



Water
and Sewer

love water
use it wisely

Water and Sewer Community Engagement and Education Strategy

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we live, work and play. We pay our respects to Elders, past, present and emerging and recognise their continued connection to these lands and waterways. We acknowledge our shared responsibility to care for and protect our place and people.

Our Vision

To be a trusted service provider for the Central Coast community and place our customers at the centre of everything we do.

Our Purpose

To provide water and sewer services that preserve our environment and maintain the liveability and health of the Central Coast community.



Administrator's message

Welcome to Council's Water and Sewer Community Engagement and Education Strategy. This strategy shares how Council will engage, communicate, educate, and continue to improve its services, while building trust with customers and the community.

This strategy outlines the different ways Council will listen, talk and communicate with its customers throughout the delivery of services, and as it makes important decisions that may affect you, your environment or your water and sewer services.

This strategy is consistent with Council's commitment to be transparent and accountable to the Central Coast community, and ensures that you, Council's customers, continue to be at the centre of everything Council does to deliver on today's water and sewer needs and prepare for the future.

With a focus on your values, Council has created this strategy following an extensive community engagement program. Thank you to the community members who helped inform this research.

I encourage you to continue to have your say about water and sewer services and keep in touch to receive Council's updates about the delivery of its water and sewer service commitments.

Rik Hart
Administrator



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About us

Central Coast Council Water and Sewer is the Water Authority for the Central Coast Region.

We service the whole Local Government Area with a population of approximately 349,000, delivering to more than 139,000 homes and businesses on the following key areas:

- **Harvesting raw water** - catchment, storage and treatment
- **Providing safe drinking water** - treating water to a high standard and delivering it to our customers
- **Collecting sewage** - transport, treatment and discharge
- **Recycling treated water** – advanced sewage treatment and reuse of recycled water
- **Managing stormwater** – flood mitigation, stormwater conveyance and water quality

Our guiding principles

Central Coast Council Water and Sewer is regulated by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART). IPART sets maximum prices for Council’s water and sewerage services.

We ensure our planning is customer centric, cost effective and builds credibility with our community which is consistent with IPART’s 3Cs Model. Learn more about IPART at ipart.nsw.gov.au



One Central Coast

Our Community Strategic Plan has three main themes which have been integral in the development of this document:



Green

The Central Coast is known for its natural beauty; maintaining our natural assets is a critical component of what we value as a community. Ongoing education is key to our green approach, as is inviting the community to take a hands-on role in conservation, protection and remediation of our environment.



Responsible

We are a responsible Council and community, committed to building strong relationships and delivering a great customer experience in all our interactions.



Liveable

Creating a liveable community means striking a balance between projects that support infrastructure development and others that enhance our quality of life.

Decision making

While community engagement does not override our regulatory requirements, it does play an important role in ensuring final outcomes are equitable and reflect the level of service our customers expect from their water authority.

Empowering through education

In previous engagement programs you told us that education is key to effective community engagement and decision-making. Our Love Water campaign will continue to help educate our community with the support of ongoing educational messaging delivered through our various communication channels.

Learn more about our Love Water campaign at lovewater.centralcoast.nsw.gov.au

Community Package

This document forms part of our ‘Community Package’ which includes your Customer Charter, Complaints Management Framework and aligns with Central Coast Council’s Community Engagement.

Respecting your voice

We respect the important role community engagement plays in helping us reach the best possible outcomes. We are committed to delivering quality consultations to ensure all views and experiences are heard and taken into consideration before making important decisions that affect your water and sewer services.

Introduction

What is community engagement?

Community engagement refers to how we engage with our community. The process commences with the delivery of information to our customers and community with the aim to seek and incorporate informed feedback to ensure we reach the best possible outcomes.

This strategy outlines the different ways we will talk and listen to you before we make important decisions that may affect you, your environment or your water and sewer services.

What is the purpose of this strategy?

This strategy outlines how we will engage, communicate, educate, and continue to build trust with our customers and community through transparency and accountability.

