



# COMMUNITY FEEDBACK FOR IPART SUBMISSION

*Research report prepared for*

Central Coast Council

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# 1. Executive Summary

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## *1.1 Background and objectives*

The NSW Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) sets the maximum prices for the water, sewerage and stormwater services provided by Central Coast Council. The next pricing submission is due for lodgement with IPART in September 2021 and will determine Council's prices for those services from 1 July 2022.

The key objective of this study was to obtain representative community feedback on areas of the Central Coast Council submission to IPART.

## *1.2 Research methodology*

This project involved four distinct components:

- A structured (representative) survey amongst n=510 Central Coast Council residents aged 18+ (labelled Residential – Structured);
- An opt-in online survey open to Central Coast Council residents through the Council's Your Voice Our Coast (YVOC) website that resulted in n=620 respondents (labelled Residential – Council YVOC);
- A phone survey of small to medium (SME) sized business decision makers with n=120 respondents (labelled SME); and,
- Two qualitative group discussions amongst residents aged 18+ (which were conducted via Zoom).

## *1.3 Research findings*

### *Future priorities for water & sewerage services*

Apart from lowering the price of water (as emerged unprompted) water quality improvement was seen to be a key area that the community would like Central Coast Council to focus attention on in the future.

- At the unprompted level quality improvement was mentioned by 34% of the Residential – Structured respondents, 42% of the Residential – Council YVOC respondents, and 22% of the SME respondents; and
- At the prompted level quality improvement was selected as the key priority area by 50% of the Residential – Structured respondents, 43% of the Residential – Council YVOC respondents, and 44% of the SME respondents.

The qualitative exploration also showed that while not all are experiencing poor quality drinking water, many who didn't have an issue still sympathized with those experiencing quality issues – something potentially driven or exacerbated by word-of-mouth and social media.



## Performance

Central Coast Council is clearly performing well for all prompted measures.

Satisfaction was highest for ‘reliability of water supply’:

- 80% of the Residential – Structured respondents rating it 4 or 5 out of 5, while 81% of the Residential – Council YVOC respondents, and 97% of the SME respondents did likewise;
- Only 4% of the Residential – Structured respondents expressed dissatisfaction for reliability (by providing a rating of 1 or 2 out of 5), while 6% of the Residential – Council YVOC respondents, and none of the SME respondents expressed dissatisfaction in this area.

Dissatisfaction was highest (though still relatively low in overall terms) for ‘water quality’:

- 60% of the Residential – Structured respondents rating it 4 or 5 out of 5, while 57% of the Residential – Council YVOC respondents, and 64% of the SME respondents did likewise;
- 16% of the Residential – Structured respondents expressed dissatisfaction for water quality, while 23% of the Residential – Council YVOC respondents, and 10% of the SME respondents expressed dissatisfaction in this area.

Sewerage overflows to personal properties did not appear to be a major issue for the survey respondents.

- 6% of the Residential – Structured respondents had experienced such an incident, while 7% of the Residential – Council YVOC respondents, and 6% of the SME respondents also indicated that they had.

However, a larger proportion claimed to be impacted by overflows into the community.

- 24% of the Residential – Structured respondents claimed that they/their household had been impacted by this, while 30% of the Residential – Council YVOC respondents, and 20% of the SME respondents also indicated that they had been impacted;
- 43% of the Residential – Structured respondents expressed concern about flows into the environment, while 55% of the Residential – Council YVOC respondents, and 50% of the SME respondents also indicated that they were concerned (by rating this with a 4 or 5 out of 5).

From the qualitative exploration, it was evident that when overflows do occur in community spaces they appear to have high visibility – particularly in and around beach areas which are of significant concern to residents.

## Drainage

There was not a clear level of support for the idea of drainage pricing being set by Council as part of general rates.

- 26% of the Residential – Structured respondents showed support, and 31% were opposed;
- 17% of the Residential – Council YVOC respondents showed support, and the majority (55%) were opposed;

- 33% of the SME respondents showed support, and 25% were opposed.

The qualitative exploration of this issue revealed that the sentiment expressed by the community on this matter is likely to have been influenced by the current economic position of Council.

However, there was majority support for the idea of all Central Coast residents contributing to the funding of drainage infrastructure:

- 57% of the Residential – Structured respondents showed support, and 15% were opposed;
- 63% of the Residential – Council YVOC respondents showed support, and 18% were opposed;
- 55% of the SME respondents showed support, and 15% were opposed.

The qualitative exploration of this issue showed that the idea of being treated equally and as one region (not divided) was seen to be a strong reason for change.

There was not a large amount of support for all business properties receiving the same drainage charge:

- 21% of the SME respondents supported this, while
- 40% were opposed to the idea.

### *Scarcity pricing*

There were mixed reactions to the scarcity pricing concept (introduced as increasing the price of water during times of drought):

- 38% of the Residential – Structured respondents showed support, and 36% were opposed;
- 32% of the Residential – Council YVOC respondents showed support, and the majority (56%) were opposed;
- 42% of the SME respondents showed support, and 37% were opposed.

One potential barrier to acceptance to emerge from the qualitative exploration was the potential impact this price structure could have on vulnerable customers. So if this were to be introduced with safeguards in place for these customer groups, this would need to be clearly communicated to the community.

### *Price alignment*

There was majority support for the discontinuation of location based sewer services pricing – with the idea of creating an average of the two price levels resonating with most:

- When the initial concept was revealed it was supported by 58% of the Residential – Structured respondents, 61% of the Residential – Council YVOC respondents, and 63% of the SME respondents; and,
- When the full pricing implications were revealed it was supported by 59% of the Residential – Structured respondents, 66% of the Residential – Council YVOC respondents, and 66% of the SME respondents.

While there was a lower level of support amongst residents in the former Wyong Council area (who are likely to have to pay slightly more than they are currently), the support level was still relatively high amongst that sub-group.

Again, the idea of treating all residents equally came through in the qualitative exploration of this.

## *1.4 Conclusions*

While water quality was not an issue for many, it was clear that the community would like water quality addressed for those who currently experience 'dirty water' events.

Similarly, while sewerage overflows to personal properties did not appear to be a significant issue for the survey respondents, overflows into the community seemed to be a higher concern, and as such this should be another priority area for future focus.

The concepts/potential changes that gained majority support, and therefore should be taken further were:

- All Central Coast residents (and businesses) contributing to the funding of drainage infrastructure; and
- The discontinuation of location based sewer services pricing.

However, the following ideas for change were not received as positively by the community and may require educational initiatives to communicate any benefits that these changes would bring to customers before they can gain wider support:

- Draining pricing being set by Council as part of general rates;
- All business properties receiving the same drainage charge; and
- Scarcity pricing (increasing the price of water during times of drought).

## 2. Background and Objectives

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### 2.1 Background

The Central Coast has the third largest urban water supply system in New South Wales, after Sydney and the Hunter region. The area has three dams, three weirs, three water treatment plants, over 50 reservoirs and more than 2,200 kilometres of pipelines. Water is also transported into the system by the Hunter Connection, a two-way pipeline that provides additional water for operational reasons, or during drought, for both the Central Coast and the Hunter.

The NSW Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) sets the maximum prices for the water, sewerage and stormwater services provided by Central Coast Council.

The next pricing submission is due for lodgment with IPART in September 2021 and will determine Council's prices for those services from 1 July 2022.

### 2.2 Objectives

Central Coast Council was seeking to engage with the community to seek feedback on areas of their submission to IPART.

The main objectives for the IPART project were therefore to:

- Determine satisfaction with current operations
- Identify customer preferences for future water and sewerage projects and services
- Gauge support for Council determining their drainage charge and issuing this charge through general rates
- Measure support for all Council residents contributing to the funding of drainage infrastructure
- Ascertaining support levels for 'scarcity pricing' (altering water usage prices during times of drought)
- Ascertaining support levels for 'price alignment' (introducing a common price for sewer services for all Council residents, and businesses)

## 3. Research Design

### 3.1 Methodology and profile of participants

This project involved four distinct components:

- A structured (representative) survey amongst n=510 Central Coast Council residents aged 18+;
- An opt-in online survey open to Central Coast Council residents through the Council's Your Voice Our Coast (YVOC) website that resulted in n=620 respondents;
- A phone survey of small to medium (SME) sized business decision makers (with n=120 respondents); and
- Two qualitative group discussions amongst residents aged 18+ (conducted via Zoom).

#### *The Residential – Structured Survey*

The aim of this survey was to conduct n=500 interviews with Central Coast Council residents aged 18+ – structured to be representative of the Central Coast Council population (with quota targets set by former LGA areas, gender, and age). This sample size provides a standard sampling error rate of plus or minus 5% at the 95% confidence interval.

Note that the establishment of quotas by former Council areas was conducted due to the need to present different pricing information to respondents depending on their location (as all residents are not currently subject to the same price structures).

The target quotas provided a solid base of respondents within each age and gender category before any post-weighting of results was applied (to the latest available ABS population statistics for the Central Coast LGA).

The residential target quotas recommended for the former Gosford City area were as follows:

*Table 1: Age and gender target quotas and sample achieved for the former Gosford Council area*

	Proportion of Population aged 18+ years	Target Quota Range out of n=256	Actual Sample Achieved (unweighted)
<b>GENDER</b>			
Male	48%	n=115-145	n=95
Female	52%	n=115-145	n=144
<b>AGE</b>			
18 to 34 years	23%	n=45-70	n=68
35 to 49 years	24%	n=45-70	n=66
50 to 69 years	34%	n=80-105	n=64
70 years or more	19%	n=40-60	n=41

The residential target quotas recommended for the former Wyong Council area were as follows:

Table 2: Age and gender target quotas and sample achieved for the former Wyong Council area

	Proportion of Population aged 18+ years	Target Quota Range out of n=256	Actual Sample Achieved (unweighted)
<b>GENDER</b>			
Male	49%	n=115-145	n=96
Female	51%	n=115-145	n=175
<b>AGE</b>			
18 to 34 years	24%	n=45-70	n=98
35 to 49 years	24%	n=45-70	n=67
50 to 69 years	33%	n=80-105	n=75
70 years or more	19%	n=40-60	n=31

Fieldwork for this survey was carried out between 2 and 28 March 2021.

While the initial intent was to conduct a roughly equal proportion of interviews via telephone and online, due to the amount of information that needed to be provided to respondents to allow them to make an informed response to the questions being posed of them, it was decided that an online approach was preferable for this investigation.

As such, while a mixed mode approach was still adopted, the majority of interviews (n= 452 of the 510 carried out) were conducted online where respondents could read the information and view the pricing aspects at their own pace.

Online respondents were sourced from an online panel provider. Screening questions were applied to ensure that the respondents were residents of the area (see questionnaire in Appendix B).

The telephone interviews were conducted from electronic listings of publicly available landline and mobile phone numbers. The sample of potential contacts extracted was specific to the geographic area of the Central Coast Council. It was then randomised, and subject to the same screening criteria as the potential online respondents.

As has been indicated, while target quotas were set to provide a solid base of respondents in each age / gender category, some post-weighting was used to make minor corrections to the composition of the sample to ensure it was representative of the population. The resultant age and gender profile of these Residential – Structured respondents is detailed below.

Table 3: Gender and Age (Residential - Structured)

	Total (n=510) %	Former Wyong Council Area (n=271) %	Former Gosford Council Area (n=239) %
<b>GENDER</b>			
Male	49	49	49
Female	51	51	51
<b>AGE</b>			
18 to 24 years	8	10	7
25 to 34 years	16	15	16
35 to 49 years	24	24	24
50 to 59 years	14	14	14
60 to 69 years	19	19	19
70 to 84 years	16	16	17
85 years or more	3	3	2

S1. Are you... SR.

S2. Which of the following age groups best describes you? SR.

BASE: All respondents (n=510)

### *The Residential – Council YVOC Survey*

An online version of the questionnaire designed for the Residential – Structured study was also made available on the Council’s Your Voice Our Coast website. Respondents are therefore self-selected, and as the survey was open to all residents, there were no quotas or targets set in any way – meaning that the outcomes are not necessarily representative of the wider population.

There were a total of n=620 respondents to the survey.

The survey was promoted via:

- the ‘Your voice – Our Coast’ website
- media releases
- ‘Coast Connect’ articles
- print advertising
- radio
- electronic direct mails (EDM’s)
- online discussion groups
- internal communications

- letters

A more detailed report outlining the promotional channels in more detail can be found in Appendix C.

All fieldwork for this survey was carried out between 1 and 28 March 2021.

The resultant age and gender profile of these Residential – Structured respondents is detailed below. As can be seen in Table 4, the respondents to the Residential – Council YVOC survey have a much older age skew than is the case for the Residential – Structured survey.

Table 4: Gender and Age (Residential – Council YVOC)

	Total (n=620) %	Former Wyong Council Area (n=269) %	Former Gosford Council Area (n=333) %
<b>GENDER</b>			
Male	50	54	47
Female	47	44	50
Other/Prefer not to indicate	3	3	3
<b>AGE</b>			
18 to 24 years	-	-	-
25 to 34 years	3	1	4
35 to 49 years	18	15	20
50 to 59 years	20	22	18
60 to 69 years	32	33	32
70 to 84 years	25	26	25
85 years or more	1	1	1

S1. Are you... SR.

S2. Which of the following age groups best describes you? SR.

BASE: All respondents (n=620)

### *The Small to Medium Enterprise (SME) Survey*

The questionnaire designed for the Residential – Structured survey was also adapted for application amongst small to medium sized business decision makers within the bounds of the Central Coast Council area. In total n=120 of these interviews were conducted.

All interviews were carried out via telephone (CATI) using publicly available business numbers from an electronic equivalent of the Yellow Pages. Fieldwork was carried out between 30 March and 8 April 2021.

The questionnaire used for this audience has been included in Appendix B.



### *The Qualitative Group Discussions*

While the quantitative surveys detailed above provide a robust measure of resident (and business) sentiment in relation to the issues posed of them, it was decided that a small-scale qualitative exercise should be carried out to supplement that quantitative studies. The outcomes of this qualitative exploration were therefore intended to provide feedback with a more in-depth focus in order to uncover some of the reasoning behind popularly held views on each given issue.

We conducted two (2) group discussions (via Zoom) amongst a cross section of community residents. Again, due to the nature of the areas of questioning we conducted one group amongst residents of the former Gosford Council area, and the other amongst residents of the former Wyong Council area.

Age quotas were also set for each group discussion to ensure that a good cross-section of people was achieved in each.

Each group discussion ran for approximately an hour and twenty minutes, allowing sufficient ‘talk time’ for the participants in relation to each subject area.

Participants were sourced through a market research recruiter that has a range of Central Coast residents on their database who have expressed an interest in participating in market research studies. A screening questionnaire was employed to ensure that the group participants met the criteria for our study.

As is standard practice for a study of this nature, participants were offered an incentive (of \$80) to take part in the project, in appreciation for their time and to cover any expenses incurred.

### *3.3 Interpreting the quantitative findings in this report*

Percentages have been rounded to whole numbers and as a result, for some closed-ended questions (where a total of 100 per cent may be expected), total percentages may not add to exactly 100 per cent. For any open-ended questions, or the closed-ended questions that allowed for multiple answer responses, the total often exceeds 100% as respondents can provide an answer that has multiple themes within it – each of which are then represented.

While most quantitative results have been presented throughout this report by both age group and former Council location, there were a relatively small number of respondents in the 18 to 34 year old age category for the Residential – Council YVOC survey. As such a base size warning accompanies these results, and the commentary that has been included for any trends or differences by age does not include the results from this age group (for the Residential – Council YVOC survey).

# Detailed Research Findings

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## 4. Priorities for Water & Sewerage Services

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### *4.1 Unprompted Improvement Preferences*

Survey respondents were asked to suggest up to three different things that they want Central Coast Council to focus on and improve. While they were given the opportunity to provide three different priority areas, they were only required to provide one.

As can be seen in Table 5, respondents from each data source were most likely to suggest that improvements should be directed towards lowering the price of water/keeping pricing at a reasonable level, as well as improving the quality of drinking water. While respondents from the structured residential survey and the SME survey suggested preferences in that order (with the cost aspect being mentioned slightly more than the water quality aspect), the reverse order emerged from the Residential – Council YVOC survey.

The set of the next most commonly mentioned improvement areas included maintaining pipes/sewer lines, providing a more efficient service, and better drainage/guttering for streets (from the Residential – Structured survey). These areas also emerged as priorities in the Residential – Council YVOC survey, though protecting the environment/conserving water and using recycled water also emerged at similar levels, while the SME survey respondents were the most likely to suggest that nothing different was required.

Table 5: Improvement Preferences - Unprompted

	Residential – Structured (n=489) %	Residential – Council YVOC (n=578) %	SME (n=109) %
Lower the cost/keep price reasonable	36	37	24
Clean/safe/drinkable water/improve water quality	34	42	22
Maintaining pipes/sewer lines	17	14	3
Provide a better/more efficient/reliable service	14	16	7
Better drainage/gutters for streets/flood prone areas	13	12	6
Protecting the environment/sustainability/conservation of water	8	19	5
Continuity of water supply/appropriate storage	7	11	9
Regular/better maintenance NFD	6	4	-
Cleanliness NFD	6	2	1
Improve water pressure	5	3	6
Quality NFD	5	2	1
Nothing/all good	4	2	18
Smell/odour from treatment plant/tap water	3	4	2
Reusing/recycling water	3	12	5
Improve the taste of water	3	2	-
Better communication/updates/information	3	2	-
More accurate/clearer pricing/billing	2	-	-
Other	10	16	6
Don't know	4	-	6

Q. When you think about your water and sewerage services, what are the three things you want Central Coast Council to focus on and improve on the most?

Base: Respondents with a water and/or sewer connection (Residential - Structured n=489; Residential – Council YVOC n=578; SME n=109)

NOTE: NFD = No Further Detail provided

Looking at the results from the Residential - Structured survey in more detail (see Table 6) it can be seen that the older respondents were less likely to mention keeping the cost of water (18% for 70+ year olds, compared to 36% of all respondents), and were more likely (than younger respondents) to see a need to maintain the pipes/sewer lines (22% for 70+ year olds, compared to 17% of all respondents and 14% of 18 to 34 year olds).

The younger respondents were the most likely to mention protecting the environment/conservation of water (12% of 18 to 34 year olds, compared to 8% of all respondents), and cleanliness – presumably of water – (10% of 18 to 34 year olds, compared to 6% of all respondents).

Table 6: Improvement Preferences – Unprompted (Residential – Structured)

	Total (n=489) %	18 to 34 y.o (n=153) %	35 to 49 y.o (n=131) %	50 to 69 y.o (n=132) %	70+ y.o (n=72) %	Former Wyong (n=259) %	Former Gosford (n=230) %
Lower the cost/keep price reasonable	36	41	41	39	18	33	38
Clean/safe/drinkable water/improve water quality	34	35	34	36	31	32	37
Maintaining pipes/sewer lines	17	14	14	18	22	12	22
Provide a better/more efficient/reliable service	14	15	14	17	7	14	14
Better drainage/gutters for streets/flood prone areas	13	13	18	12	10	13	14
Protecting the environment/sustainability/conservation of water	8	12	7	8	3	10	6
Continuity of water supply/appropriate storage	7	3	3	10	10	7	7
Regular/better maintenance NFD	6	5	9	7	3	6	6
Cleanliness NFD	6	10	12	3	-	6	6
Improve water pressure	5	3	3	7	6	3	7
Quality NFD	5	1	7	5	5	6	4
Nothing/all good	4	6	1	4	5	5	3
Smell/odour from treatment plant/tap water	3	5	4	3	2	4	2
Reusing/recycling water	3	2	3	4	5	2	4
Improve the taste of water	3	5	2	3	2	2	4
Better communication/updates/information	3	6	2	2	-	1	4
More accurate/clearer pricing/billing	2	3	3	2	-	2	2
Other	10	11	9	10	8	10	9
Don't know	4	4	2	3	6	4	3

Q. When you think about your water and sewerage services, what are the three things you want Central Coast Council to focus on and improve on the most?

Base: Respondents with a water and/or sewer connection (Residential - Structured n=489)

NOTE: NFD = No Further Detail provided

Looking at the results from the Residential – Council YVOC survey in more detail (see Table 7) it can be seen that the respondents from the former Gosford Council area were the most likely to mention improving the water quality (49%, compared to 33% of the former Wyong Council area respondents).

Those aged 35 to 49 were the most likely to mention water quality/cleanliness (51%, compared to 42% of all respondents, as well as maintaining pipes/sewer lines (21%, compared to 14% for all respondents).

Table 7: Improvement Preferences – Unprompted (Residential – Council YVOC)

	Total (n=578) %	18 to 34 y.o (n=18)* %	35 to 49 y.o (n=105) %	50 to 69 y.o (n=299) %	70+ y.o (n=156) %	Former Wyong (n=249) %	Former Gosford (n=311) %
Clean/safe/drinkable water/improve water quality	42	22	51	41	38	33	49
Lower the cost/keep price reasonable	37	50	36	38	35	37	37
Protecting the environment/ sustainability/conservation of water	19	11	20	20	17	20	18
Provide a better/more efficient/reliable service	16	33	11	15	19	16	16
Maintaining pipes/sewer lines/drains	14	17	21	14	10	12	15
Better drainage/gutters for streets/flood prone areas	12	6	26	9	10	12	13
Continuity of water supply/appropriate storage	11	11	9	10	12	13	9
Recycle/ or tertiary treat sewage/ proper processes/no overflows	8	-	8	9	8	10	7
Reusing/recycling water	6	-	2	8	6	7	5
Regular/better maintenance NFD	4	11	5	5	3	3	5
Smell/odour from treatment plant/tap water	4	6	6	5	1	6	3
Connect all properties to sewer/or stop charging for a service they don't have	3	11	4	2	4	3	4
Improve water pressure	3	-	1	3	4	4	2
Better communication/updates/ information	2	6	4	2	1	-	4
Improve the taste of water	2	-	3	2	2	2	2
Nothing/all good	2	-	3	2	3	3	2
Quality NFD	2	6	2	3	1	2	2
Cleanliness NFD	2	-	-	2	3	2	1
Other	16	11	16	17	13	15	17
Don't know	-	-	-	-	1	-	-

Q. When you think about your water and sewerage services, what are the three things you want Central Coast Council to focus on and improve on the most?

Base: Respondents with a water and/or sewer connection (Residential – Council YVOC n=578)

NOTE: NFD = No Further Detail provided

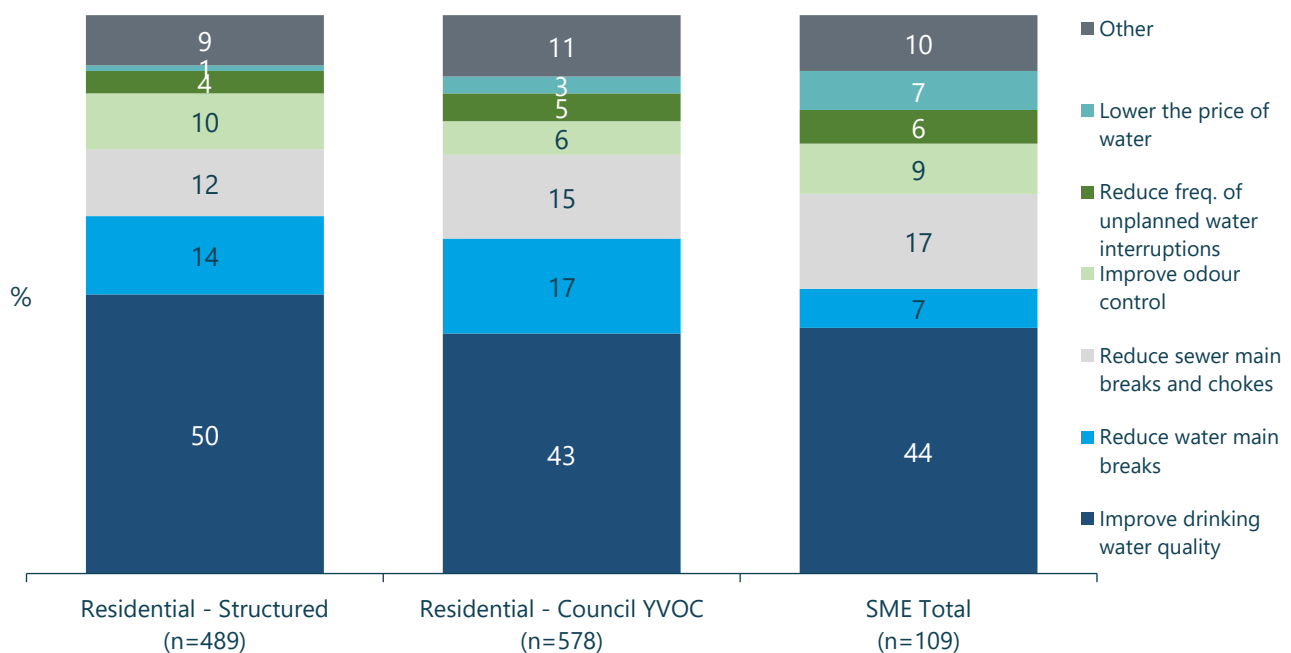
## 4.2 Prompted Improvement Preferences

Following on from unprompted improvements, the survey respondents were provided with a list of five potential areas for future focus, and were asked to identify their top preference for Central Coast Council to focus on and improve. Respondents were also offered the opportunity of including their own priority area – should they feel that none of the options offered were the top priority to focus attention on. Note that the suggestion to ‘lower the price of water’ emerged from respondents (i.e. it was not one of the pre-determined areas).

As can be seen in Figure 1, respondents from each data source were most likely to suggest that improvements should be directed towards improving the quality of drinking water – which varied between 43% amongst the Residential – Council YVOC respondents, to 50% amongst the Residential – Structured survey respondents.

The aspects with the second highest preference level tended to be reducing water main breaks and reducing sewer main breaks.

