

# MINUTES

**Venue:** Sydney Water Parramatta Office  
Level 5, 1 Smith St Parramatta, NSW

**Date and time:** 8 April 2024  
9:00am – 2:15pm  
Note: CCRG Optional item  
2:15pm – 2:45pm

**Meeting title:** Customer and Community Reference Group

**Independent Chair:** Abigail Goldberg

## Attendees:

### CCRG Members

Narelle Brown – Community Representative  
Inaara Jindani – Community Representative (*part*)  
Mary Karras – Ethnic Communities Council NSW  
Leigh Martin – Total Environment Centre  
Bruce McClelland – Business Western Sydney  
Stephen McMahon – Urban Development Institute of Australia (*part*)  
Donna Rogers – Community Industry Group (Illawarra)  
Ross Williams – Local Government NSW

### Sydney Water

Roch Cheroux – Managing Director (*part*)  
Stuart Wallace – General Manager, Customer & Stakeholder Engagement  
Dean Page – Executive General Manager Finance Commercial & Digital  
Josh Isben – Head of Customer & Strategic Insights  
Izzy Kerr – Customer Research Manager  
Monika Moutos – Head of Economics and Regulation (*part*)  
Andrew Turner – Regulatory Economics Specialist  
Rachelle Legrand – Head of Strategy & Enterprise Plan  
Chris Knowles – Enterprise Planning Manager (*part*)  
Clare Porter – Head of Strategic Comms & Corporate Social Responsibility (*part*)  
Kathy Hourigan – General Manager, Customer Services (*part*)  
Nicole McCarthy – Head of Customer Hub (*part*)  
Sharon Bowyer – Senior Customer Governance Specialist  
Katie Leroy – Senior Customer Enablement Specialist  
Caleb Furner – Strategic Bus Cust Ops Mgr (*optional item*)  
Jason Dagger – Head of Customer Billing & Account Management (*optional item*)  
Daniel Peacock – Head of Customer Contact (*optional item*)

## Apologies:

Graham Turner – Council on the Ageing (COTA)  
Steven Collins – Community representative  
Anna Bacik – Community representative  
Douglas McCloskey – Public Interest Advocacy Centre

## 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><b>Welcome and Acknowledgement of Country</b></p> <p>The meeting was opened at 9:00am and the Chair welcomed participants. The Managing Director acknowledged Country and paid respects to elders past and present.</p>	

2	<p><b>Introductions, apologies and housekeeping</b></p> <p>The Chair introduced Dean Page – Executive General Manager, Finance Commercial &amp; Digital.</p> <p>Apologies were noted.</p> <p>The Chair informed the CCRG that resignations from the CCRG had been received by Inaara Jindani and Steven Collins. The Chair acknowledged the contribution made by both Inaara and Steven to the CCRG and thanked them for sharing their respective experiences and views of the stakeholders they represented.</p> <p>Inaara thanked the CCRG for the opportunity to participate and encouraged Sydney Water to continue to seek the views of younger people and tenants.</p> <p>The Managing Director on behalf of Sydney Water thanked Inaara and Steven for their contribution to the CCRG.</p>	
3	<p><b>Minutes of previous meeting and review of actions / issues log</b></p> <p><b>Declaration of interests</b></p> <p>The Minutes and action/issues log of the 19 February 2024 CCRG meeting, which had been transmitted inter-session, were accepted without change.</p> <p>No interests were declared.</p>	
<p><b>Sydney Water update</b></p>		
4	<p><b>Managing Director update</b></p> <p>The Managing Director provided an update on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refurbishment of the Sydney Water Parramatta office, which had been funded as part of the renewal of the lease of the building and not by Sydney Water customers.</li> <li>• Work underway to prepare for Sydney Water’s price proposal submission to IPART in September and the budget submission to Government in May. While Sydney Water is not funded by the Government, it does borrow from the Government (Treasury), which impacts on the Government’s overall borrowing capacity.</li> <li>• Sydney Water’s response to the severe rain/flooding event over the weekend (5-7 April). While assistance was provided to many customers and there was some damage to Sydney Water assets no major service interruptions to drinking water supply were experienced.</li> <li>• An internal restructure to better support customer outcomes.</li> </ul> <p>CCRG members asked the Managing Director the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What discussions have Sydney Water had with Government about growth areas, timing and funding of infrastructure delivery? In response, the Managing Director highlighted that Sydney Water discussions with government are focusing on the planning process and how to include water planning right at the start of the planning process.</li> <li>• Was Sydney Water involved in the NSW Government disaster planning discussions? The Managing Director advised that Sydney Water was involved in disaster planning for the Sydney region.</li> </ul>	