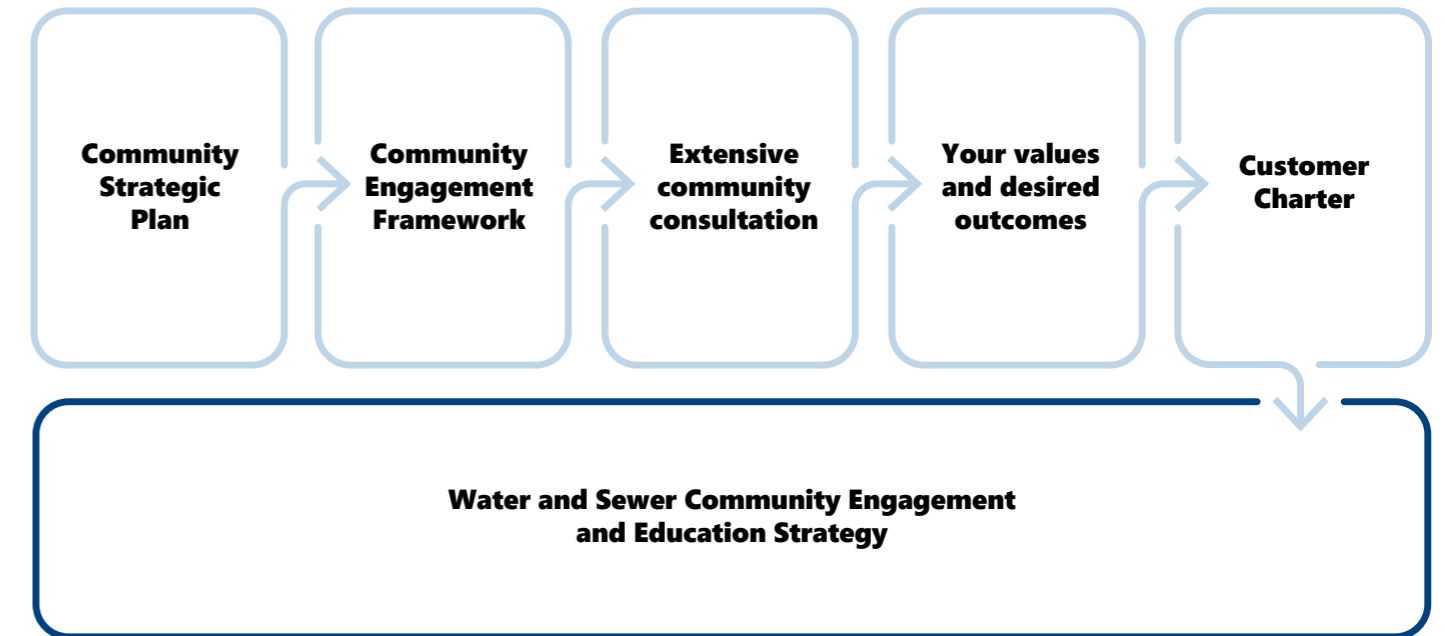
What can you provide input on?

We will engage with our customers and community when and where it matters most to ensure our community is involved in important decisions.

We consulted with you on Council's Water and Sewer Community Engagement and Education Strategy, Customer Charter and Customer Complaints Management Framework. We will seek your future input on:

- Your water and sewer values and desired outcomes
- Your water and sewer services
- Future performance reporting
- How best to share our updates and news with you
- Pricing proposals and major investments
- How we can improve our services

How we developed this strategy



Understanding shared rights and responsibilities

This strategy complements your Water and Sewer Customer Charter.

The Charter acts as a mutual agreement that defines the roles and responsibilities between Central Coast Council and our customers.

Helping you when it matters most

We provide a variety of assistance programs to support customers who may be experiencing vulnerability and financial hardship.

