



# GUIDE AGENCY INFORMATION

Published:

JULY 2024

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Hunter Water acknowledges the Traditional Countries of the Awabakal, Darkinjung, Geawegal, Wonnarua and Worimi peoples and the Countries on which we operate and beyond where our water flows.

We recognise and respect the cultural heritage, beliefs and continuing connection to the lands and waters of our Traditional Custodians and pay respect to their Elders past, present and emerging.





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# DOCUMENT INFORMATION

## Version history

Document review date is as per the Integrated Management System Standard ([HW2013-421/22.002](#)).

Version	Author	Changes	Approved By	Date Approved
1	Amanda Pfeiffer	Periodic review, incorporating changes to legislation and new formatting	Grace MacPherson Executive Manager Business Services & Assurance	22/07/24

## Document control

Document Owner	Records Manager
Approvals	Executive Manager Business Services & Assurance
Related Documents	Hunter Water Policy Guide
Associated regulations/standards	Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009

Approved By	Executive Manager Business Services & Assurance	TRIM No	HW2009-1145/30.016
Approved Date	22/07/2024	Version No	1



## 1 Introduction

This Information Guide has been produced by Hunter Water in accordance with Part 3 Division 2 of the *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009* (“GIPA Act”).

The purpose of this document is to provide members of the community, Hunter Water staff, and the public with information concerning:

- The structure and functions of Hunter Water;
- The way in which the functions of Hunter Water affect members of the public;
- The avenues available to the public to participate in policy development and the exercise of Hunter Water’s functions;
- The various kinds of government information held by Hunter Water, what information Hunter Water makes publicly available, and the manner in which Hunter Water makes it available.

This Information Guide is available on Hunter Water’s website ([www.hunterwater.com.au](http://www.hunterwater.com.au)).

## 2 About Hunter Water

Hunter Water is a NSW State Owned Corporation (SOC) providing drinking water, wastewater, recycled water and some stormwater services to a population approaching 600,000 people in homes and businesses across the Lower Hunter.

Hunter Water was the first SOC to be proclaimed within New South Wales pursuant to the *State Owned Corporations Act 1989*. Our Board comprises nine members including the Managing Director, Chairperson and seven independent Directors appointed by Hunter Water’s Shareholding Ministers. The Board of Directors oversee the organisation’s policies, management and performance. The Board of Directors set strategic direction for the organisation and ensure Hunter Water achieves its business and regulatory commitments. We operate under the *Hunter Water Act 1991* (NSW).

### 2.1 How we operate

Hunter Water delivers services under an Operating Licence granted by the NSW Government. The Operating Licence protects consumers by prescribing minimum standards of service that Hunter Water must meet in relation to:

- drinking water quality - supplying customers with safe drinking water
- water continuity - providing customers with a reliable supply of water
- water pressure - providing customers with water at acceptable pressure for everyday use
- wastewater transport - providing the reliable transport of sewage.

Our services, projects and activities cover 6,671 square kilometres in the areas of Cessnock, Lake Macquarie, Maitland, Newcastle, Port Stephens, Dungog, and small parts of Singleton. We deliver an average of 188 megalitres (one megalitre equals one million litres) of water per day. Our major water sources are: Grahamstown Dam (182,305ML), Chichester Dam (18,356ML), Tomago Sandbeds (60,000ML) and Anna Bay Sandbeds (16,024ML). We supply bulk water to small parts of the Great Lakes area and are capable of sharing up to 35ML per day with the Central Coast.

We maintain an extensive system to transport wastewater (sewage), which includes 4,995km of sewer mains, 434 wastewater pumping stations and 19 wastewater treatment works, treating almost 70,000ML of wastewater annually. We also own and operate a small amount of stormwater assets in Lake Macquarie, Newcastle and Cessnock.

Detail information and statistics regarding our infrastructure, assets, income, expenditure and human resources are published in the Annual Report, available on the Hunter Water website. If you do not have internet access, please contact us (using the details at the end of this document) and we will forward a copy of this report to you.