5	<p><b>General Manager update</b></p> <p>The General Manager provided an update on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The recent rain and flood event, which resulted in a significant increase in customer calls e.g. 1,600 calls in the Liverpool and Coledale area rather than the usual 300.</li> <li>• Parliamentary showcase event hosted by Sydney Water which included information on Purified Recycled Water, which was very well received and as a result is likely to be repeated later this year.</li> <li>• Infrastructure Pipeline and Supply Chain Expo hosted by Sydney Water, which received far higher attendance than anticipated, and excellent feedback.</li> <li>• Sydney Water presence at the Easter Show, which included a Water Literacy education focus. Sydney Water partnered with Council on the Ageing (COTA) for Seniors Day which included participation from our Customer Care team with information on payment assistance.</li> <li>• New wastewater campaign under development.</li> <li>• Sydney Water Annual Environment Performance Report for 2022-2023 recently <a href="#">published</a>.</li> </ul> <p>The General Manager responded to questions from the CCRG on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Would Sydney Water participate in the Eid festival? The General Manager advised that Sydney Water has recently participated in the Lakemba nights festival and will be involved in Eid.</li> </ul>	
<b>Price proposal</b>		
6	<p><b>Paper for discussion: Price proposal - Customer Engagement DRAFT Chapter</b></p> <p>Josh Isben provided an overview of the draft Customer Engagement Chapter of the price proposal and sought comments from the CCRG.</p> <p>Feedback was provided both prior to the meeting (as part of an optional survey) and during the meeting with notes taken by the CCRG Secretariat. Additional detailed feedback on the chapter was provided by CCRG member, Mary Karras.</p> <p>Key themes of the feedback on the Customer Engagement draft chapter were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Positioning of the CCRG</b> – the CCRG has acted as a ‘critical friend’, reviewing and examining materials.</li> <li>• <b>Complexity of the customer engagement process</b> – the Chapter doesn’t yet highlight the complexity of the customer engagement process and the need that has arisen for Sydney Water to pivot in response to feedback, including from the CCRG, which has been exercised.</li> </ul> <p>Members suggest that it is worth Sydney Water noting that they did pivot and respond to feedback as much as possible within the timeframe and include examples of the many steps that were taken to respond to feedback through the process.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Strengths</b> – Members suggest that that the chapters are underselling the effort that has been put in and the results that have been achieved. For example, members members suggest that there should be greater acknowledgement that the Board and Executive were involved in content and in leading forums and that engagement was sincere from the top.</li> <li>• <b>Shortcomings, lessons learnt and opportunities for improvement</b> – Sydney Water should consider acknowledging its shortcomings, outlining challenges and</li> </ul>	

	<p>identifying what it learnt and opportunities for improvement for future engagements.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Balance all customers</b> – include an introduction section which outlines the different customer categories and the need to balance the needs of all customers for example homeowners, tenant, developers, business and the environment – a complex juggling act.</li> <li>• <b>Environmental focus</b> – could be elevated within the chapter – acknowledge that customers did not choose the least cost options but did give a voice to the environment, and that the CCRG consider that the environment has a ‘seat at the table’.</li> <li>• <b>Future customers</b> – provide greater details on what Sydney Water considered for future customers including for the short, medium and long term.</li> <li>• <b>Audience for the Chapter</b> – be clear on who is the audience for this document (IPART regulator or customers) and use appropriately targeted language.</li> <li>• <b>Key messages</b> – be clear if key messages are just a summary of the chapter or if they should outline the outcomes. Keep the number of key messages short.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Action:</b> Sydney Water to incorporate CCRG feedback into the draft Customer Engagement Chapter of the price proposal.</p>
7	<p><b>Paper for discussion: Price proposal - Customer Outcomes DRAFT Chapter</b></p> <p>Rachelle Legrand, Chris Knowles and Clare Porter led the discussion on the draft Customer Outcomes chapter and sought comments from the CCRG. Rachelle noted that feedback from the preceding discussion applied also to this chapter and was welcome and would be taken on board.</p> <p>Feedback was provided both prior to the meeting (as part of an optional survey) and during the meeting with notes taken by the CCRG Secretariat. Additional detailed feedback on the chapter was provided by CCRG member, Mary Karras.</p> <p>Key themes of the feedback on the Customer Engagement draft chapter were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Audience and language</b> – Audience for this chapter needs to be clarified (IPART regulator or customers) and the language adapted to suit.</li> <li>• <b>Measures</b> – Need to make it clear that the measures referred to in the chapter are not the only measures required or undertaken by Sydney Water. These are just the measures that relate to the price proposal.</li> <li>• <b>Business customer outcomes</b> – opportunity to include references to outcomes required by business customers.</li> <li>• <b>Key messages</b> – these are not saying anything new or different from what customers expect from Sydney Water. Key messages should include what Sydney Water is actually going to do and how it is going to do it.</li> <li>• <b>Bringing the price proposal together</b> - Draft chapters of the price proposal have been prepared by different subject matter experts. The whole proposal will need to come together in one style and tone.</li> <li>• <b>Communication formats</b> – usual formats were identified as infographics, newsletters and short brochures. Ambassadors, videos and podcasts are important for CALD audiences. In language documentation also needs to be simple language. Speaker presentations are useful tools for two-way feedback and discussions.</li> <li>• <b>Channels</b> – all channels are appropriate for different audiences. Do not underestimate the power of direct word of mouth (community ambassadors and storytelling works). TV, radio and social media are effective for different audiences.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Action:</b> Sydney Water to incorporate CCRG feedback into the draft Customer Outcomes Chapter of the price proposal.</p>

