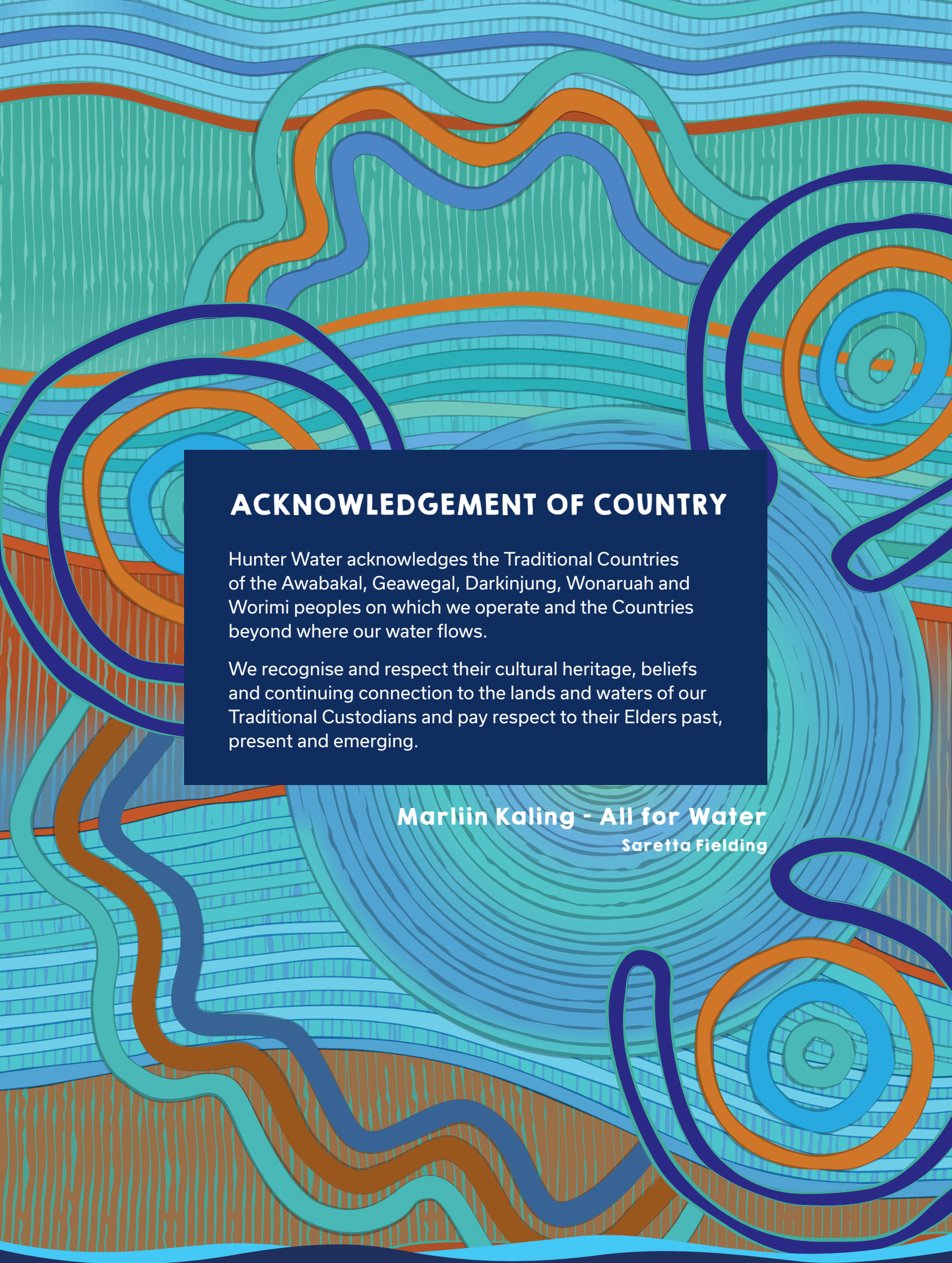


FEBRUARY 2023

Community Engagement Strategy





ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

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

We recognise and respect their 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.

Marliin Kaling - All for Water
Saretta Fielding

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INTRODUCTION

Our vision is to be a valued partner in delivering the aspirations of our region. As an essential service provider, our customers and communities are at the heart of all we do. We are entrusted to provide safe and reliable supplies of our most precious resource, water, and to ensure we have a resilient water future that meets the needs and aspirations of our diverse and growing region.