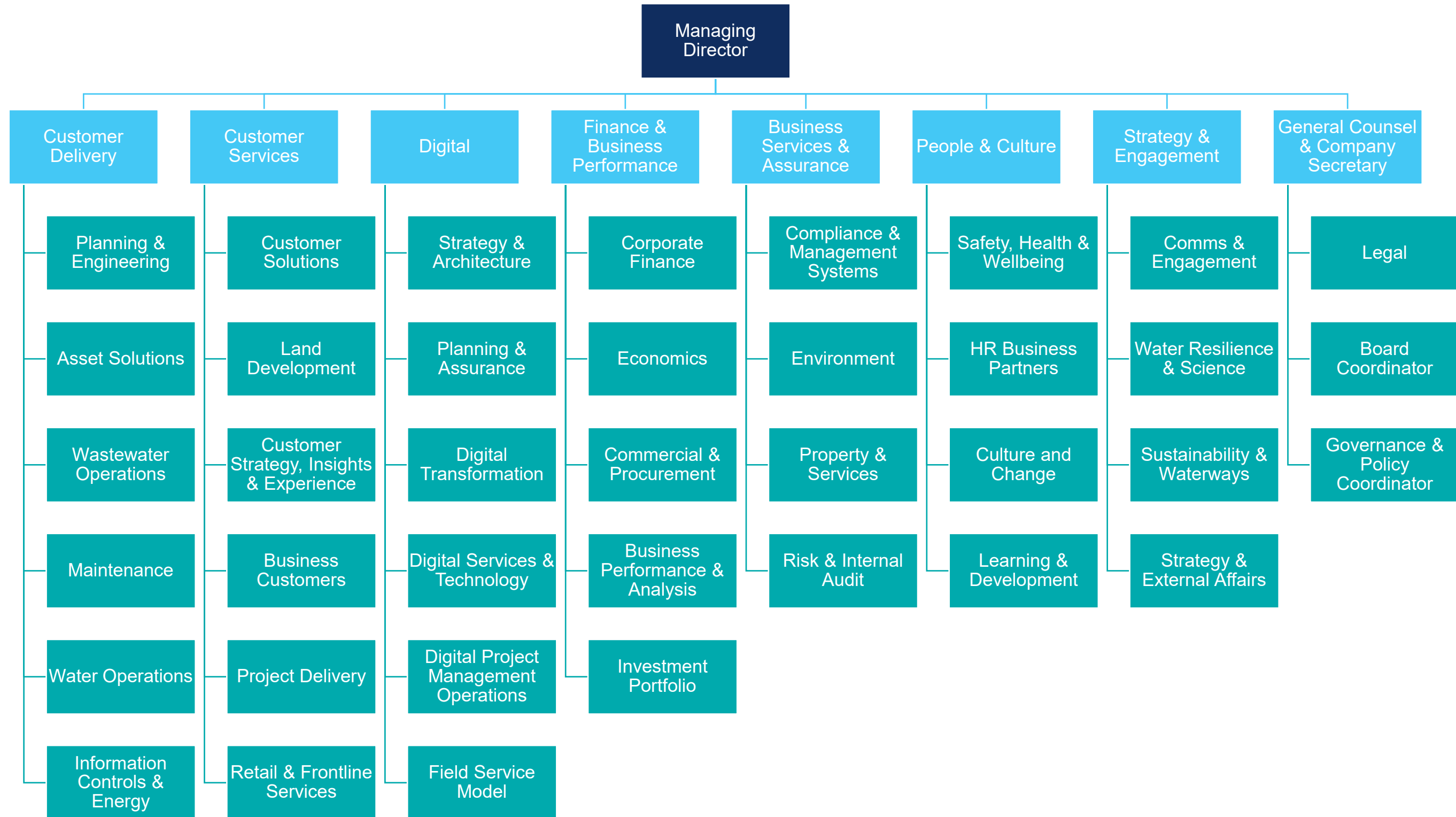
## 2.2 Organisational structure and responsibilities

The Managing Director is a member of the Hunter Water Board of Directors and is the voice and face of the corporation. The position is accountable for operational safety while providing leadership to staff and the executive, delivering the strategic vision and direction, overseeing all operating activities, capital programs and projects and ensuring compliance with regulatory frameworks. The Managing Director is also responsible for managing Hunter Water's relationships with its stakeholders. These include state and federal governments, members of parliament, community and special interest groups, industry bodies, unions and suppliers, as well as our regulators, who are the NSW Environment Protection Authority (EPA) and the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART).

The Hunter Water Executive Team consists of seven managers who all report to the Managing Director. They oversee policy implementations, the day-to-day management of our people, and the delivery of services to our customers across the different divisions.

