



# CUSTOMER AND COMMUNITY ADVISORY GROUP (CCAG) CHARTER

## 1. BACKGROUND

Hunter Water Corporation (Hunter Water) maintains and regularly consult with its Customers through a customer advisory group. This requirement was originally required via Hunter Water's Operating Licence.

Hunter Water's Customer and Community Advisory Group (CCAG) comprises representatives from across the Lower Hunter community who are able to provide advice on the interests of Hunter Water's Customers, the Customer Contract and such other key issues related to Hunter Water's planning and operations consistent with this Charter.

## 2. ROLE OF THE CUSTOMER AND COMMUNITY ADVISORY GROUP

### 2.1 PURPOSE AND ROLE

The Customer and Community Advisory Group (CCAG) provides advice on the interests of customers and consumers of Hunter Water, the Customer Contract and other key issues related to Hunter Water's planning and operations.

### 2.2 OBJECTIVES

In fulfilling its purpose, the objectives of the CCAG are:

- To provide a forum for effective input and examination by consumers and community groups into the strategy, policy, planning and service decision-making processes relevant to Hunter Water
- To disseminate information to the general public on Hunter's Water's efforts at improving water supply and wastewater service delivery
- To review consultation strategies, programs and activities being undertaken and/or proposed by Hunter Water
- To promote stakeholder engagement in decision making
- To make recommendations to management in relation to the above, as appropriate
- To work together to create a CCAG based on openness, trust, cooperation, flexibility and honesty.

### 2.3 DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE CCAG

In order to fulfil its objectives, the CCAG will:

- Consider and comment on a range of information that is presented to the CCAG in relation to the performance objectives of Hunter Water
- Review the effectiveness of consultation approaches being considered and/or utilised by Hunter Water and be willing to participate in activities which may assist Hunter Water to meet consultation objectives
- Advise Hunter Water about current and emerging issues relating to the organisation from the community's perspective
- Identify, communicate, represent and consider the broad range of needs and interests of the local community and other stakeholders within Hunter Water's supply area

- Assist Hunter Water in keeping the local community and other stakeholders informed about the business by disseminating information via existing community networks
- Encourage all members of the CCAG to present their views and respect their right to have different views
- Respond within agreed timeframes to requests for information
- Protect and preserve the confidentiality of any information provided or discussed at the CCAG that is identified explicitly as being commercial-in-confidence or confidential.

### **3. HOW MEMBERS AND THE CHAIR OF THE CUSTOMER ADVISORY GROUP WILL BE APPOINTED**

#### **3.1 MEMBERSHIP OF THE CCAG**

Consistent with Hunter Water's Operating Licence, the CCAG will, to the extent practicable, include at least one person representing each of the following interests:

- Business
- Organisations representing low income households
- Customers living in rural and urban fringe areas
- Residential customers
- Local government
- Pensioners
- Customers with disabilities
- Indigenous Australians, and
- Customers from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Additionally, Hunter Water's Operating Licence allows that the CCAG may include at least one person representing each of the following interests:

- Business consumers
- Residential consumers, and
- Environmental groups.

Hunter Water may also appoint representatives with interests beyond those listed above which may provide value to CCAG decision making (for example, representatives of young people).

Members of the CCAG may represent one or more of the above interests or be representatives of an organisation which does so. The CCAG will also include senior management representatives of Hunter Water. The overall number of members will be limited to an amount that ensures the CCAG remains workable and effective.

#### **3.2 MEMBERS OF THE CCAG AGREE TO:**

- Attend meetings and actively participate in discussions
- Report on the views of the interest areas and disseminate information on behalf of Hunter Water
- Suggest agenda items for upcoming meetings where possible
- Represent the views of Hunter Water fairly and accurately to others
- Act in a way that demonstrates respect for each other, including their individual needs, interests and responsibilities
- Be willing to think laterally and non-traditionally in tackling issues
- Work together with openness, trust, cooperation, flexibility and honesty
- Work within the framework of the CCAG Charter and meeting procedures.

### **3.3 SELECTION CRITERIA**

A key aim of establishing the CCAG is to represent a diversity of viewpoints and community concerns. To best facilitate this representation the following criteria have been developed for the evaluation of applications:

- Interest in water utilities and/or water-related matters
- Willingness to contribute constructively to the purpose and objectives of the CCAG
- Experience and ability to communicate community and other stakeholder views
- Experience and ability to provide feedback to members of the community and other stakeholders
- Currently residing/operating within the Lower Hunter area and have an awareness of local issues.