8	<p><b>Pulse check</b></p> <p>The Chair reconfirmed that following the in-camera discussion at the Feb 2024 meeting she and the Sydney Water team had worked closely to trial a different approach for this meeting in response to the matters raised by members, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clearer and more contained focus per meeting</li> <li>• More time for discussion for key items</li> <li>• An easier way for you to provide your response ahead of time (through a survey)</li> </ul> <p>Member's response to this trial was sought and member's noted that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The meeting format was improved by having fewer, more relevant topics and more time for discussion.</li> <li>• Meeting topics which focussed on matters that the CCRG can influence were welcomed.</li> <li>• The survey tool was found to be a useful tool for some CCRG members.</li> <li>• Members noted that it can still be challenging to work out how the papers fit together and sought a table of contents or similar tool to provide further context for meeting papers and how they sit together.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Action:</b> Sydney Water / Chair to further refine papers to assist members in understanding how the pack fits together.</p>
<b>Operational</b>		
9	<p><b>Response to CCRG suggested topic: Customer complaint management</b></p> <p>The Chair introduced this topic as a response to a suggested item from a CCRG member.</p> <p>Kathy Hourigan and Nicole McCarthy were introduced and provided an overview of Sydney Water's customer complaint management. They noted that Sydney Water has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a low number of complaints</li> <li>• an empowered frontline to resolve complaints</li> <li>• a certified complaint management system which is externally audited.</li> </ul> <p>Sydney Water views complaints as an opportunity to review business processes and focus on improvements. Two case studies were shared on complaints and how Sydney Water worked to resolve these issues.</p> <p>Ongoing reporting to the CCRG about Sydney Water complaints was requested. Agreed that as the CCRG is not a Board, regular complaints monitoring is not appropriate however, updates on complaints and improvement opportunities will be possible.</p>	
<b>Governance</b>		
10	<p><b>Looking ahead</b></p> <p>Josh Isben advised that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the Roadmap on CCRG engagement on price proposal had been revised. Discussed that a message from the CCRG could be more aligned to a 'report' of CCRG involvement rather than an assessment of the engagement.</li> </ul>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CCRG 2024 Forward Plan had been revised to respond to CCRG feedback and to balance streamlining meetings while included CCRG member suggested topics.</li> </ul> <p>The Chair noted that the CCRG could assess Customer Engagement against engagement principles. Members suggested benchmarking against the CCRG Charter. The Chair welcomed other suggestions from the CCRG members.</p> <p>Key points of discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the purpose of the CCRG in the price proposal and what is IPART’s definition on what the CCRG is expected to do? Sydney Water advised that IPART do not have a view on the role of the CCRG.</li> <li>• The Forward Plan will continue to be shaped and streamlined.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Action:</b> June CCRG meeting agenda to allow sufficient time for discussion on the CCRG message.</p>
11	<p><b>Other Business</b></p> <p>Sydney Water reminded that the CCRG have been invited to attend Regional Stakeholder forums at Penrith and Wollongong:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 7 May 2024 – Striking a Balance – Delivering Liveable and Resilient Cities in the Face of Rapid Growth</li> <li>• 10 May 2024 – Building water resilience in the Illawarra</li> </ul> <p>CCRG members need to register directly with Sydney Water event partners, contact details for which have been provided.</p>	
<b>Close</b>		
12	<p>The Chair thanked the CCRG members for their participation. Meeting closed at 1:45pm.</p>	
<b>Optional session: IPART price proposal update for business customers</b>		
13	<p><b>Paper for discussion: Price proposal – trade waste and backflow charges</b></p> <p>The Chair, Leigh Martin, Mary Karras, Narelle Brown and Ross Williams joined the Optional CCRG agenda item on trade waste and backflow charges.</p> <p>The Chair welcomed Caleb Furner, Jason Dagger and Daniel Peacock to the meeting.</p> <p>Caleb Furner provided an overview of the proposed changes to trade waste and backflow pricing. CCRG members supported Sydney Water’s proposal for a user (pollutant) pays model for proposed changes to trade waste and backflow charges.</p> <p>The meeting closed at 2:20pm.</p>	

**2024 CCRG meeting dates/times (Draft - subject to change)**

Monday 3 June 2024 9am-2pm*
Monday 5 August 2024 9am-2pm*
Monday 30 September 2024 9am-2pm*
Monday 11 November 2024 9am – 2pm*

\*Length of CCRG meetings to be confirmed.