any change will take effect from 1 July 2022 and be in place until 30 June 2026.

This submission to IPART for water, sewer and stormwater prices is separate to the application for a rate rise that Council recently lodged. Council applied to IPART for a 15% rate rise to help with Council's financial recovery. This process is called a Special Variation application and is a one-off application as part of our Business Recovery Plan. Water, sewer and stormwater prices are required to be reviewed every three to four years and that is what this process is for.

Have your say

We want to find out what's important to you about how we provide water, sewer and stormwater services.

You can have your say by completing an online survey at yourvoiceourcoast.com.

Should you have any concerns regarding the IPART submission process, please contact Council on 1300 463 954 or ipart enquiry@centralcoast.nsw.gov.au

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "J. Loader".

Jamie Loader
Director, Water and Sewer



Deliberative Engagement on Future Service Options

For IPART Submission

Prepared for
Central Coast Council

July 2021



Woolcott Research & Engagement is an Australian privately owned research and engagement agency that provide professional, independent and timely market research and engagement services. Our professional staff arrange, undertake and publish commissioned research and community engagement projects for industry, corporations, governments, integration agencies and individuals.

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Website: www.woolcott.com.au

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1. Executive Summary

1.1 Background and objectives

As Central Coast Council is a monopoly operator for service to Central Coast residents, the NSW Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) sets the maximum prices for the water, sewerage and stormwater services provided by Council.

The next pricing submission to IPART is due for lodgement in September 2021 and will determine Council's prices for those services from 1 July 2022. In developing its submission to IPART, Council has developed costed options for future service delivery, and was seeking community input into its decision making relating to these options.

Woolcott Research & Engagement was engaged to undertake this program of community engagement on behalf of Central Coast Council. This report outlines the findings from this exercise.

The overriding aim of this engagement was to explore preferences for future service delivery amongst Central Coast Council customers regarding costed water, sewerage and drainage options for the Central Coast area.

1.2 Research methodology

This engagement process involved two deliberative engagement forums via Zoom video conferencing (a total of n=80 participants).

Participants were pre-screened during the recruitment process to ensure that as a total they were representative of the Central Coast Council population in terms of age, gender and location.

The forums were conducted on 20th and 22nd July 2021 – with each being carried out over a duration of an hour and a half.

1.3 Research findings

Water quality and sewerage service overflow experiences

While many participants seemed to indicate that they had not experienced any water quality issues within the last 12 months or so, incidence of this was not uncommon and emerged within each of the breakout group discussions. Participants spoke of a range of issues including having brown, rusty or discoloured water, bad or low water pressure, water disruptions, as well as odour and taste issues.

Personal experiences with sewerage overflows within their household seemed much less common, but were still mentioned by some participants. Incidences of experiencing sewerage overflow issues in the broader community were more common, and emerged within each of the breakout groups. Several references were made of overflows in the Terrigal area, but other locations were also mentioned.

Reactions to the water service options

For each service area costed options were put to participants. Option A involved no change to services for no additional bill impact. Option B involved a slight improvement to service levels for an additional cost to customers. Some topics also included a third option, Option C, that involved a more significant improvement to service levels for a higher additional cost. Prior to the presentation of the options for each topic it was outlined that baseline customer bills would increase by approximately \$19, regardless of which option was

chosen as the preferred option for each topic going forward. At the end of the session participants were asked to vote on their preferred options for each service area.

Water quality and reliability:

This was considered very important to upgrade. Participants were split between Options B and C, however given the current environment in the Central Coast and the comparatively higher cost of \$36 for the SMART technology in Option C, Option B emerged as the preferred option. Although some were seeking an option between Options B and C.

Environmental safety and management:

This was also considered important and there were more consistent responses and preferences for spending the extra \$2.25 in Option B, which was felt to be a seemingly small increase for a large return on investment.

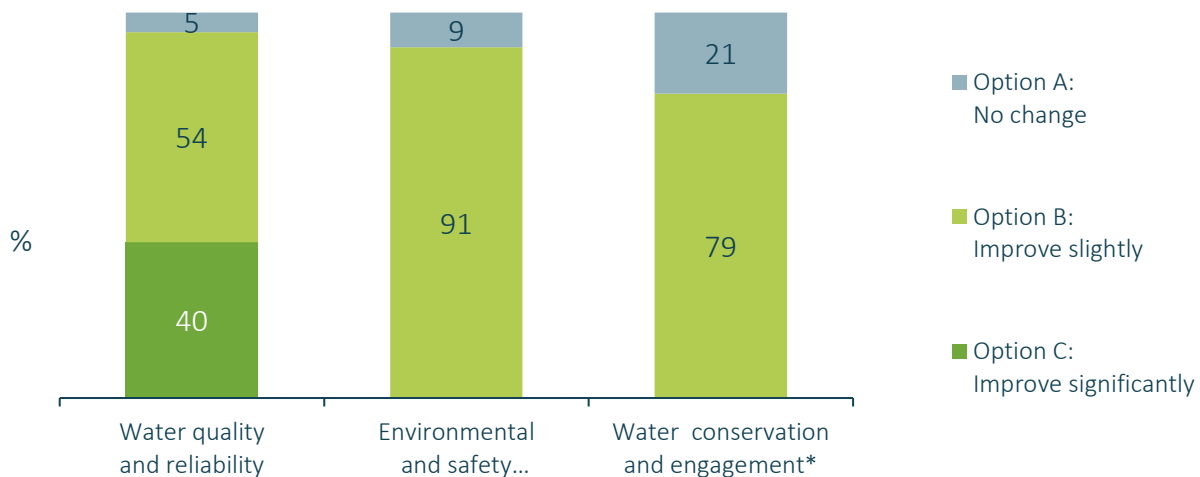
Water conservation and engagement:

The additional \$2.75 per quarter for water conservation and engagement, was also deemed largely worthwhile although some wanted more information about what Council would be doing over and above what they are currently doing in this area.

End of session voting:

From the voting, most participants appeared to be in favour of improving water services slightly, however there was some higher support (40%) for water quality and reliability being improved significantly. However, it is worth noting that these options have different costs depending on the service area.

Figure 1: Summary of preferred options for water services



Base: All participants who answered the question: n=74

* There was no Option C for these service areas

Reactions to the sewerage service options

Sewerage overflows:

Participants indicated that sewerage overflows were a significant issue, and as a result they tended to express a preference for Option C. This option (Option C) was seen to offer better outcomes to the community at a minimal price increase from Option B. Option C was also seen to have a positive health impact.

Option A was not a preferred option - primarily because participants felt that the situation would continue to deteriorate under this option, and it may cost the community more money to fix the problem further down the track.

Some (though fewer in number) felt that Option B would provide significant benefit without going to the expense of Option C, while a few participants did not like the idea of paying for something that they did not feel they would gain benefit from – and therefore had a preference for Option A.

Treatment plants and outfalls:

Overall, participants felt that the environmental implications of not doing the correct thing were seen to be significant, and most participants expressed a clear preference for Option B. The health of Option B were also important to some.

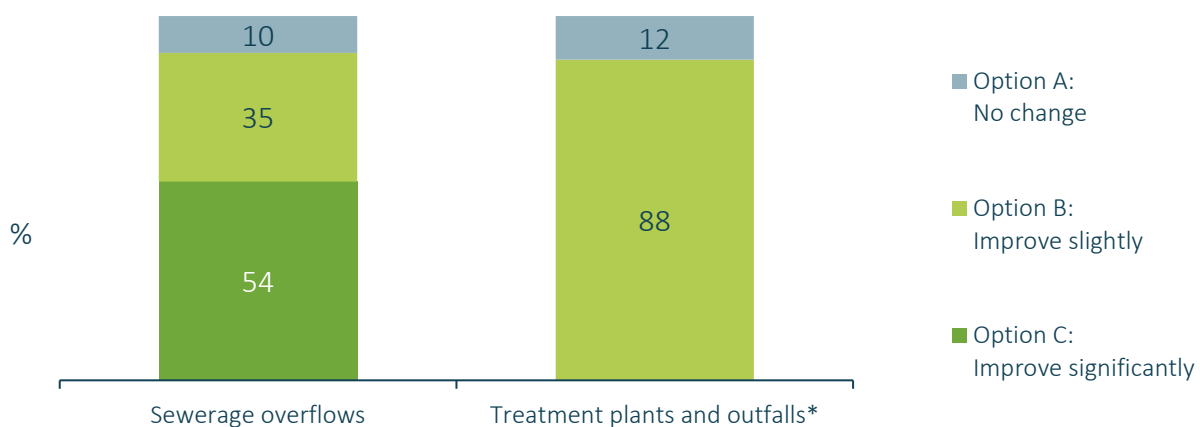
Some participants also saw an advantage in Option B because it tackled the issue now, rather than in the future – seeing it as a good investment for the future.

However, some indicated a preference for Option B purely because they didn't see Option A as something that Central Coast Council would be allowed to do.

End of session voting:

From the end of session voting, most participants were in favour of improving sewerage services in the Central Coast Council area, even with the additional expense it would incur. Only around one in ten participants indicated a preference for Option A for both service areas (indicating that they were happy for things to continue as is, with no additional cost increase).

Figure 2: Summary of preferred options for sewerage services



Base: All participants who answered the question: n=74

* There was no Option C for these service areas

Reactions to the stormwater drainage options

Critical stormwater drainage asset inspections, cleaning and repairs:

Overall, flooding was a known issue to most participants and it followed that they were interested in flood prevention measures. The breakout group discussions revealed that most participants had a preference for Option B as it was seen to offer relief to the flooding situation at a relatively low cost to customers. Some also saw an advantage in acting now (by selecting Option B) to prevent further flooding issues on the future.

However, a few participants were seeking further clarity over how the objectives outlined in Option B would actually be measured. Regardless however, there appeared to be little support for Option A as it simply wasn't seen to be a viable option moving forward.

Stormwater quality and urban channels:

Again, most participants indicated a preference for Option B over Option A, but in this instance the feedback received tended to focus on the fact that Option A was not really a viable option for them because it did not result in Council meeting legislative requirements. It follows that only a few participants seemed to have a reason for actively choosing Option B (as opposed to choosing against Option A).

While there was no obvious preference for Option A, a few participants were seeking additional information in relation to Option B – wanting to know more about what it would deliver for them, and how the outcomes would be measured.

Stormwater quality and urban channels:

As has already been indicated, flooding was seen to be a relatively important issue for the area, and flood prevention measures were therefore valued. It follows that most participants also spoke positively in relation to Option B and Option C – which they felt would lead to greater flood prevention planning.

Some had a clear preference for Option C because they felt that flooding was a priority area for action, and further planning and management was required in order to achieve this. A few participants who were in favour of Option C also indicated that their preference was based on the relatively small additional monetary outlay involved (over option B).

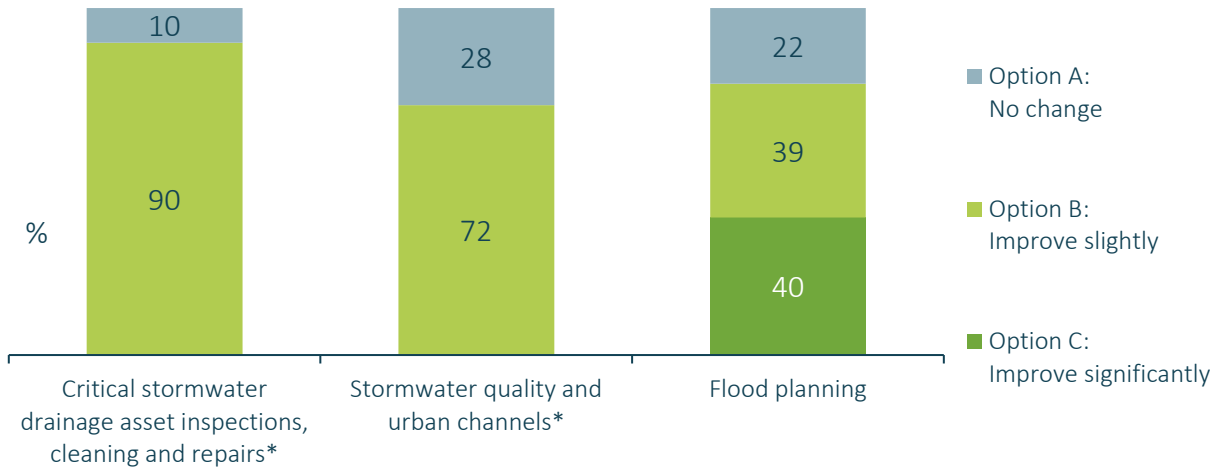
However, there was also a reasonable amount of support forwarded for Option B – primarily as it was seen to offer the same benefits as Option C, but at a slower pace (and lower cost).