Figure 1: Improvement Preferences – Prompted



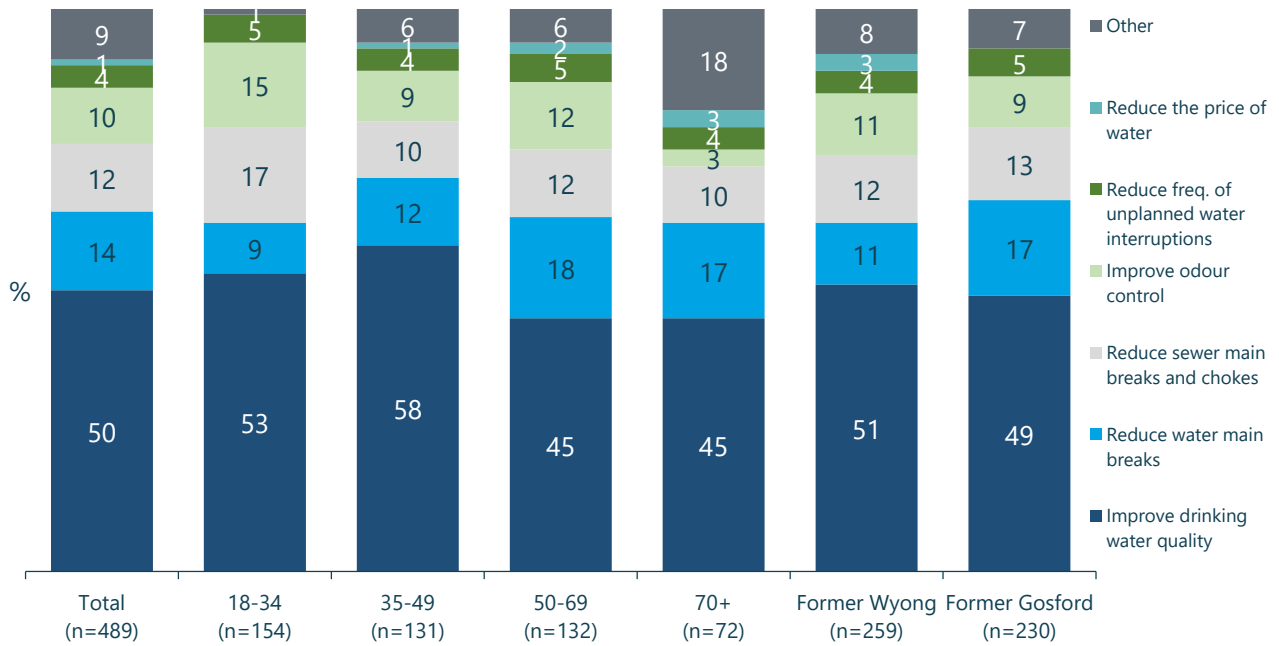
Q. Of the following options, what would you like Central Coast Council to focus and improve on the most in relation to the water & sewer assets? ROTATE ORDER

Base: Respondents with a water and/or sewer connection (Residential - Structured n=489; Residential – Council YVOC n=578; SME n=109)

Looking at the results from the Residential - Structured survey in more detail (see Figure 2) it can be seen that the highest preference level for improving the drinking water quality was amongst the 35 to 49 year old respondents (58%), while it was lower amongst those aged 50+ (45%).

While improving drinking water quality was highest amongst all sub-groups, the older respondents were more likely (than the younger respondents) to prioritise reducing water main breaks – as were respondents from the former Gosford Council area.

Figure 2: Improvement Preferences – Prompted (Residential – Structured)



Q. When you think about your water and sewerage services, what are the three things you want Central Coast Council to focus on and improve on the most?

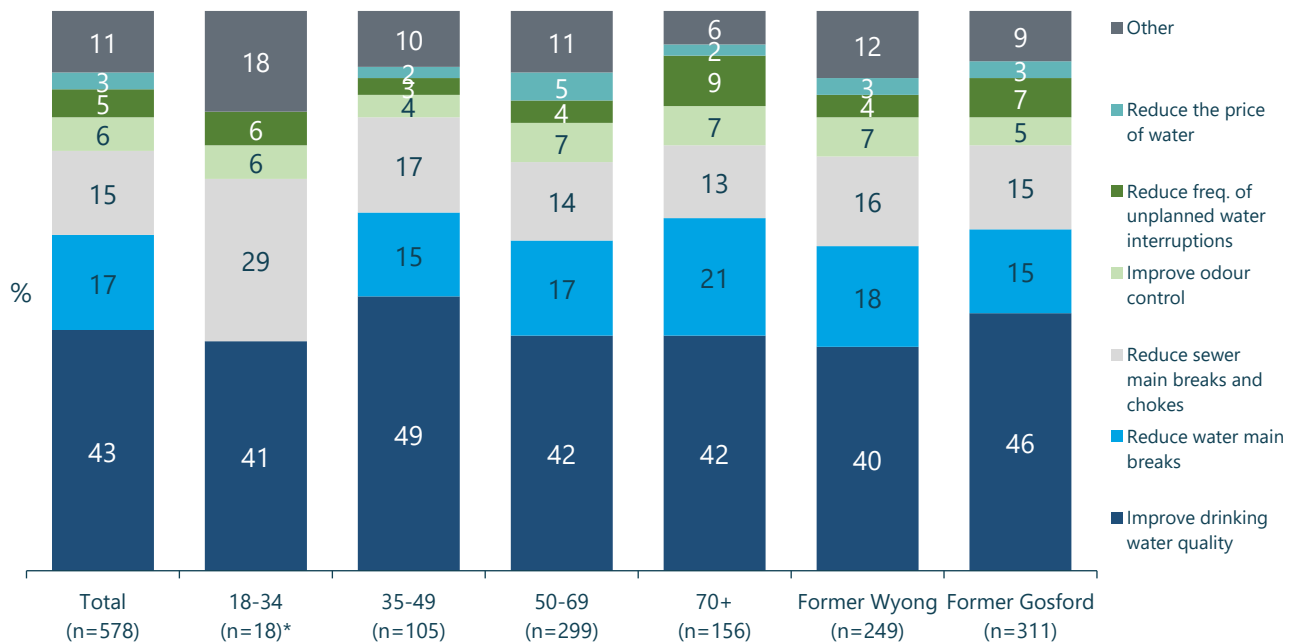
Base: Respondents with a water and/or sewer connection (Residential - Structured n=489)



Looking at the results from the Residential – Council YVOC survey in more detail (see Figure 3) it can be seen that the highest preference level for improving the drinking water quality was amongst the 35 to 49 year old respondents (49%), while it was lower amongst those aged 50+ (42%).

The older respondents were the most likely to indicate that reducing water main breaks was a main priority (21%), which was the aspect with the second highest preference level amongst the Residential – YVOC respondents.

Figure 3: Improvement Preferences – Prompted (Residential – Council YVOC)



Q. When you think about your water and sewerage services, what are the three things you want Central Coast Council to focus on and improve on the most?

Base: Respondents with a water and/or sewer connection (Residential – Council YVOC n=578)

In the group discussions that were conducted, the group participants were also asked to suggest where Central Coast Council should focus on and improve for the future. These participants tended to suggest the following:

- Ways of ensuring that there is enough water available for the future (such as building new dams and recycling water);
- Improving the quality of water (as some residents were known to have ‘dirty’ drinking water);
- Providing incentives for households to supplement their use of town water (through encouraging use of water tanks);
- Reducing the potential of flooding (as some areas were ‘known’ to be prone to flooding);
- Addressing the cost/price of water and water services;
- Maintaining existing infrastructure.

The group participants were then presented with the prompted list (as appears in the quantitative questionnaire) and were asked which areas they thought that the Central Coast Council should focus on in the future.

The outcomes of the discussions that followed tended to be very similar to what had emerged without prompting, with water quality being seen as one of the top priorities that needed to be addressed. While not all had a personal experience with poor water quality, there appeared to be awareness of water quality issues in the region.

Within one of the groups, the need to reducing sewer main breaks and chokes was also seen to be a priority.

*“I work in real estate and we get a lot of tenants calling with overflow issues” Former Gosford Council area resident*

Within the other group, reducing water main breaks was seen to be more important due to the visible water wastage that occurs with this issue.

## 5. Perceptions of Performance

### 5.1 Water Service Performance

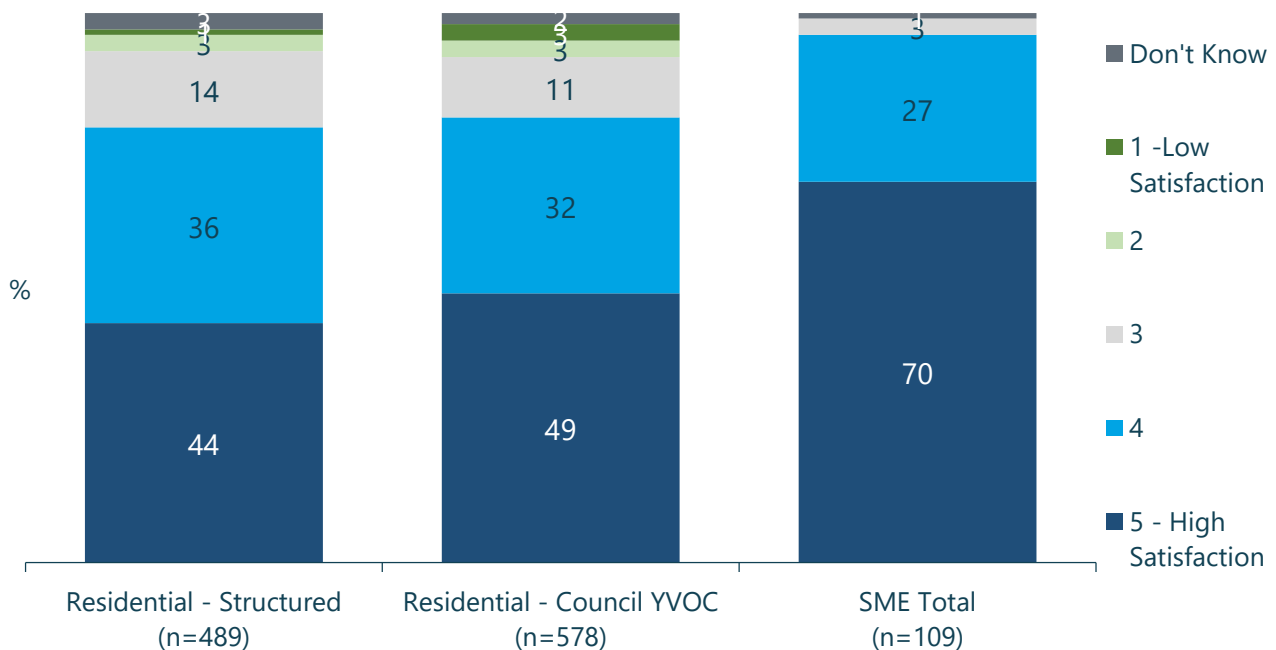
Survey respondents were asked to indicate their level of satisfaction with several aspects of water service performance using a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is low satisfaction and 5 is high satisfaction.

#### *Reliability water supply (lack of interruptions)*

The survey respondents within each survey displayed a high level of satisfaction with the reliability of the water supply (see Figure 4). Satisfaction with reliability was highest amongst the SME respondents (97% giving a rating of 4 or 5 out of 5), and lowest amongst the Residential – Structured respondents (80%) – though still very high in outright terms.

There was minimal dissatisfaction expressed in relation to water reliability – with 6% being the highest amongst the Residential- Council YVOC respondents.

Figure 4: Satisfaction with: Reliability of water supply



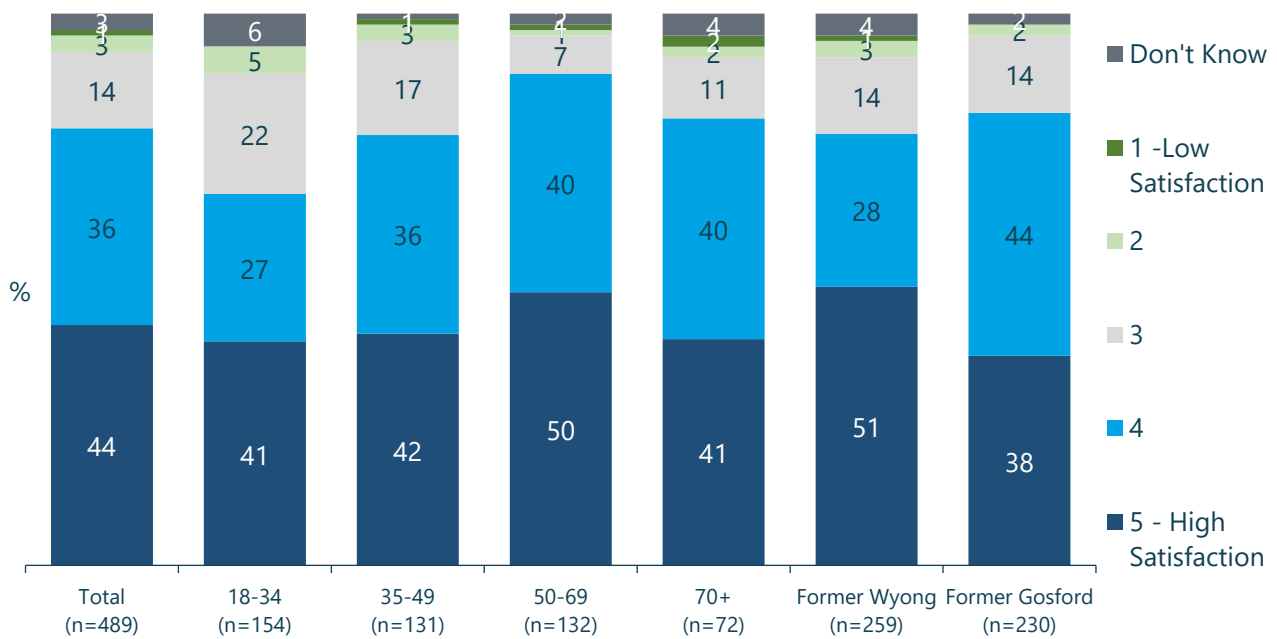
Q. Thinking about the last 12 months, how satisfied have you been with the following (where 1 is low satisfaction and 5 is high satisfaction):

Base: Respondents with a water and/or sewer connection (Residential - Structured n=489; Residential – Council YVOC n=578; SME n=109)

Looking at the results from the Residential - Structured survey in more detail (see Figure 5) it can be seen that satisfaction with reliability was highest amongst the 50 to 69 year olds (90% giving a rating of 4 or 5 out of 5). The younger respondents had the lowest overall level of satisfaction with water reliability (68% of the 18 to 34 year olds gave a rating of 4 or 5 out of 5 – though only 5% expressed dissatisfaction).

While respondents from the former Gosford Council area expressed a slightly higher overall level of satisfaction in this service area (82%, compared to 79% for the former Wyong Council area residents), those in the former Wyong Council area were the most likely to provide a 5 out of 5 rating for water reliability (51%).

Figure 5: Satisfaction with: Reliability of water supply (Residential – Structured)



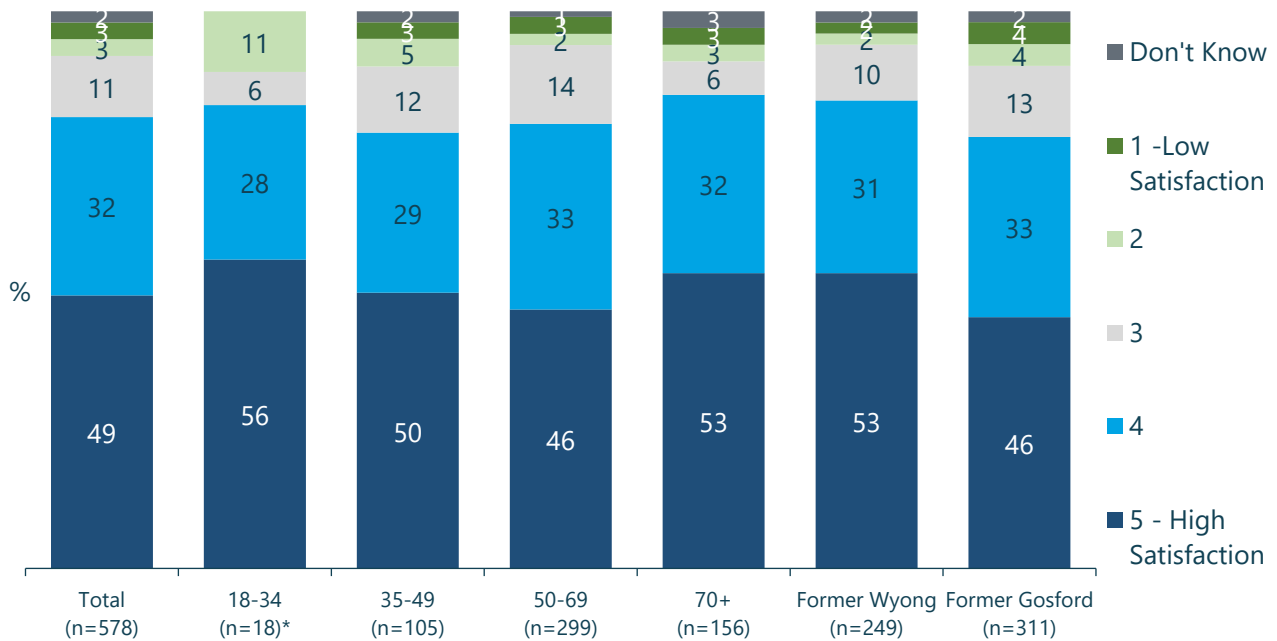
Q. Thinking about the last 12 months, how satisfied have you been with the following (where 1 is low satisfaction and 5 is high satisfaction):

Base: Respondents with a water and/or sewer connection (Residential - Structured n=489)

Looking at the results from the Residential – Council YVOC survey in more detail (see Figure 6) it can be seen that satisfaction with reliability was highest amongst 70+ year olds (85% giving a rating of 4 or 5 out of 5).

Respondents in the former Wyong Council area had a higher satisfaction level than those in the former Gosford Council area (84% and 79% total satisfaction respectively).

Figure 6: Satisfaction with: Reliability of water supply (Residential – Council YVOC)



Q. Thinking about the last 12 months, how satisfied have you been with the following (where 1 is low satisfaction and 5 is high satisfaction):

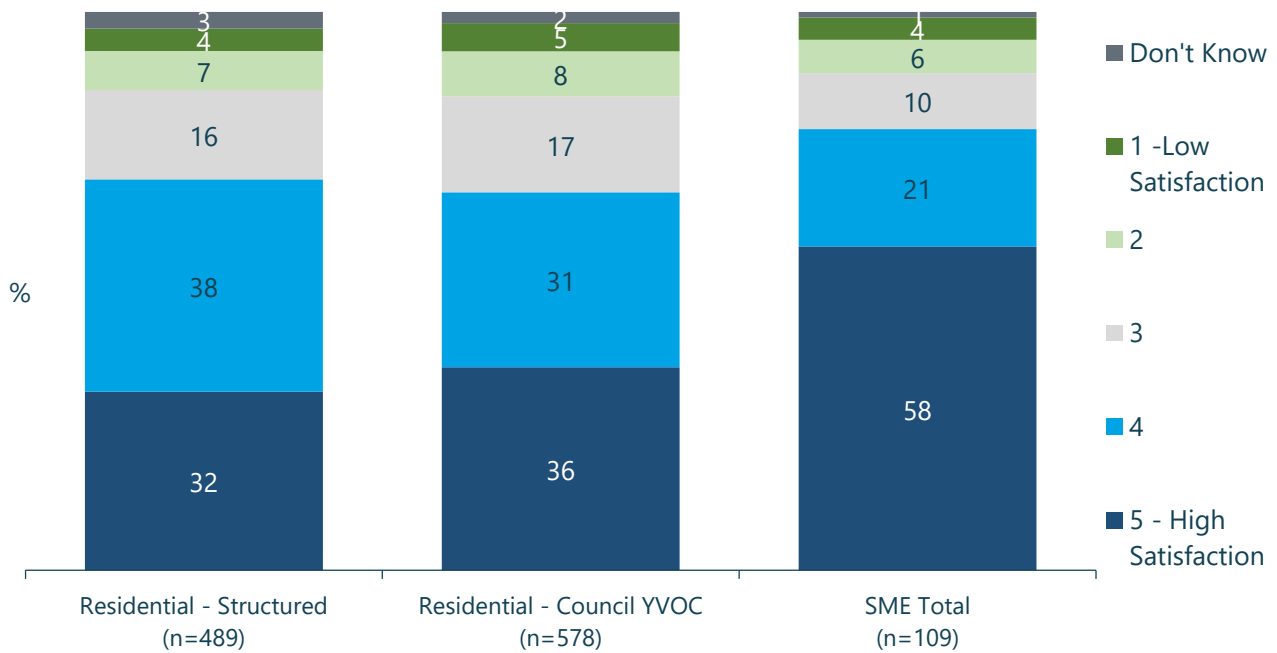
Base: Respondents with a water and/or sewer connection (Residential – Council YVOC n=578)

### Water pressure

There was also a fairly high level of satisfaction with the water pressure. Satisfaction with water pressure was highest amongst the SME respondents (79% giving a rating of 4 or 5 out of 5), and lowest amongst the Residential – Council YVOC respondents (67%) – though still very high in outright terms.

Dissatisfaction levels with water pressure were at around the 1 in 10 level, being highest amongst the Residential – Council YVOC respondents (13%).

Figure 7: Satisfaction with: Water pressure



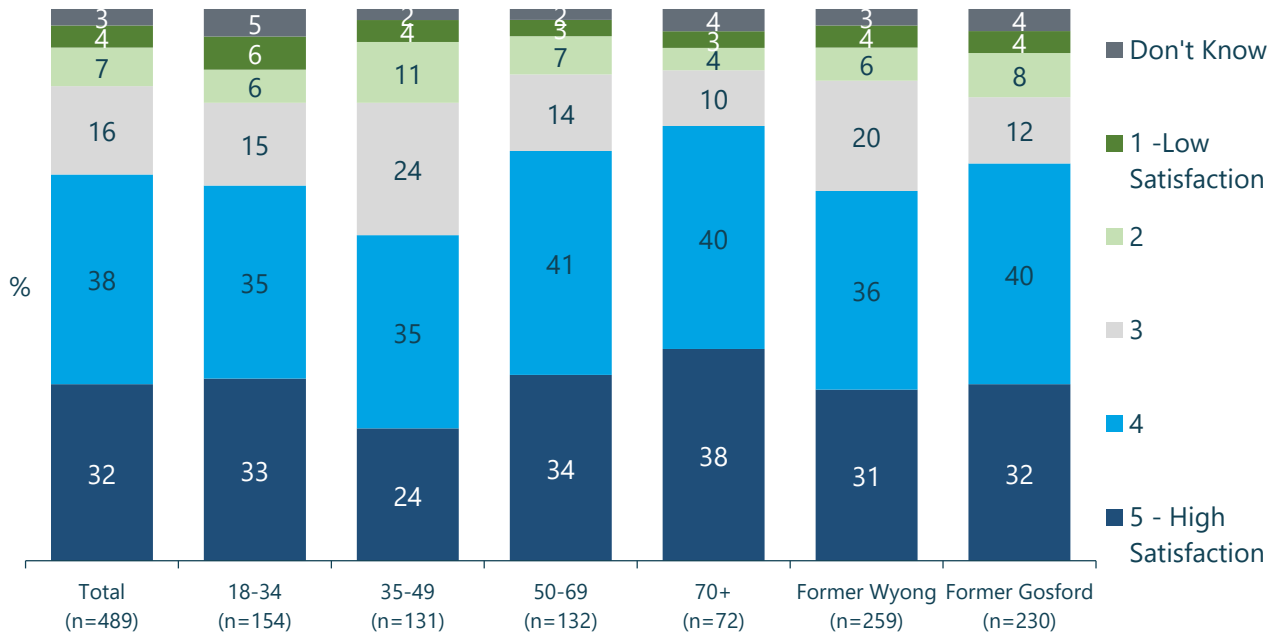
Q. Thinking about the last 12 months, how satisfied have you been with the following (where 1 is low satisfaction and 5 is high satisfaction):

Base: Respondents with a water and/or sewer connection (Residential - Structured n=489; Residential – Council YVOC n=578; SME n=109)

Looking at the results from the Residential - Structured survey in more detail (see Figure 8) it can be seen that satisfaction with water pressure was highest amongst the 70+ year olds (78% giving a rating of 4 or 5 out of 5), and lowest amongst the 35 to 49 year olds (59% gave a 4 or 5 out of 5 rating – though only 15% expressed dissatisfaction).

Respondents from the former Gosford Council area expressed a slightly higher overall level of satisfaction in this service area (72%, compared to 67% for the former Wyong Council area residents).

Figure 8: Satisfaction with: Water pressure (Residential – Structured)



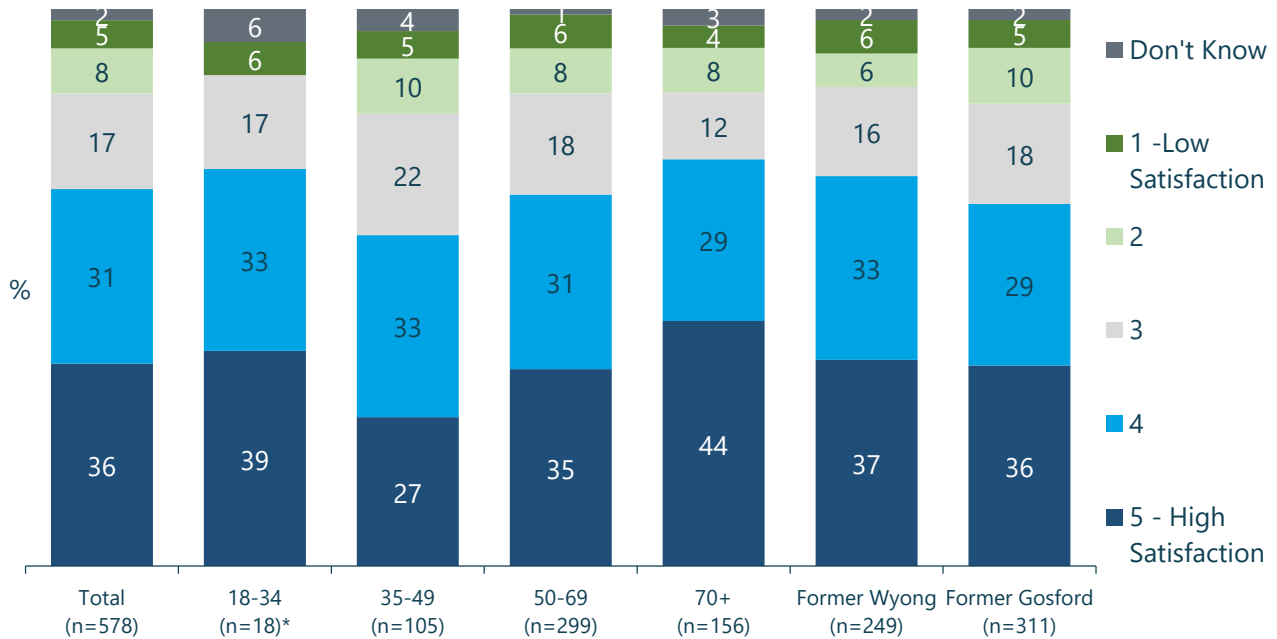
Q. Thinking about the last 12 months, how satisfied have you been with the following (where 1 is low satisfaction and 5 is high satisfaction):

Base: Respondents with a water and/or sewer connection (Residential - Structured n=489)

Looking at the results from the Residential – Council YVOC survey in more detail (see Figure 9) a pattern emerged with age. Satisfaction levels for water pressure was highest amongst the 70+ year olds (73% giving a rating of 4 or 5 out of 5) and lowest amongst the 35 to 49 year olds (60%).