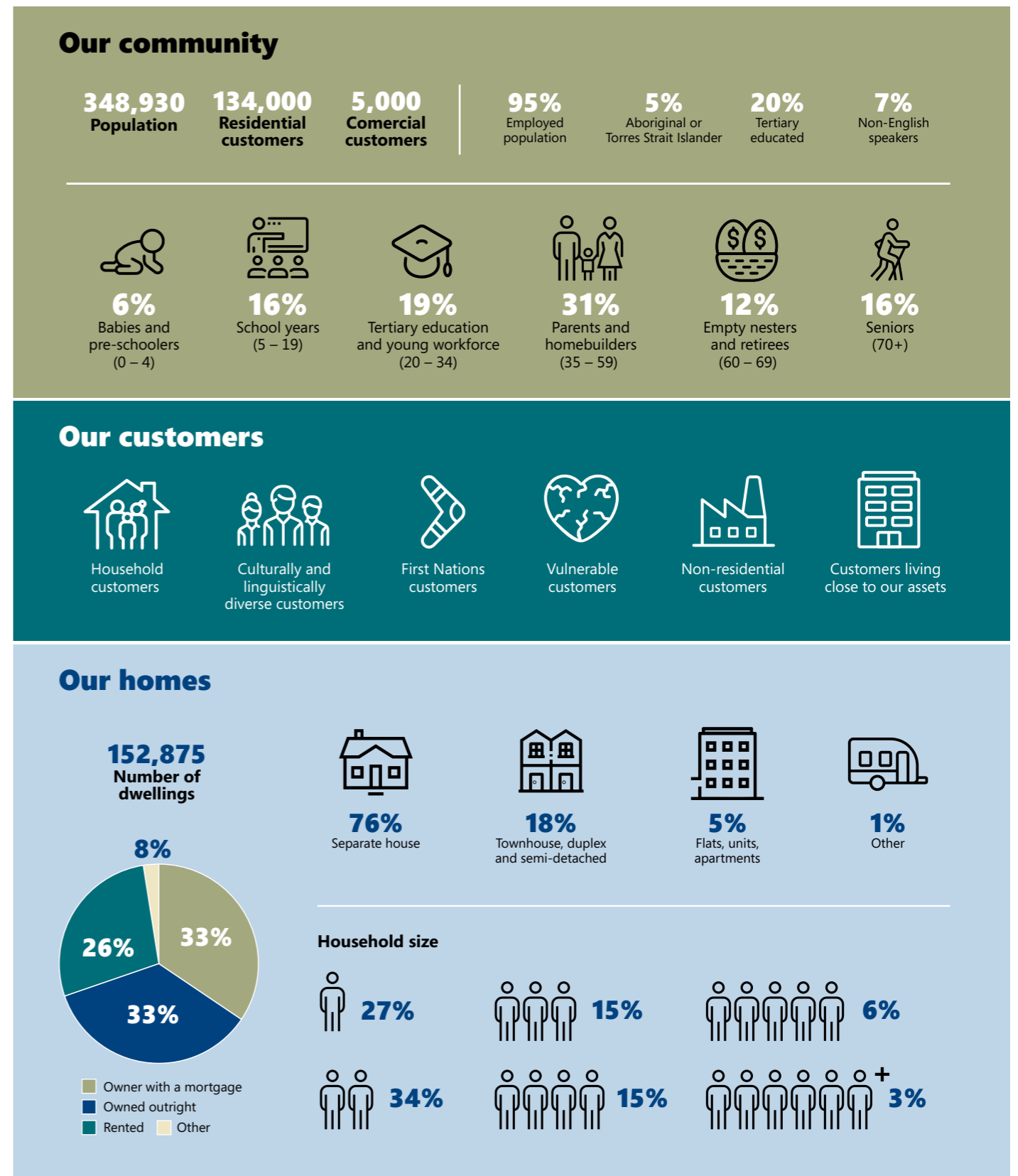
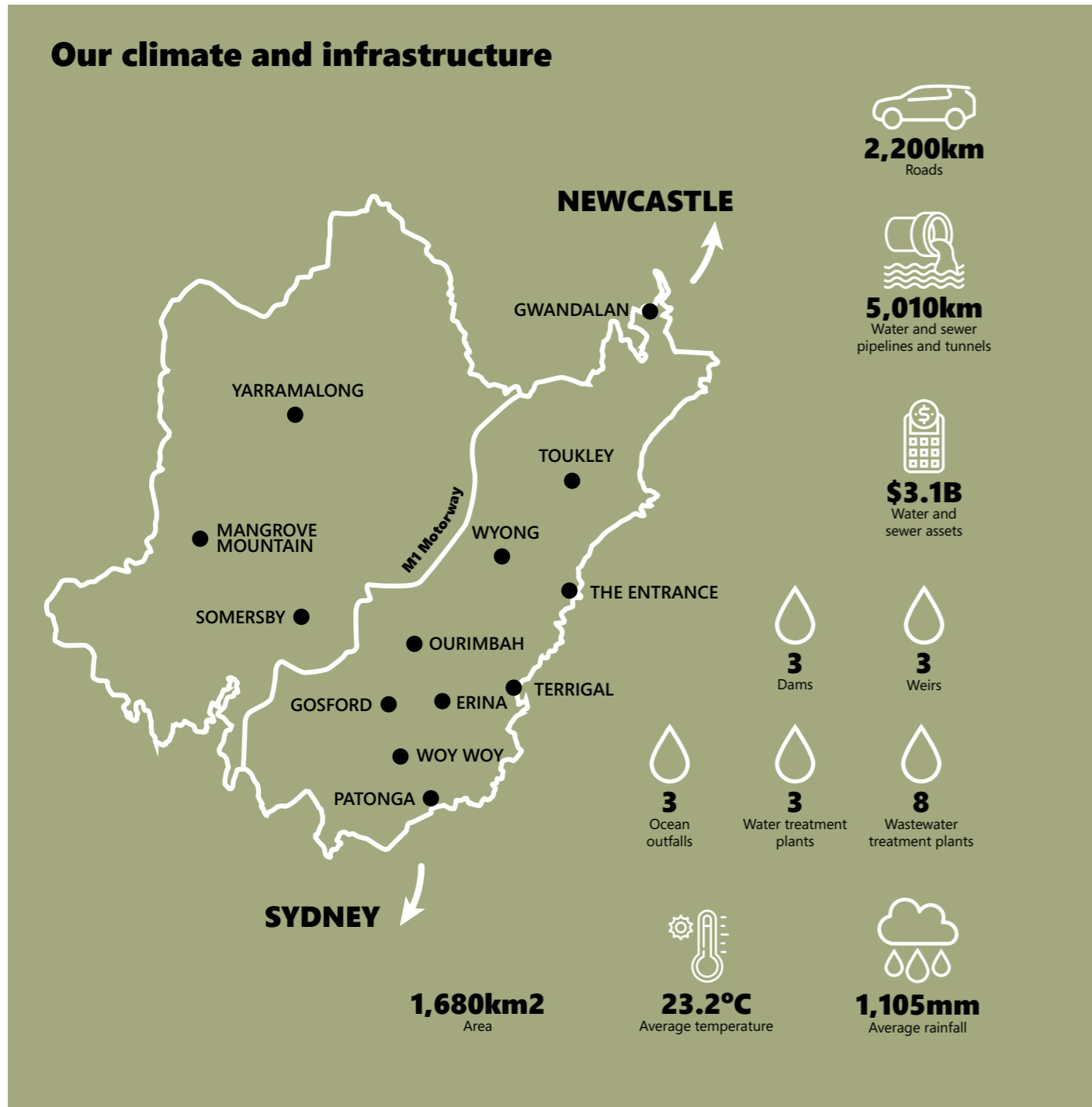
Making decisions in the best interests of our whole community, our service issue escalation and response process ensures prioritisation of most urgent and important service issues.

