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WHAT

In 2019-20, IPART trialled a water utility customer satisfaction survey for Sydney Water and Hunter Water.

Following the success of the trial, we are continuing the survey in 2020-21 and have also included Central Coast Council.

WHY

Customer satisfaction information acts as an indicator of a water utility's customer service.

Measuring and reporting on customer satisfaction over time could help drive improvement in the utilities' performance, in line with customer preferences, through 'competition by comparison'.

WHO

We have surveyed customers of Sydney Water, Hunter Water and Central Coast Council.

HOW

We are using the same organisation as last year to survey Sydney Water, Hunter Water and Central Coast Council's customers.

We have already conducted the survey twice this year (in August and November 2020) and will conduct it again two more times (in March and June 2021).

We ask customers for their views on their water service provider in those quarters.

The same organisation surveys water utility customers in Victoria, on behalf of the Essential Services Commission (ESC). The ESC shares the results from these surveys on its website (www.esc.vic.gov.au).

On the next page, we have included the average of Sydney Water and Hunter Water's customer satisfaction results over the past year, and Central Coast Council's results from the first half of 2020-21 (ie, results from two rounds of the survey). Sydney Water is compared with similar utilities in Victoria. Hunter Water and Central Coast Council are compared against each other and against Barwon Water in Victoria.

WHAT NEXT

We will next survey and publish the results for Sydney Water, Hunter Water and Central Coast Council customers in March 2021.

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What are the customer satisfaction results?

We have set out the customer satisfaction results for Sydney Water, Hunter Water and Central Coast Council in Tables 1 and 2. Sydney Water and Hunter Water's results are the average of the results over the past year. Central Coast Council's results are the average over the last two quarters as we only included Central Coast Council in the survey for the first time this financial year.

Sydney Water is comparable to City West Water, South East Water and Yarra Valley Water in Victoria. Between them, the three Victorian utilities supply water to the Melbourne region. Hunter Water and Central Coast Council are comparable to each other and to Barwon Water in Victoria.

Sydney Water continues to perform favourably compared to the Victorian utilities, as demonstrated in Table 1. Table 2 shows that Hunter Water's average results are not as high as Barwon Water's. In the first quarter of 2019-20, Hunter Water's results were similar to Barwon Water's. Since then, Barwon Water's results have improved whereas Hunter Water's remained relatively unchanged until this quarter.

While it may not be apparent from the averaged results, both Hunter Water's and Sydney Water's performance have improved substantially in this last quarter. More data collected in future surveys will show if there is a consistent improvement in customer satisfaction for these utilities, as we have seen with Barwon Water.

Central Coast Council has not performed as well as Hunter Water or Barwon Water. Further, its results have declined since the first quarter (August 2020 survey, though again, this may not be apparent from the results in Table 2). More data collected in future surveys will provide greater clarity about customer perception of the Council.

Table 1 Sydney Water's customer satisfaction results (scored out of 10)

Customer satisfaction indicator	Sydney Water	City West Water	South East Water	Yarra Valley Water	Total available score
How would you rate your water / waste water provider on delivering value for money?	6.5	6.3	6.5	6.4	(10)
How would you rate your trust for your water / waste water provider?	7.0	6.8	6.9	6.9	(10)
How would you rate your water / waste water provider's reputation in the community?	7.0	6.9	7.0	6.9	(10)
How would you rate your satisfaction with your water / waste water provider as a service provider overall?	7.2	7.0	7.2	6.9	(10)

Note: All results are the average of results obtained from surveys during the period March 2020 – November 2020 (inclusive - based on results from four quarters' of surveys).

Table 2 Hunter Water and Central Coast Council's customer satisfaction results (scored out of 10)

Customer satisfaction indicator	Hunter Water	Central Coast Council	Barwon Water	Total available score
	(Average over last year)	(Average Q1 & Q2 2020-21)	(Average over last year)	
How would you rate your water / waste water provider on delivering value for money?	6.2	5.7	6.6	(10)
How would you rate your trust for your water / waste water provider?	6.7	6.0	7.0	(10)
How would you rate your water / waste water provider's reputation in the community?	6.8	5.8	7.2	(10)
How would you rate your satisfaction with your water / waste water provider as a service provider overall?	6.8	6.1	7.3	(10)

Note: Hunter Water and Barwon Water's results are the average of results obtained from surveys during the period March 2020 - November 2020 (inclusive - based on results from four quarters' of surveys). Central Coast Council's results are the average of results from 2020-21 Quarters 1 and 2 only.