

Minutes

Venue: Sydney Water Office
Parramatta

Date and time: 3 April 2023
9:00am – 2:00pm

Meeting title:	Customer and Community Reference Group
Independent Chair:	Abigail Goldberg
Attendees:	<p>Customer and Community Reference Group Members Anna Bacik – Community Industry Group (Illawarra) Narelle Brown – Community Representative Steven Collins – Community Representative Inaara Jindani – Community Representative Mary Karras – Ethnic Communities Council NSW Leigh Martin – Total Environment Centre Bruce McClelland – Business Western Sydney Stephen McMahon – Urban Development Institute of Australia Graham Turner – Council on the Ageing Ross Williams – Local Government NSW</p> <p>Sydney Water Roch Cheroux – Managing Director (<i>part</i>) Stuart Wallace – General Manager, Customer & Stakeholder Engagement Josh Isben – Head of Customer & Strategic Insights Flavio Romano – Head of the 2024 IPART Price Proposal (<i>part</i>) Izzy Kerr – Customer Research Manager Ben Newton – Manager Community Education and Corporate Social Responsibility (<i>part</i>) Paul De Sa – Strategic Planning Manager (<i>part</i>) Paul Higham – Head of Strategy & Enterprise Plan Sharon Bowyer – Senior Customer Governance Specialist</p> <p>Observers Grant King (Board Chair) Cameron Robertson (Board Director, Chair of the Economic Regulation Committee)</p>
Apologies/absent:	Douglas McCloskey – Public Interest Advocacy Centre (CCRG member) Kate Miles – Head of Systems & Asset Plan (Sydney Water)
Meeting purpose:	Bi-monthly meeting according to CCRG Charter The CCRG works with Sydney Water at a strategic level to achieve the highest possible levels of customer focus within our practices. It supports Sydney Water to ensure that our business decisions, as set out in our strategy, enterprise plan and regulatory submissions, are in the best interests of all Sydney Water customers and the community and are shaped by them.
Desired outcome:	Discussion and feedback from CCRG Members

Agenda items:		
Item	Topic	Actions
1	<p>Welcome and Acknowledgement of Country The meeting was opened at 9:00am. The Chair acknowledged Country and welcomed Members.</p>	
2	<p>Introductions and apologies Members and Sydney Water participants introduced themselves.</p>	

	<p>Apologies noted from Douglas McCloskey.</p> <p>Observers, Grant King (Sydney Water Board Chair) and Cameron Robertson (Non-Executive Director) introduced themselves and thanked the CCRG for the opportunity to observe the meeting.</p> <p>The Chair observed that each meeting is being deliberately and consistently structured so that key topics align to the CCRG’s core remit. Topics are designed to build on each other i.e we start with customer engagement, which informs long-term capital and operational planning, both of which provide input to the price proposal. Allowance is made for member input throughout as well as for other business should supplementary issues be raised.</p>	
3	<p>Ground rules</p> <p>The Chair outlined ground rules for the CCRG meeting which focus on respect, tolerance and ensuring equity of access for all participants to all discussions.</p>	
4	<p>Minutes of previous meeting and review of actions / issues log</p> <p>The Minutes and action/issues register of the Feb 2023 CCRG meeting which had been transmitted inter-session were accepted.</p> <p>Steven Collins noted he is unable to attend the June 2023 meeting and as such asked that the RAP item be moved to an alternate meeting date when he will be present.</p>	Action: Sydney Water to reschedule RAP item
5	<p>Declaration of interests</p> <p>No conflicts were declared.</p>	
Sydney Water update		
6	<p>Managing Director and General Manager update.</p> <p>The Managing Director provided an update on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recent State Election lead-up and outcomes, including unplanned media reports in relation to Sydney Water Launch of the Digital Customer Platform Progress with the Customer Engagement program Evolution of the Long Term Capital and Operating Plan. <p><i>Key points of discussion</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will there be a public announcement from Sydney Water to reiterate that the organisation will not be privatised? <i>The Managing Director confirmed that there are no current plans to privatise Sydney Water.</i> Does the new Digital Customer Platform (DCP) include an App? <i>The DCP does not include an App as research indicated this would not be helpful for customers however the interface has the potential to free up information flow both ways. The DCP is able to help with understanding affordability and hardship and provides an opportunity to gather data.</i> Would there still be privatisation for new infrastructure such as new desalination plant? <i>The politics of the privatisation debate is interesting and discussion will be ongoing. Investment in new infrastructure can include private sector inputs in</i> 	