Unlike the Residential – Structured results, the Residential – Council YVOC outcomes show a slightly higher overall satisfaction level amongst the respondents in the former Wyong Council (70%, compared to 65% in the former Gosford Council area).

Figure 9: Satisfaction with: Water pressure (Residential – Council YVOC)



Q. Thinking about the last 12 months, how satisfied have you been with the following (where 1 is low satisfaction and 5 is high satisfaction):

Base: Respondents with a water and/or sewer connection (Residential – Council YVOC n=578)

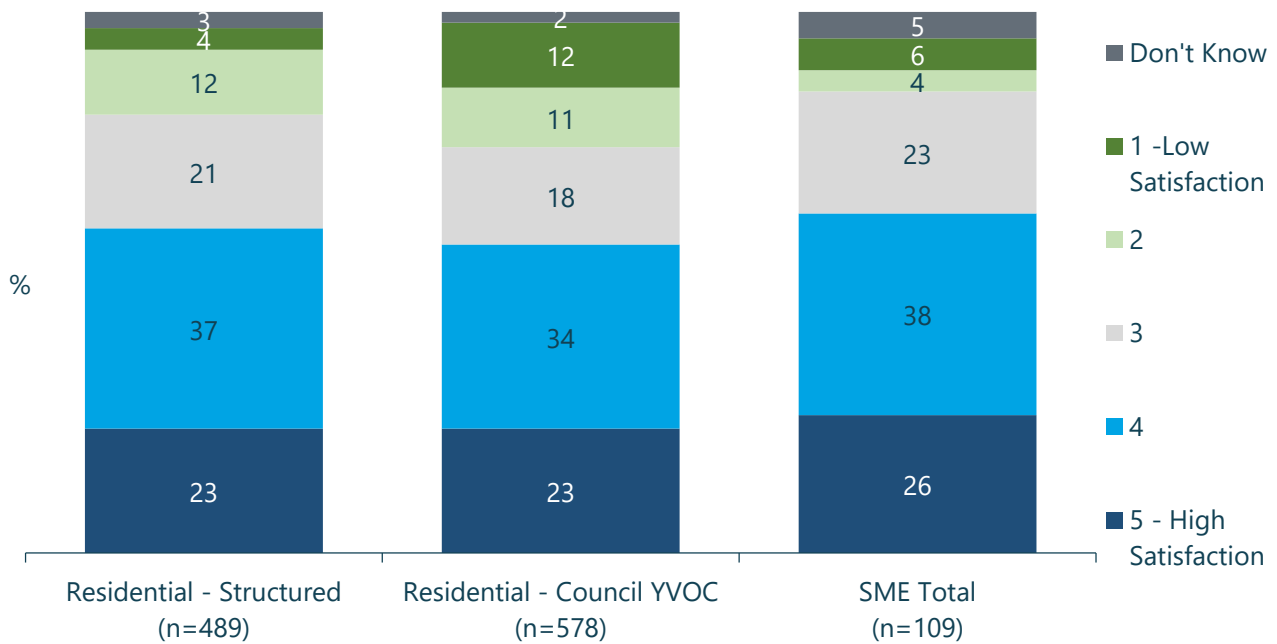


### Water quality (including taste and clarity)

The majority of respondents also indicated satisfaction with the water quality. While there was not a great deal of variation, satisfaction with water quality was highest amongst the SME respondents (64% giving a rating of 4 or 5 out of 5), and lowest amongst the Residential – Council YVOC respondents (57%).

Dissatisfaction levels varied between 10% (SME respondents) and 23% (Residential – Council YVOC respondents).

Figure 10: Satisfaction with: Water quality



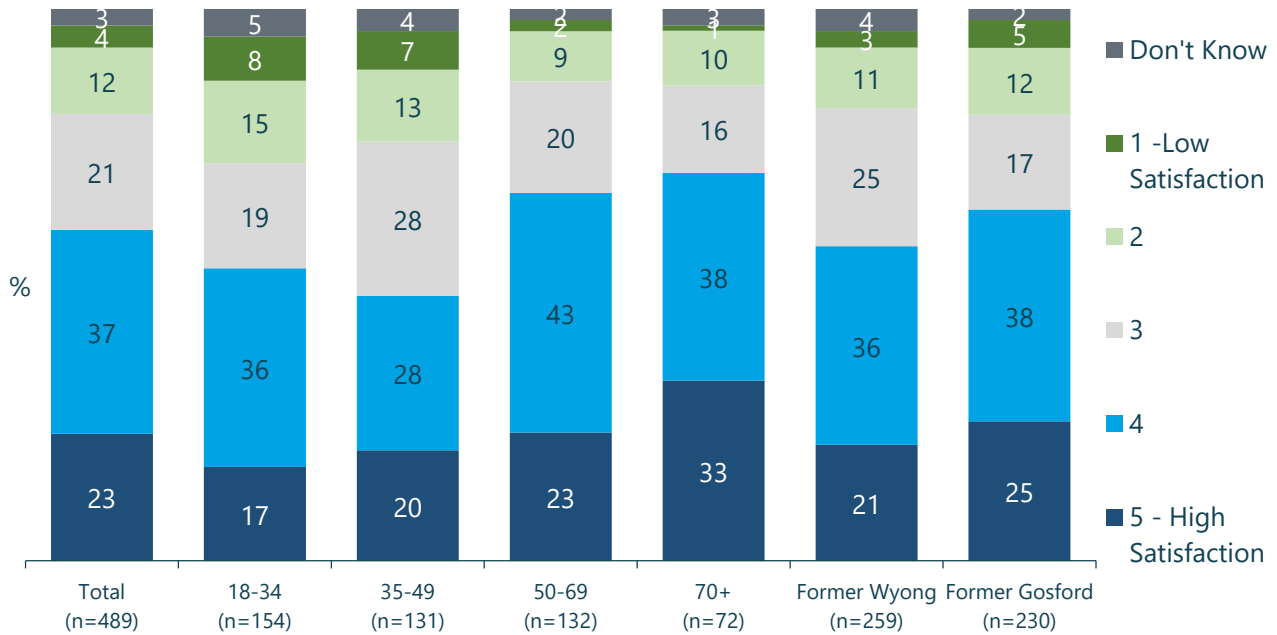
Q. Thinking about the last 12 months, how satisfied have you been with the following (where 1 is low satisfaction and 5 is high satisfaction):

Base: Respondents with a water and/or sewer connection (Residential - Structured n=489; Residential – Council YVOC n=578; SME n=109)

Looking at the results from the Residential - Structured survey in more detail (see Figure 11) it can be seen that satisfaction with water pressure was highest amongst the 70+ year olds (71% giving a rating of 4 or 5 out of 5), and lowest amongst the 35 to 49 year olds (48% gave a 4 or 5 out of 5 rating – though only 15% expressed dissatisfaction), with dissatisfaction being highest amongst the 18 to 34 year olds (23%).

Respondents from the former Gosford Council area expressed a slightly higher overall level of satisfaction in this service area (63%, compared to 57% for the former Wyong Council area residents).

Figure 11: Satisfaction with: Water quality (Residential – Structured)



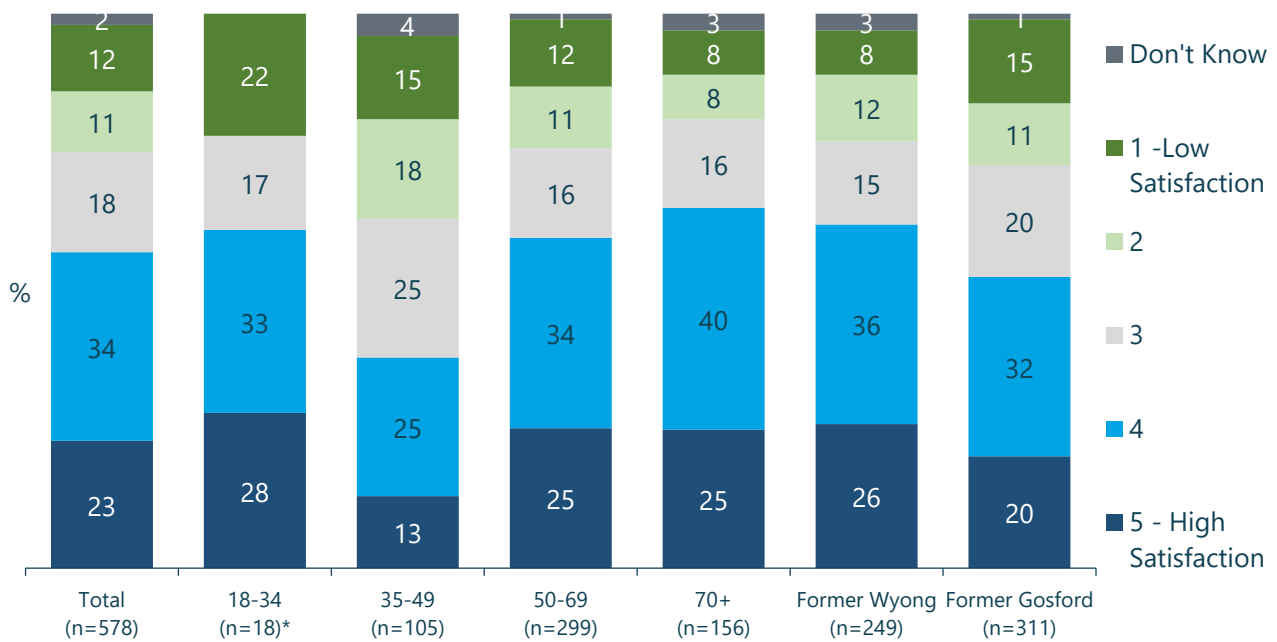
Q. Thinking about the last 12 months, how satisfied have you been with the following (where 1 is low satisfaction and 5 is high satisfaction):

Base: Respondents with a water and/or sewer connection (Residential - Structured n=489)

Looking at the results from the Residential – Council YVOC survey in more detail (see Figure 12) a pattern emerged with age. Satisfaction levels for water quality were highest amongst the 70+ year olds (65% giving a rating of 4 or 5 out of 5) and lowest amongst the 35 to 49 year olds (38%). Dissatisfaction levels were also highest amongst the 35 to 49 year olds (33%).

Unlike the Residential – Structured results, the Residential – Council YVOC outcomes show a higher overall satisfaction level with water quality amongst respondents in the former Wyong Council (62%, compared to 52% in the former Gosford Council area).

Figure 12: Satisfaction with: Water quality (Residential – Council YVOC)



Q. Thinking about the last 12 months, how satisfied have you been with the following (where 1 is low satisfaction and 5 is high satisfaction):

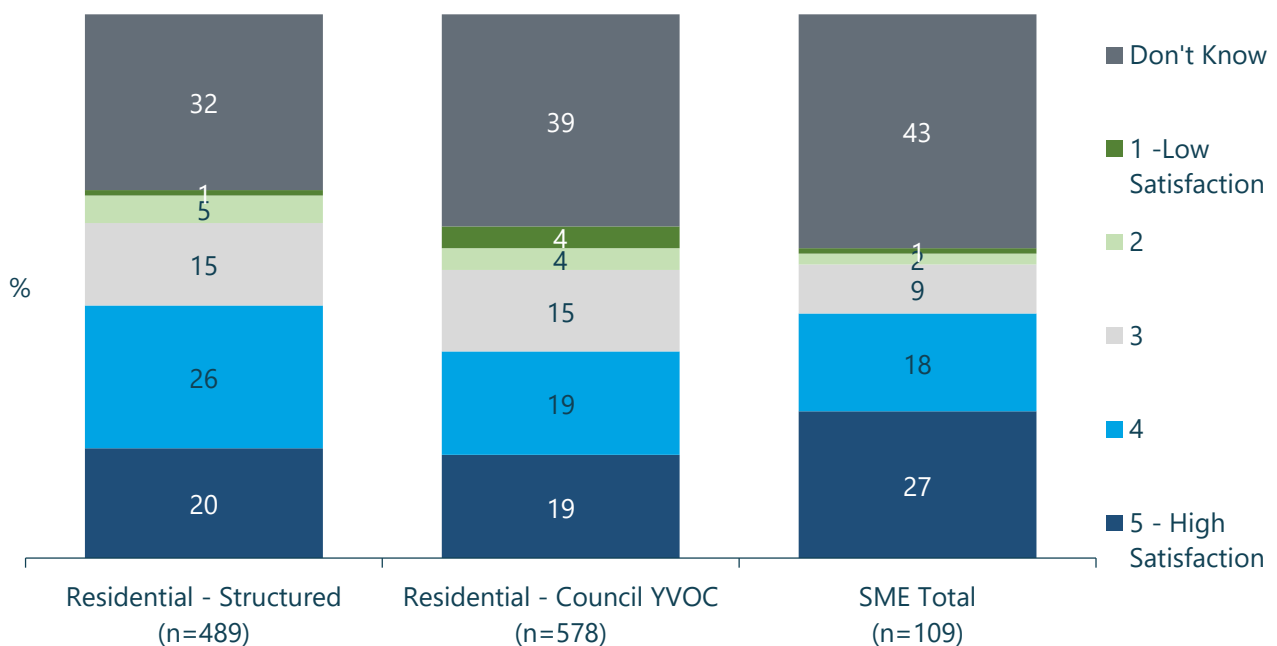
Base: Respondents with a water and/or sewer connection (Residential – Council YVOC n=578)

### Response time to fix interruptions

While satisfaction with the response time to fix interruptions was the lowest of the service areas measured, this can be seen to be due to the relatively large proportion of respondents who indicated a ‘don’t know’ response for this service attribute (between 32% for the Residential - Structured survey, and 43% for the SME survey).

So while satisfaction levels varied between 38% (amongst the SME respondents) and 46% (amongst the Residential – Structured respondents), it is important to note that there was little dissatisfaction expressed in relation to response times – which only varied between 3% (for the SME respondents) and 8% (for the Residential – Council YVOC respondents).

Figure 13: Satisfaction with: Response time to fix interruptions



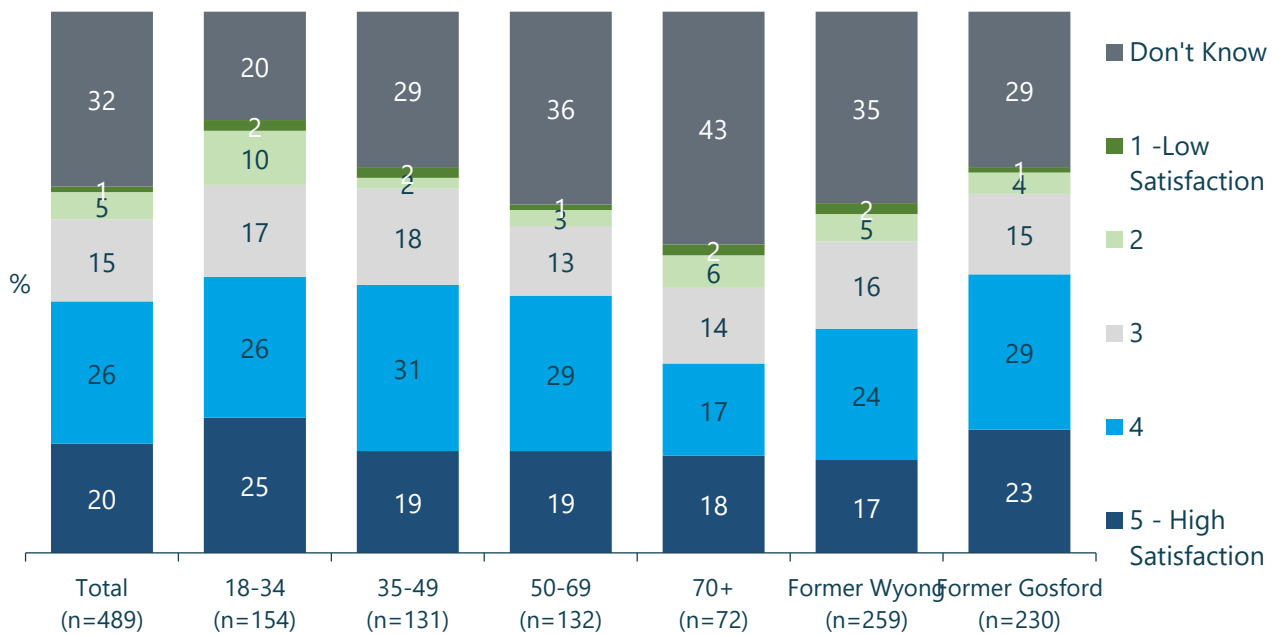
Q. Thinking about the last 12 months, how satisfied have you been with the following (where 1 is low satisfaction and 5 is high satisfaction):

Base: Respondents with a water and/or sewer connection (Residential - Structured n=489; Residential – Council YVOC n=578; SME n=109)

Looking at the results from the Residential - Structured survey in more detail (see Figure 14) it can be seen that satisfaction with response times decreased with increasing age – being rated highest by the 18 to 34 year olds (51%) and lowest by the 70+ year olds (35% giving a rating of 4 or 5 out of 5). However, the proportion of ‘Don’t Know’ responses also increased with increasing age.

Respondents from the former Gosford Council area expressed a slightly higher overall level of satisfaction in this service area (52%, compared to 41% for the former Wyong Council area residents) – again, primarily as a result of the proportion of ‘Don’t Know’ responses in each location.

Figure 14: Satisfaction with: Response time to fix interruptions (Residential – Structured)

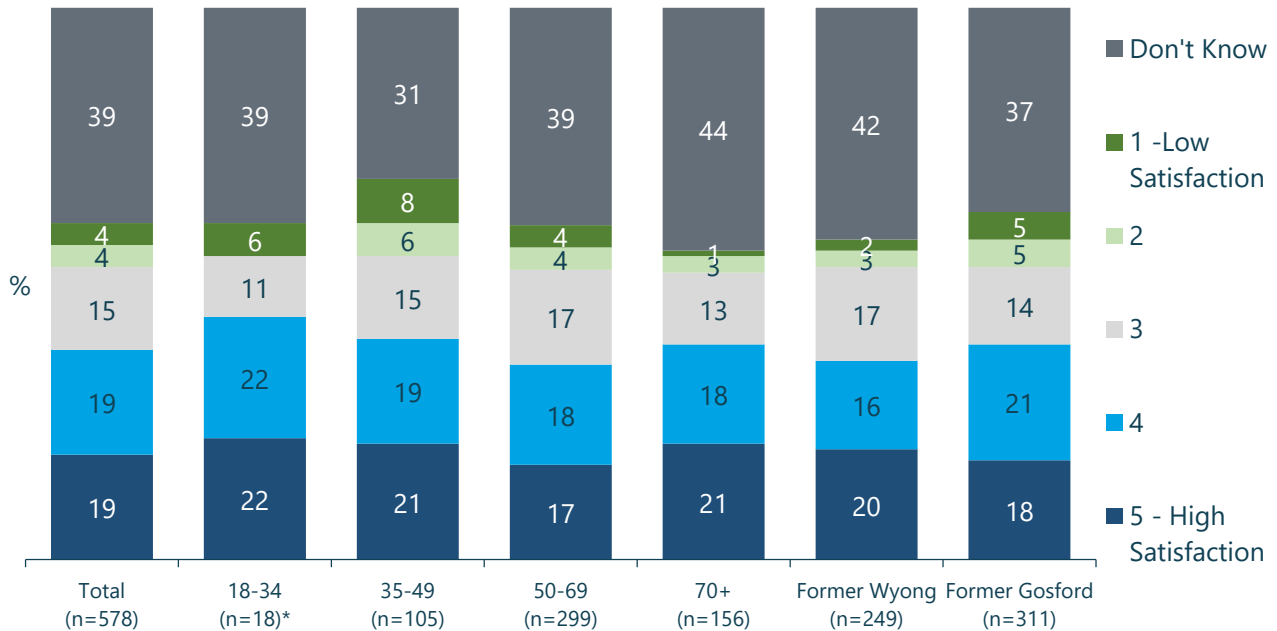


Q. Thinking about the last 12 months, how satisfied have you been with the following (where 1 is low satisfaction and 5 is high satisfaction):

Base: Respondents with a water and/or sewer connection (Residential - Structured n=489)

Looking at the results from the Residential – Council YVOC survey in more detail (see Figure 15) it can be seen that the overall satisfaction levels with response times were fairly consistent across the age and location sub-groups. Dissatisfaction was also consistently low, peaking at 14% amongst those aged 35 to 49.

Figure 15: Satisfaction with: Response time to fix interruptions (Residential – Council YVOC)



Q. Thinking about the last 12 months, how satisfied have you been with the following (where 1 is low satisfaction and 5 is high satisfaction):

Base: Respondents with a water and/or sewer connection (Residential – Council YVOC n=578)

### *Qualitative outcomes - Performance*

Overall, the group participants were quite happy with Central Coast Council's performance in relation to water supply and management.

During the discussions, there were specific references to emerge of participants having good water pressure, and having clear and good tasting water.

However, a few participants had experienced water quality issues. Both groups raised the issue of 'dirty water' or 'rusty water' being experienced by one of the group members. Interestingly, even those that did not experience it themselves saw this as something that should be a priority to be addressed.

*"I see a lot of posts on the Central Coast local Facebook page about dirty water and while mine is fine I'm concerned others don't have good quality water in the Peninsula area." Former Gosford Council area resident*

*"One of my girlfriends out Gorokan way, had water that looks brown. It looked like mud in her bathtub. There was no notification." Former Wyong Council Resident*

Water mains breaks were also mentioned as an issue by a few of the group participants.

*"You see so much water wasted through water main breaks." Former Wyong Council area resident*

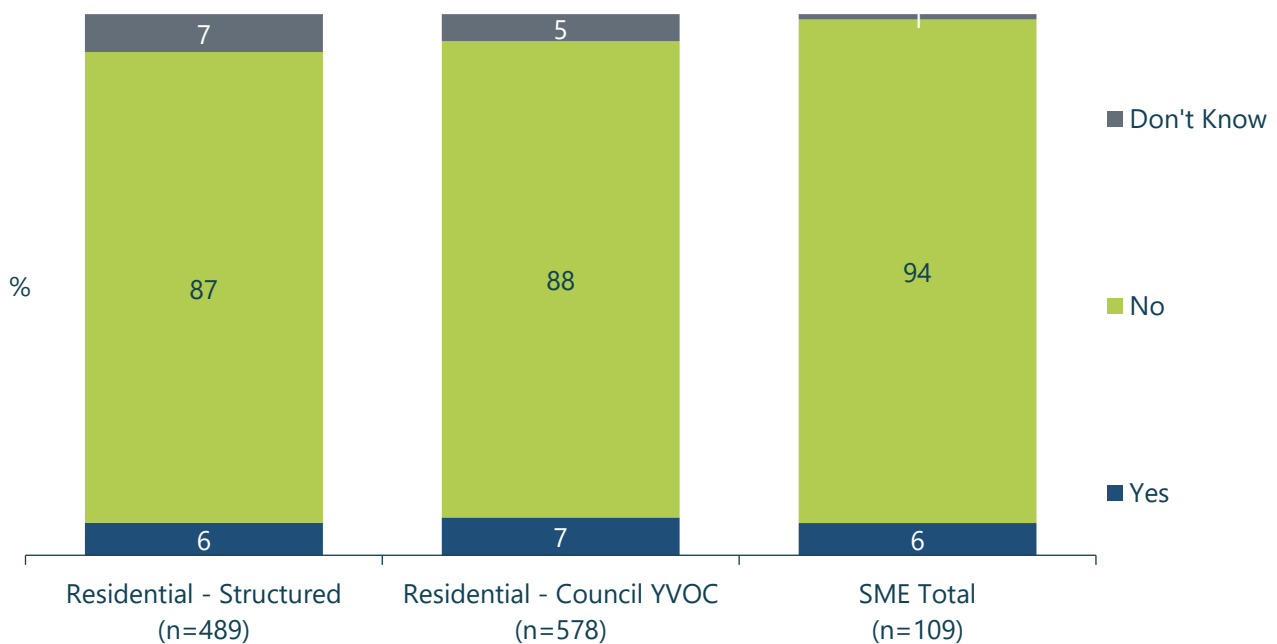
## 5.2 Sewerage Service Performance

Survey respondents were asked to indicate if they had been impacted by sewerage overflows within their own household, or in the community.

### Overflows on the property

A small minority of respondents indicated that they had been impacted by sewerage overflows on their property in the last 12 months. This varied between 6% (amongst the Residential – Structured and SME respondents) to 7% (amongst the Residential – Council YVOC respondents).