However, for this service area, there was some, though limited, support offered in relation to Option A, and this seemed to be based on the fact that this service area had a focus on planning (as opposed to actions).

End of session voting:

Overall, the large majority of all respondents indicated a preference against Option A (the 'no change' option), however, the strength of preference varied slightly. In terms of critical stormwater drainage asset inspections, cleaning and repairs, only one in ten participants opted for Option A, with there being a clear preference for Option B (90%). In terms of stormwater quality and urban channels, just over seven in ten participants indicated a preference for Option B, and for flood planning around eight in ten indicated a preference against Option A, with an even preference between B and C emerging.

Figure 3: Summary of preferred options for stormwater drainage services



Base: All participants who answered the question: n=77

*There was no Option C for these service areas

Bringing it all together

Many forum participants were surprised to see the final cost of their preferences added together, on top of the \$19 per quarter increment that they were likely to see regardless of their selections. In making their final preferences the sentiment was often reiterated that they were 'stuck between a rock and a hard place', that is they felt as though they really didn't have an option as the proposed projects and upgrades to improve water quality, the environment, sewerage infrastructure etc were critical, so they reluctantly accepted the idea that they would have to pay a higher water bill in the future.

It was also suggested that Council should be transparent and keep them informed about the progress of the projects and where and how the money is being spent.

Conclusions

Overall, the large majority of all participants were supportive of the service options that would lead to improvements in their water quality, wastewater services, as well as in drainage/flood mitigation measures. In fact, the support level for the 'no change' options only varied between 5% (for water quality and reliability) and 28% (for stormwater quality and urban channels) as detailed below:

- Water quality and reliability (5%)
- Environmental and safety management (9%)
- Sewerage overflows (10%)
- Critical Stormwater Drainage Asset Inspections, Cleaning and Repairs (10%)
- TPs and outfalls (12%)
- Water conservation and engagement (21%)
- Flood planning (22%)
- Stormwater quality and urban channels (28%)

This shows that there is a clear propensity for residents to accept an increase in costs in order to improve services to them and others in the community.

While there was acceptance of the need for improvements in services to be made, in many instances it was reluctant acceptance. Participants generally were previously unaware of the extent to which services had degraded, and there was genuine surprise expressed in relation to Council not being able to meet quality

standards in some of the service areas. However, once the issues were revealed to them most could identify with the issues being presented – as they were likely to have had direct or indirect experiences with water quality, sewerage overflows, or flooding issues.

Along with this, there was a clear level of disappointment expressed by many of the forum participants – both in terms of the service levels that some residents were dealing with, and also in the fact that to improve the situation additional funds would be required – and required by them.

Clearly in an environment where residents are already being faced with a significant rate rise, information will be critical to ensure that the community is taken on the same journey as the forum participants – by informing them of the issues and challenges being faced, the solutions available to address these problems, and of any progress made that is made in dealing with the issues once changes are implemented.

2. Background and Objectives

2.1 Background

The Central Coast has the third largest urban water supply system in New South Wales, after Sydney and the Hunter region. The area has three dams, three weirs, three water treatment plants, over 50 reservoirs and more than 2,200kms of pipelines. Water is also transported into the system by the Hunter Connection, a two-way pipeline that provides additional water for operational reasons, or during drought, for both the Central Coast and the Hunter.

As Central Coast Council is a monopoly operator for service to Central Coast residents, the NSW Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) sets the maximum prices for the water, sewerage and stormwater services provided by Central Coast Council.

The next pricing submission to IPART is due for lodgment in September 2021 and will determine Council's prices for those services from 1 July 2022. In developing its submission to IPART Council has developed costed options for future service delivery, and was seeking community input into the decision making relating to these options.

Woolcott Research & Engagement was commissioned to undertake this program of community engagement on behalf of Central Coast Council. This report outlines the findings from this engagement exercise.

2.2 Objectives

The overriding aim of the engagement exercise was to explore preferences for future service delivery amongst Central Coast Council customers regarding water, sewerage and drainage for the Central Coast area.

More specifically, the objectives were to:

- explore water quality issues within the household;
- explore sewerage service issues (wastewater overflows) both within the home and the wider community;
- obtain feedback in relation to a series of costed water supply service options;
- obtain feedback in relation to a series of costed sewerage service options;
- obtain feedback in relation to a series of costed stormwater drainage service options; and
- to determine preferences for each service option (once all costed options had been revealed).

3. Research Design

3.1 Overview of the engagement program

The program involved a deliberative engagement approach which included qualitative and quantitative techniques. The approach was designed to give participants the time and information to consider issues in-depth, make the required trade-offs and then arrive at considered outcomes.

The technique aims to provide:

- **True representation** – participants were recruited to ensure that they reflect the actual demographics of the population rather than through self-selection
- **Deliberation** – participants were given time, information and the opportunity to discuss with others with diverse backgrounds and viewpoints
- **Informed outcomes** – the provision of clear and accessible information, and access to experts, meant that participants were educated on the issues in order to grapple with complex trade-offs, think about future scenarios and ultimately arrive at informed recommendations
- **Inclusivity** – anyone who wanted to contribute was able to do so
- **Objectivity** – independent facilitation and true representation meant that the outcomes stand up to outside scrutiny

The work adhered to The Research Society and International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) Core Values and Codes of Ethics.

3.2 COVID-19 impact

Due to the existing climate regarding COVID-19, Woolcott Research & Engagement has continued to adhere to strict health guidelines, especially in this case, regarding the gathering of large groups.

The traditional 'in-person' deliberative format was moved to an online layout, utilising the Zoom platform to conduct large scale group meetings. This allowed for the delivery of information in a larger group setting, as well as smaller group discussions in 'break-out rooms' that gave researchers the ability to gather more in-depth feedback.

3.3 Interpreting the findings in this report

Percentages have been rounded to whole numbers and as a result, for some closed-ended questions (where a total of 100 per cent may be expected), total percentages may not add to exactly 100. Mean scores have also been calculated for scale questions and have been rounded to one decimal place. Caution must be taken when reading these numbers as they are based on relatively small sample sizes.

3.4 Methodology and profile of participants

This consisted of two community deliberative engagement forums via Zoom video conferencing amongst residents of the Central Coast Council area.

Online forums

In total there were n=80 participants at the two forums, as detailed below:

Table 1: Forum Participants

	Date	No. of Participants
Forum 1	20 th July 2021	n=41
Forum 2	22 nd July 2021	n=39

The forums consisted of a mix of presentations from Central Coast Council executives, ‘break-out room’ discussions and participant response polling sessions. There were around 8 participants in each pre-assigned breakout room. Each forums ran from 6.00 - 7.30 pm.

For each forum Woolcott Research & Engagement provided a lead facilitator who chaired the sessions and managed the flow and timing, as well as breakout group facilitators (for each breakout group) and a technical support staff member. Woolcott facilitators ensured that all issues were covered in the break out discussions and that everyone had the opportunity to express their views.

Polling was also included whereby participants were able to answer questions shown on screen, with results given in real time. A copy of the proforma used by the facilitators is in the [Appendix](#).

Recruitment

All participants were initially screened during recruitment to ensure they were representative of the Central Coast LGA in terms of age, gender, with further screening questions such as incidence of dwelling type, income level, being culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD), and identifying as being Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

In line with standard engagement practices, research participants were provided with a gift voucher as a token of appreciation for attending a Zoom forum (\$80).

An outline of the demographic characteristics of forum participants is detailed below. As shown in the tables below, participants across the whole project were evenly distributed in terms of gender, age and former council membership.

Just under one in ten participants spoke a language other than English at home or with family members, and 1 per cent identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

Approximately one in five were concession card or low income health care holders, and 15 per cent had experienced difficulty paying their water bill in the last 12 months.

Additionally, 15 per cent of participants were an owner or decision maker for a small or medium business.

Table 2: Gender; age; former council; CALD status; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander; SME status; concession status and problems paying bill

	Total (n=80) (%)
GENDER	
Male	50
Female	50
AGE	
Under 50 years	55
50 years or over	45
FORMER COUNCIL	
Gosford	59
Wyang	41
CALD	
Yes	9
No	91
ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER	
Yes	1
No	99
CONCESSION CARD/LOW INCOME HEALTH CARD HOLDER	
Yes	21
No	79
EXPERIENCED DIFFICULTY PAYING WATER BILL IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS	
Yes	15
No	85
SME	
Yes	15
No	85

Participants also varied according to their annual household income, with approximately half having an annual household income of less than \$104,000.

Most owned or were buying the property they lived in, while approximately one in five were renting. The majority were in a stand-alone house or dwelling and received their water/sewerage bills directly from Central Coast Council.

Approximately half felt that they lived in a typical household that uses around 47 kL of water each quarter, while one in three indicated they resided in a larger household that uses around 72 kL per quarter.

Table 3: Income; property ownership; dwelling type; receiving bill and household type

	Total (n=80) (%)
ANNUAL HOUSEHOLD INCOME	
Less than \$41,600	13
Between \$41,600 and \$78,000	19
Between \$78,000 and \$104,000	21
Between \$104,000 and \$156,000	25
More than \$156,000	21
Prefer not to say	1
PROPERTY OWNERSHIP	
Own/co own property (incl. mortgage)	79
Renting property	21
DWELLING TYPE	
Stand-alone house or dwelling	86
Townhouse or semi	9
Apartment or unit complex	5
RECIEVES WATER/SEWERAGE BILLS	
Yes	84
No	16
HOUSEHOLD TYPE	
A typical apartment/unit that uses around 29 kL each quarter (approx. \$210)	3
A single person/relatively low user household that uses around 25 kL each quarter (approx. \$200)	14
A typical house that uses around 47 kL each quarter (approx. \$250)	51
A larger/relatively high user household that uses around 72 kL each quarter (approx. \$300)	32

The polling data was weighted during analysis using interlocking age, gender and former LGA weights to ensure a representative sample across the whole Council area for the total results.

Detailed Research Findings

4. Water and Sewerage Service Issue Experiences

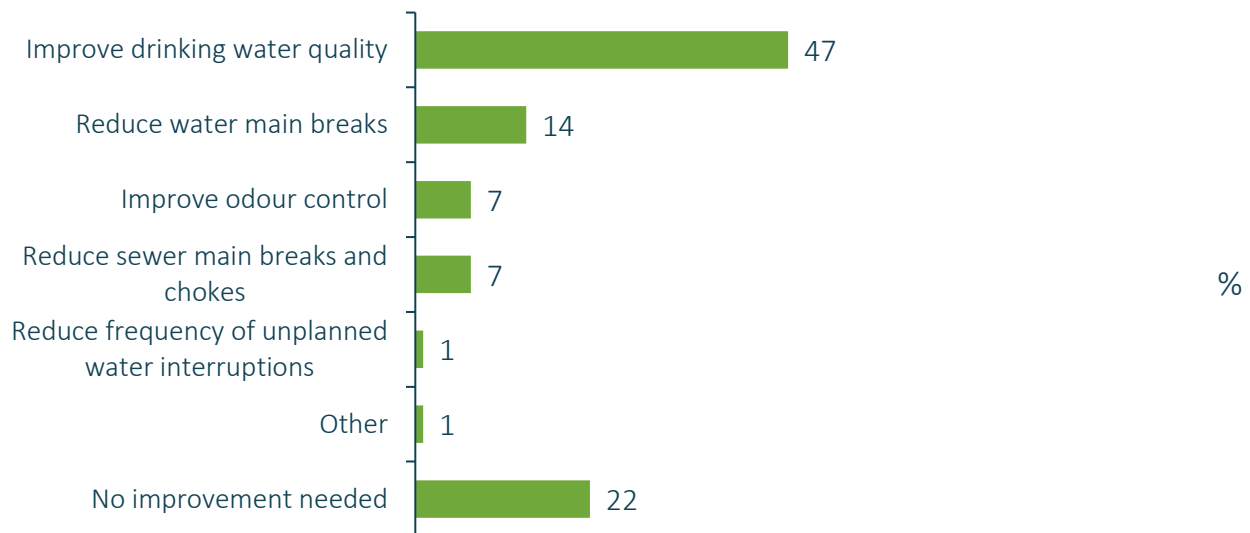
At the commencement of the forums, participants were welcomed by the Woolcott Research & Engagement Lead Facilitator, who also carried out the acknowledgement of country and explained the structure of the session and guidelines for participation. A representative from Central Coast Council then provided their own introduction to the evening and outlined the services that Central Coast Council provides in relation to water, sewerage and drainage services for their residents.