Hunter Water's Towards 2024 corporate strategy provides a blueprint for us to achieve our vision. To get us there, we have a renewed focus on placing our customers and communities at the heart of all we do; delivering sustainable, resilient and valued services; becoming a high performing and resilient organisation and being a valued contributor to our stakeholders. A key element underpinning this customer-centric approach is effective customer and community engagement with the goal of increasing community trust.

To be successful, we need to understand and reflect the values and expectations of our customers and communities in our decision making. Simply, we need to deliver value and meet the expectations of our customers now and into the future.

Building on our strong community trust record, we will gain a deeper understanding of our customers' and communities' needs and preferences, share our challenges and provide ongoing opportunities for our community to help guide the services we deliver and the investments we make, in the short, medium and long term.

Through our Love Water campaign, we will continue to build trust and create advocates to help reduce water use and raise awareness of sustainable water practices to protect the environment.



As stewards of the land and waters in which we operate, we are committed to taking care of our environment, our people and community. We seek to learn from and be guided by the perspectives, beliefs and insights of the Awabakal, Geawegal, Darkinjung, Wonaruah and Worimi peoples.

OUR CUSTOMERS AND COMMUNITY

We define our customers as those who pay for the services we provide. Our community includes people in the neighbourhoods and regions where we operate and provide services. While they do not pay for our services directly, they are impacted by or have an interest in the decisions we make.

While our interactions with each may differ, we are committed to working closely with both our customers and communities.

Across the Lower Hunter we provide water, wastewater, recycled water and some stormwater services to more than 600,000 people. This covers the local government areas of Cessnock, Lake Macquarie, Maitland, Newcastle, Port Stephens, Dungog and parts of Singleton.

Our region is diverse and growing. On average, we have 4,500 new connections each year. It's important we understand our current customers and communities, and consider our customers of the future (for example our young people).

We engage directly with a number of key customer and community groups, including (but not limited to):



Our Customer and Community Advisory Group



Community and interest groups



Development community



Young people (future customers)