To learn more about shared rights and responsibilities and our customer assistance programs search '**Customer Charter**' at centralcoast.nsw.gov.au



Our community

Central Coast Council Water and Sewer is a major water utility with over 100,000 connected properties. This means we have a broad customer base that includes residents, businesses, hospitals, schools, universities, community groups and more. While not everyone in our community pays for our services directly, we all interact in the same environment and are impacted by the decisions we make. We are committed to working closely with our customers and community to make decisions in the best interests of our whole community.



Our community's values and outcomes

Here's what you said you valued most about your water supply and sewerage services



Good quality water

Clean, clear, safe drinking water that tastes and smells good and is tested and monitored regularly.



Quality treatment

Minimising odour and health impacts on customers and workers and releasing high quality effluent to the ocean.



Reliable service

Well maintained network with minimal leaks and breakages with fast response times to faults and issues.



Affordable

Cost efficient, consistent, and good value for money with fair allocation of costs between customers.



Effective planning

Using the latest technology, water sources and long-term planning to ensure future supply demands can be met and are resilient to climate change.



Environmental focus

Protecting our catchments, oceans and marine life and utilising renewable energy to power our assets.



Transparency and education

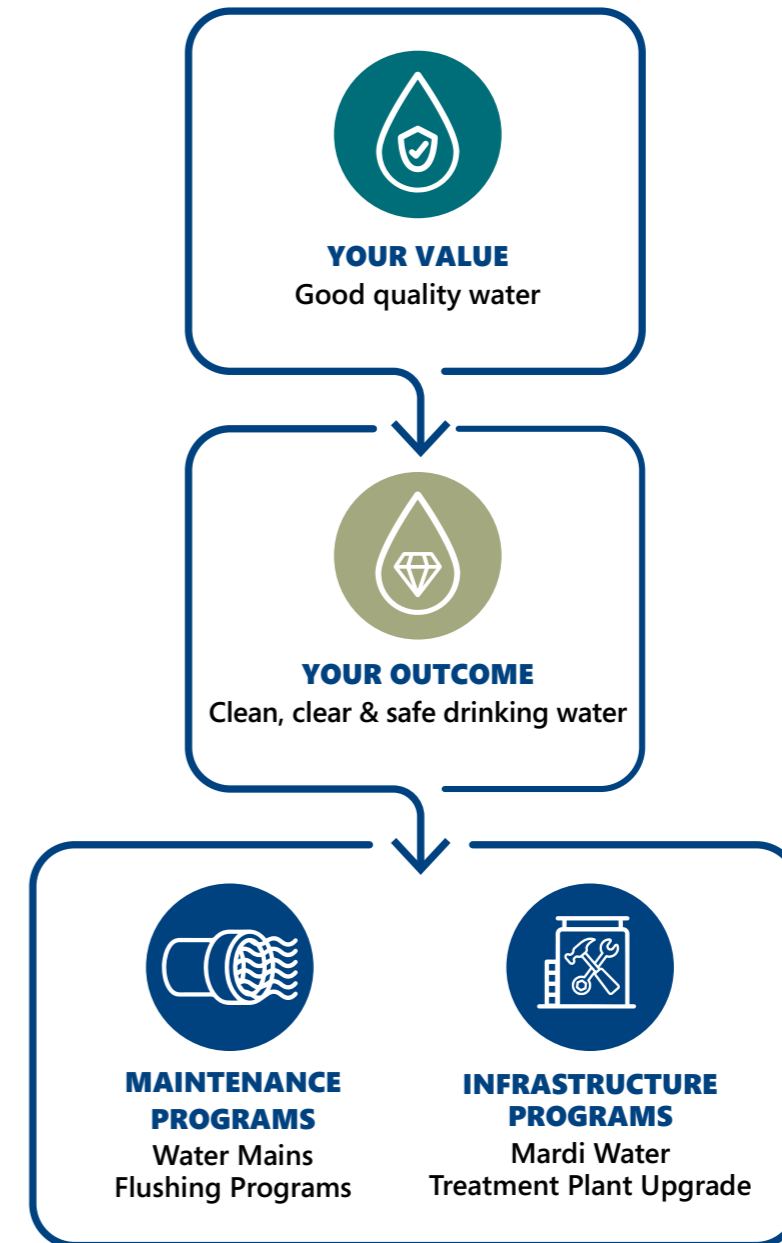
Providing clear, easy to understand information and good communication and raising community awareness about our water supply, water conservation and what is safe to flush down the toilet.

Influencing outcomes

Central Coast Council Water and Sewer is a regulated business so there are things that community feedback cannot influence such as legislation and regulations. However, other important areas can be influenced by your feedback to help ensure that we make decisions in the best interests of our broader community.

For example, our customer values provide us with clear direction on future investments. This means the amount of money that we spend on our maintenance and infrastructure can be targeted to the water and sewer services our community value most.

How your values and outcomes influence our services



Community engagement

Our principles

Our approach is guided by the five principles outlined in Council's adopted Engagement Framework as shown below.



1. Respect and transparency

- Consult with you when possible and use the information gathered in a meaningful way
- Respect your time and listen to you
- Engage at a level that is appropriate to the possibility to influence
- Share the responsibility, building trust with transparency



2. Access and inclusion

- Seek a diversity of views and perspectives
- Provide feedback to you as to how your input contributed to decision-making
- Endeavour to identify and remove barriers to participation
- Use a range of opportunities and techniques to encourage participation, and increase engagement
- Have an awareness and understanding for all who may be affected by or interested in the outcome
- Work in partnership with relevant community groups, State and Federal Government, Local Government partners, and / or other stakeholders internally within Council



3. Clarity

- Facilitate genuine and open dialogue with the community
- Clearly communicate the intention, scope, and outcomes of the consultation
- Use plain language and avoid jargon to provide clear explanations
- Make information available in accessible formats



4. Accountability and improvement

- Seek to maintain consistent standards and levels of quality
- Share results internally and work together to avoid duplication and 'over consultation'
- Evaluate engagement efforts and consistently seek to learn and improve practice



5. Capacity

- We will build the community's capacity to contribute, by educating and empowering both the community and staff so that they may participate in meaningful, two-way collaboration