Figure 16: Experienced sewerage overflows on their property



Q. Now, thinking about sewerage services in the last 12 months, please indicate if your household has been impacted by the following:

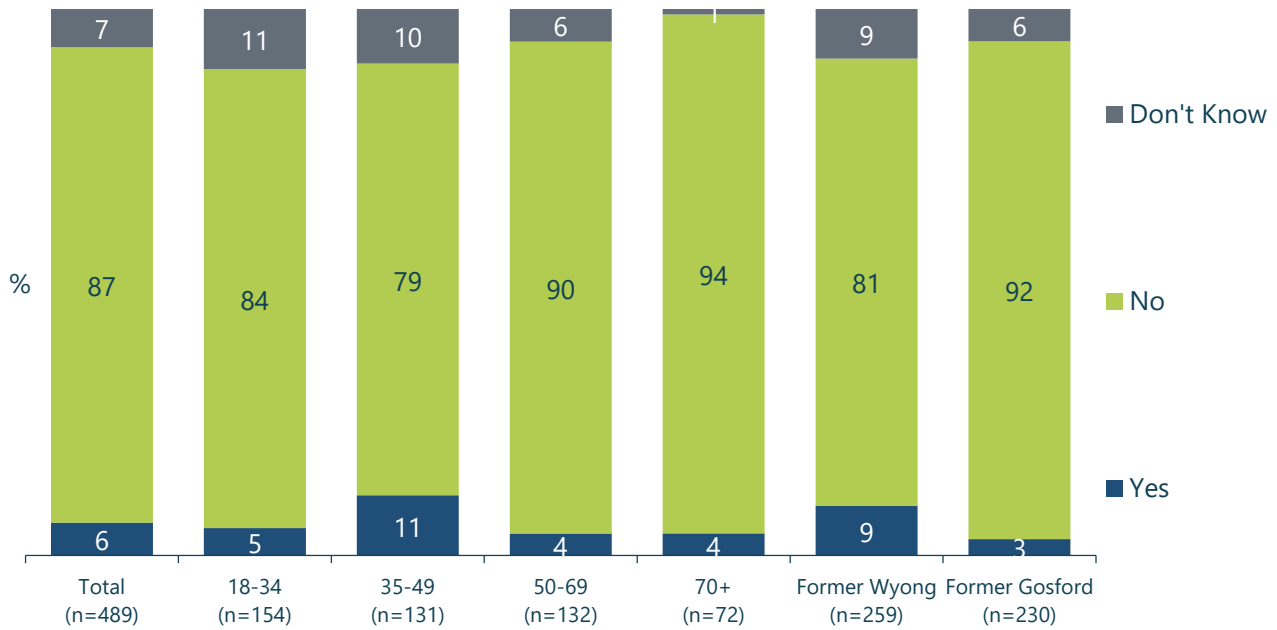
Base: Respondents with a water and/or sewer connection (Residential - Structured n=489; Residential – Council YVOC n=578; SME n=109)



Looking at the results from the Residential - Structured survey in more detail (see Figure 17) it can be seen that the claimed incidence levels for having had a sewerage overflow on their property in the last 12 months varied (by age) between 4% (amongst the 50 to 69 and 70+ year olds) and 11% (amongst the 35 to 49 year olds).

Respondents from the former Wyong Council area expressed a slightly higher incidence level of such a disturbance (9%, compared to 3% for the former Wyong Council area residents).

Figure 17: Experienced sewerage overflows on their property (Residential – Structured)



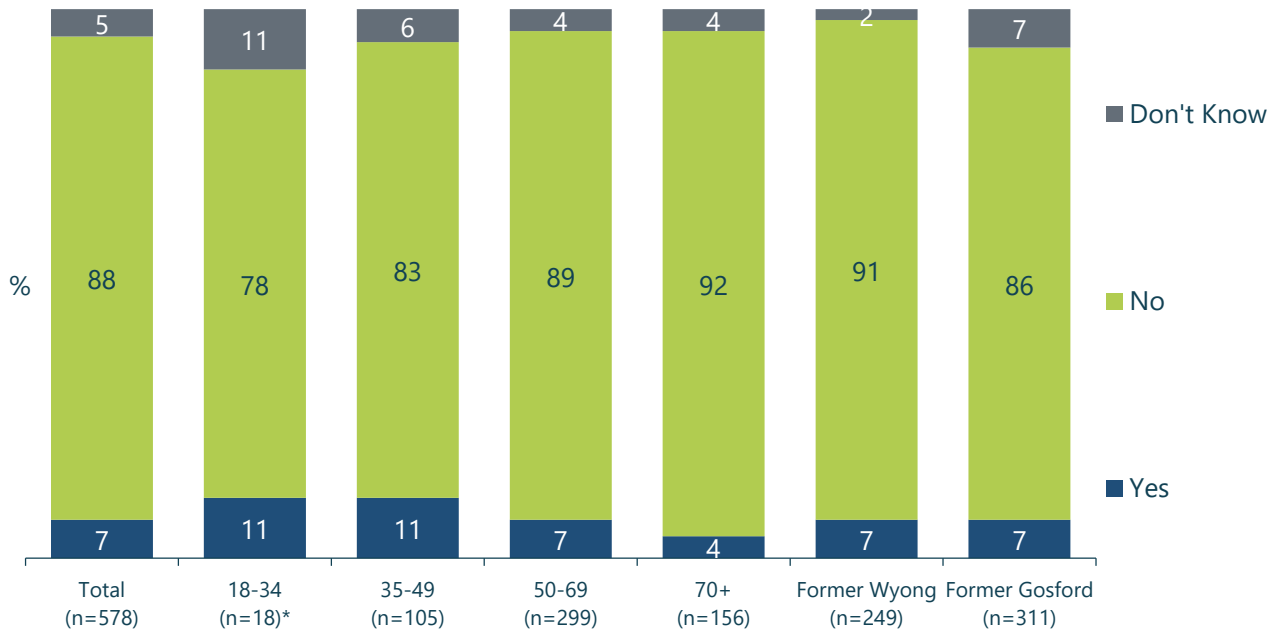
Q. Now, thinking about sewerage services in the last 12 months, please indicate if your household has been impacted by the following:

Base: Respondents with a water and/or sewer connection (Residential - Structured n=489)

Looking at the results from the Residential – Council YVOC survey in more detail (see Figure 18) there was again little variation, with the claimed incidence levels for having had a sewerage overflow on their property in the last 12 months varying (by age) between 4% (amongst the 70+ year olds) and 11% (amongst the 35 to 49 year olds).

There was no reported difference between respondents from the former Council areas (7% for both).

Figure 18: Experienced sewerage overflows on their property (Residential – Council YVOC)



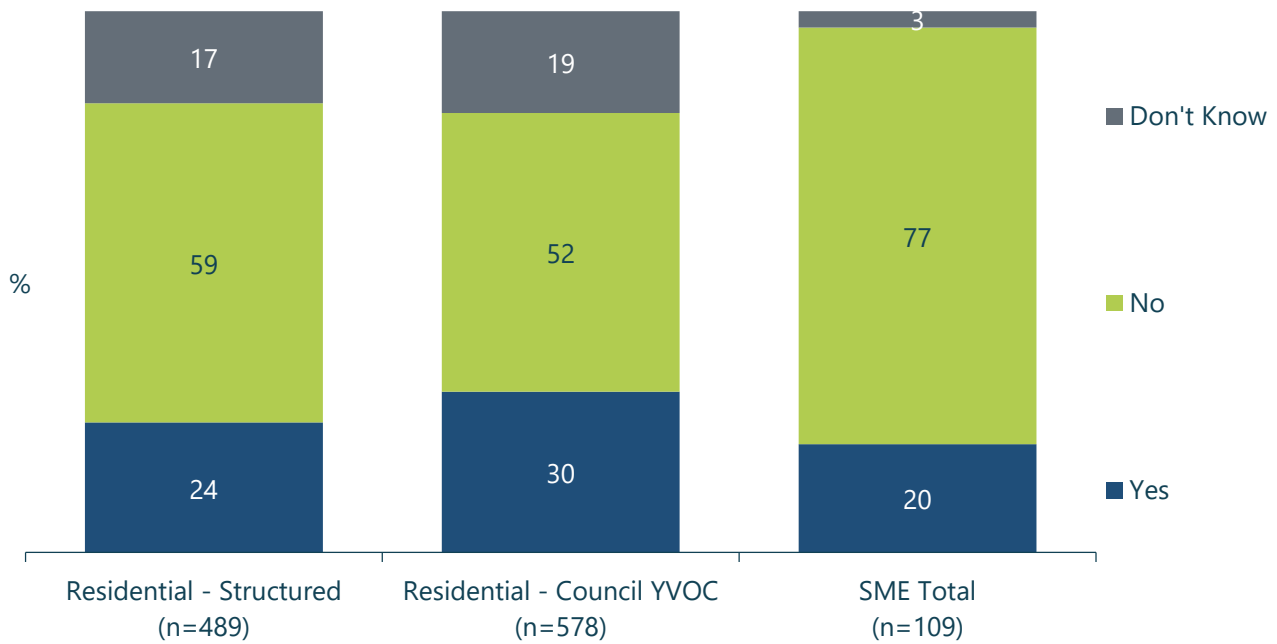
Q. Now, thinking about sewerage services in the last 12 months, please indicate if your household has been impacted by the following:

Base: Respondents with a water and/or sewer connection (Residential – Council YVOC n=578)

### Overflows in the community

Incidence of being impacted by sewerage overflows in the community in the last 12 months was somewhat higher. This varied between 20% (amongst the SME respondents) and 30% (amongst the Residential – Council YVOC respondents).

Figure 19: Experienced sewerage overflows on their property



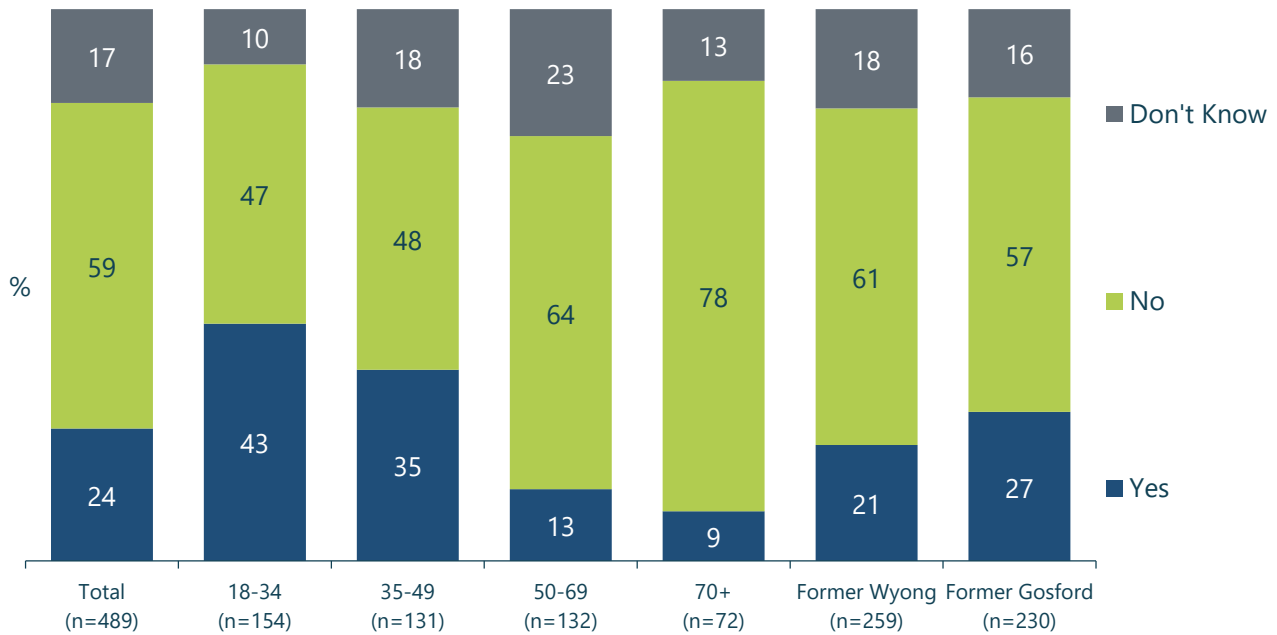
Q. Now, thinking about sewerage services in the last 12 months, please indicate if your household has been impacted by the following:

Base: Respondents with a water and/or sewer connection (Residential - Structured n=489; Residential – Council YVOC n=578; SME n=109)

Looking at the results from the Residential - Structured survey in more detail (see Figure 20) it can be seen that there is a clear trend of the claimed incidence levels decreasing with increasing age – with this being highest amongst the 18 to 34 year olds (43%), and lowest amongst the 70+ year olds (9%).

Respondents from the former Gosford Council area expressed a slightly higher incidence level of such a disturbance (27%, compared to 21% for the former Wyong Council area residents).

Figure 20: Experienced sewerage overflows on their property (Residential – Structured)



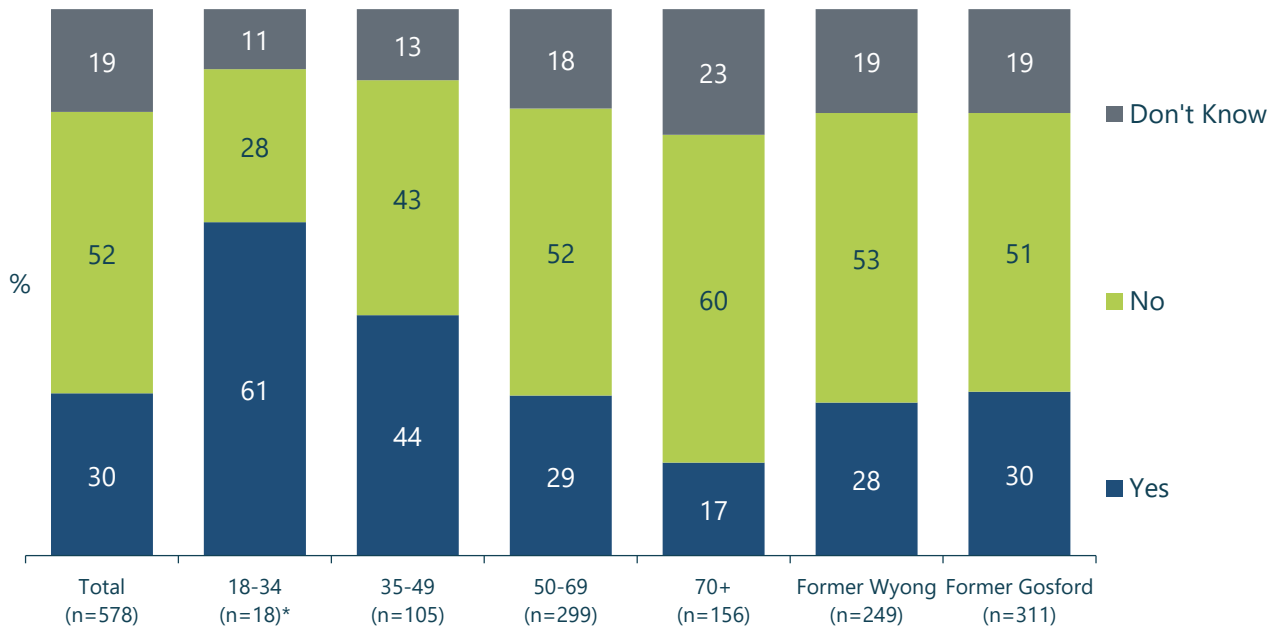
Q. Now, thinking about sewerage services in the last 12 months, please indicate if your household has been impacted by the following:

Base: Respondents with a water and/or sewer connection (Residential - Structured n=489)

Looking at the results from the Residential – Council YVOC survey in more detail (see Figure 21) the same pattern by age can be seen quite clearly. Excluding the 18 to 34 year old group (due to the small sample size), this varied between 44% (amongst the 35 to 49 year olds) and 17% (amongst the 70+ year olds).

There was no real difference between respondents from the former Council areas (28% for the former Wyong area, and 30% for the former Gosford area respondents).

Figure 21: Experienced sewerage overflows on their property (Residential – Council YVOC)



Q. Now, thinking about sewerage services in the last 12 months, please indicate if your household has been impacted by the following:

Base: Respondents with a water and/or sewer connection (Residential – Council YVOC n=578)

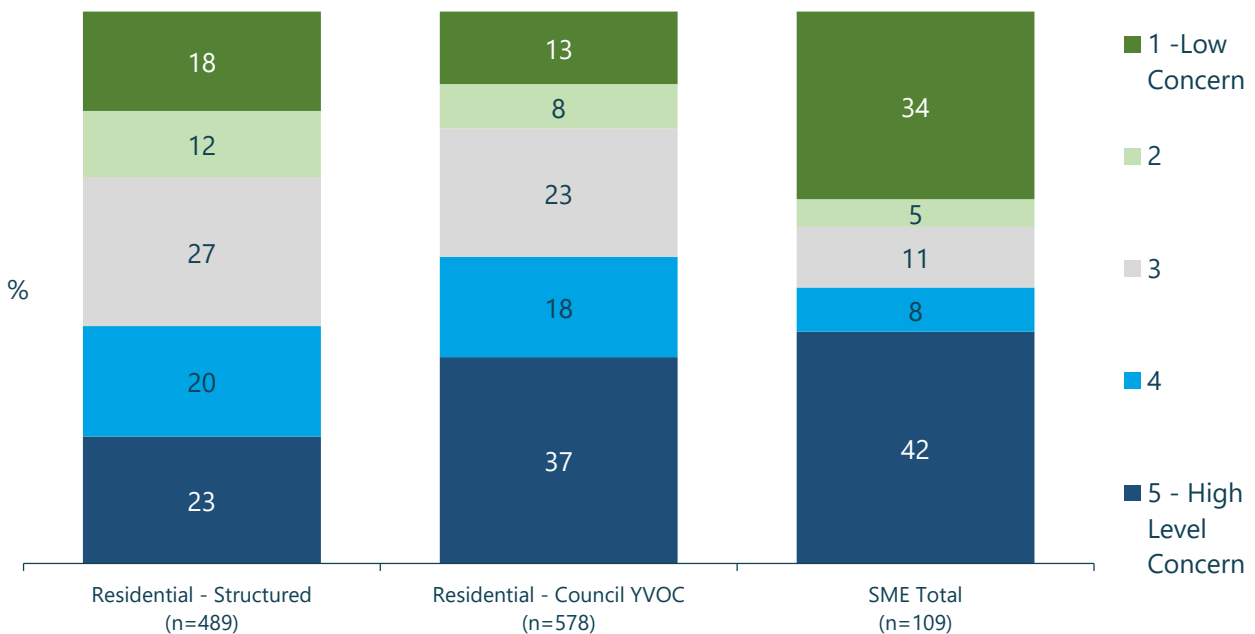
### Concern over the frequency of sewerage overflows into the natural environment

The survey respondents were asked, based on what they had experienced themselves or heard about from others, how concerned they are about the frequency of sewerage overflows (caused by blockages and chokes in the sewer system) that flow into the natural environment (e.g. bushland, river, beaches or lakes). A score of 1 indicated low concern, while a score of 5 indicated high concern (see Figure 22).

The proportion of respondents indicated that they were concerned in total (those who gave a rating of 4 or 5 out of 5 for this) varied between 43% (amongst the Residential - Structured respondents) to 55% (amongst the Residential – Council YVOC respondents).

The SME respondents were fairly polarised on this issue, with 50% indicating that they were concerned (in total), and 39% indicating that they were unconcerned.

Figure 22: Concern relating to overflows into the community



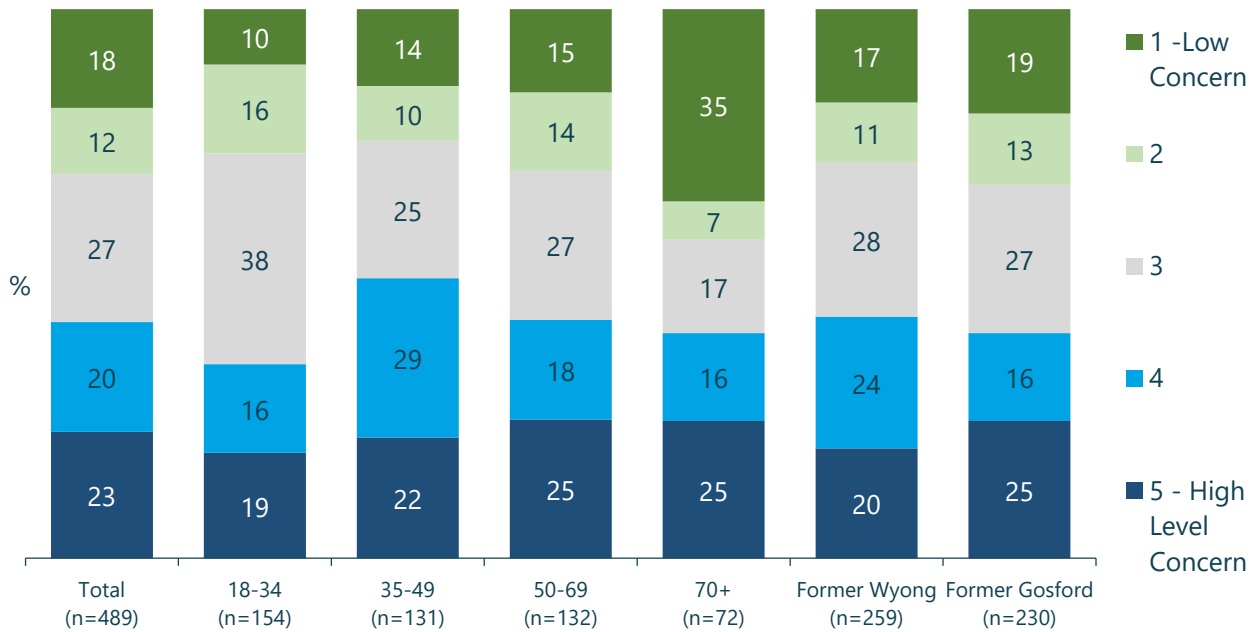
Q. Based on what you have experienced yourself or heard about from others, how concerned are you by the frequency of sewerage overflows (caused by blockages and chokes in the sewer system) that flow into the natural environment (e.g. bushland, river, beaches or lakes):

Base: Respondents with a water and/or sewer connection (Residential - Structured n=489; Residential – Council YVOC n=578; SME n=109)

Looking at the results from the Residential - Structured survey in more detail (see Figure 23) it can be seen that respondents aged 35 to 49 were the most likely to indicate concern over overflows into the community (51% gave a rating of 4 or 5 out of 5) while the 70+ year olds were the most likely to indicate low/no concern in this area (42% gave a rating of 1 or 2 out of 5).

Concern was fairly consistent by location.

Figure 23: Concern relating to overflows into the community (Residential – Structured)



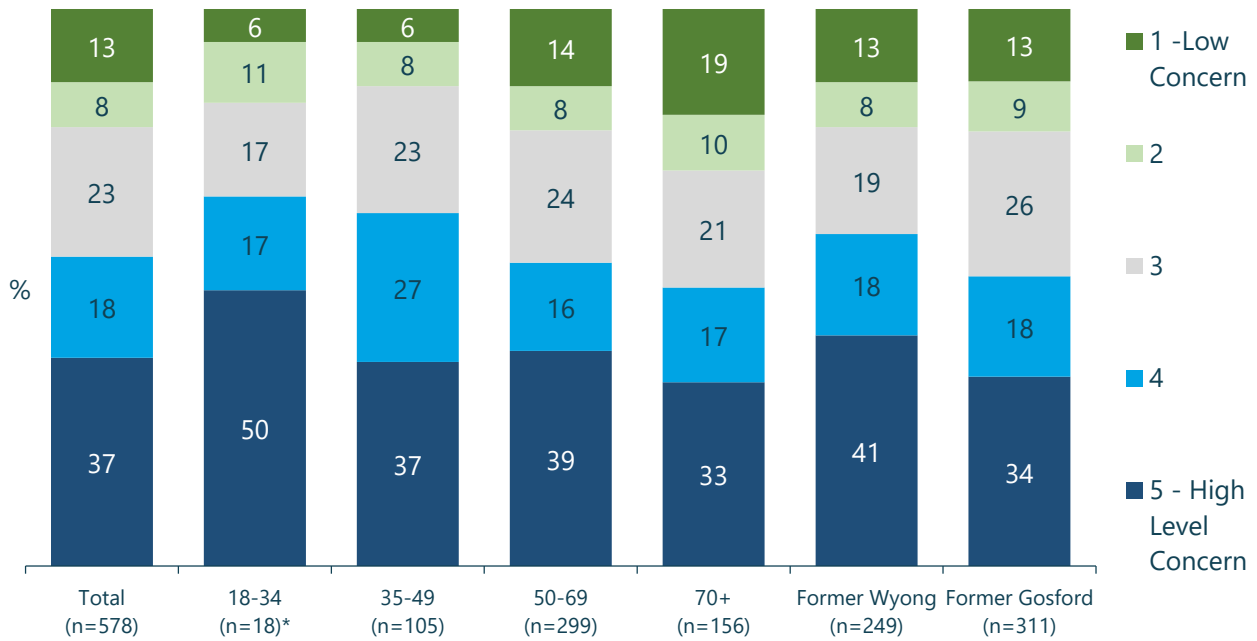
Q. Based on what you have experienced yourself or heard about from others, how concerned are you by the frequency of sewage overflows (caused by blockages and chokes in the sewer system) that flow into the natural environment (e.g. bushland, river, beaches or lakes):

Base: Respondents with a water and/or sewer connection (Residential - Structured n=489)

Looking at the results from the Residential – Council YVOC survey in more detail (see Figure 24) it can be seen that concern level decrease with increasing age. Excluding the 18 to 34 year old group (due to the small sample size), total concern varied between 64% (amongst the 35 to 49 year olds) and 50% (amongst the 70+ year olds).

Respondents in the former Wyong Council area showed slightly more concern than those in the former Gosford Council area (59% and 51% respectively).

Figure 24: Concern relating to overflows into the community (Residential – Council YVOC)



Q. Based on what you have experienced yourself or heard about from others, how concerned are you by the frequency of sewage overflows (caused by blockages and chokes in the sewer system) that flow into the natural environment (e.g. bushland, river, beaches or lakes):

Base: Respondents with a water and/or sewer connection (Residential – Council YVOC n=578)



### *Qualitative outcomes – Sewerage overflows*

When the issue of sewerage overflows was prompted within the group discussions there was a considerable degree of concern expressed about the impact that these overflows can have – particularly in relation to beaches after heavy rain.

*“When there is heavy rainfall it seems to overload the local pumping station.” Former Gosford Council area resident*

*“I have seen the odd bit of toilet paper floating at the beach. And sometimes it is closed because of the sewerage getting into the water. It’s not ideal. You would expect that in poorer countries, not in Australia.” Former Wyong Council area resident*

Two participants indicated that they had had a personal experience at their own property.

- For one of these, the immediate response by Central Coast Council was praised, but the follow-up for ‘filling the hole’ and ‘laying turf’ down was said to be delayed (they assumed due to Council’s current financial situation).
- The other participant mentioned that they had an experience with a sewerage overflow when there was flooding in the area.