	<p><i>various structures. Affordability for customers is always factored into decision making.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This year will be important for the water recycling discussion. <p><i>Sydney Water acknowledges the importance of recycling. The business recently held a campaign with Jess Fox, Olympic canoeist, on saving water. Education material regarding water recycling is under development.</i></p> <p>The General Manager, Customer and Stakeholder Engagement provided an update on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sydney Water's Ethics Book which has recently been published. A copy of the book was passed around the table. Sydney Water participation in the Easter Show and Lakemba Nights Festival Environmental approval for the construction of the Upper South Creek Advanced Recycling Centre Progress on St Marys plant upgrade. <p>The Managing Director left the meeting.</p>	
Customer engagement		
7	<p>Paper for noting: community engagement (education) content for new arrivals to Australia</p> <p>Sydney Water provided an overview of the changes to the factsheet content made since the last CCRG meeting and that the material will be translated by Multicultural NSW.</p> <p>The Chair noted that significant beneficial changes had been introduced following CCRG input.</p> <p><i>Key points of discussion:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compliments on the revised content and 'look' of the brochure. Recent discussions with Multicultural Health workers provided insights that a lot of new arrivals use bottled water. Suggestion that Sydney Water include information on tap water being drinkable. Opportunity to provide factsheet to Health Workers. Opportunity to provide the factsheet to financial counsellors and associations and on the website in other languages. The reference to 'Sydney Water is the company' within the factsheet might be perceived differently and could be ambiguous. Suggested that this reference be deleted. The reference to 'new arrivals' doesn't need to be spelt out in the content. Suggested that 'new and emerging communities' was a better reference Sharing the content with schools, local councils, cultural and linguistically diverse organisations and was recommended including those community associations that have a case management focus. Local councils are constantly talking to the community and have a diverse network of residents across all different aspects of the community. Universities would also be a useful conduit for new and emerging communities. Wollongong University has a large, diverse population of new international students. University orientation weeks would be a valuable means for distribution of the factsheet. 	<p>Action: Sydney Water to revise factsheet, translate and distribute material (including on Sydney Water website).</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication with the International Student Community, not just university level was suggested • Podcasts and video messages prepared in relevant languages would also be useful. Making use of infographics such as simple ticks and crosses in the supporting graphics could help with messaging and showing the correct behaviours. Pictures of wastewater blockages would also assist with the wastewater messages. <p>Sydney Water advised that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The factsheet could be placed on the website in relevant languages. • Work is underway with to assess the feasibility of having the Sydney Water website available in the top 5 languages for Sydney. 	
8	<p>Paper for noting: customer engagement framework subgroup meeting</p> <p>The chair for the subgroup meeting (Inaara Jindani) provided a summary of that meeting.</p> <p>Sydney Water advised that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A revised version of the Customer Engagement Framework summary document was prepared following the feedback from the subgroup. A hardcopy of the revised version was provided during the CCRG meeting. • Further CCRG feedback on the revised document is welcome. <p>It was noted by the subgroup that Sydney Water did a great job in responding to the feedback by the group in a very professional manner and wanted to acknowledge these efforts.</p> <p>The subgroup meeting minutes were accepted.</p>	<p>Action: CCRG members to provide any additional feedback on the Customer Engagement Framework summary document.</p>