Our approach

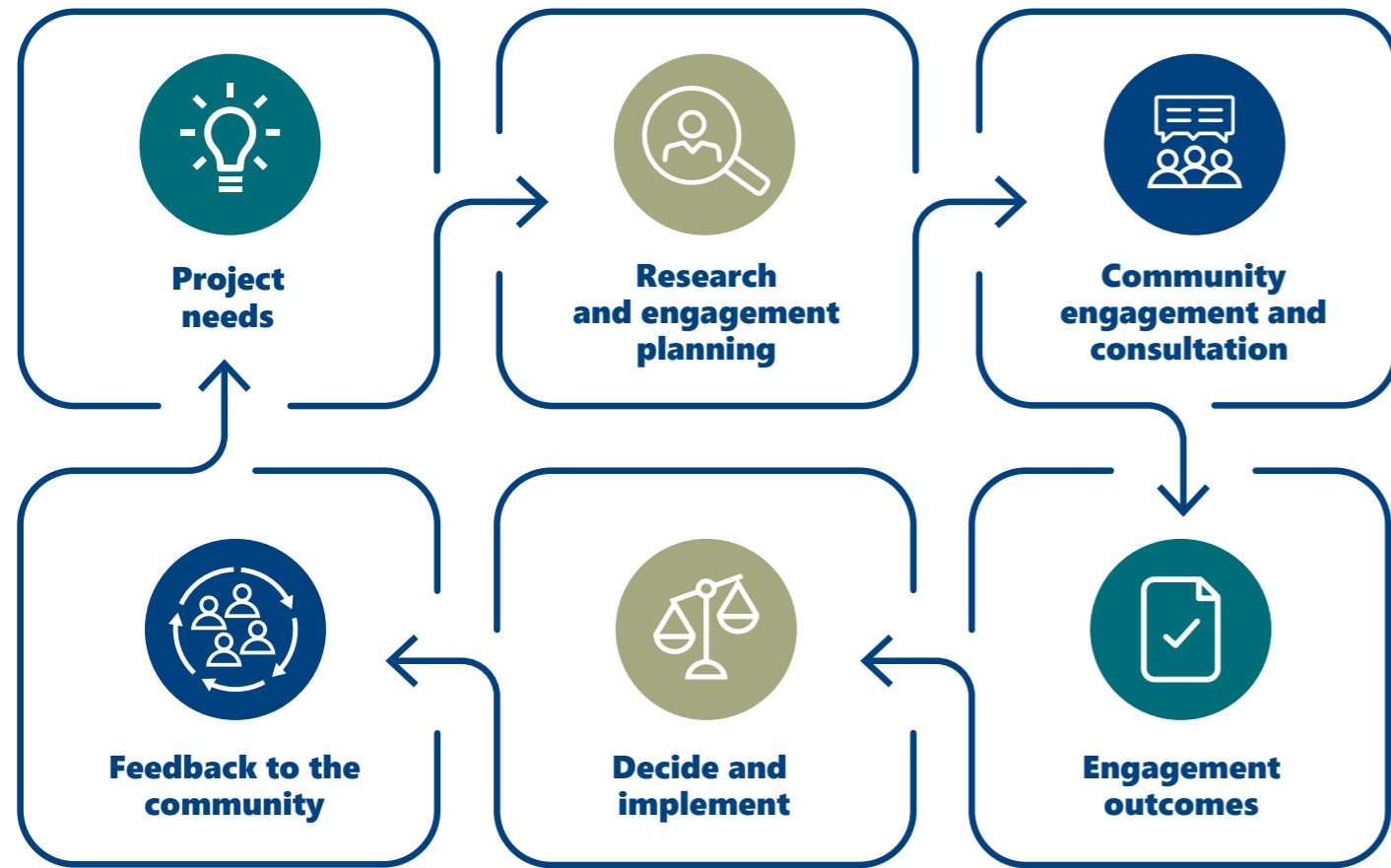
Our Community Engagement Strategy aligns with Council's Community Engagement Framework and, more broadly the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Spectrum of Participation. The spectrum shows how the range and input of community involvement varies depending on the goals, time frames, resources, and impacts of a project.

Spectrum of public participation



How we engage with you

This Strategy guides the way engagement is planned and undertaken at Central Coast Council Water and Sewer. Planning for engagement considers a range of factors including the stakeholders impacted by the project, how much impact the project will have on the environment, and the level of interest and significance to the community.