Council then explained their requirement to submit pricing proposals to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) and their desire to include community feedback in Council’s upcoming submission. To provide context to the participants, the composition of a water bill was explained (consisting of water, sewerage, and stormwater service charges), and the average water and sewer bill for residents was compared to that of other NSW water authority areas.

Following the presentation, the Woolcott Research & Engagement Lead Facilitator gave participants the opportunity to individually vote on questions using Zoom’s polling feature. The Lead Facilitator provided instructions to participants on how to respond to the polling question, and once the results were obtained they were shared with all participants in the forum.

Participants were asked what aspect of Central Coast Council’s water and sewerage service warranted the most improvement. Approximately half indicated that the Council needed to focus on improving the drinking water quality, while 14 per cent felt that reducing water main breaks should be prioritised. Additionally, approximately one in three did not feel that the Council needed to focus on or improve any of the services listed.

Figure 4: Aspect of water and sewerage services for Central Coast Council to focus and improve on

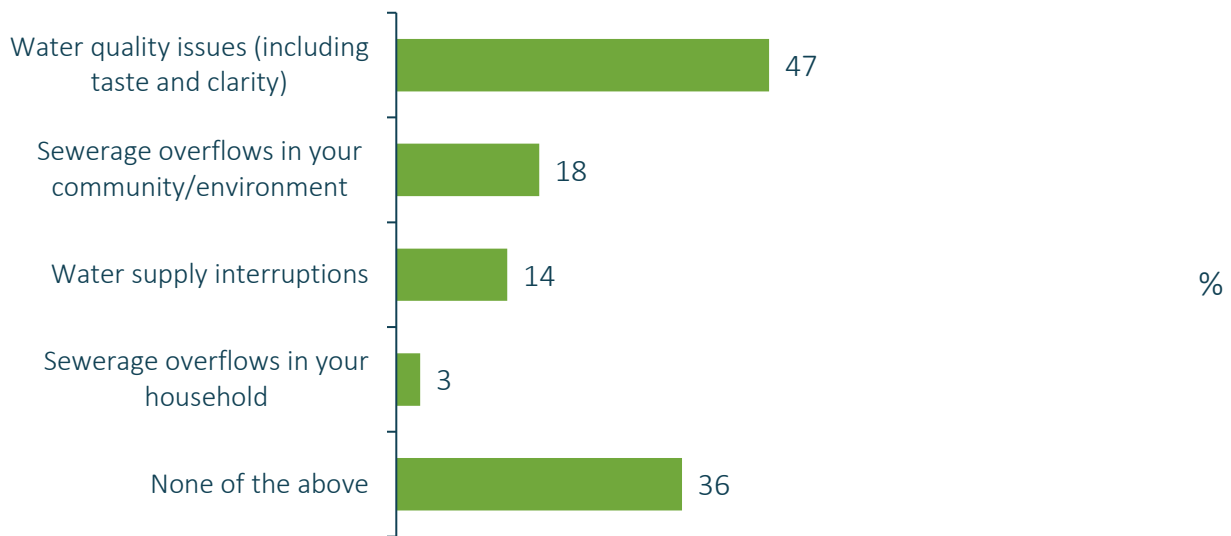


Q. Of the following, what would you like Central Coast Council to focus and improve on the most in relation to the water & sewerage?

Base: All participants who answered the question: n=72

Participants were also asked to indicate whether they had been impacted by water and sewerage service interruptions. Almost half reported that they had been impacted by water quality issues, including taste and clarity. Some had also been impacted by sewerage overflows and/or water supply interruptions. However, 36 per cent reported that their water and sewerage services had not been impacted by any of the issues listed.

Figure 5: Impact on water and sewerage services



Q. Thinking about water and sewerage services in the last 12 months, please indicate if you have been impacted by the following (please select all that apply)

Base: All participants who answered the question: n=72

After answering the polling questions, participants were assigned into breakout groups to discuss their personal experiences in relation to water quality and sewerage overflows.

Overall, many participants indicated that they had not experienced any water issues within the last 12 months or so, but within each breakout group there tended to be several participants that were less satisfied with their water, and spoke of a range of issues including having brown or discoloured water, bad or low water pressure, water disruptions, as well as odour and taste issues.

The participants were most likely to complain about the water quality in terms of colour, which tended to be described as dirty or brown.

“At Greenpoint we get dirty water.”

“When they flush the water and you get dirty water and it tastes bad.”

“I get brown water. It’s just brownish coming out of the tap. Not all the time.”

“We have tea coloured water coming through our taps, that really needs attention. I don’t think it’s uncommon.”

“Sometimes you fill the kettle and it looks like you’ve already made a cup of tea when you haven’t!”

“We’ve had the browny coloured water once or twice a year”

“The water was brown, you couldn’t bathe in it, you couldn’t wash light coloured clothes. That has been in the last 12 months.”

“Often the water almost looks brown. I buy water as I don’t trust it”

“There was a period maybe 4 months ago when the water quality noticeably dropped- there was this rusty sort of colour, brownish colour of water in the bathtub.”

"I get discoloured water sometimes. There's no way I'm going to drink it. It looks bad."

Another common complain that tended to emerge related to water odour, with this generally described as smelling like chlorine.

"I've had Sydney family visit and say my water smells more like chlorine. Not all of the time, but sometimes the smell is obvious"

"I am close to The Entrance and have had a chlorine smell coming from the taps."

"A couple of times a year there is a lot of chlorine. The smell is very strong."

"When I run a bath sometimes I notice the smell of the water. I think it could be the chemicals in the water, I'm not sure, but it's strong."

A few participants also made reference to taste issues.

"I have intermittent issues – maybe when they've just put in fluoride or chlorine- there's that extra taste in the water."

"I can't stand the taste of it. I can't drink it. It's quite disgusting actually."

Some, though fewer in number, also complained about how the water felt to them.

"I've got an \$1800 water filtration system in our house because the water was so severe it made all of our skin dry out."

"We have a filter too – the water is too sandy and drying otherwise, and it just tastes bad. The quality is bad!"

Several participants also raised water pressure and reliability issues.

"We had 2 or 3 burst water mains in the street that stopped the water here for a couple of days."

"Davistown always having water breaks. Council decided to reduce water pressure to try to stop it but now we can't wash anything down because no pressure."

"There have been a few interruptions when no water in the taps."

Within this breakout session, participants were also asked to reveal whether or not they had experienced any sewerage overflow issues within their household, or had witnessed it within the broader community. The incidence of participants having experienced overflows in their household seemed much less likely than for water quality issues (as detailed above).

So while the large majority had not experienced sewerage overflow issues, those that had tended to indicate that it had overflowed through their toilets or had prevented use of their toilets, while one participant indicated that they had had an overflow issue that impacted their pool.

"At Davistown you can't flush your toilets because it just overflows when there is heavy rain. We have a vacuum system and it just can't cope."

"Yes, we have had overflows. The sewer system got overloaded and in Chittaway Point there were properties impacted."

"We had a situation when there was overflow from that storm. We had no toilets for about two weeks."

"We have had a problem in Narara where the wastewater came up through the pool."

Incidence of experiencing sewerage overflow issues in the broader community were more common, and emerged within each of the breakout groups. Several references were made of overflows in the Terrigal area, but other locations were also mentioned.

"Of course there's the Terrigal issue. There are overflows around that Terrigal area. I've certainly experienced that. It's not very nice at all. Terrigal is such a tourist area, and the problem there could be turning people away and doing damage to businesses as a result."

"Terrigal has issues – it's unsafe to swim. You find faecal matter. It's disturbing as it is a beautiful beach."

"At Terrigal lagoon it often overflows. You can't swim at the beach when it happens."

"At Canton beach there have been sewage problems for quite some time. I'm concerned at what's going into the waterways."

"For us my children play sport at Bateau Bay, and the sewage smell there in summer is horrific, you don't feel that you're breathing fresh air."

"It stops me from swimming or paddle boarding."

"I live on Lake Munmorah and every time it rains you are told not to swim for 3 days. When we walk along the path there is often a sewerage smell. A bad odour."

"I am up in the hills. Berkeley Vale and Killarney Vale area. The neighbourhood experiences backflow with high rainfall."

A few participants also made mention of seeing signage or talk on social media, but had not come into direct contact with it.

"I've seen signs at Canton Beach. Signs went up around Christmas time."

"I've seen it at Terrigal, but that's not my area."

"I've seen it on Facebook, but haven't experienced it myself."

5. Reactions to Water Service Options

It was revealed to participants (by the Council presenter) that Central Coast Council has been exceeding the regulatory limit for both water quality and sewerage overflow complaints. In order to address this situation, it was explained that participants would be presented with costed options in a range of service areas for them to consider, discuss with their peers, and ultimately indicate their individual preference toward.

For each service area it was explained that there would be an option of continuing with current service levels (Option A), which would involve no additional charge over the standard increase that IPART would allow (assumed to be \$19), an option to increase services (Option B), and where relevant, an option for a more substantial improvement (Option C).

<p>Option A: Continue doing what we are doing</p>	<p>Option B: Improve slightly</p>	<p>Option C: Improve substantially</p>
<p>No additional change in bills</p>	<p>Average customer pays an extra \$X each year</p>	<p>Average customer pays an extra \$X each year</p>

The problems and challenges relating to water quality were then outlined to participants by a Central Coast Council representative. Participants were then talked through the options available to them in three distinct service areas:

- Water quality and reliability;
- Environmental and safety management; and
- Water conservation and engagement.


Following this presentation forum participants were assigned into breakout sessions to discuss their thoughts and opinions about each of these three service areas.

Reactions to the options for ‘water quality and reliability’

During this session, participants were provided with a summary of the options that had been presented by Central Coast Council (as shown below) before they were encouraged to provide their feedback. This chart was amended slightly after the first forum, to include the projects covered, so the final version is shown below.

Figure 6: Moderator chart of options for water quality and reliability

Options – Water quality and reliability

	Option A No change	Option B Improve slightly	Option C Improve significantly
Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More water quality issues • Higher incidence of interruptions and failures • Responding only to emergencies and identified areas of repeated failure • Higher community property damage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving drinking water quality • Keeping dam water clean from sediment runoff • Ensuring water sources are clean and not polluted • Building reliability to avoid unplanned interruptions • Improving our response time to issues • Reducing water overflows 	Everything in Option B plus: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investment in SMART technologies • Reducing water loss • Protecting critical assets • Increasing our proactive identification and response programs • Less incidence of network failures
Projects	No new projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bushfire safety program • Mains cleaning • Water asset inspections 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Best practice bushfire safety • Mains cleaning - more areas and longer periods • Proactive maintenance program • SMART technology
	No additional change in bills	Average customer pays an extra \$9 a quarter	Average customer pays an extra \$36 a quarter

Initial reactions to these options were centred around the seemingly large increase between Options B (\$9) and C (\$36), with many participants asking questions regarding the reason for the large increase and seeking further information. In that respect Option B was well liked by participants because it provided some key benefits at a more reasonable and realistic cost increase. However there were frequent suggestions or requests for an option in between B and C as a halfway measure.

