

Council happenings . . .

with Mayor
Glenn Wall

Draft determination by IPART for Water Pricing

On Friday April, 24, the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) released its draft report and draft determination on *the* maximum prices that can be charged by Hunter Water Corporation for the provision of water and sewerage.

In summary, under the draft determination for properties located in Dungog Shire, the water charge will rise from \$1.27 KL in 2008/2009 to \$1.86 KL (plus inflation) in 2012/2013. However, the water service charge will fall from \$127.53 to \$73.90 (plus inflation).

For existing residential sewerage services, the service charge will rise by 57 per cent to \$505.39 in 2012/2013 (plus inflation), however residential customers will no longer be required to pay a sewerage usage charge.

For Clarence Town residents, the IPART report flags that sewerage charges will increase by around \$375 in the 2010/2011 financial year when the sewerage scheme is commissioned.

Under the draft determination a typical residential household with a 20 mm water and sewerage connection with a water consumption of 200kL per annum will experience a bill increase of 36 per cent (\$220) over the determination period.

The drivers of increases in a typical household based upon the IPART draft determination are attributed to (2008/2009): Tillegra Dam (\$30), sewerage projects required to meet DECC standards (\$24), sewerage transport and treatment plant upgrades (\$49), water supply system development and upgrades (\$18), other system augmentation (\$26), increased operating expenditure (\$29), higher rate of return capital (\$31), removal of developer charges (all costs recovered through customer prices \$13)

Copies of the report, submissions received and the reports of consultancies undertaken by IPART in the course of the review are available on the IPART website www.ipart.nsw.gov.au

Copies can also be obtained by contacting IPART on 9290 8472. Written submissions are requested by May 22. Pending stakeholder feedback, IPART may hold a second hearing on May 15 at Newcastle Town Hall IPART intends to complete its review and publish its final report by mid-July.

Dungog Shire land use strategy

For some time, council's planning consultants, Worley Parsons (formerly Planning Workshops Australia), have been actively working on the Dungog Shire Council Land Use Plan.

This plan will provide the strategic basis for zoning changes as part of the 2011 Comprehensive LEP. The plan will recommend land use changes based upon identified constraints and demands.

At this point in time, the following chapters of the draft land use plan are being compiled: LGA overview; Dungog (inclusive of Dungog Rural Residential Study); Clarence Town; Paterson (inclusive of Martins Creek, Vacy and Paterson); Gresford and East Gresford; Tillegra; Rural lands (this document is intended to replace the Dungog Rural Strategy 2003).

There was considerable debate whether to separate the Land Use Plan to exclude Tillegra and revisit that precinct when the dam environmental assessment report is released.

Once the council's Land Use Plan is on exhibition, in particular the chapter relating to the proposed dam foreshore (that is yet to be determined by the minister), the question may be asked why council is planning for something that has not yet been determined?

Council has decided that with the critical infrastructure declaration of the dam and the timing of the strategic planning processes, council should be proactive and prepare a land use plan on the presumptive basis that the dam will proceed. Assuming the dam does not proceed, the chapter can simply not be utilised.

However, if the dam is approved, then council will be in an exceptional position with an agreed land use direction for the immediate environs around the dam site.

Such clarity can provide direction in regards to future environmental land, future agricultural land or land suitable for development.

Furthermore, if the proposed Tillegra Dam was excluded from the Dungog Land Use Plan, public consultation would have to be carried out a second time, adding additional cost to the project.

The Land Use Plan will be exhibited with the background and issues work known as the situation analysis, which has not been placed on public exhibition, however by exhibiting both documents concurrently, will facilitate a deeper understanding and increased comprehension.

Given the significance of this strategy for the community, the exhibition period is expected to be very comprehensive and will consist of advertisements in the media; letters to every property owner in the LGA; government agency consultation; public meetings; plans on display at public venues; and an exhibition period of 60 days.

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