Hunter Water is seeking a CCAG that is reflective of the diversity of the Lower Hunter Community with a blend of social, economic and environmental interests and a range of professional expertise on the CCAG.

Applicants do not need to be a representative of a community group or other organisation to be considered for membership. Preference will be given to applicants who can represent the concerns of a variety of interest groups. However, where a community group or other organisation nominates a representative, the community group or organisation must be able to demonstrate that they:

- Have a formally constituted entity, with a reasonably-sized membership base
- Have appropriate mechanisms in place to report on the views of the community and to disseminate information from Hunter Water to their respective community members
- Have primary objectives that are directed toward the interests of one or more of the areas nominated as requirements for membership to the CCAG with direct-linkages in place
- Are not a lobby group and/or is non-political in its purpose or character.

If a member's position should become vacant mid-term, then Hunter Water may choose to seek further nominations to fill this position. Any such decision including membership selection will be at the discretion of Hunter Water.

### **3.4 SELECTION PROCESS**

Hunter Water will invite applications from the community via public advertisements and in writing to its customers. Hunter Water may also invite expressions-of-interest from identified stakeholder organisations representing business and community groups.

Selections and appointments will be made to the CCAG in a manner consistent with Hunter Water's recruitment policies and procedures.

### **3.5 MEMBERSHIP VACANCIES**

If a member's position on the CCAG becomes vacant at any time, Hunter Water may request a replacement from the member organisation, or select a new member organisation to represent the interests of any group listed in the Operating Licence. Where appropriate, membership vacancies that may arise on the CCAG may be advertised on Hunter Water's website, or approaches may be made direct to relevant organisations.

Either Hunter Water or the member agency may terminate a member's tenure on the CCAG. Termination of membership could result from:

- Missing three or more consecutive meetings without an apology

- Misconduct (such as inappropriate behaviour in meetings, or abuse of position on the CCAG for personal gain)
- Disclosing information that has been explicitly identified as commercial-in-confidence or confidential
- Violating the intent and philosophy of the Charter
- Not adequately representing the views of member agency or the wider community
- A member of the CCAG becoming an employee of Hunter Water or a direct provider of goods or services to Hunter Water
- In the case of local government representatives, at the conclusion of the local government term

Notification of the termination of a member will be made in writing to the member body as well as directly to the member.

#### **4. THE TERM FOR WHICH MEMBERS ARE APPOINTED**

Members will be initially appointed for a term of up to four (4) years, which can be renewed up to a maximum of one time (i.e. to a total of eight (8) consecutive years).

Members who are members of the CCAG at the time of adoption of this Charter will be considered to have commenced their first term of CCAG membership, and remain eligible for term renewal.

#### **5. OPERATIONS**

##### **5.1 MEETINGS**

The CCAG will hold at least four (4) regular meetings per annum and such additional meetings as Hunter Water may decide in order to fulfil its duties. Meetings will be held quarterly as a guide.

##### **5.2 CHAIRPERSON**

An independent Chairperson will be appointed by Hunter Water from the CCAG membership for a period of up to two (2) years, and may be renewed up to a maximum of three (3) times.

In addition to the responsibilities of members (Clause 3.2), the Chairperson will:

- Support Hunter Water in ensuring that the CCAG performs its functions, and acts in accordance with this Charter
- Facilitate the conduct of meetings to allow frank and open discussion
- Ensure individual members make an effective contribution
- Develop the capability of the CCAG and its members
- Facilitate the flow of information to members and stakeholders
- Liaise with Hunter Water in the development of the meeting agenda

If the Chairperson is absent from a meeting, a member of the CCAG may be nominated to chair the meeting.

##### **5.3 ATTENDANCE AT MEETINGS**

Attendance at any meeting of the CCAG is limited to the following:

- CCAG Members (or a member organisation's alternative representative, should the Member be unavailable)
- Hunter Water attendees (including the Managing Director, Executive Manager Customer Strategy and Retail, Chief Investment Officer, Head of Public Affairs and CCAG Secretary)
- Other Hunter Water staff and external persons invited by Hunter Water or the CCAG.

## **5.4 QUORUM**

A quorum shall consist of 3 CCAG members.