“I think it’s a big jump price-wise from Option B to C – particularly where we are at the moment. I’d like to see something between B and C”

“There’s a huge jump between Option B and Option C. I would have thought there would be something in between the two. I would consider something between the two, something less significant in price change”

“I think Option B because Council is wasting money elsewhere so they can save money elsewhere.... once they focus on where they are directing the money they will be able to do option C with the savings from other parts of Council”

The large increase was also thought to be particularly unrealistic or ‘a big stretch’ given the current situation with Council and the extra rate increase proposed. It was felt that a staged approach or a gradual introduction of some of the benefits of Option C would be better, and that overall this was not a priority for Council now.

“There are trust issues with the Council, so to add \$36 a quarter I would question whether that is the right amount”

“Given the current financial climate at the moment I don’t think I can consider Option C. It looks like a great option but I don’t think it’s realistic at this point in time”

“Option C is what everyone would absolutely love but \$36 for the kind of population we have with low incomes is a big hit because our rates are going to be so high too. I am torn, and worried about the dollars”

“I’m thinking B for the time being and if we want to move to C later, but in this current climate start with B”

However, the majority appeared to be in favour of an increase of some sort, believing that Option A (doing nothing) was not a good idea given the strong need to improve water quality and reliability in the region.

“I think given what has just been outlined to us we have to do something, so Option A isn’t really an option. We obviously need to improve the current situation, so we need to choose between B and C”

The idea of having SMART technology in Option C gained interest, with many acknowledging that increases in technology could potentially increase efficiencies and decrease water loss in the longer term. For this reason some participants chose Option C. Others also chose the higher cost increase because they wanted to invest in the infrastructure for future generations.

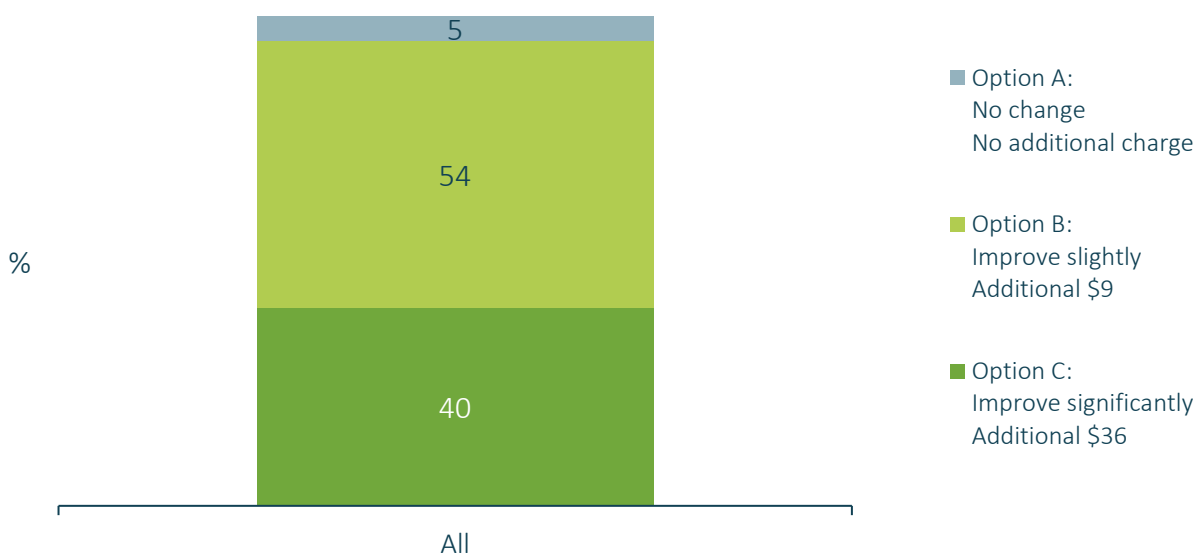
“Smart technologies sound good because you can be proactive in finding out what the issues are, but I understand those will be expensive”

“Option C you commit to \$36 per quarter but ultimately the water bills will be reduced because it’s providing a long-term solution...short time loss long term gain”

“Option C. Because we need it for our future and for our kids”

Towards the end of the forum, once they had the opportunity to view the full implications of their preferences, participants were asked to indicate via a Zoom polling question what their preferred option was for the future of Central Coast Council’s water quality and reliability. Consistent with the forum breakout sessions, the polling questions revealed that just over half were in favour of Option B, which would involve improving water quality and reliability slightly for an additional cost of \$9. Two in five were in favour of Option C which would improve the service significantly for an additional \$36.

Figure 7: Preferred option for water quality and reliability



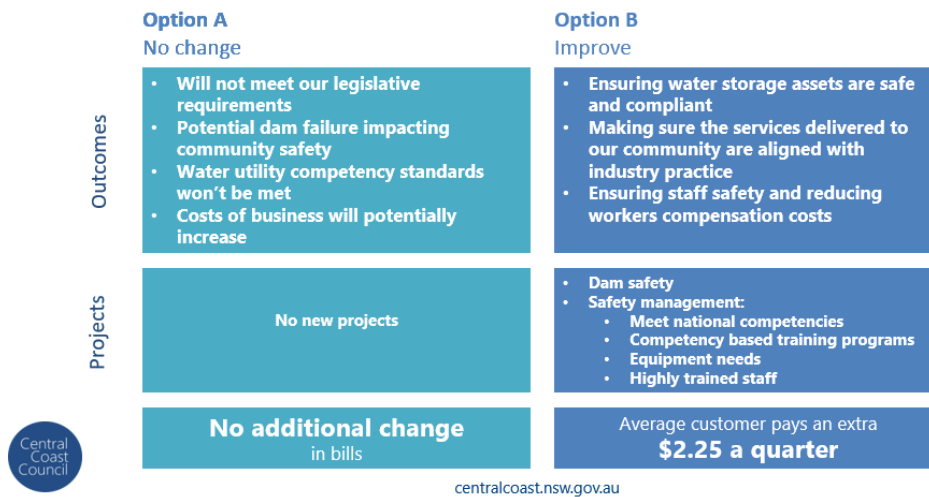
Q. What is your preferred option for 'Topic 1: Water quality and reliability'?
 Base: All participants who answered the question: n=74

Reactions to the options for ‘environmental safety and management’

Below is the chart summarising the two options that participants were show for environment and safety management.

Figure 8: Moderator chart of options for environment and safety management

Options – Environmental and safety management



Overall, across both forums there appeared to be a great deal of consistency in responses as well as the preference selected for this issue, with most participants opting for the ‘improvement’ offered in Option B.

Option B was felt to have a relatively small increase, for a seemingly large return on investment, and importantly Option A was not felt to be really a viable option because Council is not meeting legislative requirements and safety standards are being jeopardised, which was not considered acceptable at all.

“It looks like a very small investment in dollar terms to go with B.... I see B as a pretty good investment, I would go with B, as it’s not all that much money”

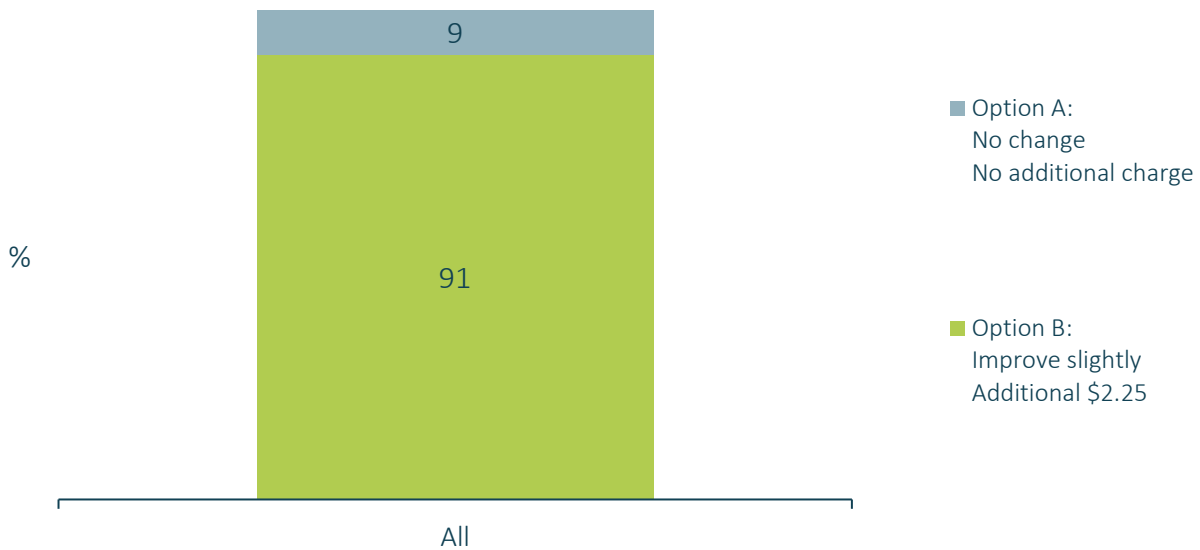
“I don't understand how they can do Option A if it doesn't make the legislative requirements. It seems illegal”

“I was confused by this one I don’t understand why we are being charged for them doing what they should be doing anyway – shouldn’t they be ensuring staff safety? Isn’t our money going to this anyway – this should be a given, why does it suddenly cost extra to ensure the staff are safe. I couldn’t do that to my staff”

“You have to do B if you are not meeting legislative requirements”

Again, at the end of the forum participants indicated their preferred option for the future of Central Coast Council’s environmental and safety management. The responses from participants in the breakout sessions was reflected in the results with the vast majority favouring Option B which would cost an additional \$2.25, rather than have no change to the service.

Figure 9: Preferred option for environmental safety and management



Q. What is your preferred option for 'Topic 2: Environmental and safety management'?
Base: All participants who answered the question: n=74

Reactions to the options for 'water conservation and engagement'

The final component of this breakout session explored reactions to two options regarding water conservation and engagement (shown below).

Figure 10: Moderator chart of options for water conservation and engagement

Options – Water conservation and engagement

	Option A No change	Option B Improve
Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of planning will mean future generations may experience water shortages pushing pricing up Limited understanding of your needs and delivering services that do not align with your expectations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Building important relationships with our community and understanding what your needs are Making it simpler for you to connect with us Working with you to preserve water and develop sustainable opportunities for the future of your water supply
Projects	No new projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improving customer engagement Improved communication Building water conservation Building water security Community education programs
	No additional change in bills	Average customer pays an extra \$2.75 a quarter



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Similarly for this issue, while the additional cost of \$2.75 per quarter was viewed as quite minimal, participants were a bit unsure about the additional benefits that Option B would provide.

Those who indicated that they would choose Option B, felt it was important to continue to encourage residents and young people to conserve water and to understand their needs and hear community feedback.