*“We get sewerage overcharge into our garage. Once every 6-12 months. Whenever there is a lot of flooding in Tuggarah.” Former Wyong Council area resident.*

### 5.3 Water and Sewerage Service Performance

Survey respondents were asked to think about their water and sewerage services over the past 12 months, and were asked to indicate their satisfaction in two performance areas – using a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is low satisfaction and 5 is high satisfaction.

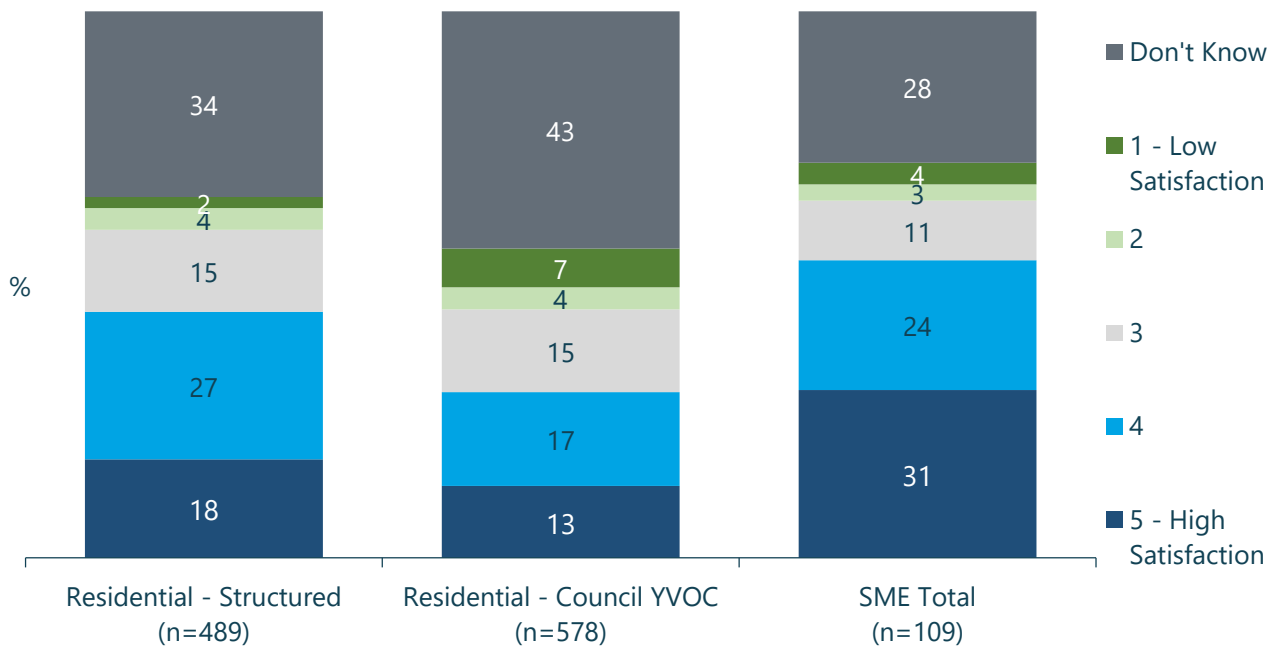
#### Being easy to deal with

While satisfaction with Central Coast Council being ‘easy to deal with’ does not appear to be particularly high, many respondents were unable to rate this aspect (between 28% and 43% indicated that they were unable to do so).

Total satisfaction levels (that is scores 4 and 5 out of 5) varied between 40% (amongst the Residential – Council YVOC respondents) to 55% (amongst the SME respondents).

Importantly, dissatisfaction levels only varied between 6% (amongst the Residential – Structured respondents) and 11% (amongst the Residential – Council YVOC respondents).

Figure 25: Satisfaction with: Being easy to deal with

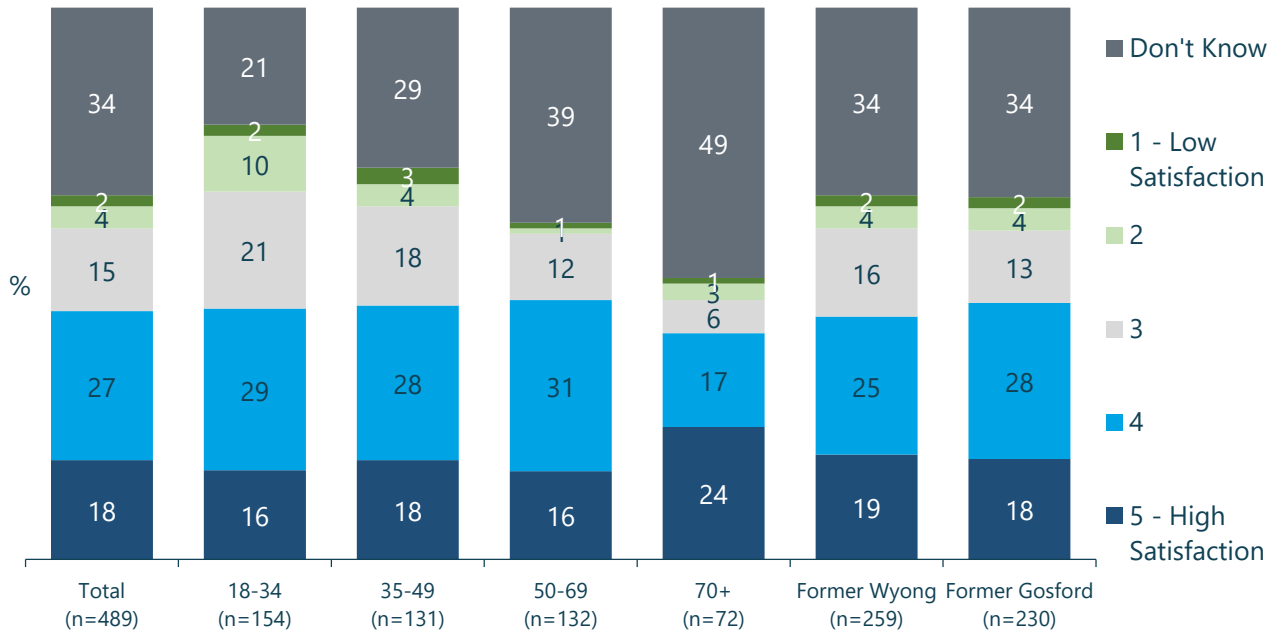


Q. Still thinking about the last 12 months, how satisfied have you been with your water and sewerage supplier in the following ways (where 1 is low satisfaction and 5 is high satisfaction):

Base: Respondents with a water and/or sewer connection (Residential - Structured n=489; Residential – Council YVOC n=578; SME n=109)

Looking at the results from the Residential - Structured survey in more detail (see Figure 26) it can be seen that satisfaction levels were quite consistent by age and location, with the proportion of 'Don't Know' responses varying considerably – from 21% (amongst the 18 to 34 year olds) to 49% (amongst the 70+ year olds).

Figure 26: Satisfaction with: Being easy to deal with (Residential – Structured)



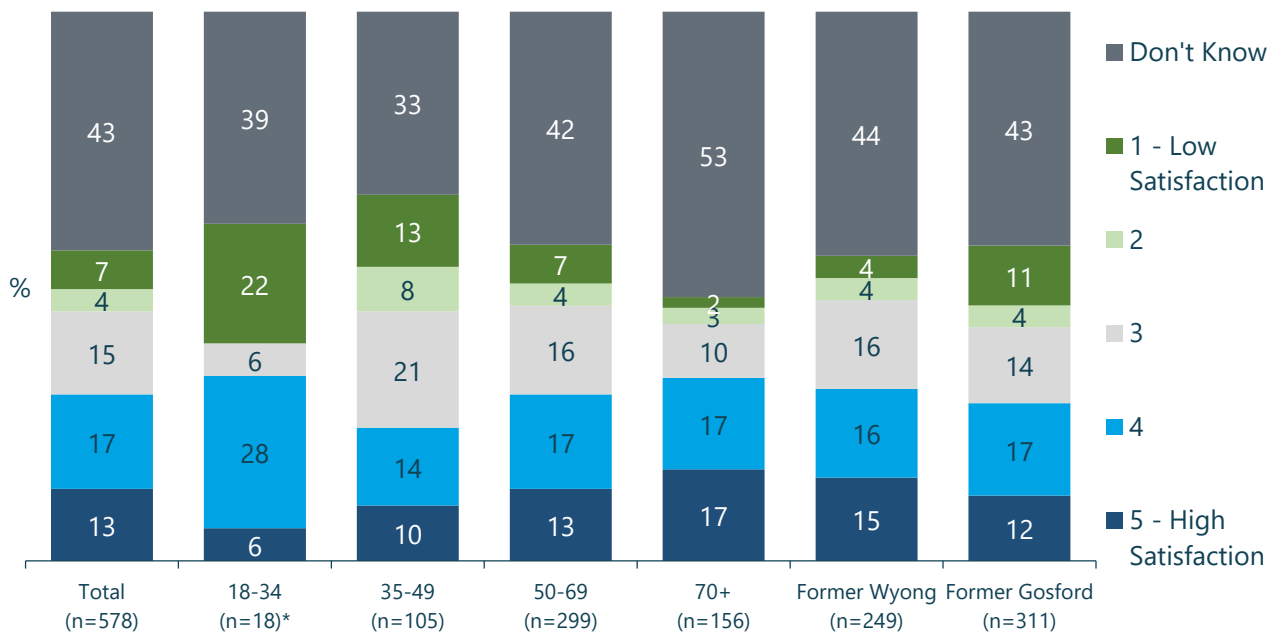
Q. Still thinking about the last 12 months, how satisfied have you been with your water and sewerage supplier in the following ways (where 1 is low satisfaction and 5 is high satisfaction):

Base: Respondents with a water and/or sewer connection (Residential - Structured n=489)

Looking at the results from the Residential – Council YVOC survey in more detail (see Figure 27) there was a little more variation evident, with satisfaction by age varying between 34% (amongst the 70+ year olds) and 42% (amongst the 50 to 69 year olds) – excluding the 18 to 34 year old group (due to the small sample size), Again, the proportion of ‘Don’t Know’ responses increased with increasing age.

While relatively small in overall terms, the proportion of dissatisfied respondents was higher amongst the former Gosford Council area respondents than it was amongst the former Wyong Council area respondents (15% and 8% respectively).

Figure 27: Satisfaction with: Being easy to deal with (Residential – Council YVOC)



Q. Still thinking about the last 12 months, how satisfied have you been with your water and sewerage supplier in the following ways (where 1 is low satisfaction and 5 is high satisfaction):

Base: Respondents with a water and/or sewer connection (Residential – Council YVOC n=578)

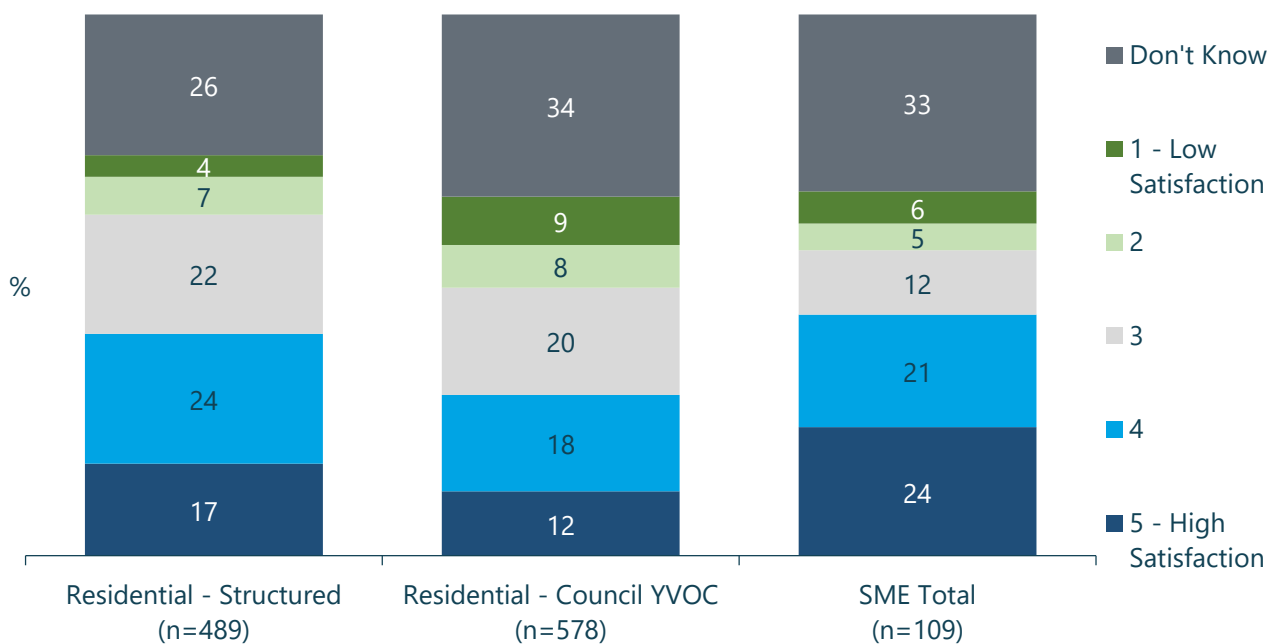
### Having information available in relation to any outages/service interruptions

While satisfaction with Central Coast Council ‘having information available in relation to any outages/service interruptions’ does not appear to be particularly high, this is again primarily due to many respondents being unable to rate this aspect (between 26% and 34% indicated that they were unable to do so).

Total satisfaction levels varied between 30% (amongst the Residential – Council YVOC respondents) to 45% (amongst the SME respondents).

Dissatisfaction was just above the one in ten level (11% for both the Residential – Structured and SME respondents, and 17% for the Residential – Council YVOC respondents).

Figure 28: Satisfaction with: Having information available in relation to any outages/service interruptions



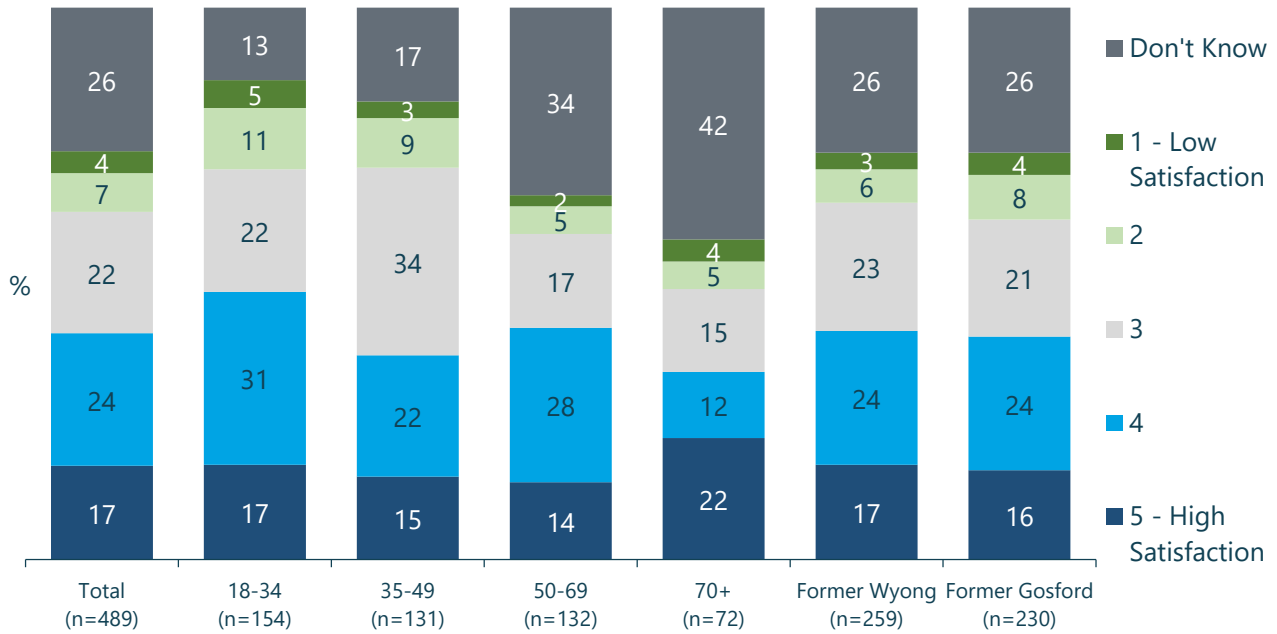
Q. Still thinking about the last 12 months, how satisfied have you been with your water and sewerage supplier in the following ways (where 1 is low satisfaction and 5 is high satisfaction):

Base: Respondents with a water and/or sewer connection (Residential - Structured n=489; Residential – Council YVOC n=578; SME n=109)

Looking at the results from the Residential - Structured survey in more detail (see Figure 29) it can be seen that satisfaction by age ranged from 34% (amongst the 70+ year olds) to 48% (amongst the 18 to 34 year olds). However, the 'Don't Know' responses varied between 13% (amongst the 18 to 34 year olds) to 42% (amongst the 70+ year olds).

There were no real differences by location.

Figure 29: Satisfaction with: Having information available in relation to any outages/service interruptions (Residential – Structured)



Q. Still thinking about the last 12 months, how satisfied have you been with your water and sewerage supplier in the following ways (where 1 is low satisfaction and 5 is high satisfaction):

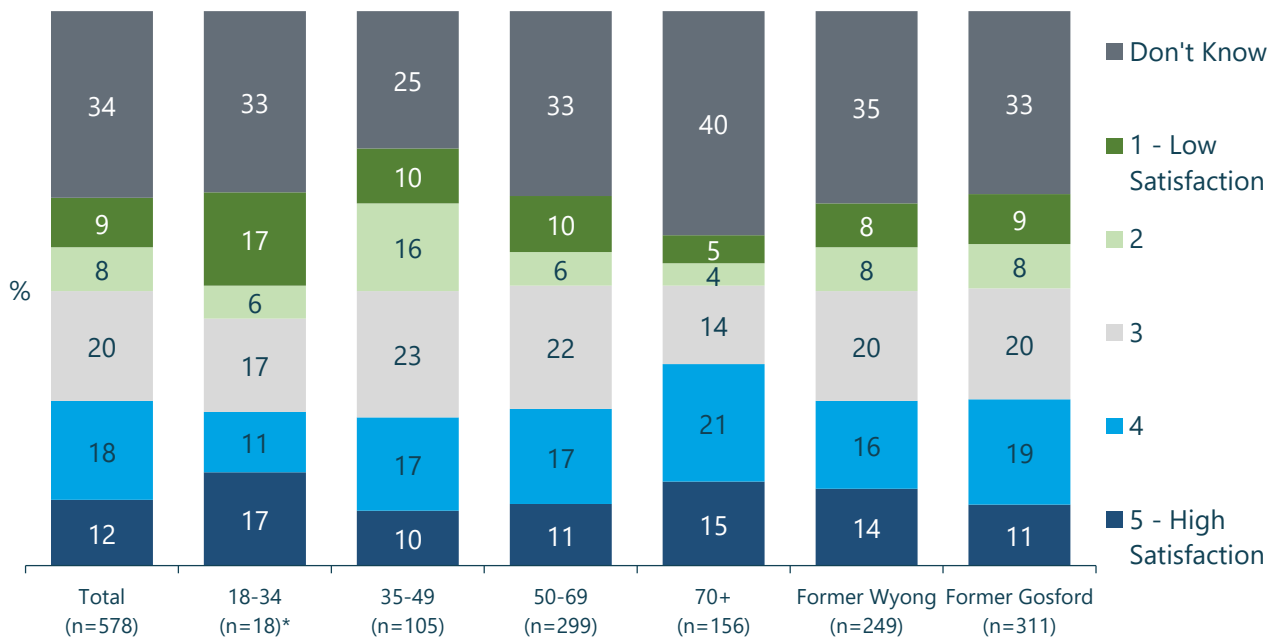
Base: Respondents with a water and/or sewer connection (Residential - Structured n=489)

Looking at the results from the Residential – Council YVOC survey in more detail (see Figure 30) it can be seen that satisfaction by age ranged from 27% (amongst the 35 to 59 year olds) to 36% (amongst the 70+ year olds) – excluding the 18 to 34 year old group (due to the small sample size).

The ‘Don’t Know’ responses were also sizable amongst the Residential – Council YVOC sample, varying between 25% (amongst the 35 to 59 year olds) and 40% (amongst the 70+ year olds).

There were no real differences by location.

Figure 30: Satisfaction with: Having information available in relation to any outages/service interruptions (Residential – Council YVOC)



Q. Still thinking about the last 12 months, how satisfied have you been with your water and sewerage supplier in the following ways (where 1 is low satisfaction and 5 is high satisfaction):

Base: Respondents with a water and/or sewer connection (Residential – Council YVOC n=578)

## 6. Drainage

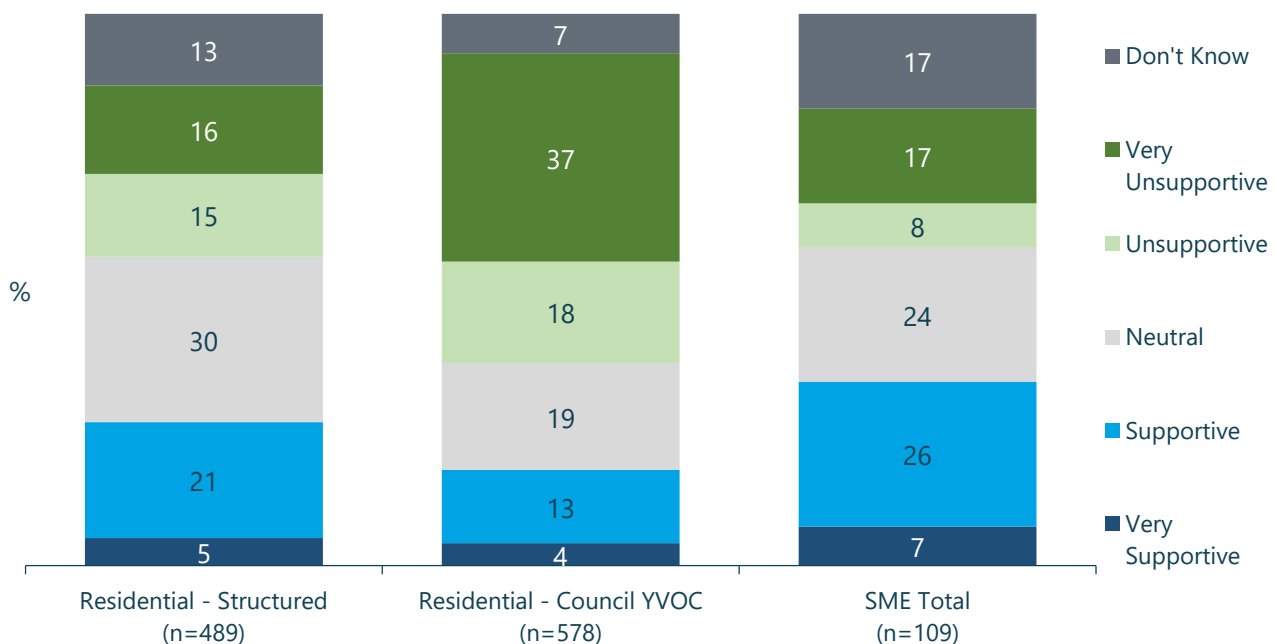
### 6.1 The Determination and Issuing of Drainage Charges

Survey respondents were asked to indicate their level of support for moving the stormwater drainage charge from the water bills to general Council rates – using a scale from very supportive to very unsupportive.

While the Residential - Structured respondents and the SME respondents were reasonably polarised in their response to the idea of Central Coast Council determining their drainage charge and issuing this charge through general rates – the majority of the Residential – Council YVOC respondents were opposed to it.

Within the Residential – Structured survey 26% of respondents supported the idea, while 31% opposed it, and in the SME survey the balance was switched slightly in the other direction (with 33% supporting it and 25% opposing it), yet in the Residential – Council YVOC survey the majority of respondents opposed this idea (55%, with only 17% support indicated).

Figure 31: Support for a change in the determination and issuing of drainage charges



Q. At the moment the stormwater drainage charge is included in your water bill and the pricing is determined by IPART. IPART have suggested that Council investigates the possibility of having the pricing set by Central Coast Council as part of the general rates, to be in-line with how other Councils charge for this. In principle, if the amount was to remain at a similar level, how supportive would you be for the stormwater drainage fee to be set by Central Coast Council under general Council rates? Would you be...

Base: Respondents with a water and/or sewer connection (Residential - Structured n=489; Residential – Council YVOC n=578; SME n=109)

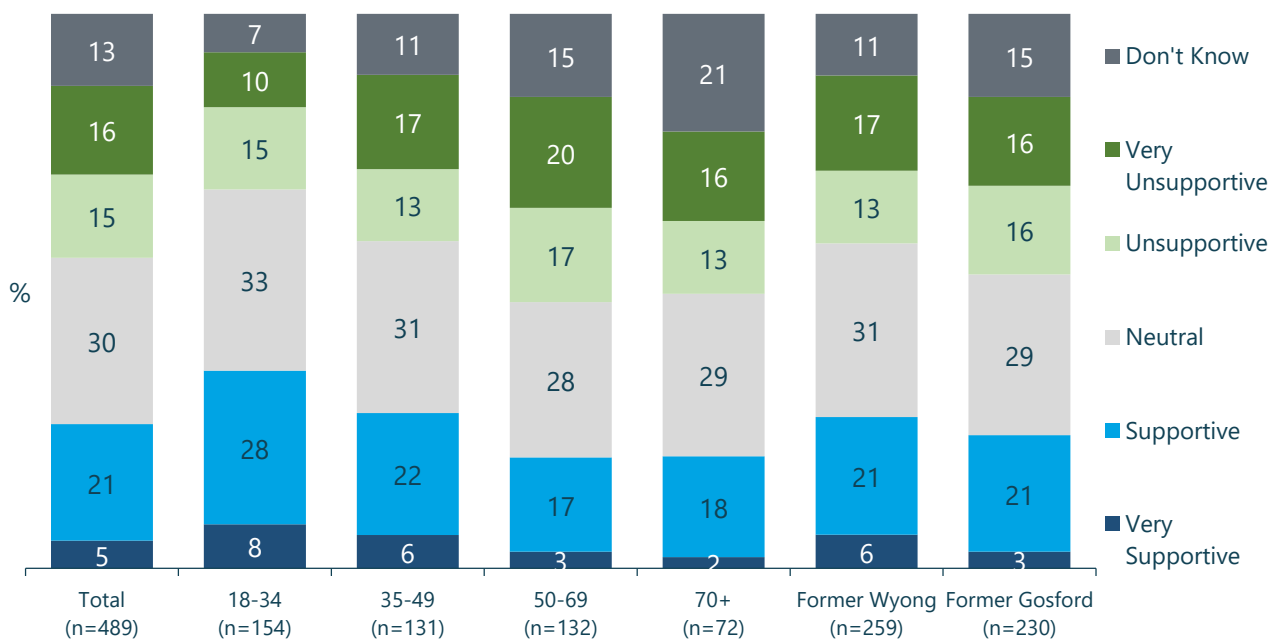


Looking at the results from the Residential - Structured survey in more detail (see Figure 32) it can be seen that support by age ranged from 20% (amongst the 50 to 69 and the 70+ year olds) to 36% (amongst the 18 to 34 year olds). However, the proportion opposed varied between 25% (amongst the 18 to 34 year olds) to 37% (amongst the 50 to 69 year olds).

