



Media Release

2 DECEMBER 2022

Sydney Water welcomes independent review into Lane Cove incident

Sydney Water will create a digital customer portal, and improve internal flow of information during incidents following an independent review into the Lane Cove incident earlier this year.

A complex and protracted watermain break in September, resulted in residents being left without water, some for several days.

The report found that communications between the customer contact centre and incident management team was insufficient, leading to a breakdown in communications to customers.

Sydney Water will implement all the review's recommendations with a particular focus on incident planning, response and communications to customers.

Sydney Water's General Manager of Customer Services, Kathy Hourigan said valuable lessons were learned and will result in a range of new measures to engage with customers.

"The review provided valuable insight into the issues which restricted the flow of information and the ability to communicate effectively with customers," Ms Hourigan said.

"The incident was complex and protracted and a gap in information sharing simply meant we did not communicate the full scale of the incident effectively.

"Information during major incidents is critical and while our teams did their absolute best to resolve the issue as quickly as possible, the impact on customers was underestimated," Ms Hourigan said.

The report into the incident found the Incident Management Team made decisions based on the information available at the time but did not have access to an accurate number of impacted customers during the first two days of the incident.

“We are committed to implementing these recommendations and deeply apologise again for the inconvenience and disruption and acknowledge this is not consistent with the level of service expected from our customers,” Ms Hourigan said.

Mitigating the impact on our customers in the future is our number one priority and there have already been significant changes including:

Additional Duty Managers and Customer Advocates to ensure customer impacts and closely monitored.

Better co-ordination between the Customer Contact Centre and the Emergency Control Centre.

Introducing a Customer Portal to allow people to register their contact details so they can be notified of outages

Engage with Community-based social media groups to share service-impact information

Key recommendations of the independent inquiry include:

- A review of incident escalation criteria to better incorporate customer impact and consumer sentiment – Sydney Water already has customer impacts as part of the incident assessment criteria and will review these criteria by the end of March 2023 to ensure that they are clearer and more visible in the Emergency Control Centre.
- Better visibility and analysis of real-time customer call volumes, website traffic, and customer sentiment to inform incident management planning, communications, and activity – Sydney Water is developing a dashboard to combine customer information from various sources and will make this available to all teams involved in incident management by March 2023.
- Improved management and coordination of incident-related communications between teams including better integration of the Customer department (Hub specifically) into the Emergency Coordination Centre – Sydney Water is better integrating our Customer Hub and Emergency Control Centre by expanding the role that the Customer Hub Duty Manager plays in the Emergency Control Centre, especially as the incident escalates.



- Investigating ways to more accurately understand the number of people impacted directly and indirectly by an incident including real-time modelling – Sydney Water is improving the visibility of the number of people served by connections points (such as unit blocks, schools and aged care facilities) by December 2022. Customer impacts can be complex to assess when water is rezoned during an incident, however Sydney Water will assess how new technologies may enable real time monitoring.

###

Media: 0407222049
media@sydneywater.com.au