“I’m weighing up the costs, so far we are losing a cup of coffee a quarter. I think understanding what the communities needs are is important. I guess we are talking about these things aren't we”

“I would choose B. We are doing it right now. It is for the future for our kids. We want to make sure it is all clean and healthy for them, getting them to learn to love the land.....conservation is a massive part of that”

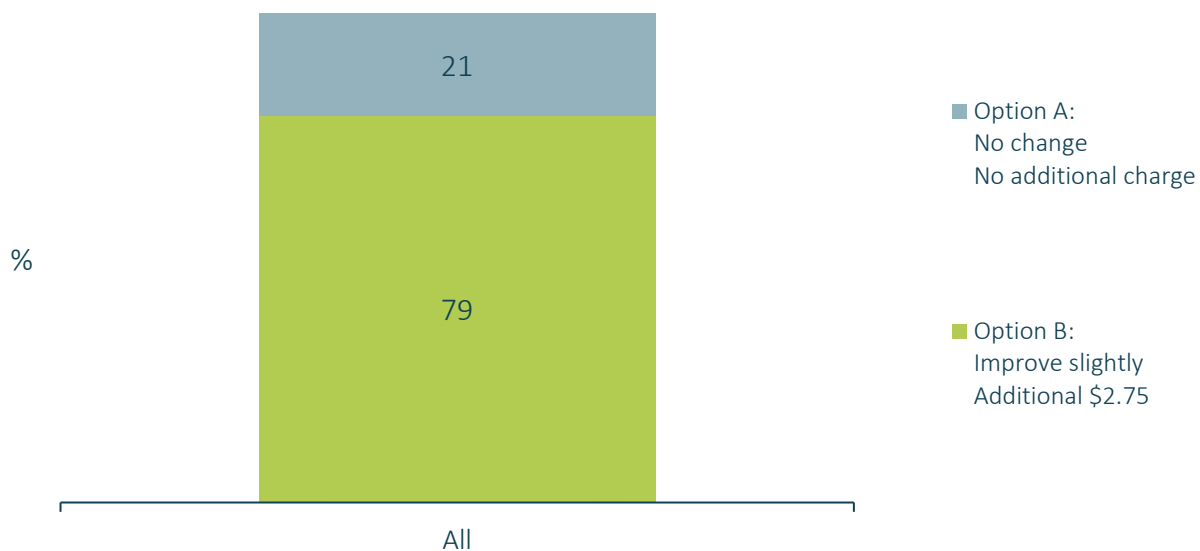
There were however some participants who were unsure about the additional value that Option B would provide with comments relating to Council seemingly already doing this, that is, communicating and engaging with customers, so they wanted further information about what they would be paying for over and above what council are already providing.

“Option B, reluctantly - it all will add up, and I thought Council did that anyway – isn't that happening already, they put pamphlets in our bills and things like that”

“I’m a bit cynical about connecting with the community. I’m not sure that it needs that much investment. I don’t see as much value in this one, isn't this part of what we’re already getting for our money. I’m a bit torn between A and B on this one”

Participants were also given the opportunity to indicate which option they preferred for Central Coast Council’s water conservation and engagement. Again, most participants were in favour of Option B which would improve this service slightly for an additional cost, rather than making no change.

Figure 11: Preferred option for water conservation and engagement



Q. What is your preferred option for 'Topic 3: Water conservation and engagement'?
Base: All participants who answered the question: n=74

6. Reactions to Sewerage Service Options

A representative from Central Coast Council presented information relating the problems and challenges with the sewerage services in the Central Coast area. They outlined the options available in relation to two service areas:

- Sewerage overflows; and
- Treatment plants and outfalls.

For each service area the options were presented, along with the outcomes that the selection of each respective outcome would achieve for them and the community in general, together with the cost implications for each.

Reactions to the options for 'sewerage overflows'

Below is the summary chart of the options available in relation to sewerage overflows which was displayed to participants during the discussion session in the forums.

Figure 12: Moderator chart of options for sewerage overflows

	Option A No change	Option B Improve slightly	Option C Improve significantly
Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can only inspect pipes in high risk/problems areas • Will continue to experience high sewerage overflows • Increased odour complaints • Sewerage overflowing into local waterways • Less money to replace or repair aging pipes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reducing our overflows • Protecting our environment • Increasing our proactive inspections • Improving our response time to fix issues • Fixing small problems to avoid big problems in the future 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Everything in Option B plus: • More proactive inspections • Further increasing the frequency and volume of repairs • Proactive methods to response times • A reduction in sewer breaks and odour complaints
Projects	No new projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Odour reduction • Sewer asset inspections • Reactive to planned maintenance • Improved systems to track network issues 	All of option B plus <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Optimising proactive inspections • Further increasing frequency of repairs • More proactive responses
	No additional change in bills	Average customer pays an extra \$6.25 a quarter	Average customer pays an extra \$8 a quarter

Overall, participants tended indicate that sewerage overflows were a significant issue with high impacts on the community, and therefore the participants expressed a preference for Option C. This option (Option C) was seen to offer better outcomes to the community at a minimal price increase from Option B.

“Option C is only a small increase over Option B and it seems to offer more.”

“There’s very little monetary cost between B and C. It makes me lean towards C for the better outcomes.”

“If you are going to pay \$6.25 you may as well pay \$8 and get the better one.”

“I think if you’re willing to pay 6.25 for B you might as well pay that little bit extra for the significant improvements.”

However, for many their reasoning for selecting Option C related to the avoidance of any health issues that sewerage overflows could have.

“Sewerage is an extreme health problem and anything that can alleviate the problems is worth it.”

“I vote for spending more money on sewerage – it’s worth more because it’s an environmental issue and it affects people and their homes, it’s a bad health thing.”

“I would choose C – it’s our health, if it the system isn’t working then it impacts the community.”

However, some participants felt that Option B would provide significant benefit without going to the expense of Option C.

“I can’t see what C offers that B doesn’t, so maybe Option B for me.”

“Option B looks pretty good. I know Option C is better, but we could probably get by just fine with B.”

Option A was not a preferred option - primarily because participants felt that the situation would continue to deteriorate under this option, and it may cost the community more money to fix the problem further down the track.

“I think that Option A is a no-no.”

“If things don’t get done it’s going to disintegrate even further. I’m not sure that we have an option.”

“What we’re saving with Option A will just have a greater financial impact in future years. It’s easier to pay now and fix these things”

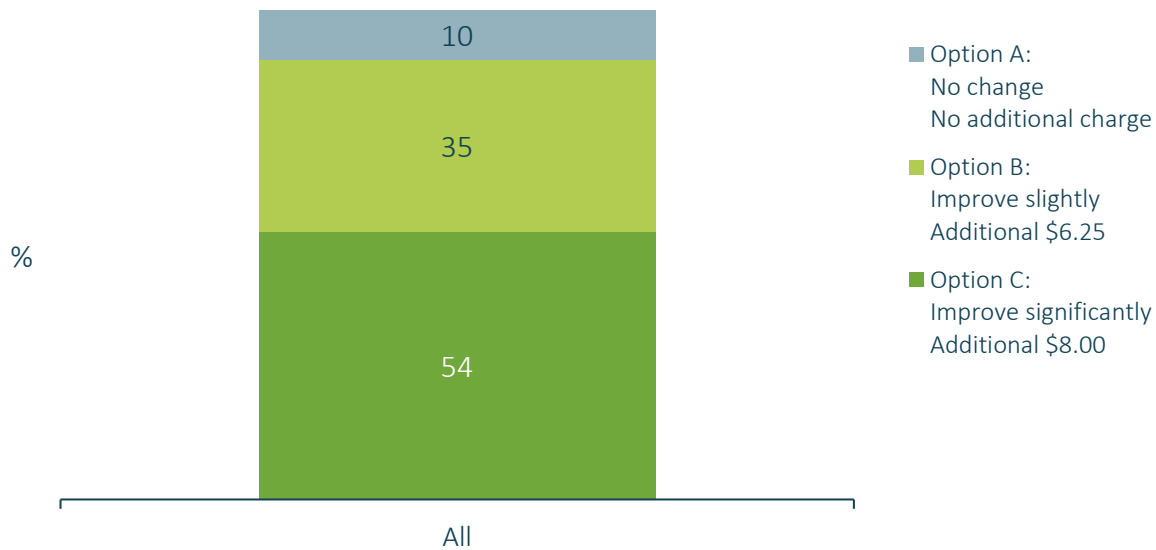
However, a few participants did not like the idea of paying for something that they did not feel they would gain benefit from – and therefore had a preference for Option A.

“If we haven’t had a problem, why should we pay?”

“We don’t have any problems in our area so I don’t want to pay extra for other people.”

From the end of session voting, when asked about their preferred option for managing Central Coast Council’s sewerage overflows over half of the forum participants indicated they preferred Option C which would improve the service significantly for an additional \$8.00 per quarter.

Figure 13: Preferred option for sewerage overflows



Q. What is your preferred option for 'Topic 4: Sewerage overflows'?
Base: All participants who answered the question: n=74

Reactions to the options for 'treatment plants and outfalls'

Below is the summary chart of the options available in relation to treatment plants and outfalls which was displayed to participants during the discussion session in the forums.

Figure 14: Moderator chart of options for treatment plants and outfalls

	Option A No change	Option B Improve
Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued poor ocean water quality Public health impacts Not compliant with our EPA licenses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved ocean water quality More environmentally responsible
Projects	No new projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clean out and inspection of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aeration tanks at all Treatment Plants Digesters Wet weather ponds Grit chambers Proactive maintenance plans Sludge management at Treatment Plants
	No additional change in bills	Average customer pays an extra \$4 a quarter

Overall, participants felt that the environmental implications of not doing the correct thing were seen to be significant, and most participants expressed a clear preference for Option B.

"I am happy to spend the \$4 a quarter. If what is being pumped out into the ocean is improved, I agree with it 100%."

"This one has a clear impact on the environment so I think it's easier for Council to 'sell' Option B."

"Most people see the environment as important these days."

"We want improved ocean water, it's emotive and practical."

The health aspect was also important for some in their preference for Option B.

"Plus the health of everyone going into the water. You don't want to have something floating by you when you're going for a swim, A is not an option."

Some participants also saw an advantage in doing this work now, rather than in the future – seeing it as a good investment for the future.

"It saves money in the future. It will save us in the long term."

"Considering we have one of the lowest rates – its time we started investing."

However, some were opting for Option B purely because they didn't see Option A as something that Central Coast Council would be allowed to do.

"If it's not compliant, I can't see us doing Option A."

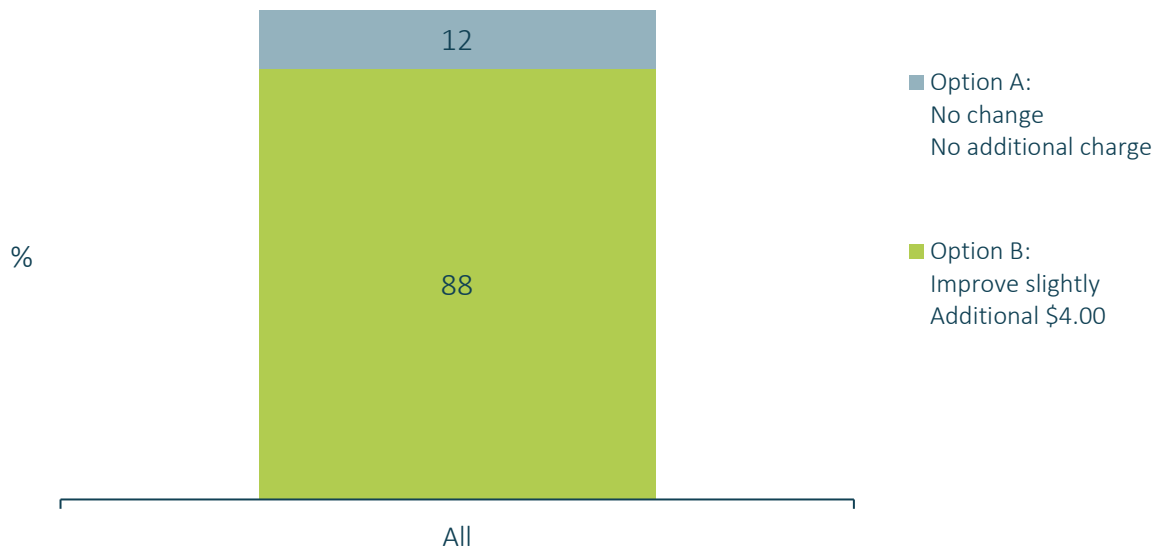
"If there are fines for not doing the right thing, then we probably can't afford to do Option A."

"We don't really have a choice. If we are non-compliant. We have to go B - we don't have a choice."

"I don't know how they can continue with something that is not compliant with the EPA. It is not even an option really."

From the end of session voting, most participants were in favour of Option B which involves slightly improving treatment plants and outfalls for an additional charge of \$4.00 per quarter, rather than making no change to the service.

Figure 15: Preferred option for treatment plants and outfalls



Q. What is your preferred option for 'Topic 5: Treatment plants and outfalls'?

Base: All participants who answered the question: n=74

7. Reactions to Stormwater Drainage Service Options

A representative from Central Coast Council presented information relating the problems and challenges with the stormwater drainage system in the Central Coast area. They also outlined the options available in relation to three service areas:

- Critical stormwater drainage asset inspections, cleaning and repairs;
- Stormwater quality and urban channel; and
- Flood planning.