There were only minor differences by location.

Support amongst those from lower income households was not greatly different, with 23% of those from households with a stated income of under \$42K indicating that they were supportive of this idea, while 27% were unsupportive.

Figure 32: Satisfaction with: Support for a change in the determination and issuing of drainage charges (Residential – Structured)



Q. At the moment the stormwater drainage charge is included in your water bill and the pricing is determined by IPART. IPART have suggested that Council investigates the possibility of having the pricing set by Central Coast Council as part of the general rates, to be in-line with how other Councils charge for this. In principle, if the amount was to remain at a similar level, how supportive would you be for the stormwater drainage fee to be set by Central Coast Council under general Council rates? Would you be...

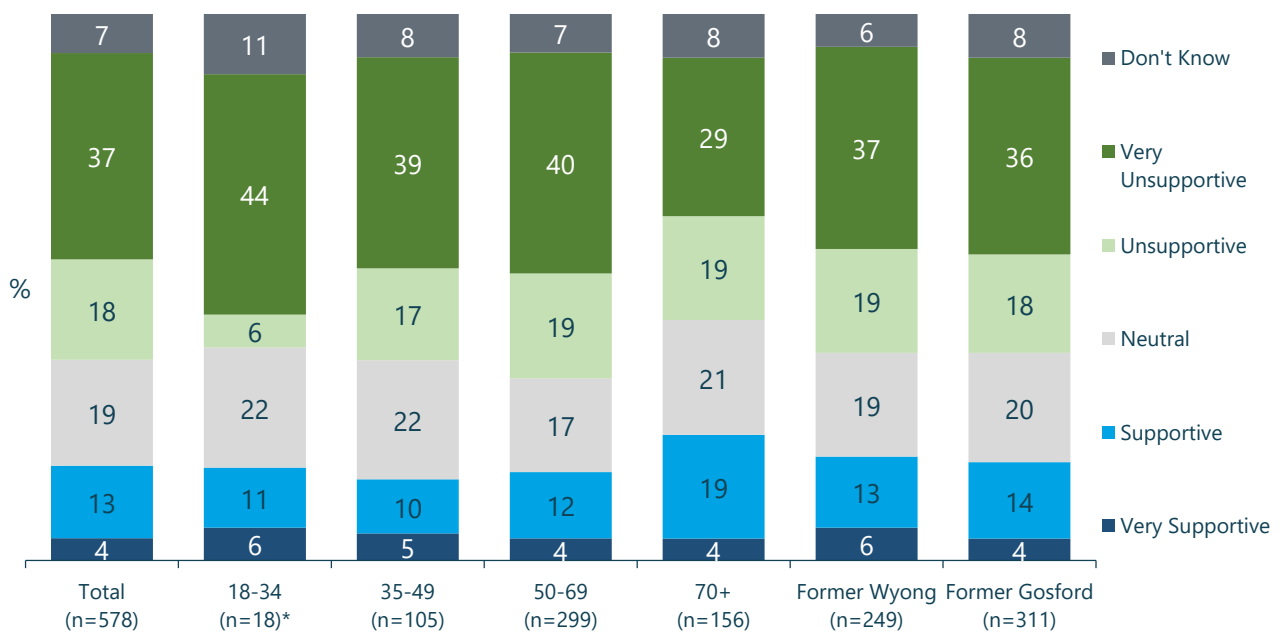
Base: Respondents with a water and/or sewer connection (Residential - Structured n=489)

Looking at the results from the Residential – Council YVOC survey in more detail (see Figure 33) it can be seen that support by age was relatively low across all sub-groups – peaking at only 23% amongst the 70+ year olds. However, opposition to this idea was consistently high – peaking at 59% amongst the 50 to 69 year olds

There were no real differences by location.

Support amongst those from lower income households was inline with the general support level, with 15% of those from households with a stated income of under \$42K indicating that they were supportive of this idea, while 55% were unsupportive.

Figure 33: Satisfaction with: Support for a change in the determination and issuing of drainage charges (Residential – Council YVOC)



Q. At the moment the stormwater drainage charge is included in your water bill and the pricing is determined by IPART. IPART have suggested that Council investigates the possibility of having the pricing set by Central Coast Council as part of the general rates, to be in-line with how other Councils charge for this. In principle, if the amount was to remain at a similar level, how supportive would you be for the stormwater drainage fee to be set by Central Coast Council under general Council rates? Would you be...

Base: Respondents with a water and/or sewer connection (Residential – Council YVOC n=578)

### *Qualitative outcomes – Drainage charge determination and billing*

The outcome in the group discussions was very similar. Some didn't mind whether they paid the drainage charge as part of their water bill or rates as it would be the same level (the amount was seen to be the key factor in this response).

*"Whether you pay Peter or Paul it's not going to be any cheaper. I don't see any issue with it."  
Former Wyong Council area resident*

However, due to the recent financial issues experience by Council, others were against this idea as they lacked confidence and trust in Council's ability to manage the drainage budget and to minimise the cost to the community.

*"If council has control could they just charge whatever they want?" Former Gosford Council area resident*

*"Council has to recognise that they suffer from a huge credibility issue at the moment." Former Gosford Council area resident*

*"I think recently we've seen how well the Council manages their money and frankly I don't trust them to put the rates up higher than they need to be." Former Wyong Council area resident*

It was mentioned by some renters that if it was moved to the rates bill then their landlord would probably put their rent up to account for any increase in the rates that the landlord would have to pay (assuming the tenant was currently paying the water bill).

A couple of participants also expressed frustration about paying a charge for drainage when they don't have kerbs and guttering in their area. They were convinced that this meant there was no drainage service in their area, and so they shouldn't be paying for it.

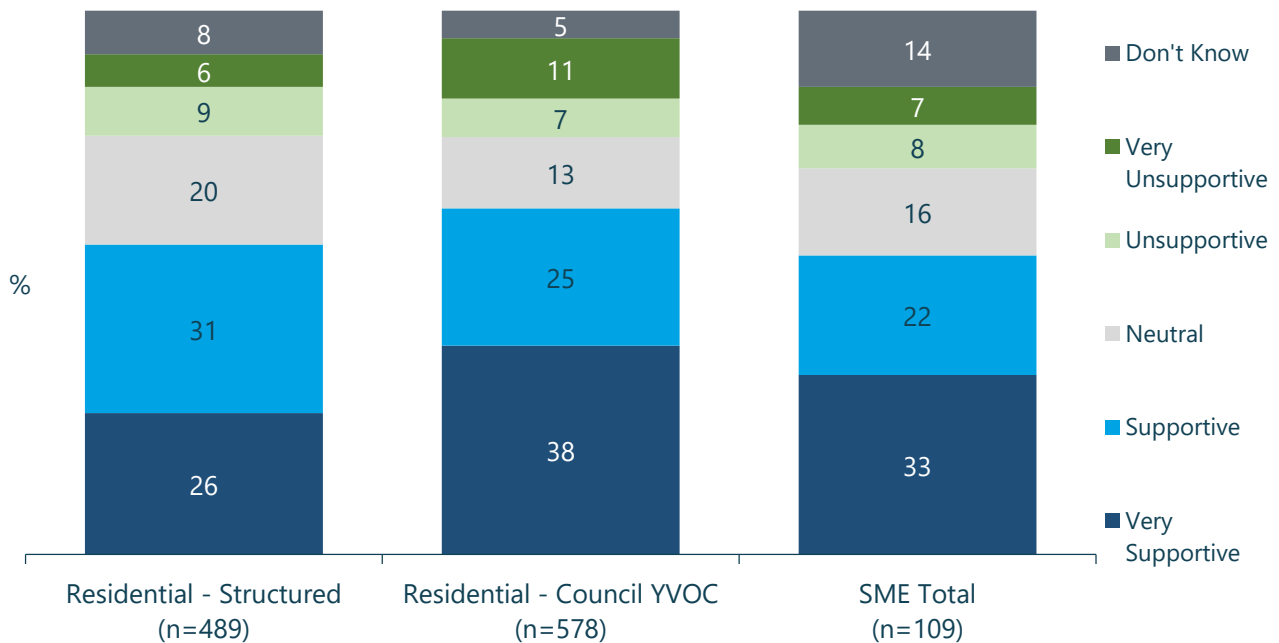
## 6.2 Contributions to the Cost of Drainage Infrastructure

Survey respondents were informed that some residents currently don't contribute to the cost of drainage infrastructure, and were asked to indicate their level of support for all Central Coast residents contributing to this cost through a drainage charge.

The majority of all respondents showed support for the idea of all residents/property owners contributing to the funding of drainage infrastructure. This varied from 55% of the SME respondents to 63% of the Residential – Council YVOC respondents.

Opposition to this idea was relatively limited – varying between 15% (amongst both the Residential – Structured and SME respondents) to just 18% (amongst the residential – Council YVOC respondents).

Figure 34: Support for all residents contributing to the cost of drainage infrastructure



Q. At the moment, due to the way drainage charges were originally set up, a small proportion of the Council's population does not contribute to the funding of drainage infrastructure. To what extent do you support the idea of all property owners within the Central Coast region contributing towards that cost? Would you be...

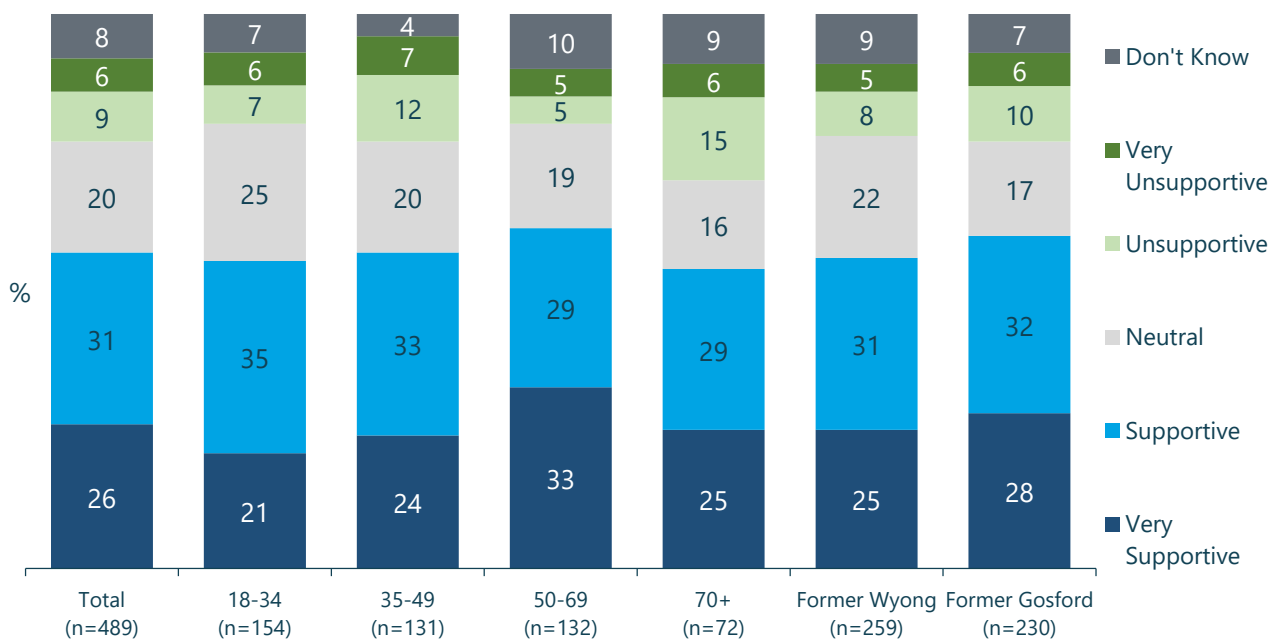
Base: Respondents with a water and/or sewer connection (Residential - Structured n=489; Residential – Council YVOC n=578; SME n=109)

Looking at the results from the Residential - Structured survey in more detail (see Figure 35) it can be seen that support was fairly consistent across all sub-groups depicted.

The highest level of support was from the 50 to 69 year old respondents (62%), while the highest level of opposition was amongst those aged 70+ (at only 21%).

Support amongst those from lower income households was slightly lower, with 52% of those from households with a stated income of under \$42K indicating that they were supportive of this idea, while 21% were unsupportive.

Figure 35: Satisfaction with: Support for a change in the determination and issuing of drainage charges (Residential – Structured)



Q. At the moment, due to the way drainage charges were originally set up, a small proportion of the Council's population does not contribute to the funding of drainage infrastructure. To what extent do you support the idea of all property owners within the Central Coast region contributing towards that cost? Would you be....

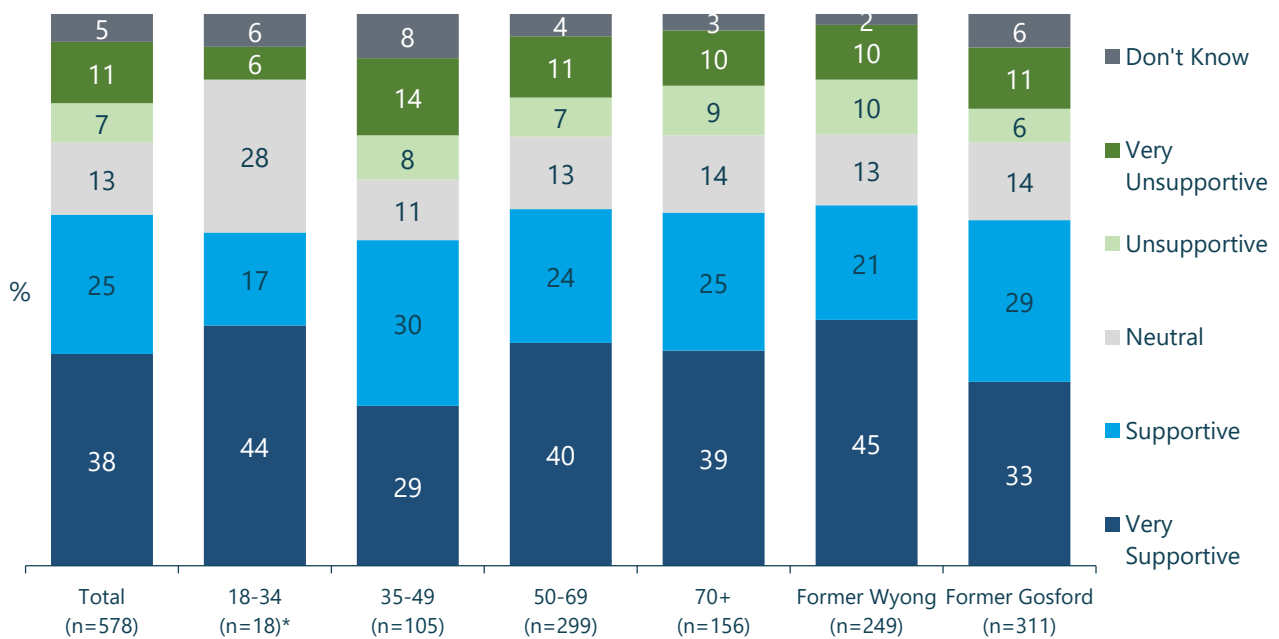
Base: Respondents with a water and/or sewer connection (Residential - Structured n=489)

Looking at the results from the Residential – Council YVOC survey in more detail (see Figure 36) it can be seen that support was also fairly consistent across all sub-groups depicted.

The highest level of support was from the former Wyong Council area respondents (66%), while the highest level of opposition was amongst those aged 35 to 59 (at only 22%).

Support amongst those from lower income households was slightly lower, with 57% of those from households with a stated income of under \$42K indicating that they were supportive of this idea, while 24% were unsupportive.

Figure 36: Satisfaction with: Support for a change in the determination and issuing of drainage charges (Residential – Council YVOC)



Q. At the moment, due to the way drainage charges were originally set up, a small proportion of the Council's population does not contribute to the funding of drainage infrastructure. To what extent do you support the idea of all property owners within the Central Coast region contributing towards that cost? Would you be....

Base: Respondents with a water and/or sewer connection (Residential – Council YVOC n=578)

### *Qualitative outcomes – Common drainage charge for all customers*

Within the group discussions there was strong support for the idea of all property owners within Central Coast region to be contributing towards drainage costs.

Raising this idea in both groups led to questions being raised about why some customers have not been contributing to this cost to date – and they wanted to know who isn't paying and why they weren't paying.

*"If they have drainage then they should pay!" Former Wyong Council area resident*

There was also some confusion about what 'drainage' actually was and what the charge covered - and again a couple of the group participants questioned why they are currently paying a drainage service fee when they don't have kerbs and guttering in their area.

*"I think a lot more work has to be done on this before they charge. In lots of places they don't even have a drain, just grass! Why are we paying for something that doesn't even exist?" Former Wyong Council area resident*

One participant recognised the confusion relating to this service area.

*"I don't think people understand how the money is spent and what benefit they are getting from that." Former Gosford Council area resident*

Ultimately though, participants recognised that the charge needed to be made, and they were happy for everyone to contribute for the greater good and wellbeing of the community.

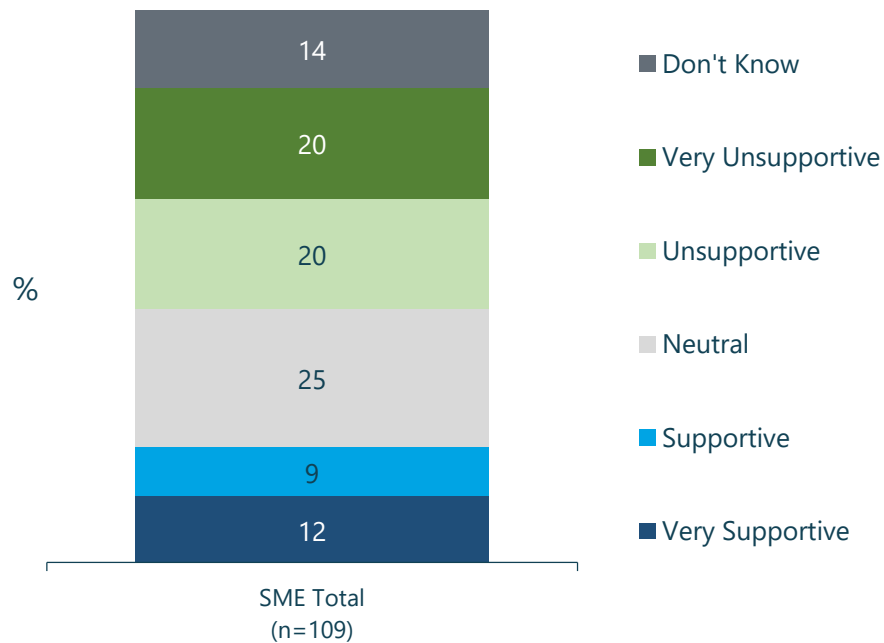
### 6.3 Support for all business properties receiving the same drainage charge

The SME survey respondents were informed that if a business resides in a 'business only / non-residential' complex, then the drainage charge is based on the total land size of the complex. It is then divided up based on the number of businesses in the complex. However, if a business resides in a complex that also includes residential premises, then each property is charged a set amount. They were then asked to indicate their level of support for all business properties being charged the same set amount.

Looking at the results from these SME respondents (see Figure 37) it can be seen that support was relatively low (21% in total) while opposition was more marked (40% in total).

A relatively large proportion of respondents were neutral in their response, or did not know whether or not to support/oppose it (39% in total).

Figure 37: Satisfaction with: Support for all business properties having the same drainage charge



Q. Currently if a business resides in a 'business only / non-residential' complex, then the drainage charge is based on the total land size of the complex. It is then divided up based on the number of businesses in the complex. If a business resides in a complex that also includes residential premises, then each property is charged a set amount. To what extent do you support all business properties being charged the same set amount? Would you be...

Base: Respondents with a water and/or sewer connection (SME n=109)



## 7. Scarcity Pricing

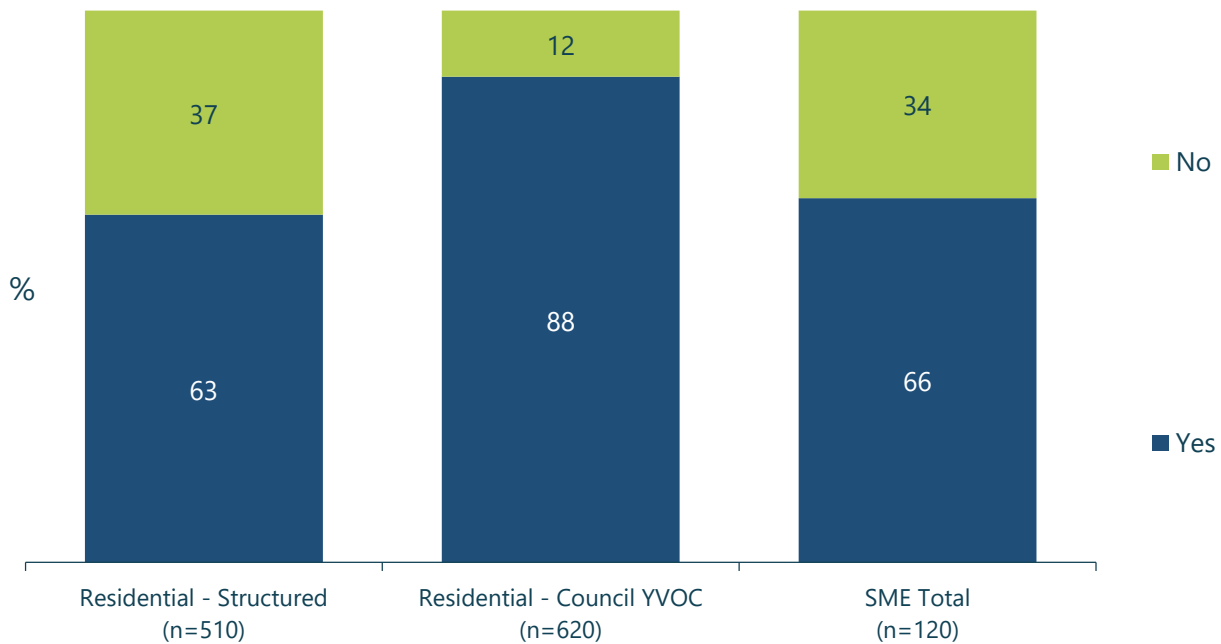
### 7.1 Bill Detail Awareness

Survey respondents were informed that there is both a Fixed and Usage component to their water bill, and were asked to indicate if they were previously aware of this.

As is shown in Figure 38, the majority of all respondents indicated that they were aware that there were both fixed and usage based charges on a standard water bill. However, more than a third of Residential – Structured respondents (37%) were unaware of these separate components.

The Residential – Council YVOC respondents had the highest level of prior awareness of this (88%).

Figure 38: Awareness of bill details



Q. Central Coast Council charges customers for water and sewerage services. Prices for these services are set by IPART, who is the independent pricing regulator in NSW. For their water services, customers pay a FIXED charge per property, and a USAGE charge that varies with the volume of water used by the property. So customers can control their overall bill by varying the amount of water that they use. Were you aware of this?

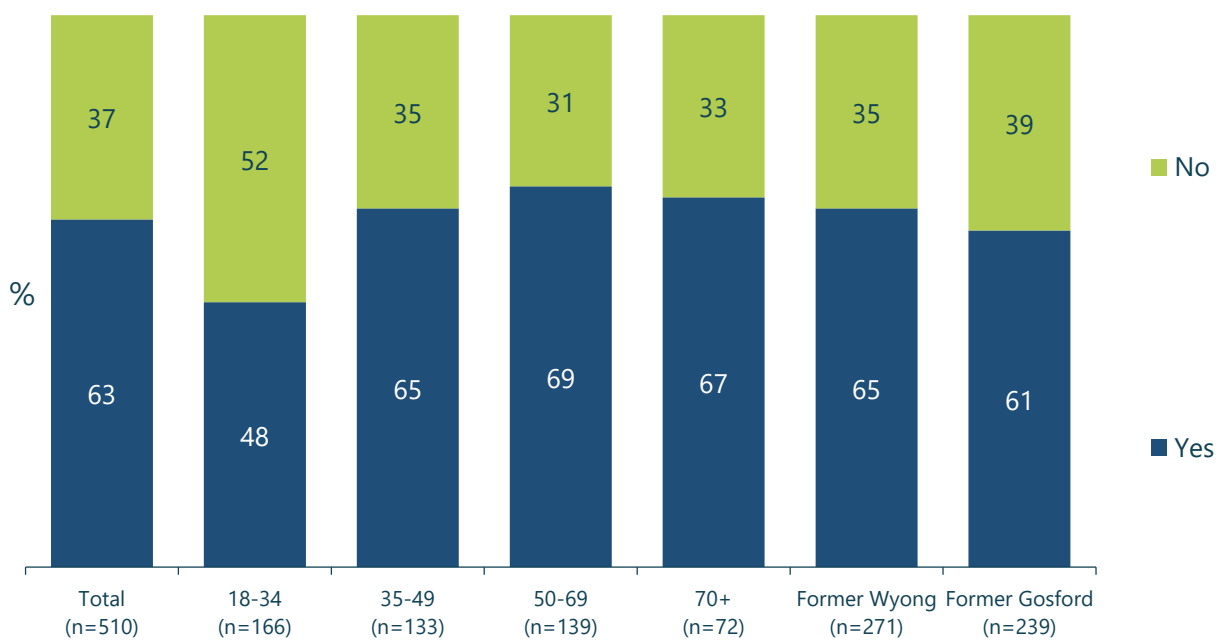
Base: All respondents (Residential - Structured n=510; Residential – Council YVOC n=620; SME n=120)

Looking at the results from the Residential - Structured survey in more detail (see Figure 39) it can be seen that awareness was reasonably high for all age groups – with the exception of the 18 to 34 year old respondents with more than half 52% indicating they were unaware.