9	<p>Paper for discussion: customer engagement update</p> <p>The Chair introduced this item by acknowledging those members who had attended Phase 3 Customer Engagement workshops. She observed that she had attended a Sydney City workshop where the diversity of customer views and complexity of topics discussed had provided very helpful insights into the work being undertaken by the Sydney Water customer engagement team.</p> <p>The Chair invited feedback from other CCRG members who were able to attend the Phase 3 Customer Engagement workshops. The feedback included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hornsby session - Urban greening and being future focused were key themes raised by customers. Cost impacts were not seen as an issue. • City session - Initially concerned that the topics raised at the city session were too high level. However, the session flowed well. There were diverse participants. Was interesting to see the contrasts, to observe the knowledge shared and to hear customer feedback. • City session – all in all it was a very well-run session. Included a diverse group of participants. The facilitator was excellent (used plain English and the pace was good). Suggested having dinner first would be more suitable for participants attending straight after work. The room was crowded and was a bit hard to move. Conversation flow could have been smoother in terms of waiting for the scribe to take notes. Need to get the customer views out, as not everyone had a chance to speak while waiting for notes to be taken. Working in pairs could have been better. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wollongong session - Customers were supportive of improving waterways in other areas. Cost of living was a major theme for participants as well as support for environmental and climate change improvements. Some participants had concerns/confused over the information presented with numeric values. • Parramatta session – Was very well run, but at a high level. The group might not have embraced the topics. Not enough time to get their thoughts out. Was observed that participants were not as environmentally conscious and appeared to have more of a self-interest. The session was diverse, but not as inclusive as it could have been in terms of taking it all in and for the time for thinking and providing responses. • Holding a Customer Engagement session in Liverpool/Campbelltown area was suggested as an additional location as some people from this area would not be willing to travel to Parramatta, City or Illawarra. • Some CCRG members have experience with other utilities Customer Engagement programs and Advisory committees including Youth Advisory Committees. Is there an opportunity for Sydney Water to convene a Youth committee? This may help with future proofing to work with young people. Jemena runs customer engagement sessions in top languages. <p>Sydney Water provided an update on the Customer Engagement program (Phases 1 to 4) and in response to the CCRG discussion, advised that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Representation from the Liverpool/Campbelltown area is maintained for the qualitative forums, workshops, 1:1 interviews and the quantitative surveys (with large sample sizes). • Topics are complex with complicated information. It is difficult to make this information simple and accessible but best efforts are being made to achieve this. • Topics for Phase 3 were deliberately split into 2 sessions (A & B) so as not to have too much information in each. Challenging to get the balance right. • Smaller customer engagement sessions are being held 'in language' in the top 6 languages for the greater Sydney area. • It is proposed that a CCRG subgroup meeting be held to discuss planning for Phase 4. • The subgroup would focus on the design of Phase 4 in terms of what attributes to include and how the information is put forward to customers in plain language rather than on the methodology for Phase 4. <p>CCRG members interested in joining the subgroup were noted. The Chair invited CCRG member Mary Karras to chair this subgroup meeting.</p>	<p>Action: Sydney Water to consider the formation of a Youth Advisory committee (or similar) and to discuss with IJ.</p> <p>Action: Sydney Water to schedule subgroup meeting for Phase 4 customer engagement with MK as meeting chair.</p>
Morning tea		
Strategic planning		
10	<p>Paper for noting: Long Term Capital and Operational Plan (LTCOP) drivers update</p> <p>Sydney Water provided an update on the LTCOP drivers following the CCRG feedback from the February 2023 meeting.</p> <p><i>Key points of discussion:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With respect to delivery timeframes, how agile is Sydney Water to respond to increases in migration, for example refugee intake should this happen quickly? 	