For each service area the options were presented, along with the outcomes that the selection of each respective outcome would achieve for them and the community in general, together with the cost implications for each.

Reactions to the options for 'critical stormwater drainage asset inspections, cleaning and repairs'

Below is the summary chart of the options available in relation to this stormwater drainage service area which was displayed to participants during the discussion sessions.

Figure 16: Moderator chart of options for critical stormwater drainage asset inspections, cleaning and repairs

Option A

No change

- We reactively inspect, clean and repair high risk assets when problems occur
- There is no reduction in the frequency of road or property flooding
- There is a greater chance of catastrophic asset failure

No additional change
in bills

Option B

Improve slightly

- We proactively inspect, clean and repair high risk assets to address problems before they become an issue
- We reduce the frequency of road or property flooding
- We reduce the chance of catastrophic asset failure

Average customer pays an extra
\$1.58 a quarter

Overall, flooding was a known issue to most participants and it followed that they were interested in flood prevention measures. The breakout group discussions revealed that most participants had a preference for Option B as it was seen to offer relief for this significant issue at a relatively low cost increase to customers.

Some seemed to be selecting Option B due to their own experiences with flooding, and the perceived importance of preventing it.

“For me it would definitely be Option B because I can see what has happened with the local area here. Flooding is a big deal, so it’s a no-brainer for me.”

“It’s definitely B for me. I live where it floods. It happens all the time, and it has to be fixed.”

Some also saw an advantage in acting now (by selecting Option B) to prevent further flooding issues in the future.

“As far as planning and preventing breaks in the drains, and preventing damage to other property, it seems like money spent early is less money spent later.”

“We need to reduce flooding risk now as that results in extra costs to us down the track, so we have to go with B”

For some, the fact that there was an improvement being offered for what was considered to be a relatively small increase in monetary outlay was a main factor in their preference for Option B.

“It seems to be the biggest return for the smallest increase in cost.”

However, a few participants were seeking further clarity over how the objectives outlined in Option B would actually be measured.

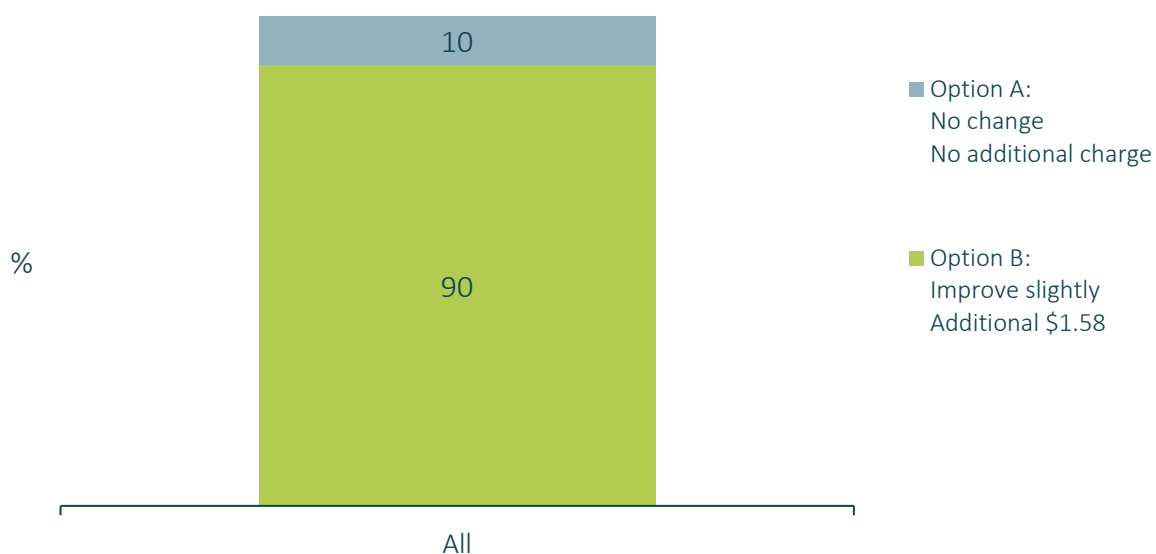
“It just says it will be reduced. How will we know that they have done all that.”

Regardless however, there appeared to be little support for Option A as it simply wasn’t seen to be a viable option moving forward.

“No change will move us backwards, whereas Option B will make an improvement.”

At the end of session voting, as with previous options, the large majority of participants indicated a preference against Option A, with 90% selecting Option B which involves improving critical stormwater drainage asset inspections, cleaning and repairs at an additional cost of \$1.58 per quarter.

Figure 17: Preferred option for critical stormwater drainage asset inspections, cleaning and repairs

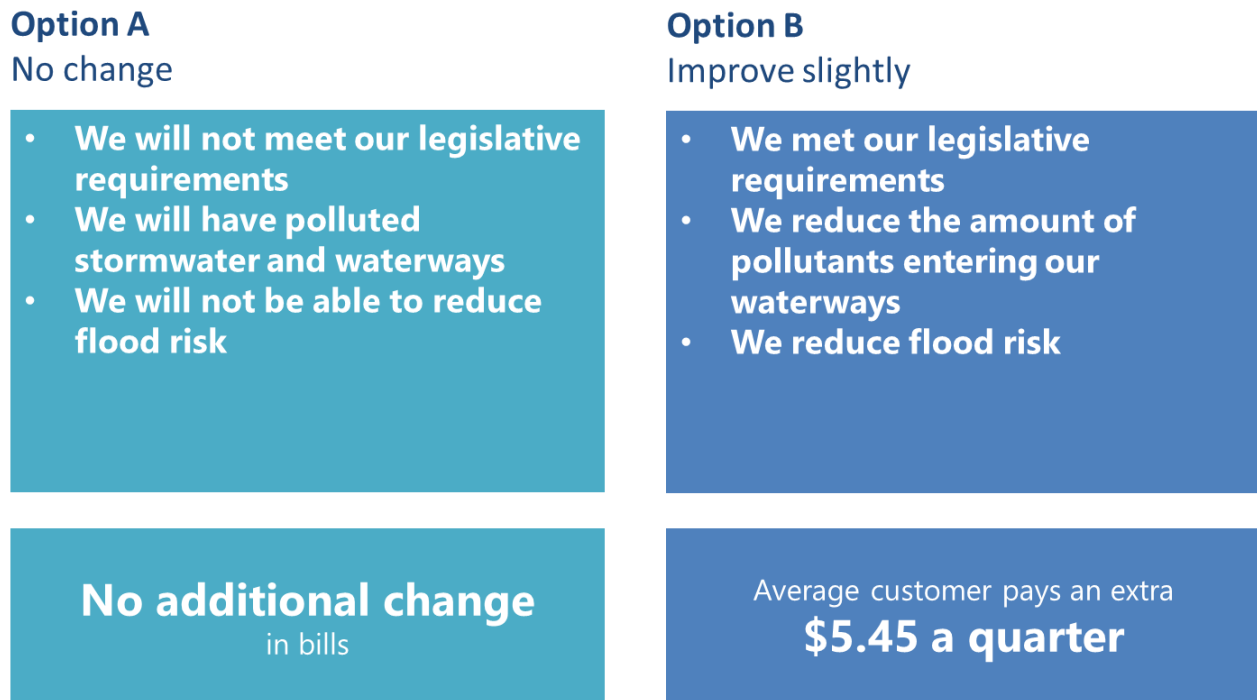


Q. What is your preferred option for 'Critical Stormwater Drainage Asset Inspections, Cleaning and Repairs'?
Base: All participants who answered the question: n=77

Reactions to the options for 'stormwater quality and urban channels'

Below is the summary chart of the options available in relation to this stormwater drainage service area which was displayed to participants during the discussion sessions.

Figure 18: Moderator chart of options for stormwater quality and urban channels



Again, most participants indicated a preference for Option B over Option A, but in this instance the feedback received tended to focus on the fact that Option A was not really a viable option for them.

"I don't know how we can choose Option A – how is not meeting legislative requirements an option?"

"B. No change leaves you with no options."

"I imagine we are not meeting our legislative requirements? So how can we choose that?"

"We need to meet our legislative requirements, so it has to be Option B."

Only a few participants seemed to have a reason for actively choosing Option B (as opposed to choosing against Option A).

"I think it should be a priority to stop pollutants entering the waterways, they can have a lot of downstream effects. I want Option B"

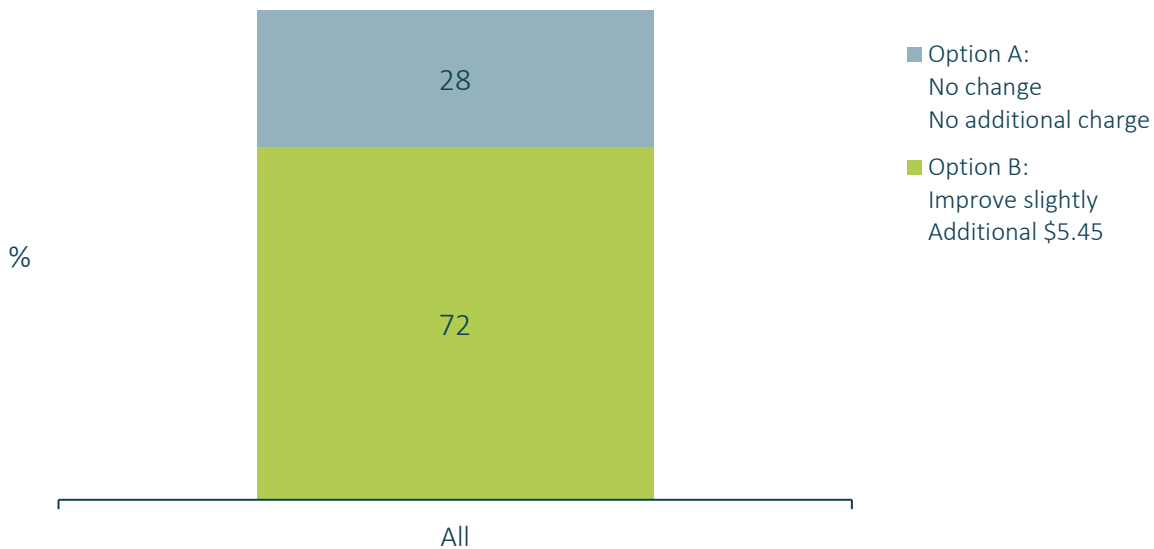
"We just need to reduce flood risk. It has to be Option B."

While there was limited obvious preference for Option A during the discussion sessions, a few participants were seeking additional information in relation to Option B – wanting to know more about what it would deliver for them, and how the outcomes would be measured.

“It’s a little hard to quantify what the statements in Option B mean. ‘Reducing’ doesn’t tell us anything really. By how much?”

At the end of session voting, approximately seven in ten participants were in favour of Option B which would improve stormwater quality and urban channels ‘slightly’ for an additional charge of \$5.45 per quarter.

Figure 19: Preferred option for stormwater quality and urban channels



Q. What is your preferred option for 'Stormwater quality and urban channels'?
Base: All participants who answered the question: n=77

Reactions to the options for 'stormwater quality and urban channels'

Below is the summary chart of the options available in relation to this stormwater drainage service area which was displayed to participants during the discussion sessions.

Figure 20: Moderator chart of options for stormwater quality and urban channels

Option A No change	Option B Improve slightly	Option C Improve significantly
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Our flood information will become outdated Future decisions and advice about flood prone land will expose the community to greater flood risk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will be able to provide up to date flood information and advice to the community We will prepare flood studies and flood mapping to guide decision making and manage flood risk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greater funding will allow faster delivery of flood management options, such as flood mitigation works to reduce flood risk.
No additional change in bills	Average customer pays an extra \$2.18 a quarter	Average customer pays an extra \$3.41 a quarter

As has already been indicated, flooding was seen to be a relatively important issue for the area, and flood prevention measures were therefore valued. It follows that most participants also spoke positively in relation to Option B and Option C – which they felt would lead to greater flood prevention planning.