Division	Executive	Responsibilities
<b>Business Services &amp; Assurance</b>	Executive Manager Business Services & Assurance	Division provides quality support services and assurance to Hunter Water, including risk, resilience, internal audit, compliance and management systems, environment, property management, insurance, fleet, records management and facilities management functions.
<b>Customer Delivery</b>	Executive Manager Customer Delivery	Division provides water and wastewater services to customers within the area of operations. Division also provides the planning and delivery of Hunter Water's capital program for infrastructure assets.
<b>Customer Services</b>	Executive Manager Customer Services	Division provides the following services: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meter reading, billing and account management for all Customers;</li> <li>• Customer contact and investigation and response to Customer complaints;</li> <li>• The land development process and interaction with Developers;</li> <li>• The management of the customer response aspects of water and sewer incidents for all major and critical customers;</li> <li>• Credit management and debt recovery for all debtors; and</li> <li>• The development and implementation of strategies for the management of backflow prevention and trade waste.</li> </ul>
<b>Digital</b>	Executive Manager Digital	Division provides accurate, meaningful, proactive and timely ICT support to business operations to ensure the effective management of Hunter Water's digital resources.
<b>Finance &amp; Business Performance</b>	Executive Manager Finance & Business Performance	Division is responsible for the overall financial management of Hunter Water. This includes Finance, Economics, Commercial Procurement, Regulatory Policy, Financial Control and Compliance, Corporate Accounting, Treasury and Business Performance Reporting.
<b>People &amp; Culture</b>	Executive Manager People & Culture	Division includes human resources, safety, health and wellbeing, and organisational change management capability.
<b>Strategy &amp; Engagement</b>	Executive Manager Strategy & Engagement	Division is responsible for strategy development, investment planning and community and stakeholder engagement, to ensure community values are reflected in a resilient and sustainable water future for the region.

2.2.1 Organisational Structure Chart





## 3 Hunter Water’s Decision-Making Functions That Affect The Public

### 3.1 Land and Property Development

Hunter Water is responsible for the installation of all new water and sewer services and for ensuring that we protect the ongoing supply of quality water and sewer services for our community.

If you are subdividing land or developing property, we need to approve the installation of all new water and sewer services. If you are building 1.5 metres or less from one of our water or sewer mains or sewer junction, then we need to approve your plans and there are requirements that will need to be met.

### 3.2 Billing

Residential customers receive a bill from Hunter Water three times a year. Commercial customers may be billed more frequently. Water and sewer charges for customers consist of a fixed service charge and a usage charge. We may restrict or disconnect the supply to your property and/or take legal action if you do not pay outstanding debts or comply with agreed arrangements.

### 3.3 Water Meters

Only Hunter Water or a licensed plumber can fit water meters to a property. Hunter Water requires customers’ properties have an approved water meter installed (known as the main water meter) to measure the volume of water supplied to each property.

### 3.4 Trade Waste

Trade wastewater is any liquid waste generated from any non-residential property (commercial or industrial, business, trade, or manufacturing process) discharged into the sewer system. It does not include domestic wastewater. Only trade wastewater which complies with specific guidelines may be discharged into the sewer system.

All companies and businesses operating in the Hunter Water area of operations and discharging trade wastewater into the sewer system need to be aware of our trade wastewater requirements.

### 3.5 Standpipes

Standpipes are portable hydrants designed to be connected to a fire hydrant in a water main to gain access to bulk water. All standpipes used in our area of operations must be metered and hired from Hunter Water.

### 3.6 Pipe Maintenance and Repair

Hunter Water is responsible for the maintenance and improvement of the wastewater network, however home owners also have responsibilities. Property owners are responsible for all the fittings and pipes inside the property boundary, through to the connection point with Hunter Water’s pipes.

### 3.7 Recycled Water

Dual reticulation or ‘third pipe’ schemes deliver highly treated recycled water to residential areas through a separate purple pipe. This pipe supplies recycled water that is suitable for use in toilet flushing, garden irrigation, washing machines, car washing and surface cleaning.

All plumbing work in recycled water suburbs needs to be carried out by a licenced plumber in accordance with the Plumbing Code of Australia (PCA) and Hunter Water services requirements. All new homes built in recycled water suburbs will have to undergo a series of inspections by NSW Fair Trading at various stages of construction.