Business and industry



Social service providers

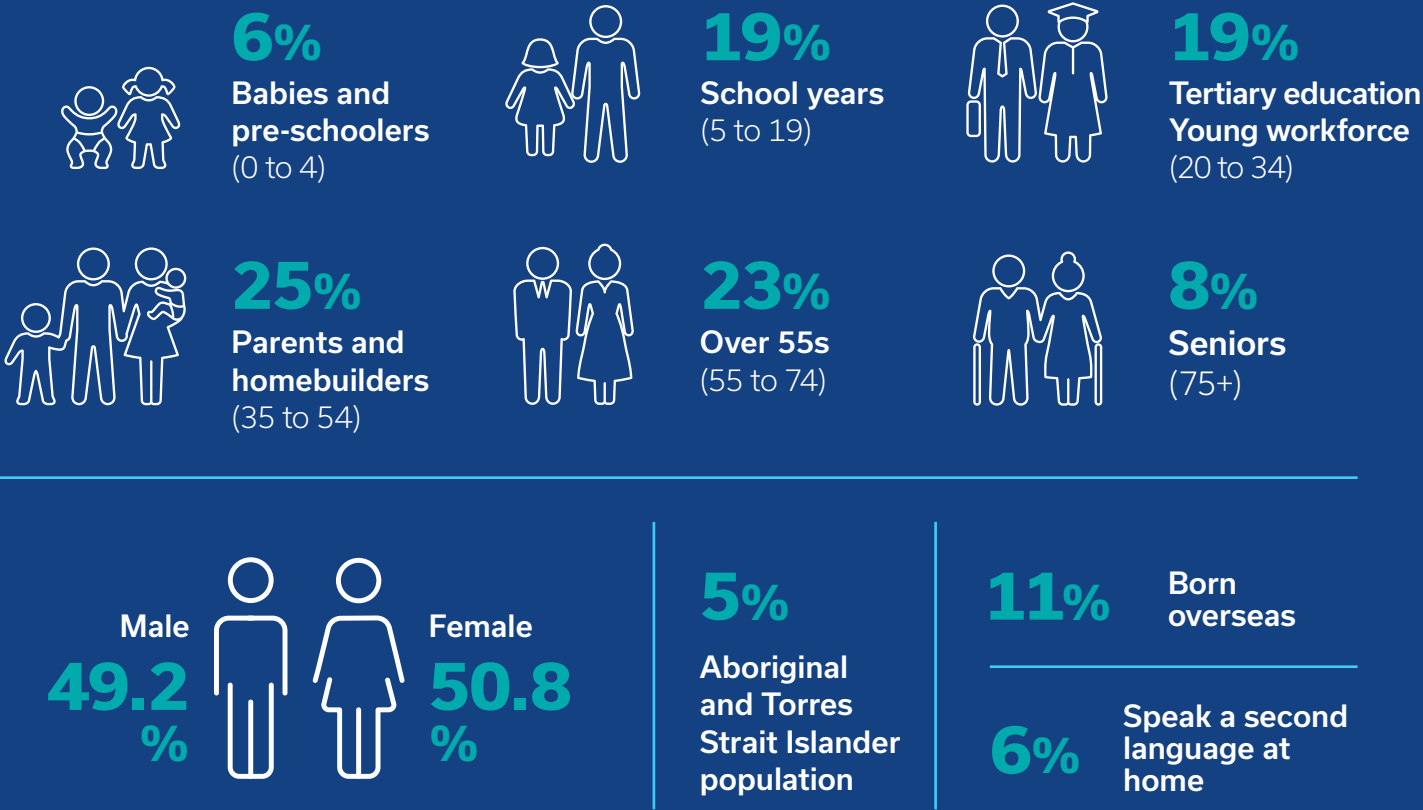


Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

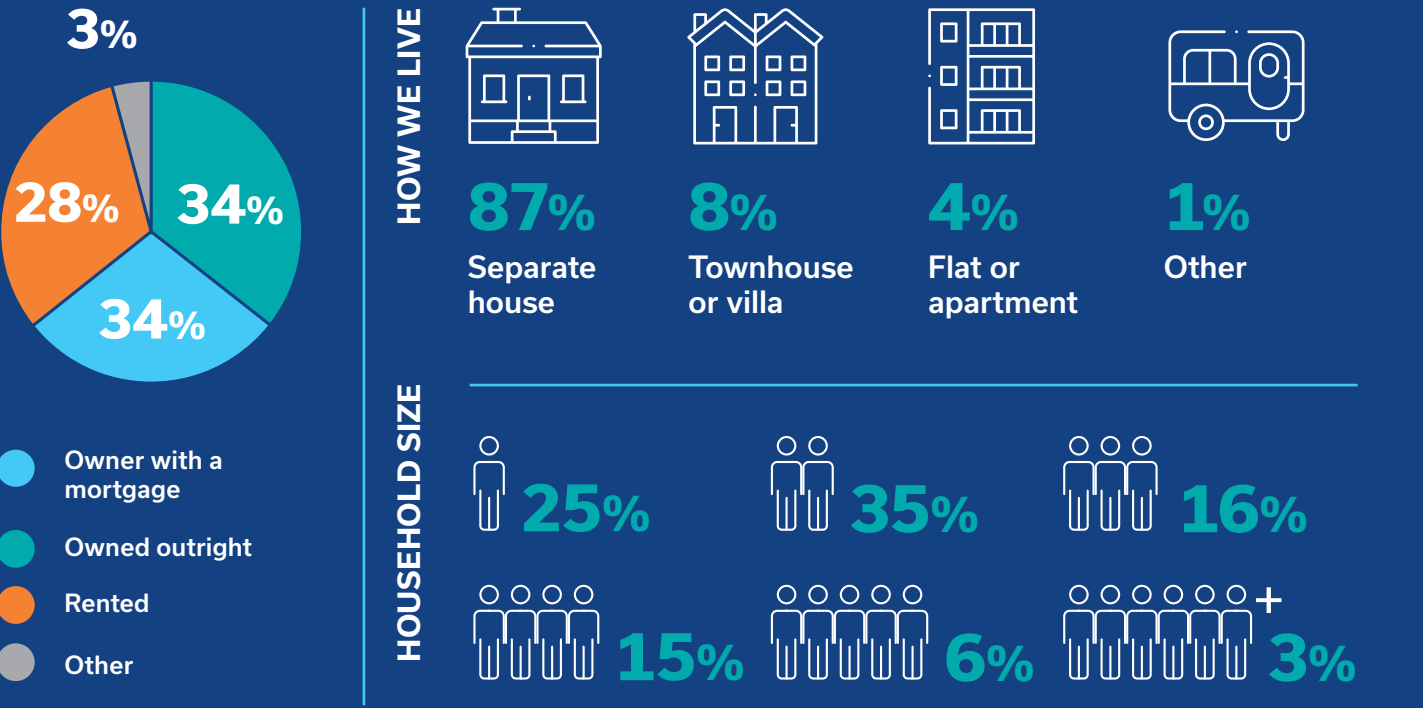


Neighbours to our assets/infrastructure

WHO WE ARE



OUR HOMES



JOURNEY TO DATE

Consistent with the objectives of our Towards 2024 Strategy, we are committed to becoming a customer-centric business; one that listens to our customers and community, understands their values and preferences and incorporates them into our decision making.