Our engagement channels



Broad communications

- Community newsletters - print and digital
- Social platforms
- Radio
- Television
- Signage
- Newsletters



Deliberative forums

- Water security plan
- Improving Your Water and Sewer services



Events

- Attendance at Council run community events provides an opportunity for direct engagement, feedback and time to 'check in' with our community on behaviours and perceptions around the value of water.
- Shopping centre 'drop-in' events



Love Water

- A communication and education campaign that educates our community on the value of water
- This campaign utilises digital, radio, print, social media and events
- The goal of this campaign is to achieve large scale awareness and behaviour change throughout the community



Online

- Your Voice Our Coast - an online hub, where the community can provide real input and direction into the projects and initiatives affecting our area and our region
- Feedback helps Council shape our community, our region and our future



Project based communications

- Community liaison and proactive early engagement to guide our operations, services and project delivery
- This focused based engagement involves face-to-face discussions, online engagement and broad community communications



Schools Educational Program

- Delivered via the Love Water Campaign
- Tailored educational programs for early childhood, primary and high schools
- School water audits
- Site tours and experiences



Social media

- Facebook
- Instagram
- Twitter
- LinkedIn
- YouTube



Stakeholder forums

- Public forums at Council Meetings
- Agencies and key stakeholders
- Water utilities



Surveys

- Qualitative and quantitative surveys
- Project based surveys
- Customer experience surveys
- Your voice surveys
- Social media polls



Our community engagement action plan

We have developed a list of commitments that we will deliver over the next three years. These will support us to uphold our promise to the community. We will review these actions regularly to ensure they are on track and adapt and respond to changing circumstances as needed.

Commitment	Timeframe
Develop and adopt Customer Charter and Complaints Management Framework Functions as a mutual agreement and underpins our promise to our community.	September 2023
Revise Water and Sewer Communications Plan Guides how we will communicate with our customers and community.	September 2023
Develop and adopt Community Engagement and Education Strategy Outlines how we engage and educate our community.	November 2023
Develop Water and Sewer Education Plan Provides specific details of future educational programs, campaigns and events.	November 2023
Masterplan Unconnected Properties Engagement Educate and engage customers on the risks and funding approaches for unconnected properties on the Central Coast.	December 2023
Establish Water and Sewer Customer Advisory Group This group will act as a representative body from our community and will provide feedback on key documents, projects, and initiatives.	June 2024
Develop Water Security Community Engagement Plan Outlines community engagement planning of key Water security projects.	June 2024
Recycled and Purified Water Engagement Educate and engage customers on the use of recycled water and purified recycled water for drinking purposes.	June 2024
Water and Sewer Community Consultation (IPART) Engage with customers to identify opportunities to Improve your water and sewer services.	Annually

Commitment	Timeframe
Water and Sewer Customer Survey (IPART) Engage with customers to understand their experiences and identify opportunities for improvement with the water and sewer services we provide.	Annually
Large Non-residential Customer Engagement Engage with large non-residential customers on water conservation and water efficiency.	Ongoing
Develop Water and Sewer Stakeholder Database Dedicated water and sewer database to keep our customers and stakeholders informed.	Ongoing
Future pricing proposals Support IPART in their determination of fair prices for customers.	Ongoing
Infrastructure and Capital Works Engagement Engage with customers on a variety of major investments and infrastructure upgrades.	Ongoing
Seek customer feedback Engage with customers to understand their experience and identify opportunities for improvement.	Ongoing

Measuring the success of engagement

At the conclusion of every engagement project, an engagement evaluation and key findings report is completed and uploaded to the project page on the Your Voice Our Coast website. Learn more at yourvoiceourcoast.com Council's engagement team are responsible for closing the loop and reporting back to the community on what was heard during consultation and how customer feedback has influenced decision-making.

At a project level, different indicators and evaluations may be chosen to measure the success of engagement. Monitoring and reviewing Council's engagement activities is essential to identify areas for improvement and to ensure we continue to meet our customers expectations.

Educating our community

Our informed community

Developing a water-smart community is extremely important to us. A shared understanding of where water comes from, and how to conserve our precious resource benefits us all.

We deliver a range of water community education programs and campaigns. Our education programs target early childhood, primary school, and high schools. We also deliver programs tailored to small business, community, and internal staff groups.

Community education topics include:

- Environmental benefits of water conservation
- Making the most of our existing supplies
- Maintaining environmental water flows
- Adapting to changing weather patterns associated with climate change
- Long-term water security of a safe and secure supply of water
- Cost saving
- What you can and can't flush down the toilet
- Self-sufficiency
- Ensuring the public is informed, empowered, and inspired to be water wise

Educating our community in the future

To deliver on our promise, a Water Education Plan with clear objectives, timeframes and budget will be developed in conjunction with this Education Strategy. To ensure an inclusive approach to all our customers, education at Central Coast Council Water and Sewer will be governed by the following key focus areas and actions.