### 3.8 Illegal connections

It is illegal to connect stormwater to the wastewater system, as it increases the volume delivered for treatment and can overload our wastewater treatment plants. Hunter Water conducts inspections and smoke testing to detect illegal stormwater connections and will require the property owner to remove any illegal work.

### 3.9 Backflow prevention

Hunter Water’s water supply system is designed to ensure that water flows to a customer’s property under pressure. If this pressure is not maintained or a cross connection occurs, there is a chance that water could be drawn back into our system. To protect our water system from contamination, all properties connected to our water supply must install a backflow prevention device appropriate to the property's hazard rating.

Only licensed plumbers with backflow prevention accreditation issued by a registered training organisation can install, inspect, commission and test backflow devices

## 4 Types of Information Held by Hunter Water

Hunter Water keeps records associated with its core functions of providing water and wastewater services to the Lower Hunter region, as well as documents dealing with administrative matters. Documents held include the following:

Information Types	
Policies / Standards	Letters / Emails
Maps and Diagrams	Confidential Employee Files
Contracts and Agreements	Photographs
Tenders / Specifications	News and Media Releases
Agendas and Minutes of Meetings	Confidential Customer Details
Business Files	Submissions and Briefings
Legal Documents	Plans and Strategies
Reports – Admin, Environmental, Financial	Applications for Development, Connections and Building over Assets

Hunter Water reserves the right to refuse access where there is an overriding public interest against disclosure.

## 5 How to Access Hunter Water’s Information

### 5.1 Open Access Information

Information is available on our website on our ‘Your Right to Information’ page. This page provides links to the following information:

- Media releases
- Publications – including this Agency Information Guide and our Policy Guide
- Contracts Register – list of contracts between Hunter Water and the private sector
- Disclosure Log – information which may be of interest to the general public which has already been released under GIPA
- Documents Tabled in Parliament



## 5.2 Proactive disclosure

Hunter Water releases information to the public regularly regarding recent and ongoing projects via its website. Some examples are:

- Operating Licence
- Customer Contract
- Annual Repot
- Regulatory Reports, including monthly drinking water quality reports
- IPART and Pricing Proposals
- Customer Information
- Love Water Grants
- Community Events
- Major Projects in your area
- Pollution Monitoring Reports
- Community Groups
- History & Heritage Assets
- Customer Newsletters (“The Stream”)
- Standard Technical Specifications

Hunter Water also has a ‘Newsroom’ section on its website, which is regularly updated so members of the public can easily keep up to date with everything regarding water in the Hunter region (under About/Our Business or search for “News and Updates”).

## 5.3 Informal Access

Members of the public can request information from Hunter Water on any topic of interest. If Hunter Water staff know that the requested information is easily accessible and is clearly in the public interest to disclose, the information will be supplied free of charge. Members of the public can also request information via the Right to Information Officer (contact details are in the last section of this document).

Some information is subject to an approved charge as determined by IPART NSW. This type of information usually forms part of Hunter Water’s day to day operations such as conveyancing certificates, service location diagrams for water and sewer, property sewerage diagrams and billing record searches. This type of information cannot be accessed under GIPA and you will be required to pay the appropriate charge.

## 5.4 Formal Access

In some cases, requests for detailed information need to be made using the formal access process under the GIPA Act. In this case an application form needs to be lodged with Hunter Water’s Right to Information Officer with a \$30 application fee. There may be further charges for processing your application depending on the resources and time required to process your request. The application fee you have paid will count towards these charges. We will provide you with an estimate of any charges at the earliest opportunity and you will have the opportunity to seek a discount or waiver.

# 6 How Hunter Water Engages with the Public

Hunter Water works in and around our community each and every day. We have a firm commitment to communicating and supporting people throughout the lower Hunter.



## 6.1 Customer and Community Advocacy Group (CCAG)

Our Customer and Community Advisory Group (CCAG) enables two-way, open communication between Hunter Water and local councils, customer representatives, environmental groups and community organisations. The CCAG, and its predecessor the Community Consultative Forum, have operated since the early 1990s.

The CCAG's membership is made up of community representatives whose role is to provide advice and feedback on emerging issues, performance, strategies, programs and projects representative of the broad range of needs and interests of the local community and other stakeholders in Hunter Water's area of operations.