Over the past years we have been engaging with our customers and communities to understand what's important about the value we provide, their journeys and how we can best meet their needs.

Our next phase of this journey will focus on embedding an integrated engagement approach across the business, and supporting our people to understand and reflect our customers and community's values and preferences in our operational and strategic decision making.



Key initiatives include:



Towards 2024 Strategic Objectives to improve community trust, community focus, customer and community understanding and customer experiences.



A dedicated community engagement hub on our Hunter Water website.



Voice of the Customer program gives prominence to the values and preferences of our customers and communities, and empower our people to make decisions that are customer centric.



Indigenous values and perspectives inform our business through our Reconciliation Action Plan.



Building capability in our people to understand data and apply key insights in their day-to-day activities.



Tailored engagement with customers experiencing financial challenges.



Actively placing our customers and community at the forefront of our strategic planning and decisions regarding future investment, such as the Lower Hunter Water Security Plan.



Our schools education program ensures we hear from our customers of the future.



A quarterly customer survey gathers insights from our customers about our performance and service levels, water conservation behaviours and level of water literacy.



A Tone of Voice program provides a practical guide for our people to write consistent, customer-focused communications.



Regular surveying of our customers about their interactions with us, our service levels and operational improvements.



A community water literacy program enables us to have deeper and richer conversations about our water future.



Pulse check surveys to get direct feedback about customer communication and messages.



Targeted forums with key community and stakeholder groups, including Councils and the development sector.



Customer journey mapping to identify pain points for our customers and process improvements needed.



Regular e-newsletters to our community on the latest project updates, service improvements and opportunities to provide input.



Our major projects engagement team supports customer and community involvement in our projects from early planning through to delivery.



Actively including the values and preferences of 'our customers of the future' (young people) into our planning and investment decisions.

OUR APPROACH

Hunter Water aligns with the International Association for Public Participation. The Public Participation Spectrum helps to define the scope of the community's input and their level of influence on the decision-making process.

Our commitment is to 'collaborate' with our community as far as practicable on decisions that may impact them. This means that we listen and learn from our customers and the community and reflect their values and views in our decision making.

To guide our approach, we have developed a customer-centric future state to how we will engage with our community, underpinned by our organisation's Values.



Reaching this future state will be underpinned by our values, particularly learning, trust and inclusion.

The following principles will guide us:



Inclusion

- // We will provide genuine opportunities for our customers and community to guide our decision making
- // we will make sure we get the right information to the right people at the right time, in a way they prefer.



Learning

- // We will improve our understanding of customer and community values, views and expectations and reflect these in our decision-making
- // our approach to engagement is best practice, planned, proactive, and fit for purpose
- // our people will feel they have the capability and understanding to make customer-centric decisions
- // we will use each interaction as an opportunity to share our knowledge and educate our community on what we do and why, so they can understand and provide their views on complex issues.



Trust

- // We will connect on things that are important to our customers and community
- // we will build awareness of who we are, what we do and why
- // we will let our customers and community know how we intend to use the insights we gather in research and engagement activities, and report back how those inputs have influenced our activities, plans and proposals.

SNAPSHOT OF HOW WE LISTEN

We engage with our customers and communities in a number of ways and for a range of purposes, from the development of our strategic plans such as the Lower Hunter Water Security Plan and service levels, through to the design, development and delivery of specific projects and programs. These engagement activities help to guide our day to day operations and investment decisions.

Here's a snapshot of how we listen:



Online and digital

- // Have your say engagement hub, with opportunities to provide input and feedback on programs and projects
- // Website live chat and feedback
- // Social media enquiries and feedback.



Events and community interactions

- // Events across local government areas to provide direct engagement opportunities for our customers
- // Our community education program underpins all our engagement activities.



Surveys

- // Quarterly customer research survey to test customer perceptions of our service levels, corporate reputation, water conservation behaviours and levels of water literacy
- // Customer experience monitoring
- // Qualitative and quantitative surveys to inform specific projects.



Tailored engagement

- // Direct engagement with customers needing specific customer support
- // Community consultation and proactive early engagement to guide our operations, service and project delivery
- // Focused discussions and ongoing relationship management with our development partners, major and large customers.



Customer segmentation

- // Understanding our customer profiles and segments to help us better tailor or improve our services and communication
- // Understand preferences and values of young people, our customers of the future.