Awareness was also relatively consistent by location (65% in the former Wyong Council area, and 61% in the former Gosford Council area).

There was a marginally lower level of awareness amongst those from lower income households, with 60% of those from households with a stated income of under \$42K indicating that they were aware of fixed and usage charges on water bills.

Figure 39: Awareness of bill details (Residential – Structured)



Q. Central Coast Council charges customers for water and sewerage services. Prices for these services are set by IPART, who is the independent pricing regulator in NSW. For their water services, customers pay a FIXED charge per property, and a USAGE charge that varies with the volume of water used by the property. So customers can control their overall bill by varying the amount of water that they use. Were you aware of this?

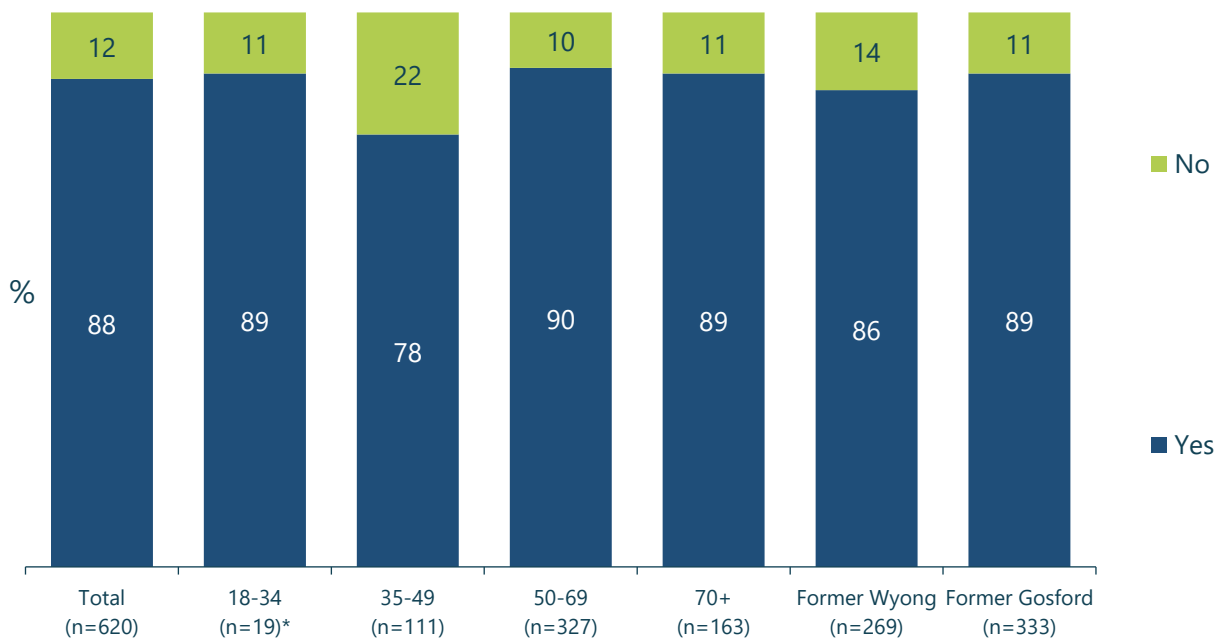
Base: All respondents (n=510)

Looking at the results from the Residential – Council YVOC survey in more detail (see Figure 40) it can be seen awareness was much higher amongst these survey respondents.

Awareness was also relatively consistent by age group – with the exception of the 35 to 49 year olds (78%, compared to 83% in total).

There was a slightly lower level of awareness amongst those from lower income households, with 83% of those from households with a stated income of under \$42K indicating that they were aware of fixed and usage charges on water bills.

Figure 40: Awareness of bill details (Residential – Council YVOC)



Q. Central Coast Council charges customers for water and sewerage services. Prices for these services are set by IPART, who is the independent pricing regulator in NSW. For their water services, customers pay a FIXED charge per property, and a USAGE charge that varies with the volume of water used by the property. So customers can control their overall bill by varying the amount of water that they use. Were you aware of this?

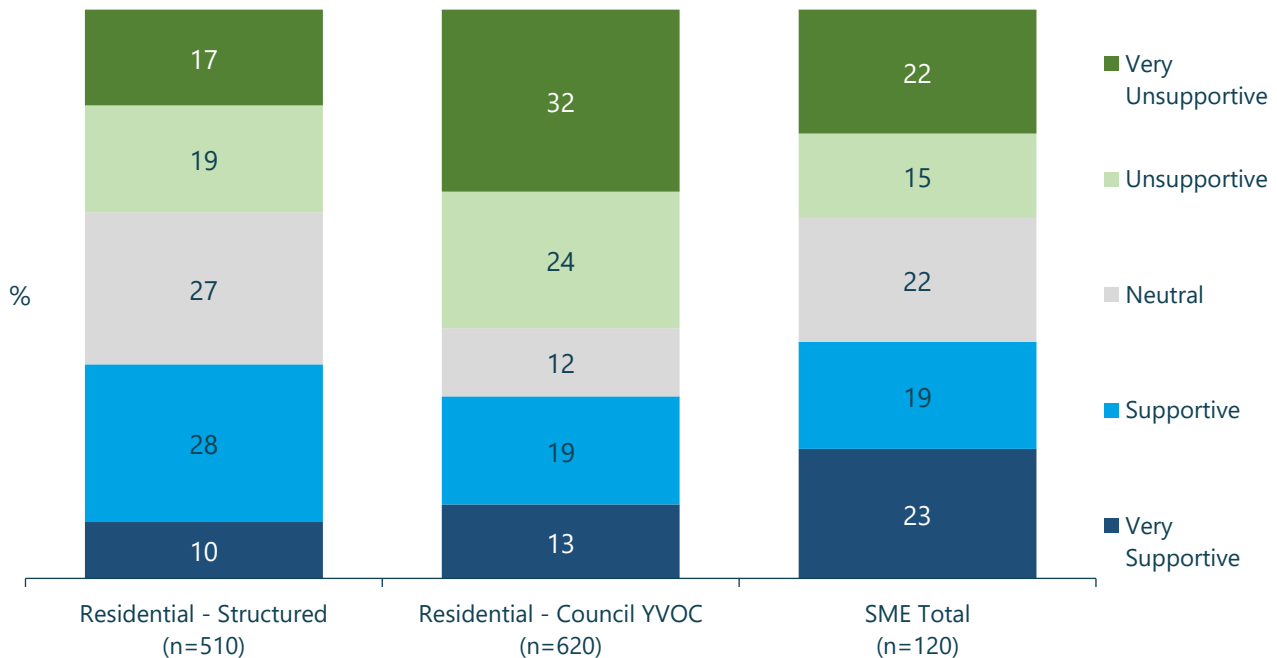
Base: All respondents (n=620)

## 7.2 Support for Scarcity Pricing

Survey respondents were provided with information relating to the scarcity pricing concept (including that there would be an increase in the usage charge for water during times of drought) and were asked to indicate a level of support/opposition for the idea.

As is shown in Figure 41, while there were fairly mixed reactions to the idea of increasing the usage charge for water during times of drought amongst both the structured residential and SME respondents (38% of Residential – Structured respondents supported the idea and 36% opposed it, while 42% of the SME respondents supported it and 37% opposed it), the majority of the Council - YVOC respondents were opposed to it (56%, with 32% indicating support).

Figure 41: Support for scarcity pricing



Q. In response to our variable climate, some other water providers have moved towards a pricing system that involves increasing the USAGE charge for water during times of drought. This means is that when water reserves run low, there is an increase in the USAGE price for water. Increasing the USAGE price then encourages residents to use less water – it generally doesn’t result in an increase in revenue for the provider because people use less and the cost to supply water also increases when water reserves are low. Central Coast Council is interested in knowing how supportive you would be of the introduction of this pricing system. They are proposing that when the dam levels fall below 50% the USAGE price for water increases. If a business didn’t reduce their consumption pattern, this could result in an increase of around \$10 per quarter on the average bill when dam levels are lower - however, the exact USAGE and FIXED charges would be determined by IPART. How supportive are you of Central Coast Council introducing this pricing system (increased usage charge during times of drought)?

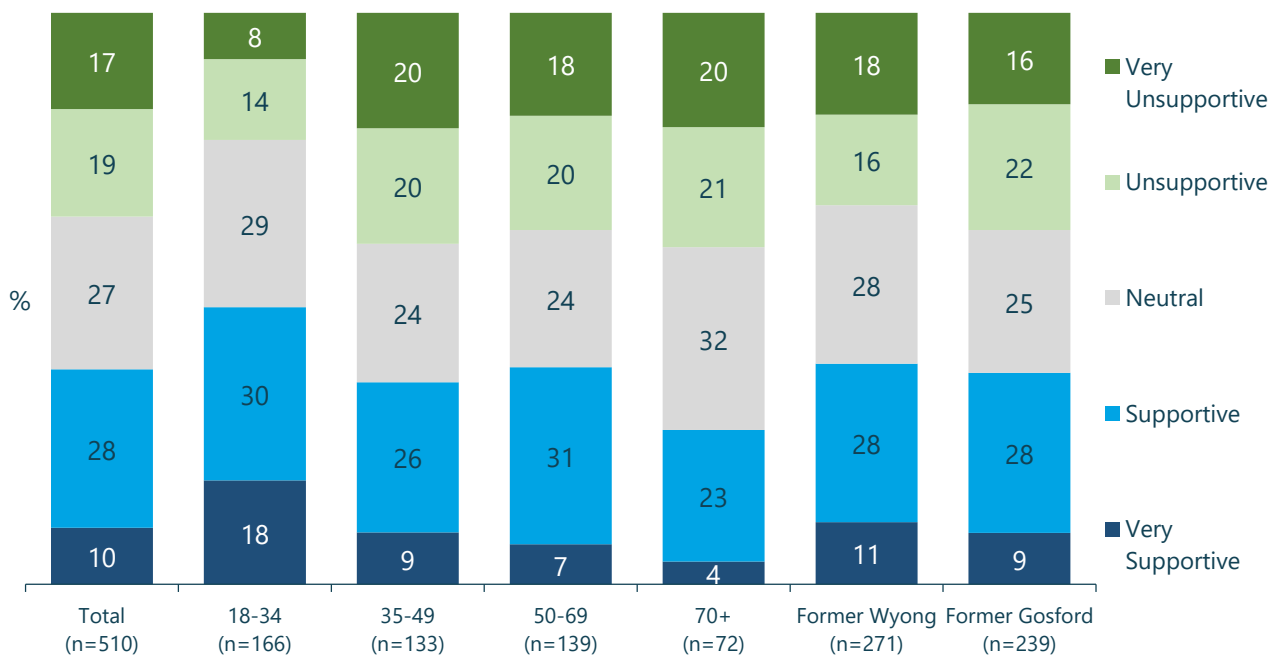
Base: All respondents (Residential - Structured n=510; Residential – Council YVOC n=620; SME n=120)

Looking at the results from the Residential - Structured survey in more detail (see Figure 42) it can be seen that support for the scarcity pricing concept was highest amongst the 18 to 34 year old respondents (48%), and lowest amongst the 70+ year old respondents (27%). Not surprisingly the opposition levels were highest for those aged 70+ (41%) and lowest for those aged 18 to 34 (22%).

Support and opposition levels were fairly even by location.

Support expressed by those from lower income households was inline with the total community, with 35% of those from households with a stated income of under \$42K indicating that they were supportive, while 33% were opposed to it.

Figure 42: Support for scarcity pricing (Residential – Structured)



Q. How supportive are you of Central Coast Council introducing this pricing system (increased usage charge during times of drought)?

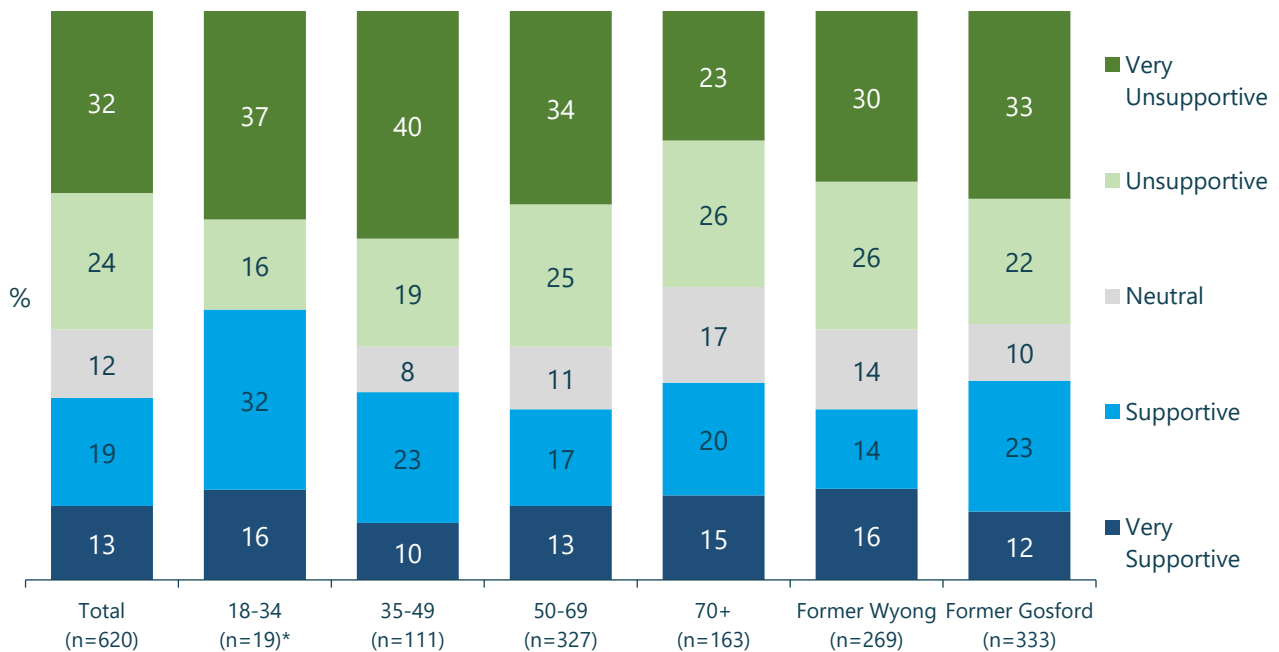
Base: Respondents with a water and/or sewer connection (Residential - Structured n=489)

Looking at the results from the Residential – Council YVOC survey in more detail (see Figure 43) it can be seen that (excluding the 18 to 34 year old group due to the small sample size) support was relatively low amongst all age groups – peaking at only 35% amongst those aged 70+, while opposition was highest amongst those aged 35 to 49 and 50 to 69 (59% for each).

Again, support and opposition were fairly even by location – though there was a slightly higher level of support amongst the former Gosford Council area respondents than the former Wyong Council area respondents (35% and 30% respectively).

There was a slightly lower level of support expressed by those from lower income households, with 25% of those from households with a stated income of under \$42K indicating that they were supportive, while 60% were opposed to it.

Figure 43: Support for scarcity pricing (Residential – Council YVOC)



Q. How supportive are you of Central Coast Council introducing this pricing system (increased usage charge during times of drought)?

Base: Respondents with a water and/or sewer connection (Residential – Council YVOC n=578)

### *Qualitative outcomes – Scarcity pricing*

The group participants also expressed mixed views in relation to the concept of Central Coast Council increasing the usage price of water during times of drought.

On one hand, some thought it would be a good way of increasing awareness of water usage, recognising its value and encouraging people to be more conscious of their water use and thereby save water.

*“I think it is an excellent idea, it makes people more aware. If you use it you pay more.” Former Gosford Council area Resident*

On the other hand, there was much concern about the potential impact that an increase in the usage price may have on larger families, those on lower incomes, and vulnerable customer in general (such as pensioners). It was thought that other water saving measures could be put in place first (such as water restrictions and more household water tanks) and that this sort of approach may be best left as a back-up.

*“I strongly disagree. I think it is taxing the poor. People still need to use a certain amount of water to live.” Former Wyong Council area resident*

There was a single suggestion, which many others then agreed with, that ideally households should pay more for usage over a certain pre-set threshold level which could be established for different household sizes – so that if households used more than a typical household of their size they would then be subject to higher prices (i.e. they would be charged more if they are using ‘excess’ water).

In addition, another participant objected to the idea that Council could alter the cost of water – even though they clearly understood the reason behind this concept. They suggested that water is a natural resource that Council shouldn’t have ownership of, and they interpreted the scarcity pricing concept as one that imposed on their view here.

However, once the pricing details of the concept were revealed to the group participants (\$10 a quarter on average) there was slightly more acceptance of the concept in one group, however the participants in the other group remained unsupportive.

*“\$10 is nothing to worry about.” Former Gosford Council area resident*

There did seem to be consensus that if it were to be adopted, the dam levels falling to 50% was a good level to change the usage price - as when storage falls below that level people started to become concerned about future supply.

The group participants who were in favour of the idea still wanted some provisions made for vulnerable customers and those on low incomes.

Again, at this stage in the discussion process, there were suggestions that other options should be considered ahead of an option like this, such as investing in more dams, making better connections between existing infrastructures, and promoting use of rainwater tanks etc.

Those opposed to the idea tended to feel that people were quite responsible with their water use anyway, and that incentives are a better motivator than penalties in encouraging behavioural change.

## 8. Price Alignment

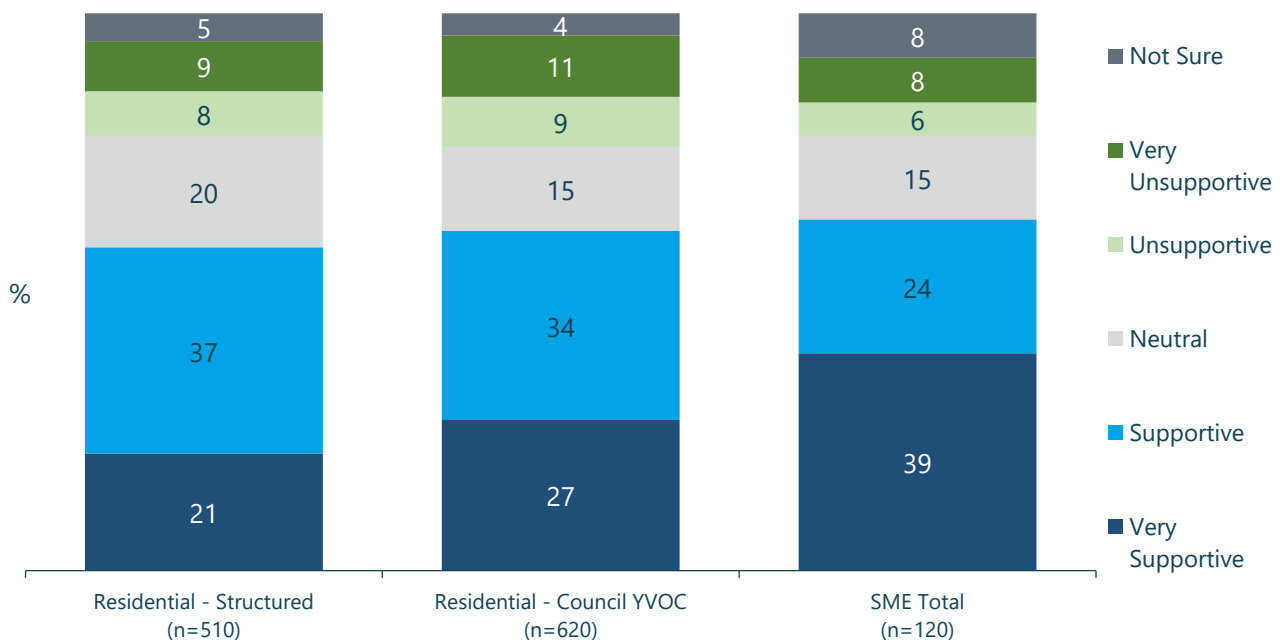
### 8.1 Reactions to the Price Alignment Concept

Survey respondents were informed that there are different sewerage service prices that customers pay depending on their location (based on the former Wyong and former Gosford Council areas), and were asked to indicate if they were supportive of these prices being aligned so that all customers paid the same amount for this service.

As is shown in Figure 44, the majority of all respondents indicated that they were supportive of the idea of introducing a single sewerage service price for all customers. Support varied between 58% (amongst the Residential – Structured respondents) to 63% (amongst the SME respondents).

The proportion of those opposed to this idea varied between 14% (amongst the SME respondents) to 20% (amongst the Residential – Council YVOC respondents).

Figure 44: Reactions to the general price alignment concept



Q. As you may know, Central Coast Council was formed from the amalgamation of the former Gosford and Wyong Councils. Each of the former Councils had responsibility for the provision of water and sewerage services to their residents. Now that they have been combined they have aligned the prices for water rates, but there are still different sewerage service charges. Historically, residents of the former Gosford City Council paid higher service charges as Gosford Council received more revenue to invest in infrastructure. To support the vision of ‘One – Central Coast’, Central Coast Council is interested to know how supportive you would be for a single price for sewerage services to be introduced for all Central Coast residents in the future, so that any future investment in sewerage services will be based on asset expenditure requirements, not on previous local government area boundaries. How supportive are you of the idea of introducing a single price so that all Central Coast Council residents pay the same amount for their sewerage services?

Base: All respondents (Residential - Structured n=510; Residential – Council YVOC n=620; SME n=120)

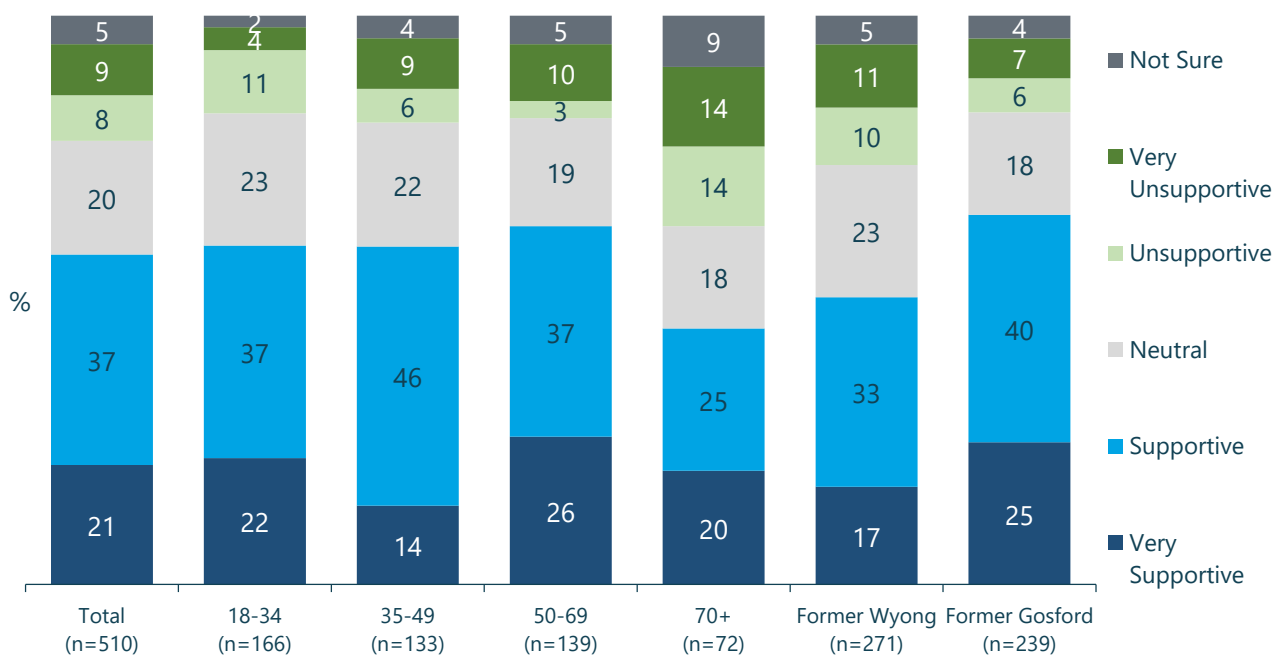


Looking at the results from the Residential - Structured survey in more detail (see Figure 45) it can be seen that the 70+ year old age group were the only ones without majority support for this concept (45% supported it while 28% opposed it).

It can also be seen that, while there was majority support in both instances, support was higher in the former Gosford Council area than it was in the former Wyong Council area where notably prices were likely to increase under this concept (65% and 50% respectively).

There was a lower level of support expressed by those from lower income households, with 45% of those from households with a stated income of under \$42K indicating that they were supportive, while 26% were opposed to it.