Some had a clear preference for Option C because they felt that flooding was a priority area for action, and management was required in order to achieve this. Those opting for this Option tended to indicate that they had experienced flooding themselves.

“I’m quite in favour of C. Where I live it’s important to look at flood mitigation.”

“I live in a flood area so I would be happy with the C options.”

A few participants indicated that they were in favour of Option C because the additional monetary outlay was minor (in comparison to Option B).

“For the amount of money involved I would say C. The more money the quicker it would be fixed.”

However, there was also a reasonable amount of support forwarded for Option B as well – primarily as it was seen to offer the same benefits as Option C, but at a slower pace (and lower cost).

“The main difference for me between B and C is that C is going to achieve it a lot quicker. Taking a bit longer is fine, so long as they prioritise the areas that really need it.”

“I like the middle one. You see the same result without going all in.”

“I think B would be sufficient, there is only so much you can do.”

“This just feels like B is enough for some reason.”

However, for this service area, there was some, though limited, support offered in relation to Option A, and this seemed to be based on the fact that this service area had a focus on planning (as opposed to actions).

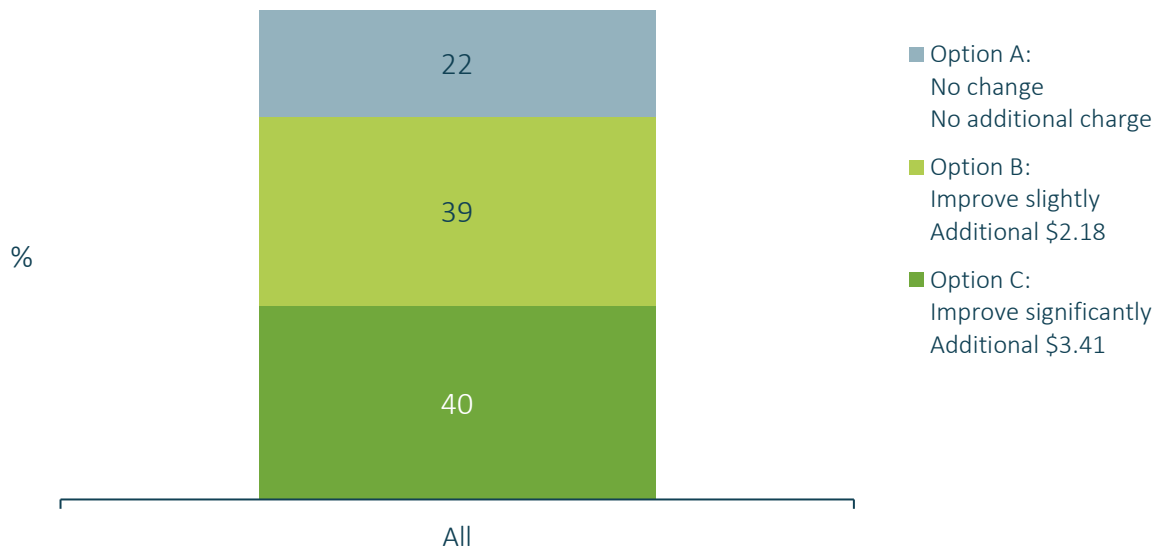
“Seems more about R&D rather than being proactive and doing something tangible. I would probably go A as it doesn’t seem tangible.”

“This is where I vote for A. Doing more and more studies is not going to address the issues.”

“I’m surprised that we don’t have enough data on flooding already given the East Coast lows we’ve experienced in recent years. Why do we need more?”

At the end of session voting, the large majority of participants again voted against Option A, with 78% selecting either Option B or C. There were fairly even preferences between Options B and C (39% and 40% respectively).

Figure 21: Preferred option for flood planning



Q. What is your preferred option for 'Flood planning'?
Base: All participants who answered the question: n=77

8. Overall Reactions to the Full Schedule of Work

The final breakout session was an opportunity for participants to see all elements combined together with the final costs added up and to provide feedback prior to the polling questions to indicated their preferences for each individual service area. It was also reinforced by Council representatives that the total bill amount for the individual selections was also likely to have the standard increase of \$19 per quarter added to it.

Below is the summary chart that was presented by Council which was also shown on-screen by the moderators during the breakout sessions.

Figure 22: Moderator chart of the total potential bill impacts options

Potential bill impacts - quarterly	No additional change (\$)	Improve slightly (\$)	Improve significantly (\$)
1. Water quality and reliability	0	9.00	36.00
2. Environmental and safety management	0	2.25	2.25*
3. Water conservation and engagement	0	2.75	2.75*
4. Sewerage overflows	0	6.25	8.00
5. Treatment plants and outfalls	0	4.00	4.00*
6. Stormwater drainage			
- Critical stormwater drainage inspections, cleaning and repairs	0	1.58	1.58*
- Stormwater quality and urban channels	0	5.45	5.45*
- Flood planning	0	2.18	3.41
Quarterly bill impact	0	33.46	63.44
Total quarterly bill impact	19	52.46	82.44

* These are the same as the 'improve slightly' costs

Note that all options will include an additional \$19

When the full list of service areas and their associated option costs were shown there were many who were quite surprised to see the what the total amount could be – particularly those who had been preferencing Option C (where available) in their minds as they proceeded through the forum, while others had been adding up the amounts themselves so were less surprised.

“It is a huge amount \$82. It is an extra quarter of payments.”

“It’s pretty shocking – and that’s \$19 on top of this too, isn’t it?”

“I think it is going to be hard to convince the general public that they are going to get a minimum increase of \$200 a year. I am going to have a hard time working out if I want to pay \$200 or \$330!”

“I was doing the sums as we were going - I think all things need to be improved over time – you can’t leave things as they are, you’ve got to expect this.”

“It’s like boiling the frog, a little bit of heat and eventually it ends up boiled to death....I’m going to go the high road because I don’t believe we have any alternative – water is essential for life, I’m just very concerned Council are not telling us what went on in the past to get us to this position.”

In this final session, there were also some who reiterated that they felt as though they really didn't have an option as the aspects needed to improve water quality, the environment, sewerage infrastructure etc were critical, so they reluctantly accepted the idea that changes need to be made and paying a higher water bill to pay for it was required.

"Look I really feel that I'm stuck between a rock and a hard place – yes better to go for higher payment of water quality and reliability but people have brought up a lot of good points about who are these people at Council making these decisions about the water in the future and will they get it right?"

"It is quite concerning that they are not meeting legislation. You can't leave it the way it is so need B's as a minimum. There has to be some change."

In accepting this payment there were frequent comments and suggestions that Council should be transparent, keep them informed about the progress of the projects and where the money is being spent.

"As long as we see some sort of outcome from all this – it would be nice to know that they are actually doing this...they need to communicate this – maybe with our bills to actually know what they've done, or maybe a report about the works already undertaken – what money they've allocated and what works they've actually done."

"I'm happy to pay the full amount as long as council delivers on what they're promising here, as long as we're getting good value for money."

However, given the increase that residents were facing in relation to their Council rates, along with monetary concerns relating to the COVID-19 situation generally, some were also keen to minimise any potential increase as much as possible, and suggestions were made in this regard.

"Given the current financial climate at the moment I don't think I can consider Option C. They look like great options but I don't think it's realistic at this point in time."

"Is it all going to be up to the current residents to raise this extra money, or can we get some of that money back from developers or something?"

"It would be good if they could keep our increase as low as possible, and maybe have larger increases for new residents moving into the area."

9. Conclusions

Overall it can be seen that the large majority of all participants were supportive of the service options that would lead to improvements in their water quality, wastewater services, as well as in drainage/flood mitigation measures.

As depicted in the table below, the levels of support for Option A (the ‘no change’ option for each service area) varied between 5% (for water quality and reliability) and 28% (for stormwater quality and urban channels) – showing a clear propensity for residents to accept an increase in costs in order to improve services to them and others in the community.

Table 4: Summary of end-of-session voting

	SERVICE AREA	Option A %	Option B %	Option C %
Water quality and reliability	Water	5	54	40
Environmental and safety management	Water	9	91	N/A
Sewerage overflows	Sewerage	10	35	54
Critical Stormwater Drainage Asset Inspections, Cleaning and Repairs	Drainage	10	90	N/A
TPs and outfalls	Sewerage	12	88	N/A
Water conservation and engagement	Water	21	79	N/A
Flood planning	Drainage	22	39	40
Stormwater quality and urban channels	Drainage	28	72	N/A

While there was acceptance of the need for improvements in services to be made within each of the service areas that were discussed during the forums, in many instances it was reluctant acceptance. Participants generally were unaware of the extent to which services had degraded, and there was genuine surprise expressed in relation to Council not being able to meet quality standards in some of the service areas. In this regard though, many participants had experienced service issues themselves (such as poor water quality, sewerage overflows, or flooding), or had seen them in the community, or had heard about them from friends or family who also lived in the Central Coast area. As such, there was acceptance that the issues were real and needed to be addressed.

Along with this, there was a clear level of disappointment expressed by many of the forum participants – both in terms of the service levels that some residents were dealing with, and also in the fact that to improve the situation additional funds would be required – which in an environment where residents were already being faced with significant cost increases in relation to the Special Rate Variation, was being presented at a less than ideal time.

It also needs to be considered that the forum participants were stepped through the decision-making process in that they were properly informed of the challenges faced by Central Coast Council in each service area, and then were informed of the potential options for solutions (including a ‘no change’ option) prior to indicating their preferences. Education of this nature will be critical in gaining wider community support for any potential changes, so care will be needed to ensure that residents are properly informed of the issues, the solutions that have been recommended/adopted, and of the progress that is made in future years to address the issues that have been identified.

Appendix

APPENDIX: Forum agenda

Central Coast Council IPART Deliberative Forum Agenda

Project:	Central Coast Council IPART Forums (via Zoom)				
Date	Tuesday 20 July, Thursday 22 July	Time:	6.00 - 7.30pm	Duration:	1hr 30mins
Forum outcomes:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transparent engagement on price and service trade offs • Identification of preference for level of investment into water, wastewater and stormwater services 				