Customer and Community Advisory Committee

- // Representative membership
- // Four meetings per year with a diverse group of community members who provide feedback, suggestions and ask questions about our programs, projects and strategies.



Stakeholder conversations

- // Ongoing, regular engagement with our key stakeholders on operational and strategic matters.



Behaviour change research

- // Market research and community surveying provide us with insights on the effectiveness of our Love Water conservation campaign, communications and messaging.



Deliberative forums and focus groups

- // Test community perceptions, perspectives and trade-offs
- // Development of strategic programs such as the Lower Hunter Water Security Plan and Biosolids Program.



Customer feedback at our touchpoints

- // Customer feedback through our Contact Centre, website, phone and face-to-face interactions
- // Service complaints.



Our people

- // Insights and findings shared from our people, collated via the Voice of the Customer program*
- // Lessons learned at project completion.



Shared insights and findings

- // Insights and research from WSAA, other utilities and industry bodies.

WHAT WE'VE HEARD

We asked our community to tell us what they value about the water they receive and the services we provide.

Through community deliberation, we developed six core community values:

WATER QUALITY

Having clean and safe water



ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY

Protecting the environment and using natural resources responsibly



AFFORDABILITY

Services for all



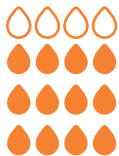
EDUCATION

Conserving water together



RELIABILITY AND FUTURE-PROOFING

Ensuring there's enough water for now and the future



TRANSPARENCY

Sharing information on planning and decision-making



What we have heard from our Customers and community over the past five years has been synthesised into 'customer outcomes'. These 'customer outcomes' help inform how we make decisions, from our day to day activities to larger investment decision-making.

Our 'Customer outcomes' will continue to be tested and refined over time to ensure we're delivering what our customers and community expect of us.

We will continue to test and refine these customer outcomes over time to help shape our strategic direction and ensure we continue to deliver value to our customers and community.

We will develop measures and targets across these outcomes and monitor them to understand how we are tracking against our customer's and community's expectations.

OUR ENGAGEMENT ROADMAP

In line with our engagement principles, we have developed a roadmap of how we plan to continue to engage with our customers and community to help inform our strategic direction and future investment priorities.

Our engagement activities will seek to understand the things that matter most to our customers and community and their views and preferences, including trade-offs between the outcomes they would like to see delivered. We will:

- // Use customer insights to shortlist priority areas for deeper engagement
- // use multiple methods to engage with a broad cross-section of our customers and community, including meaningful two-way conversations with our community, and surveys to understand our customers willingness to pay
- // test support for proposed service levels and projects.

We will reflect on these findings and provide feedback to our community on how their preferences have been incorporated into our decision-making process.

Our proposed engagement approach will inform our future strategic direction and investment decisions, and help support our next pricing submission to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) in 2024.

Overview of engagement approach to inform investment decisions.



Data and insights continue to inform our understanding and shape our conversations.

The conversations we have with our customers and community will build our understanding and be shaped over time by what we learn. This integrated and coordinated approach will be underpinned and supported by the Love Water brand and our community water literacy program. Our approach to community engagement is supported by tailored and more detailed engagement plans to support specific projects and programs.

Our Voice of the Customer Program help to disseminate key insights across the business to ensure these are reflected in our decision making, as well as capability training to support our people.

We will continue to seek out and learn from our industry peers and be guided by best practice approaches, ensuring we remain adaptable and responsive to the changing needs and expectations of our customers and community.

This roadmap will develop and evolve over time as we learn more about our customer and community views and adapt to our changing environment.

EMBEDDING YOUR INSIGHTS

We'll continue to embed customer and community considerations in our decision making across our strategy, planning and capital works programs.

- // **This Community Engagement Strategy** provides the guide rails for all our activities, including our approach to engagement guiding principles and how we do it.
- // Our **Voice of the Customer** program gives prominence to the values and preferences of our customers and communities and empowers our people to make customer centric decisions. This program, guided by this strategy, aims to empower our people to deliver better customer and community outcomes.
- // Customer insights and community engagement considerations included in all relevant investment **business cases**.
- // **Relationship managers** for key groups to maintain a consistent, trusted 'voice' of Hunter Water.
- // An **integrated communications and engagement team** that supports all levels of the business, from visioning through to delivery, assuring feedback and learnings are fed back through the business.
- // **Support our people** with skills and capabilities to make customer centric decisions.
- // **Easy access to data** and customer related information to support customer-centric decision making.
- // Make use of technologies, data and policies to **promote collaboration across our business**.
- // **We measure what matters** so that we can make positive changes and improve customer experience and community outcomes.