Membership of the CCAG includes representatives of local government, residential and business customers, environmental and community organisations.

The CCAG operates under the terms of its Charter which describes its purpose, role and responsibilities. More information about CCAG can be found here:

<https://www.hunterwater.com.au/haveyoursay/customer-and-community-advisory-group>

## 6.2 Lower Hunter Water Security Plan Community Liaison Group (LHWSP CLG)

We have established an expert Community Engagement Advisory Panel (CEAP) as part of our customer and community engagement plan to inform our pricing proposal to IPART for the 2025-2030 price path. IPART's new water regulatory framework is designed to promote a genuine shift to customers. Under the framework, a water business' pricing proposal must demonstrate how customers and the community have been involved in setting the engagement agenda and how the resulting proposal demonstrates that our activities and expenditure promote customer value.

We formed this panel of experts to help hold ourselves accountable for undertaking high-quality customer and community research and the appropriate use of the insights gathered.

The CEAP was formed to:

- constructively challenge Hunter Water on the design and implementation of pricing proposal customer engagement activities, and use of customer insights in decision making for the purpose of Hunter Water's pricing proposal
- assure customers, the community, stakeholders and IPART of the quality of engagement work and integration of customer insights into the pricing proposal.

Members bring to the CEAP background and experience in the following areas:

- Expertise in economic regulation and regulatory issues within the utilities sector
- Designing, implementing, analysing and applying the findings of customer research and engagement using a range of qualitative and quantitative methods beyond an academic context
- Advocacy or support for customers experiencing financial vulnerability or other circumstances that create barriers to using Hunter Water's services.
- Advocacy for, and engagement with, the business community in the Lower Hunter region.

## 6.3 Throsby Creek Government Agencies Committee

This Committee, chaired by the Member for Newcastle, seeks to deliver cooperative leadership from numerous government agencies with responsibility for the status of the Lower Throsby Creek.

The Committee is seeking to further improve the environment of the Throsby Creek water way and its surrounds, and the amenity of the area for residents, visitors and commercial users.



## 6.4 Customer Experience Monitoring Program

Hunter Water conducts regular surveys to monitor customer experience. Customers who are invited to participate, and complete a survey, are automatically eligible to participate in a 'lucky door' prize draw to win a \$50 gift card. Prizes are drawn each month.

## 6.5 Your Voice – Have Your Say

This is Hunter Water's dedicated engagement platform, which enables our community to be involved in projects and programs at a time that suits them through surveys, polls, forum discussions and interactive mapping tools. You can register online via Hunter Water's website.

## 6.6 Community Funding Program

Hunter Water's Community Funding Program offers community, schools and industry-related groups the opportunity to work with Hunter Water to deliver activities that relate to water and wastewater services. This Program supports the delivery of water-related infrastructure, community education and conservation projects.

Our Community Funding Program involves community infrastructure partnerships, sustainability grants, education scholarships and employee charity support.

# 7 Feedback and Questions

## 7.1 General enquiries

Hunter Water welcomes general enquiries from members of the public. You may enquire by mail, email, or telephone. We can deal with most enquiries informally to avoid the cost of making a formal GIPA application.

**Postal Address:** PO Box 5171 HRMC NSW 2310

**Telephone:** 1300 657 657

**Email:** [enquiries@hunterwater.com.au](mailto:enquiries@hunterwater.com.au)

## 7.2 Right to Information Officers

Hunter Water's Right to Information Officers can be contacted as follows:

**Office:** 36 Honeysuckle Drive NEWCASTLE WEST NSW 2300

**Postal Address:** PO Box 5171 HRMC NSW 2310

**Telephone:** 1300 657 657 and ask to speak to a GIPA Officer

**Email:** [gipa@hunterwater.com.au](mailto:gipa@hunterwater.com.au)

## 7.3 Information and Privacy Commission

The Information and Privacy Commission has a range of tools and resources including frequently asked questions regarding access to government information on their website:

You are also welcome to contact them directly:

**Free Call telephone:** 1800 472 679

**Email:** [ipcinfo@ipc.nsw.gov.au](mailto:ipcinfo@ipc.nsw.gov.au)

**Postal Address:** GPO Box 711 SYDNEY NSW 2001

**Office Location:** Level 17, 201 Elizabeth Street SYDNEY NSW 2000