	<p><i>Scenario planning and sensitivity analysis is included as part of the planning work.</i></p> <p><i>Assets are designed to be delivered in stages to align to growth.</i></p>	
11	<p>Paper for discussion: Aligning Long Term Capital and Operational Plan (LTCOP) with customer preferences</p> <p>Sydney Water outlined that feedback was sought from the CCRG on Sydney Water’s Long-Term Capital and Operational Plan (LTCOP) approach to aligning with customer priorities emerging from the customer engagement program.</p> <p>Sydney Water outlined that the LTCOP is not running to the same timeline as the customer engagement program however that feedback from the customer engagement work is being taken into consideration and factored into long term planning.</p> <p>The Chair sought comment from the CCRG on the actions outlined in the Table.</p> <p><i>Key points of discussion:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the changes to the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines that we are expecting? In the context of Sydney Water providing clean, safe drinking water, what is Sydney Water doing to support plumbing within apartment blocks? How well do customers understand that they or their building managers, are responsible for their water pipes and impacts on water quality? • A lot of the actions noted in the Table refer to Sydney Water ‘investing’. Is there an opportunity to get an idea of the costings or a proportion of these costs. Need to get some idea on how much each of these costs, what’s the magnitude of costs. For example, how much will preventing sewer overflows cost, what proportion of the budget would this be. Some options might be a higher cost now, but not into the future or vice versa. • With respect to the environment and natural waterways, it was noted that there are unreasonably high targets for the environment and stormwater in western Sydney. The additional levy for the Aerotropolis is unreasonable South Creek is a more intense for investment eg for wetlands and boardwalks. Need to include a cost/benefit analysis and consideration of impacts on Developers and cost pass on to customer purchasers. Need to clearly understand the financial impact to get a ‘pristine environment’. What is the cost to get clean environment, versus additional cost to get to pristine. • Many of the actions noted in the Table reads as if Sydney Water are already doing these (just ‘business as usual’). What actions are new because of the Customer Engagement work? Has anything changed? What is the new and innovative approach for the future? Needs confirmation of what actions are new. • Is there an opportunity for the Digital Customer Platform work to be noted as one of the actions? Need to include this as addressing customer feedback. • The Table needs to include a view of the short, medium and long term actions and include the proportional investment. Impacts of upfront developer costs impacting today and tomorrow. Initiatives could also be included to the short, medium and long term actions. For example, the Digital customer platform could be included as a short term action. Also specify the ‘custodians’ (groups) which are impacted eg financially vulnerable, business, developers. • What impacts do rebates have on costings or affordability? • It was suggested that the table should include a split between non-discretionary items (eg ADWG, EPA requirements) and the discretionary items. What will just happen regardless vs what can customers influence? 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On purified recycled water it was noted that this is not just about rainfall independent supply but also reducing discharge (additional benefit). Building community acceptance for Purified Recycled Water is not just about acceptance for western communities, but for all of Sydney. Reusing purified recycled water via Prospect reservoir would demonstrate that this recycled water is for the majority (80%) of Sydney. Richmond community also relies on recycled water and this is not at the purified level. How much will be required on community engagement for Purified Recycled Water? To what extent do the actions need to align to customer preferences? There are difficult decisions to make and some customer preferences might not align to what needs to be done now to support long term water supply. It was reiterated that political acceptance was more important than customer acceptance as governments often lag behind. Customer engagement messaging on Purified Recycled Water needs to explain that it is not 'Toilet to Tap'. Concerns may disappear when it is understood that the water is treated, then put back into rivers and dams before being retreated. Affordability for the business community also needs to be assessed. Has to be market viable for example for the South Creek area. Any costs to developers can make projects unviable. Unexpected costs cannot be added to projects. <p>Sydney Water responded to questions and comments during the meeting, with a summary of feedback provided below. It was agreed that the basis of the LTCOP is the need for thinking for the future and balancing investment and costs for future generations. Sydney Water acknowledged that this could be made more explicit in the Table.</p> <p>The Chair summarised the suggestions to improve the Table as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide details on the short, medium and long term impacts and actions Clarify non-discretionary and discretionary actions, and the implications of these Costs /proportional costs/ budget considerations should be noted for each of the items across a short, medium and long term horizon <p>The Chair and Sydney Water thanked the members for their comments and for the level of detail and depth of thinking from the CCRG.</p>	<p>Action: Sydney Water to make the basis for LTCOP on future generations more explicit in the Table.</p> <p>Action: Sydney Water to consider CCRG feedback and update the Table as appropriate.</p>
	Stand-up break	
12	<p>'Virtual tour': Purified Recycled Water Update</p> <p>Sydney Water provided an update on the Purified Recycled Water demonstration plant currently under construction. A short video was also shown. The demonstration plant includes a customer experience centre which outlines the why, options, explores the treatment process and what the future might look like.</p> <p><i>Key points of discussion:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It will be important to show that the output water is drinking water quality and for sampling of water for drinking to be provided. Resistance to water recycling for drinking is diminished when it is understood that it is mixed in with other water sources. It was highlighted that Adelaide used recycled water for drinking. Is the customer experience centre just focusing on school students? <i>The customer experience centre is intended to be used for stakeholders (government, regulators, water industry professionals), Sydney Water</i> 	<p>Action: Sydney Water to report back on the costs to build PRW.</p>