FOCUS AREA 1

Build community knowledge through engagement, education, and transparency.



Deliver a variety of educational programs and campaigns that align with the values of our community.



Improve engagement, collaboration and understanding through the development of quality water and sewer information resources.



Inform our community on the importance of water conservation and the viability and safety of recycled and purified water as a future water supply option.

FOCUS AREA 2

Develop young people to be water smart, future focussed, and innovative.



Deliver educational programs and campaigns to schools and early childhood centres across the Central Coast.



Facilitate educational opportunities across Central Coast Council's water and sewer assets.



Inform young people on water conservation best practises and strive to develop school water literacy.

FOCUS AREA 3

Collaborate with First Nations Peoples to improve shared water knowledge.



Liaise with Council's Aboriginal Advisory Committee to ensure that all collaborations and decision making is targeted and culturally appropriate.



Engage with Council's Aboriginal Advisory Committee on all decisions affecting First Nations residents to ensure that educational programs and campaigns are community-led.



Work together with Cultural Leaders and Elders as recommended by Council's Aboriginal Advisory Committee to establish partnerships on traditional water education.

FOCUS AREA 4

Engage and educate businesses and high-water usage non-residential customers so they can be water wise and reduce their impacts on the environment.



Establish regular contact with businesses and large non-residential customers to understand their preferred communication and engagement channels.



Provide education to businesses and large non-residential customers on the appropriate disposal of sewage into our sewer network.



Improve businesses and large non-residential customers resilience to future droughts and population growth.

Your Voice Our Coast

Council's online platform, Your Voice Our Coast (YVOC), is an online hub that enables community input into the projects and initiatives affecting residents and businesses in their local area and the wider region.

YVOC facilitates focused conversations, provides tools for information sharing, as well as data collection and analysis. This engagement platform centralises information and provides a one-stop-shop for stakeholder interaction.

Water Security Plan Engagement

Our water security vision is to provide a resilient and sustainable water future that seeks new opportunities, contributes to regional health and prosperity, and is supported by the community.

In 2021 we engaged with you on our Water Security Plan to understand your values and opinions about your future water supply and demands. This information was used to inform the development of the plan. To learn more search 'Water Security Plan' at yourvoiceourcoast.com

Improving Your Water and Sewer Services Engagement

In March 2023, we commenced our extensive community engagement program—'Improving Your Water and Sewer Services'.

Participants worked collaboratively to define and prioritise a set of water and sewer values, future performance metrics, communication preferences, and the contents for our Water and Sewer Customer Charter.

As part of the work to ensure that our customers are at the centre of everything we do, insights from this consultation helped us target our planning to our community and direct resources where we can achieve the most value to our community.

The findings and outcomes are incorporated in the 2023 Water and Sewer Customer Charter and this Community Engagement and Education Strategy.


To learn more search 'Improving Your Water and Sewer Services' at yourvoiceourcoast.com



Community Forum held at Gosford

How we engaged you

Water Security Plan

-  3 live video forums with **116** participants
-  30 In depth phone interviews
-  **308** online survey completions
-  **127** advertisements across two radio stations

Improving Your Water and Sewer Services





-  4 face to face deliberative forums in Wyong and Gosford with **84** participants
-  **23** in depth phone interviews with hard to reach customers
-  **1,232** online survey completions
-  **18,000+** emails sent

How you connected with us

Water Security Plan

-  **2,238** visits to the Your Voice Our Coast website page
-  Over **11,000** stakeholders were kept up to date through e-news
-  **230** stakeholders were kept up to-date through project update e-newsletters
-  More than **7,500** social media users reached
-  **269k** people were reached, with **339** clicks through to the project page
-  **442** downloads of The Water Supply and Demand factsheet
-  **230** views of our educational video on water supply and demand options

Improving Your Water and Sewer Services

-  **3,378** visits to the Your Voice Our Coast website page
-  **94,000** stakeholders were kept up to-date through project update e-newsletters
-  **3,286** social media impressions
-  **18** customer service requests lodged and closed



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Follow us on socials

 @CentralCoastCouncil  @CentralCoastCouncil  @CCoastCouncil  /central-coast-council

For more information visit

centralcoast.nsw.gov.au
lovewater.centralcoast.nsw.gov.au