## **5.5 MEETING AGENDAS AND BUSINESS PAPERS**

CCAG Members may nominate topics for inclusion on the CCAG Agenda.

Hunter Water will provide members with business papers at least three (3) days prior to the meeting for consideration.

## **5.6 AUTHORITY**

The CCAG is an advisory committee and does not have any formal decision-making role or any responsibility for the management of Hunter Water.

## **5.7 CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

CCAG members must declare their interest, whether perceived, pecuniary or otherwise, should they feel a conflict may arise at a CCAG meeting. Employees of organisations which receive grants or sponsorships from Hunter Water or are a significant provider of goods and services to Hunter Water, must declare their potential conflict of interest prior to the CCAG commencing to discuss a relevant agenda item, or as soon as the potential conflict becomes known to the CCAG member.

## **5.8 SUB-COMMITTEES/WORKING PARTIES**

With support of Hunter Water, the CCAG may resolve to form sub-committees or working parties for consideration of particular matters. The motion to form a sub-committee or working party should include information on scope, purpose, duration and membership.

# **6. MONITORING AND REPORTING ON ISSUES RAISED AT THE CUSTOMER AND COMMUNITY ADVISORY GROUP**

## **6.1 MINUTES**

Hunter Water will ensure that the business of the CCAG is properly minuted and recorded.

Minutes will include a summary of actions arising to ensure appropriate follow up and reporting back to the CCAG membership.

Draft minutes will be presented to the CCAG for endorsement at the following meeting, and to a meeting of Hunter Water's Board of Directors for approval.

Approved meeting minutes will be published on Hunter Water's website. Confidential and/or matters of a sensitive nature will be redacted from the published minutes.

# **7. MATTERS TO BE CONSIDERED BY THE CUSTOMER AND COMMUNITY ADVISORY GROUP**

Hunter Water will refer matters to the CCAG that are of strategic or operational importance, where there is benefit in understanding customer issues and expectations. This will include topics of relevance to the membership of the CCAG.

The CCAG Chairperson and members may additionally nominate topics for discussion/presentation at the CCAG.

## 8. COMMUNICATING THE OUTCOMES OF THE CUSTOMER AND COMMUNITY ADVISORY GROUP'S WORK TO THE PUBLIC

### 8.1 REPORTING RESPONSIBILITIES

Hunter Water will promote the existence and objectives of the CCAG to the community and employees of Hunter Water. CCAG activities will be reported by Hunter Water in accordance with the following:

- Publishing adopted minutes of CCAG meetings on Hunter Water's website
- Publishing a summary of the CCAG's work each year in Hunter Water's Annual Report
- Publishing CCAG activities in newsletters to Hunter Water employees.

Additionally, a copy of the CCAG Charter will be placed on Hunter Water's website and made available in printed form to the public upon request.

## 9. FUNDING AND RESOURCING OF THE CUSTOMER AND COMMUNITY ADVISORY GROUP

Hunter Water will provide appropriate meeting facilities for the CCAG to function. As a guide, Hunter Water will attempt to rotate meeting locations across its Area of Operations.

In consultation with the CCAG, Hunter Water will also facilitate appropriate technical tours and site visits to coincide with CCAG meetings. As a guide, two site visits will occur annually.

Hunter Water will provide Secretarial support to the CCAG. The Secretary will be responsible for the collation of the agenda and minutes, and support the Chairperson in convening meetings of the CCAG.

A sitting fee will be paid to members of the CCAG consistent with the half-day daily fees set for Advisory Boards and Committees in the NSW Premier's Memorandum M2012-18 Classification and Remuneration Framework for NSW Government Boards and Committees, as amended from time to time.

Additionally, Hunter Water will reimburse any reasonable out-of-pocket expenses incurred by a member in fulfilling their duties to the CCAG.

## 10. CHARTER

### 10.1 AMENDMENT AND REVISION

This Charter will be reviewed at least once every four (4) years, or as otherwise determined by Hunter Water, to ensure consistency with best practice and the requirements of Hunter Water's Operating Licence.

The Charter is to be approved by Hunter Water's Board of Directors.

## 11. APPROVALS:

**Date endorsed by CCAG:** Supported in-principle 14 August 2018

**Date approved by Hunter Water's Board of Directors:** 22 September 2018

**Reviewed by the CCAG without modification:** 13 September 2022

**Next review:** 1 July 2023