	<p><i>employees, community groups including schools, local councils, multicultural and first nations groups etc.</i></p> <p><i>The experience will be primarily a science and community-based learning experience.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How much does purified recycled water cost? How much more does it cost to get to that next level of treatment? What's the comparative cost to dams or desalination? What's the community willingness to pay for this? <p><i>Material provided at the facility is intended to factor in options e.g., desalination, probably including broad costs comparisons (incremental costs of discharge to the environment).</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the cost comparison to upgrading Sydney Water sewerage treatment plant infrastructure? • There was a reservation regarding the use of the term 'Treatment Room' as part of the Customer Experience Centre due to its medical connotations. <p><i>Nomenclature will be reviewed.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was suggested that small 'in language' tours could be held (by Sydney Water staff or community leaders) or pod casts available in the top 3-4 languages. • Has there been any thought to the use of solar or green gas to power the plant? <p><i>Green power is under consideration.</i></p> <p>The CCRG thanked Sydney Water for the virtual tour and looked forward to a site visit of the plant in real life.</p>	
Price proposal		
13	<p>Paper for discussion: price proposal update</p> <p>Sydney Water provided a brief overview of the need to determine metrics for the top 5 customer outcomes that had been determined through the customer engagement work.</p> <p>The Chair introduced a workshop approach for this item and invited the CCRG members to work in pairs. Feedback was written on post-it notes for each of the proposed customer outcomes. This feedback was provided to Sydney Water who will incorporate it in the first instance into forthcoming papers for the Sydney Water Executive and Board.</p>	<p>Action: Any additional CCRG feedback was invited to be provided by email to Sydney Water.</p> <p>Action: Sydney Water to present revised metrics to CCRG at a future meeting.</p>
General business		
14	<p>Pulse check</p> <p>Sydney Water outlined the many ways in which the CCRG's input is influencing policy, customer facing material, planning and the evolution of the price proposal.</p> <p>The Chair invited members as well as Sydney Water attendees to provide roundtable feedback on the meetings held to date and in relation to future agenda items.</p> <p><i>Key points of discussion:</i></p>	<p>Action: Sydney Water to connect with IJ out of session to further discuss</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The perspective and structure of the CCRG is working well and is different and better to the preceding format for customer and community engagement. • Ability to make a real contribution is seen as a positive. • Good level of detail, real genuine consultation. Authentic • Attending the Customer Engagement forums have really assisted with understanding the topics and customer perspectives. • Need to consider that the customer is more than just a person. Need to lift the focus to the common good and think about broader customer perspectives (wider community, developers, business, the environment). • Opportunity to consider scenario planning as part of their customer reference groups. Would be good to include trade-offs and benefits. • Potential topics that members would like to discuss in future include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Developer discussion - developer service charges, trickle down cost impacts to customers, development delays, South Creek (costs of treatment and long term technical issues). ○ Stormwater charges, recycled water, water quality and costs ○ Intergenerational equity, youth advisory groups, ○ Sydney Water performance against the UN sustainability goals <p>Sydney Water advised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CCRG still in early phases and members are actively engaged and already adding value. There is nevertheless opportunity to refine the group going forward and continually improve. • Will further investigate youth and intergenerational perspectives out of session. • Future agenda items were noted for the Forward Plan where inclusion is possible. 	<p>Youth and intergenerational perspectives.</p> <p>Action: Sydney Water to include future items on Forward Plan.</p>
15	<p>Other business: Q&A general session and upcoming events</p> <p>The Chair invited members to ask any questions to the Sydney Water Observers (Board Chair and Board Director).</p> <p><i>Key points of discussion:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What experience from today's CCRG meeting would the Observers be taking back to the Sydney Water Board? • Where does the business sit at a Board level with interaction with politics? <p>The Sydney Water Board Chair and Board Director again thanked the CCRG for the opportunity to attend the meeting and outlined their observations from the CCRG meeting including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The CCRG are working well together and have a good Chair. CCRG meetings are similar length to Sydney Water Board meetings. • The CCRG is important to Sydney Water. The CCRG are working well for only its third meeting. Thinking of bounds of level of service and affordability. Asking for as much thought and consideration to balance cost of service. Encouraged the CCRG to continue to focus on data to make input and provide advice. <p>The General Manager, Customer and Stakeholder Engagement outlined two key upcoming events:</p>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sydney Easter Show (April) – Sydney Water will have a display focusing on water conservation • OzWater Conference (May) – An annual water industry conference being held in Sydney this year. Sydney Water staff are presenting several papers and will be hosting some technical tours. 	
16	<p>Next meeting and forward plan</p> <p>The next meeting was noted for 5 June. Location of the meeting to be advised.</p> <p>Additions and amendments to the Forward Plan were noted as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RAP (to be rescheduled) • Intergenerational concerns • ESG – UN sustainability goals • Developer topic <p>Any additional CCRG feedback on the papers or workshop was invited to be provided by email to Sydney Water to customerreferencegroup@sydneywater.com.au or c/o the Chair.</p>	
17	<p>Meeting close</p> <p>The meeting closed at 2pm.</p>	

2023 CCRG Meeting dates/times (subject to change)

Monday 5 June 2023 9am-2pm* - Location TBA
Monday 7 August 2023 9am-2pm* - Purified Recycled Water demonstration plant site tour - TBA
Monday 9 October 2023 9am-2pm*
Monday 27 November 2023 9am-2pm*

*Length of CCRG meetings to be determined.