Time	Session details	Responsibility	Materials
5.45pm onwards	<p>Pre-forum – Registration of participants</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assist participants with Zoom, etc 	WR	
6.00-6.05pm	<p>Welcome and Introduction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome and thanks for joining the Zoom discussion • Acknowledgement of Country • Purpose of session • Structure of the session (and explanation of break out sessions) • Guidelines; no right or wrong answers; try not to dominate, etc • Introduce the Central Coast Council representatives 	WR Lead Facilitator	PP slides
6.05-6.10pm	<p>Presentation and welcome by Central Coast Council (CCC)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role of Central Coast Council in water and wastewater management and services provided • CCC has to submit plans to IPART, who determines prices Council can charge. They reduced prices last submission. • Explain charges and average bill. • CCC currently has lowest bills of any water provider • Explanation of the purpose of the forum – explore cost v service trade offs, i.e. to look at what levels of service the community is happy with • Stress importance of the forum to CCC and how community feedback will be used 	Central Coast Council – Jamie Loader	PP slides
6.10-6.13pm	<p>Polling questions – current bill and satisfaction with service levels</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which of the following would be the closest to representing you? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A single person/relatively low user household that uses around 25 kL each quarter (approx. \$200) ○ A typical house that uses around 47 kL each quarter (approx. \$250) 	WR Lead Facilitator	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A larger/relatively high user household that uses around 72 kL each quarter (approx. \$300) ○ A typical apartment/unit that uses around 29 kL each quarter (approx. \$210) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Of the following, what would you like Central Coast Council to focus and improve on the most in relation to the water & sewerage? SR <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Improve drinking water quality ○ Reduce frequency of unplanned water interruptions ○ Reduce water main breaks ○ Improve odour control ○ Reduce sewer main breaks and chokes ○ Other ○ No improvement needed ● Thinking about water and sewerage services in the last 12 months, please indicate if you have been impacted by the following (<i>please select all that apply</i>) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Water quality issues (including taste and clarity) ○ Water supply interruptions ○ Sewerage overflows in your household ○ Sewerage overflows in your community/environment (e.g. (beach or lake displaying 'no swimming' signs) ○ None of the above 		
<p>6.13-6.20pm</p>	<p>Breakout group discussion (groups of approx. 8 people):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Thinking about you water service over the last 12 months, how satisfied have you been with your water supply? What issues have there been? Have you heard of other households having issues? <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>PROBE FOR:</i> Water quality (including taste and clarity), Reliability of water supply (lack of flow interruptions), Response time to fix interruptions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Now, thinking about sewerage services in the last 12 months, how satisfied have you been with this? Have you experienced: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Sewage overflows on your property, ○ Sewage overflows in the community (caused by blockages and chokes in the sewer system) that flow into the natural environment (e.g. bushland, river, beaches or lakes). Often seen as the beach or lake displaying 'no swimming' signs? How concerned about you about this? 	<p>WR breakout group facilitators</p>	
<p>6.20-6.30pm</p>	<p>Presentation: Challenges facing Council</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Unique geography 	<p>Central Coast Council –</p>	<p>PP slides</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fewer people to pay for services • Fragmented network • Low investment for many years has resulted in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Reported water quality issues and complaints increasing ○ Reported sewer overflows and complaints increasing ○ Major breaches of Environmental Protection Licenses ○ Wastewater treated to tertiary level • Topics we will cover and how we will present the options 	Jamie Loader	
6.30 - 6.35pm	<p>Presentation: Council proposals for water services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water quality and reliability • Environmental and safety management • Water security <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Presentation of options for each: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No change (with no change to bills) ▪ Slight change (with \$ change to average bill) ▪ (Where possible) Significant change (with \$ change to average bill) • Outline the benefits to customers at each level of change 	CCC – Jamie Loader	PP slides
6.35- 6.45pm	<p>Breakout group discussion: Response to the water services options</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Go through each topic and ask: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What do you like/dislike about each option? Any concerns? ○ What is the preferred option and why? ○ Try to get the group to come to some agreement (to encourage discussion) but explain that they will be voting individually at the end of the forum 	WR breakout group facilitators	Show PPT slide of options for each topic
6.45 - 6.50pm	<p>Presentation: Council proposals for sewerage services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sewerage overflows • Outfalls <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Presentation of options for each: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No change (with no change to bills) ▪ Slight change (with \$ change to average bill) ▪ Significant change (with \$ change to average bill) • Outline the benefits to customers at each level of change 	CCC - Jamie Loader	PP slides
6.50- 6.58pm	<p>Breakout group discussion: Response to the sewerage services options</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you like/dislike about each option? Any concerns? • What is the preferred option and why? 	WR breakout group facilitators	Show PPT slide of options for each topic

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Try to get the group to come to some agreement (to encourage discussion) but explain that they will be voting individually at the end of the forum 		
6.58 - 7.03pm	<p>Presentation: Council proposals for stormwater drainage services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stormwater drainage <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presentation of options: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No change (with no change to bills) Slight change (with \$ change to average bill) Significant change (with \$ change to average bill) Outline the benefits to customers at each level of change 	CCC - Jay Spare	PP slides
7.03- 7.12pm	<p>Breakout group discussion: Response to the stormwater drainage options</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What do you like/dislike about each option? Any concerns? What is the preferred option and why? Try to get the group to come to some agreement (to encourage discussion) but explain that they will be voting individually at the end of the forum 	WR breakout group facilitators	Show PPT slide of options
7.12 - 7.15pm	<p>Presentation: Bringing it all together- total bill impacts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Present total bill impacts and changes to bills 	CCC - Jamie Loader	PP slides
7.15- 7.20pm	<p>Breakout group discussion: Bringing it all together</p> <p><i>Show total bill impacts slide - facilitator should highlight the preferred options from the group.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Now you have seen all the options for water, wastewater and stormwater and what the bill impacts are, does it change your choices on any of the topics? Why? <p><i>Ask them to write down their preferred option individually for each as they will be voting on their preferences in the next session.</i></p>	WR breakout group facilitators	Show PPT slide of total bill impacts
7.20- 7.25pm	<p>Polling</p> <p>What is your preferred option for</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Water quality and reliability? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Option A- no change – no additional charge Option B- improve slightly – additional \$9 Option C- improve significantly – additional \$36 	WR Lead Facilitator	PPT slide of options

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Environmental and safety management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Option A- no change – no additional charge ▪ Option B- improve slightly – additional \$2.25 ○ Water conservation and engagement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Option A- no change – no additional charge ▪ Option B- improve slightly – additional \$2.75 ○ Sewerage overflows <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Option A- no change – no additional charge ▪ Option B- improve slightly – additional \$6.25 ▪ Option C- improve significantly – additional \$8 ○ Treatment plants and outfalls <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Option A- no change – no additional charge ▪ Option B- improve slightly – additional \$4 <p>And now for the stormwater drainage topics</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Critical Stormwater Drainage Asset Inspections, Cleaning and Repairs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Option A- no change – no additional charge ▪ Option B-improve slightly – additional \$1.58 2. Stormwater quality and urban channels <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Option A- no change – no additional charge ▪ Option B-improve slightly – additional \$5.45 3. Flood planning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Option A- no change – no additional charge ▪ Option B-improve slightly – additional \$2.18 ▪ Option C- improve significantly – additional \$3.41 		
7.25-7.28pm	<p>Thanks and next steps</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Thank for participation and explain how their feedback will be used 	CCC – Jamie Loader	PP Slides
7.28-7.30pm	<p>CLOSE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Thank everybody for attending ● Explain the procedure for receiving incentive 	WR Lead Facilitator	

Appendix C – Central Coast Council Customer Personas

Customer personas

Eight customer personas were created based on the analysis and consultation conducted during the Digital Content Strategy's research phase.

These personas are a realistic depiction of the CCC's key audiences, and will help make customer-centred decisions throughout the implementation of the website and assist Council in better understanding the customer experience.

Angela Ratepayer

Background

Angela lives on the coast with her 3 kids and husband, Adrian. She works in Gosford, while Adrian commutes to Sydney, making it difficult for him to do things in-person on weekdays.

Technology proficiency (out of 5)



Goals

- Providing stability for her family
- Getting regular tasks done quickly
- Entertaining her kids during the school holidays

Frustrations

- Seeing her kids upset or distressed
- Not having more time to focus on herself and her career
- Having to do things her husband can't because he is commuting (and they can't be done online)



TYPE	Ratepayer
AGE	34
STATUS	Married for 12 years
FAMILY	3 children under 10 years old
JOB	Office manager
LOCATION	Green Point

Jordon Business owner

Background

Jordon grew up on the coast with his family, and has been working part-time while studying to become a social worker. He has recently decided to open his own café with a friend.

Technology proficiency (out of 5)



Central Coast Council - Digital Strategy - Customer Personas - © Folk 2017

Goals

- Setting himself up for a relaxed life
- Getting his restaurant open
- Finishing his diploma this year

Frustrations

- Contractors not sticking to agreed timeframes
- Not being able to find information to assist him
- Not understanding what the process is or not being updated



Understanding permit processes
Lodging Development Applications
Researching demographic data

TYPE Business owner
AGE 28
STATUS Single
FAMILY Family lives in the area
JOB Barista
LOCATION Kincumber

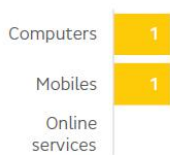
7

Priscilla Retiree

Background

Priscilla retired 23 years ago and moved to the coast with her husband, Brian. She is involved in a number of community groups, and paints with an artists' group 2 days each week.

Technology proficiency (out of 5)



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Goals

- Having a positive influence on her community
- Being close to quality healthcare services
- Caring for her adult son in hospital

Frustrations

- Feeling like she has been forgotten
- Most things being too expensive
- Being forced to use technology



Booking venues
Paying rates via the phone
Applying for grants

TYPE Retiree
AGE 82
STATUS Widowed for 7 years
FAMILY 2 adult children
JOB Retired
LOCATION Summerland Point

8

Mark Visitor

Background

Mark rents and works on the lower north shore in Sydney with his fiancée, Michelle. They're planning a weekend away to the coast to look at some possible locations for their wedding.

Technology proficiency (out of 5)



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Goals

- Saving enough money for his first home deposit
- Finding new places to eat out
- Getting out of the city on weekends

Frustrations

- Not having bought property sooner
- Having to battle with traffic
- Not having constant internet connections from all his devices



Looking for tourist information

Finding out about upcoming festivals

Researching venues for hire

TYPE Visitor
AGE 36
STATUS Getting married this year
FAMILY No children
JOB Web developer
LOCATION North Sydney

Hailey Student

Background

Hailey lives at home with her parents and younger brother, and is a full-time law student at Newcastle University. She works part-time as a paralegal at her parent's law firm in Erina.

Technology proficiency (out of 5)



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Goals

- Having new and fun experiences
- Becoming independent enough to move out of home
- Finishing her studies and finding a job

Frustrations

- Not having a life away from her parents
- Not being able to do things online
- Finding things to do that are free
- Getting around between home, work and university



Looking for free events

Applying for scholarship programs

Getting updates on road works

TYPE Student
AGE 22
STATUS Single
FAMILY No children
JOB Paralegal
LOCATION Chittaway Bay

9

10

Lana

Investor/developer

Background

Lana is a project manager for a property developer in Sydney's eastern suburbs. She has recently relocated her family to the coast to manage construction of a block of apartments.

Technology proficiency (out of 5)



Central Coast Council - Digital Strategy - Customer Personas - © Folk 2017

Goals

- Settling her family into their new temporary home
- Successfully delivering her project on time and within budget

Frustrations

- Construction not commencing on time due to delays with the DA
- Having to hire a construction manager who is commuting
- Not knowing what's available on the coast (being a new resident)



Applying for permits

Lodging Development Applications

Researching local schools

TYPE Investor/developer
AGE 42
STATUS Married
FAMILY 1 infant child
JOB Project manager (ex-Architect)
LOCATION Gosford

11

Colin

Retiree 2

Background

Colin has recently retired to enjoy life after working extremely hard over the last 40 years. He is starting to be involved in a number of community groups and is currently re defining what retired life means to him.

Technology proficiency (out of 5)



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Goals

- Relaxing and enjoying life
- Being close to family especially excited about being a Grandparent for the first time
- Traveling or other opportunities that weren't available to him when he was young

Frustrations

- Being considered and lumped in the same group as Priscilla (Retiree 1)
- Boredom and trying to keep busy
- Role reversal of his children taking on a parent role with him (e.g. telling him how to drive the car as they are worried he is becoming a bad driver)
- Lots of options available and fatigue about what to do



Looking for adventures

Looking for things to do on the coast

Enjoying life and family

TYPE Resident
AGE 63
STATUS Married
FAMILY 2 Children / Grandchildren
JOB Retired
LOCATION Wyong

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Rhonda The Access Customer

Background

Rhonda uses a wheelchair, lives independently and receives regular drop in support. She has an NDIS funded support worker who helps with shopping and getting out and about in the community. She is a NDIS participant and has a package that includes drop in home support, access to community and social activities, assistive technology and public transport training.

Technology proficiency (out of 5)



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Keeping in touch with friends/family

Visit theatre and local leisure centre to participate in a swim program

Getting out in the community

Goals

- Keeping in touch with friends/family
- Getting out in the community
- Visit theatre and local leisure centre and participate in a swimming program

Frustrations

- Reading text and understanding directions
- Support worker Companion Card not accepted everywhere
- Lack of wheelchair accessible venues and facilities and continuous paths of travel outside
- Online information needs to be audio captioned or staff are Auslan trained
- Lack of online information about accessible destinations and amenities

- TYPE** Accessible
- AGE** 32
- STATUS** Single
- FAMILY** Elderly mother. Older sister as primary family carer and NDIS funded support worker
- JOB** None
- LOCATION** Buff Point

Other audiences

Secondary

The following customers were also identified as secondary audiences of the CCC:

- Educators
- Government agencies
- Job seekers