Figure 45: Reactions to the general price alignment concept (Residential – Structured)



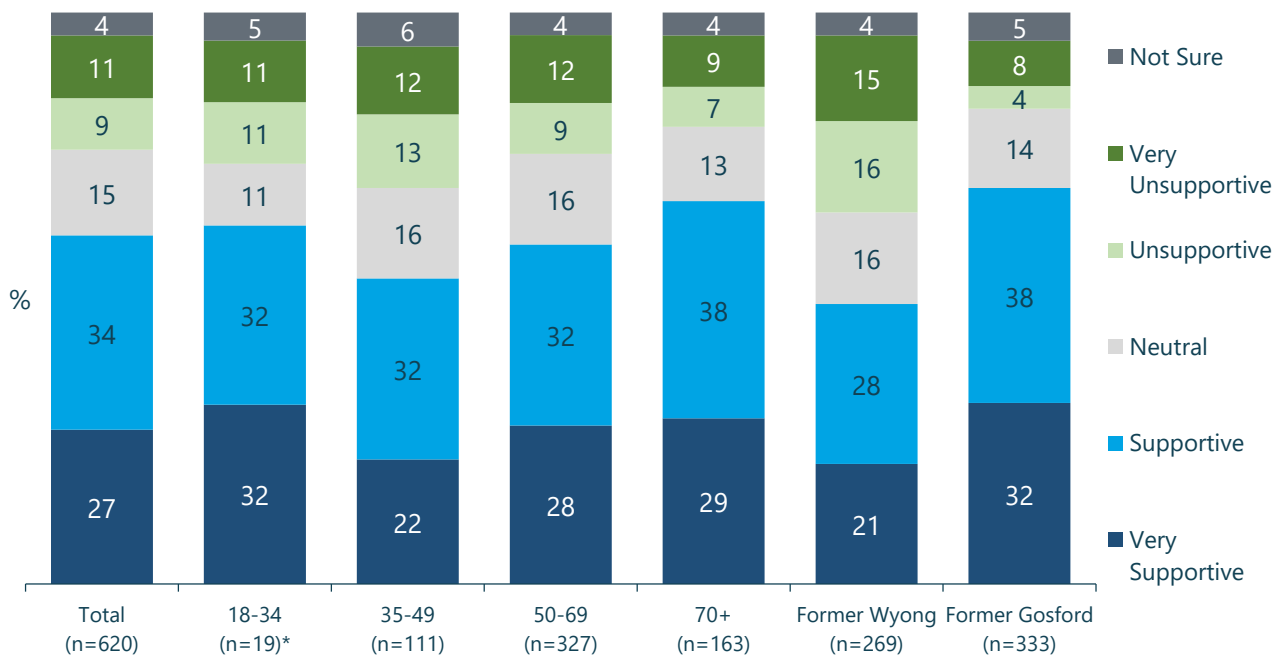
Q. How supportive are you of the idea of introducing a single price so that all Central Coast Council residents pay the same amount for their sewerage services?  
Base: All respondents (n=510)

Looking at the results from the Residential – Council YVOC survey in more detail (see Figure 46) it can be seen (excluding the 18 to 34 year old group due to the small sample size) that support actually increased with increasing age – peaking at 67% (amongst the 70+ year olds).

The difference between former Council areas was also more pronounced for this study, with those in the former Gosford Council areas showing greater support than those in the former Wyong Council area (60% and 49% respectively) – with 31% of those in the former Wyong Council area indicating that they were opposed to the idea.

There was a slightly lower level of support expressed by those from lower income households, with 56% of those from households with a stated income of under \$42K indicating that they were supportive of price alignment, while 27% were opposed to it.

Figure 46: Reactions to the general price alignment concept (Residential – Council YVOC)



Q. How supportive are you of the idea of introducing a single price so that all Central Coast Council residents pay the same amount for their sewerage services?

Base: All respondents (n=620)

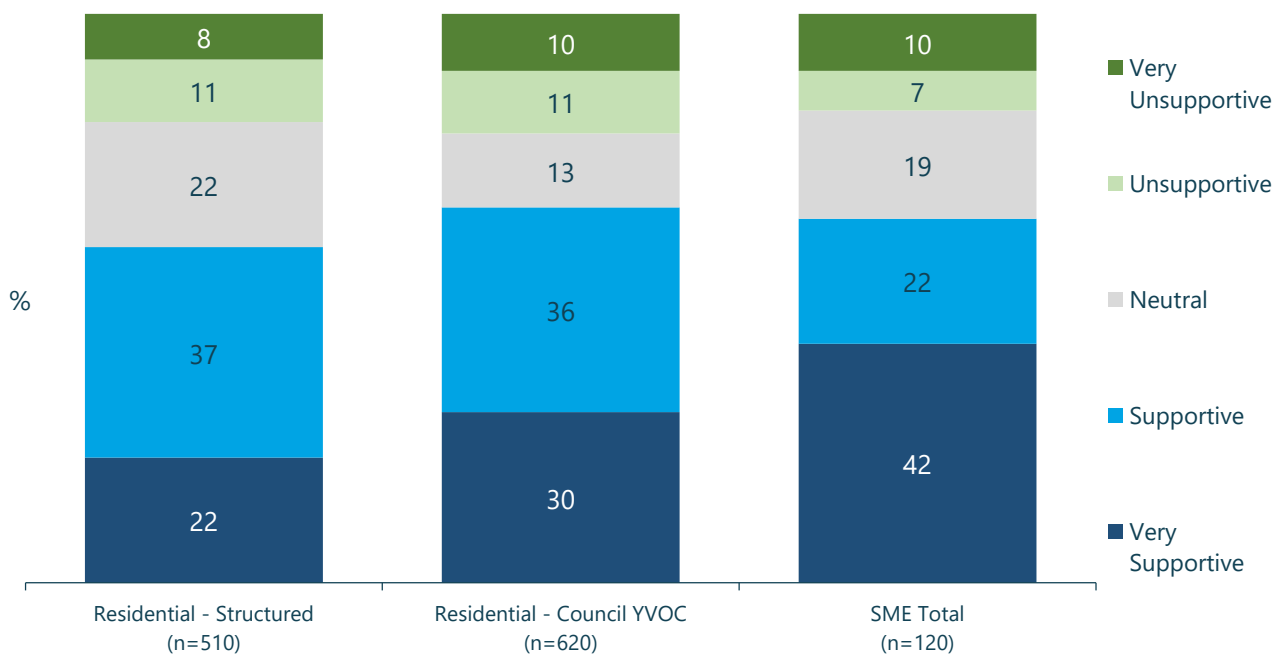
## 8.2 Reactions to Further Detail of the Price Alignment Concept

Survey respondents were informed of a possible price implication for them based on their location (and meter size for the SME respondents). They were again asked to indicate their level of support after knowing more about the price implications. Interestingly, support levels did not alter much after the price element was revealed.

As is shown in Figure 47, the majority of all respondents still indicated that they were supportive of the single sewerage service price for all customers once they knew about how it may impact their bill. Support varied between 59% (amongst the Residential – Structured respondents) to 66% (amongst the Residential – Council YVOC respondents).

The proportion of those opposed to this price alignment idea varied between 17% (amongst the SME respondents) to 21% (amongst the Residential – Council YVOC respondents).

Figure 47: Reactions to detail of the price alignment concept



Q. To give you a better idea of the likely impact on your own household, customers in the previous Wyong LGA may pay a slightly higher price to offset the lower charges for the previous Gosford LGA. At the moment the prices are as follows (based on residential houses): Former Gosford Council area = \$99.66 (per quarter), and Former Wyong Council area = \$91.55 (per quarter). The proposal would be for a single price. As an example - an average of the two would be \$95.60. How supportive are you of this?

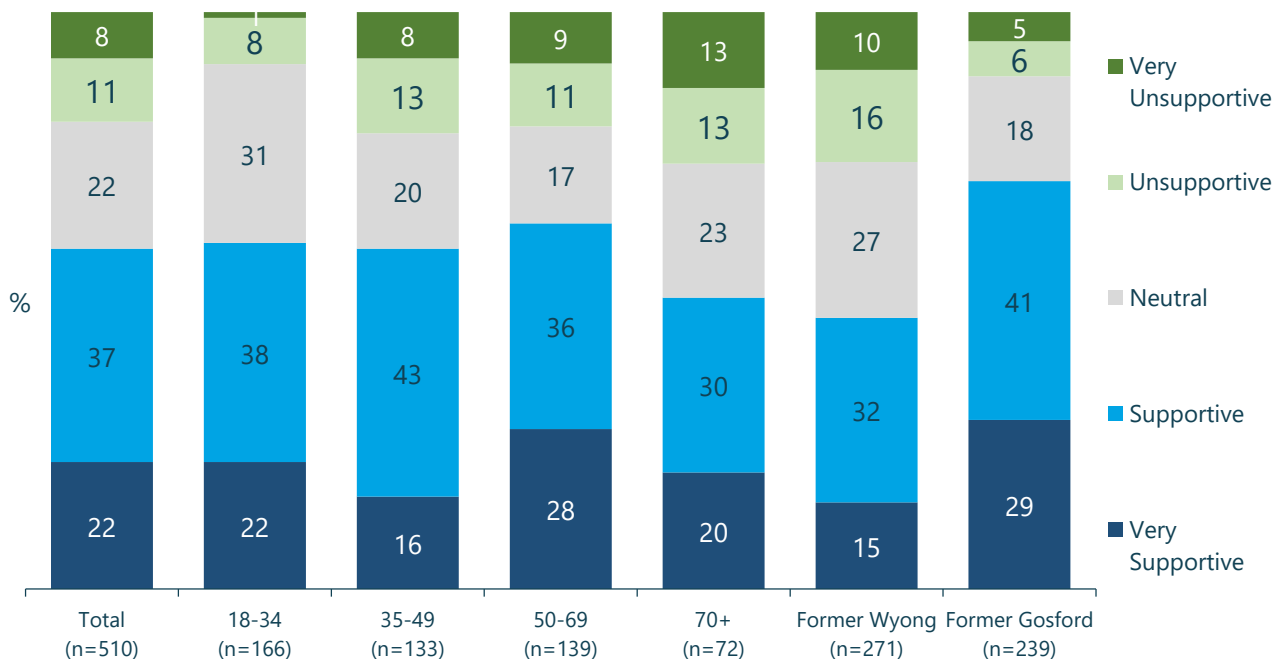
Base: All respondents (Residential - Structured n=510; Residential – Council YVOC n=620; SME n=120)

Looking at the results from the Residential – Structured survey in more detail (see Figure 48) it can be seen that the 70+ year old age group again displayed the lowest support level for this concept, though half did show support (50% supported it while 26% were opposed to it).

It can also be seen that support amongst those in the former Wyong Council area only decreased marginally once the price implication for them was revealed (50% were supportive of the general concept, while 47% were supportive once they were aware of the pricing aspect). Support amongst those in the former Gosford Council area increased and while there was majority support in both instances, support was higher in the former Gosford Council area than it was in the former Wyong Council area where prices were likely to increase under this concept (65% and 50% respectively).

There was a lower level of support expressed by those from lower income households, with 46% of those from households with a stated income of under \$42K indicating that they were supportive, while 24% were opposed to it.

Figure 48: Reactions to detail of the price alignment concept (Residential – Structured)



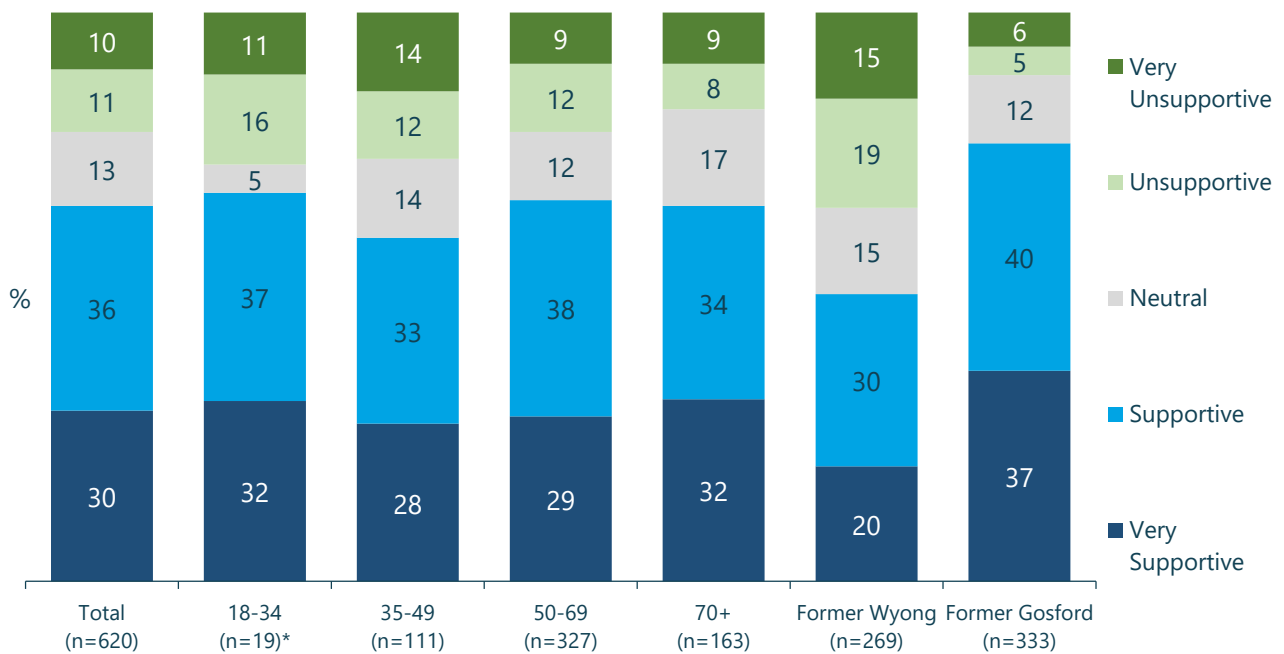
Q. As an example - an average of the two would be \$95.60. How supportive are you of this?  
Base: All respondents (n=510)

Looking at the results from the Residential – Council YVOC survey in more detail (see Figure 49) it can be seen that support did not vary much from the levels that were displayed for the general concept (before the price implications were revealed). The largest changes were for the 50 to 69 year olds (that had an increase in support from 60% to 67%), and the former Gosford Council area residents (that had an increase in support from 70% to 77%).

There was no real change in support amongst the former Wyong Council area (49% showed support for the general concept, and 50% showed support once the price implications were revealed).

There was a lower level of support expressed by those from lower income households, with 55% of those from households with a stated income of under \$42K indicating that they were supportive, while 30% were opposed to it.

Figure 49: Reactions to detail of the price alignment concept (Residential – Council YVOC)



Q. As an example - an average of the two would be \$95.60. How supportive are you of this?  
Base: All respondents (n=620)

### *Qualitative outcomes – Price alignment*

All of the group participants indicated that they were in favour of the concept of aligning the prices (both in the group of residents from the former Wyong Council area, and in the group amongst residents from the former Gosford Council area).

The discussion in this area tended to revert to the current financial issues being faced by Council, with suggestions being made that Council has effectively been operating as two Councils by maintaining two Council buildings etc. which, it was assumed, was a contributor to the high running costs that they had been made aware of.

From that point, most participants concluded that they would be better off if all residents were treated equally, and so they were in favour of the single pricing concept that aligned with a real vision for all Central Coast Council residents to be treated the same way.

*“It is one Council so it would makes sense. I would say take the average of the two.” Former Wyong Council area resident*

*“It sounds fair enough, everyone pays the same amount.” Former Wyong Council area resident*

Some who had initially expressed hesitancy in their acceptance of the idea later suggested that they were totally accepting once they knew the price implication – indicating that it was a relatively small monetary amount involved.

*“It is \$4! Who cares?” Former Wyong Council area resident.*

## 8. Summary & Conclusions

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### 8.1 Summary of Findings

As has been indicated, due to the methodological approach and the resultant profile of respondents, the results of the Residential – Council YVOC survey are not necessarily representative of the Central Coast Council population. As such, we would recommend that greater weight be given to the results from the Residential – Structured survey. However, both (along with the outcomes of the SME survey) are presented here for further consideration.

#### *Future priorities for water & sewerage services*

Apart from lowering the price of water (as emerged unprompted) water quality improvement was seen to be a key area that the community would like Central Coast Council to focus attention on in the future.

- At the unprompted level this was mentioned by 34% of the Residential – Structured respondents, 42% of the Residential – Council YVOC respondents, and 22% of the SME respondents; and
- At the prompted level this was selected this as the key priority area by 50% of the Residential – Structured respondents, 43% of the Residential – Council YVOC respondents, and 44% of the SME respondents.

The qualitative exploration also showed that while not all are experiencing poor quality drinking water, many who didn't have an issue still sympathized with those experiencing quality issues – something potentially driven or exacerbated by word-of-mouth and social media.

#### *Performance*

Central Coast Council is clearly performing well for all prompted measures.

Satisfaction was highest for 'reliability of water supply':

- 80% of the Residential – Structured respondents rating it 4 or 5 out of 5, while 81% of the Residential – Council YVOC respondents, and 97% of the SME respondents did likewise;
- Only 4% of the Residential – Structured respondents expressed dissatisfaction for reliability (by providing a rating of 1 or 2 out of 5), while 6% of the Residential – Council YVOC respondents, and none of the SME respondents expressed dissatisfaction in this area.

Dissatisfaction was highest (though still relatively low in overall terms) for 'water quality':

- 60% of the Residential – Structured respondents rating it 4 or 5 out of 5, while 57% of the Residential – Council YVOC respondents, and 64% of the SME respondents did likewise;
- 16% of the Residential – Structured respondents expressed dissatisfaction for water quality, while 23% of the Residential – Council YVOC respondents, and 10% of the SME respondents expressed dissatisfaction in this area.

Sewerage overflows to personal properties did not appear to be a major issue for the survey respondents.

- 6% of the Residential – Structured respondents had experienced such an incident, while 7% of the Residential – Council YVOC respondents, and 6% of the SME respondents also indicated that they had.

However, a larger proportion claimed to be impacted by overflows into the community.

- 24% of the Residential – Structured respondents claimed that they/their household had been impacted by this, while 30% of the Residential – Council YVOC respondents, and 20% of the SME respondents also indicated that they had been impacted;
- 43% of the Residential – Structured respondents expressed concern about flows into the environment, while 55% of the Residential – Council YVOC respondents, and 50% of the SME respondents also indicated that they were concerned (by rating this with a 4 or 5 out of 5).

From the qualitative exploration, it was evident that when overflows do occur in community spaces they appear to have high visibility – particularly in and around beach areas which are of significant concern to residents.

### *Drainage*

There was not a clear level of support for the idea of draining pricing being set by Council as part of general rates.

- 26% of the Residential – Structured respondents showed support, and 31% were opposed;
- 17% of the Residential – Council YVOC respondents showed support, and the majority (55%) were opposed;
- 33% of the SME respondents showed support, and 25% were opposed.

The qualitative exploration of this issue revealed that the sentiment expressed by the community on this matter is likely to have been influenced by the current economic position of Council.

However, there was majority support for the idea of all Central Coast residents contributing to the funding of drainage infrastructure:

- 57% of the Residential – Structured respondents showed support, and 15% were opposed;
- 63% of the Residential – Council YVOC respondents showed support, and 18% were opposed;
- 55% of the SME respondents showed support, and 15% were opposed.

The qualitative exploration of this issue showed that the idea of being treated equally and as one region (not divided) was seen to be a strong reason for change.

There was not a large amount of support for all business properties receiving the same drainage charge:

- 21% of the SME respondents supported this, while
- 40% were opposed to the idea.



### *Scarcity pricing*

There were mixed reactions to the scarcity pricing concept (introduced as increasing the price of water during times of drought):

- 38% of the Residential – Structured respondents showed support, and 36% were opposed;
- 32% of the Residential – Council YVOC respondents showed support, and the majority (56%) were opposed;
- 42% of the SME respondents showed support, and 37% were opposed.

One potential barrier to acceptance to emerge from the qualitative exploration was the potential impact this price structure could have on vulnerable customers. So if this were to be introduced with safeguards in place for these customer groups, this would need to be clearly communicated to the community.

### *Price alignment*

There was majority support for the discontinuation of location based sewer services pricing – with the idea of creating an average of the two price levels resonating with most:

- When the initial concept was revealed it was supported by 58% of the Residential – Structured respondents, 61% of the Residential – Council YVOC respondents, and 63% of the SME respondents; and
- When the full pricing implications were revealed it was supported by 59% of the Residential – Structured respondents, 66% of the Residential – Council YVOC respondents, and 66% of the SME respondents.

While there was a lower level of support amongst residents in the former Wyong Council area (who are likely to have to pay slightly more than they are currently), the support level was still relatively high amongst that sub-group.

Again, the idea of treating all residents equally came through in the qualitative exploration of this.

## 8.2 Conclusions

As supported by the qualitative exploration, the three surveys all indicate that Central Coast Council should focus attention on improving water quality for the small proportion of the population that are currently experiencing 'dirty water' events. This sentiment emerged as a priority in both an unprompted and prompted sense. Water quality was also the service area with the highest dissatisfaction levels:

- 16% of the Residential – Structured respondents expressed dissatisfaction with water quality; and 23% of the Residential – Council YVOC respondents, and 10% of the SME respondents also expressed dissatisfaction.

While sewerage overflows to personal properties did not appear to be a major issue for the survey respondents, overflows into the community seemed to be slightly more problematic, and as such this should be another priority area for future focus:

- 24% of the Residential – Structured respondents claimed that they/their household had been impacted by this, while 30% of the Residential – Council YVOC respondents, and 20% of the SME respondents also indicated that they had been impacted; and
- 43% of the Residential – Structured respondents also expressed concern about flows into the environment, while 55% of the Residential – Council YVOC respondents, and 50% of the SME respondents also indicated that they were concerned.

There was not a strong level of support for the idea of drainage pricing being set by Council as part of general rates, and as such we would not recommend pursuing this within the current environment of distrust with Council management. Nor was there support (amongst SME respondents) for all business properties receiving the same drainage charge. An educational initiative around the reason and benefits of changes, and transparency around how costs are allocated would help to improve trust and understanding of Council and water spending.

However, there was majority support for the idea of all Central Coast residents (and businesses) contributing to the funding of drainage infrastructure, and this is something that should be taken further:

- 57% of the Residential – Structured respondents showed support;
- 63% of the Residential – Council YVOC respondents showed support; and
- 55% of the SME respondents showed support.

The scarcity pricing concept (introduced as increasing the price of water during times of drought) also failed to gain significant support. Should Council wish to take this idea further we would recommend developing strategies to overcome the main barriers that emerged (e.g. implementing a system that provides exemptions to vulnerable customers and communicating this clearly).

Given that there was majority support for the discontinuation of location based sewer services pricing and so this idea should be progressed:

- When the initial concept was revealed it was supported by 58% of the Residential – Structured respondents, 61% of the Residential – Council YVOC respondents, and 63% of the SME respondents; and

- When the full pricing implications were revealed it was supported by 59% of the Residential – Structured respondents, 66% of the Residential – Council YVOC respondents, and 66% of the SME respondents.

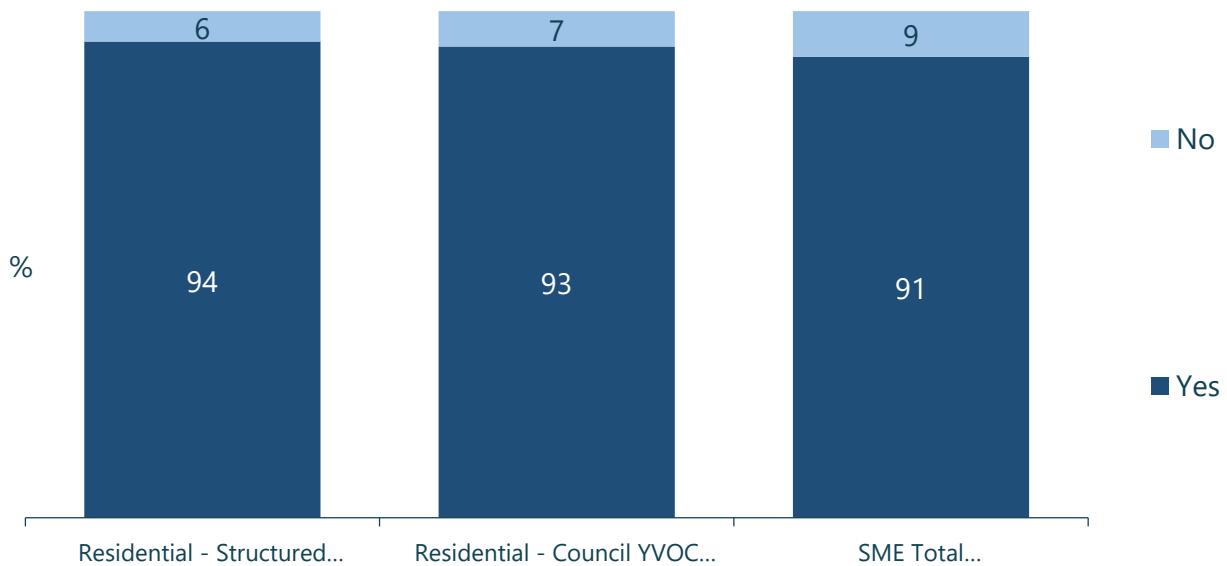
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## Appendices

## Appendix A: Respondent Details

### A.1 Connections to Town Water & Sewer

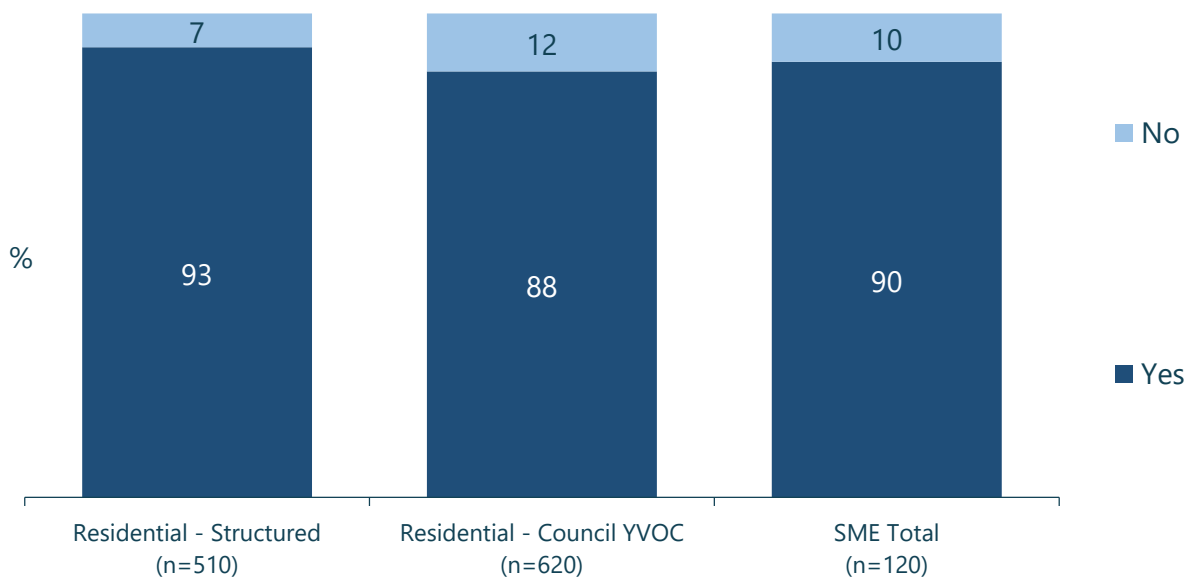
Figure 50: Connection to town water



Q. Is your household/business connected to town water?

Base: All respondents (Residential - Structured n=510; Residential – Council YVOC n=620; SME n=120)

Figure 51: Connection to town sewer

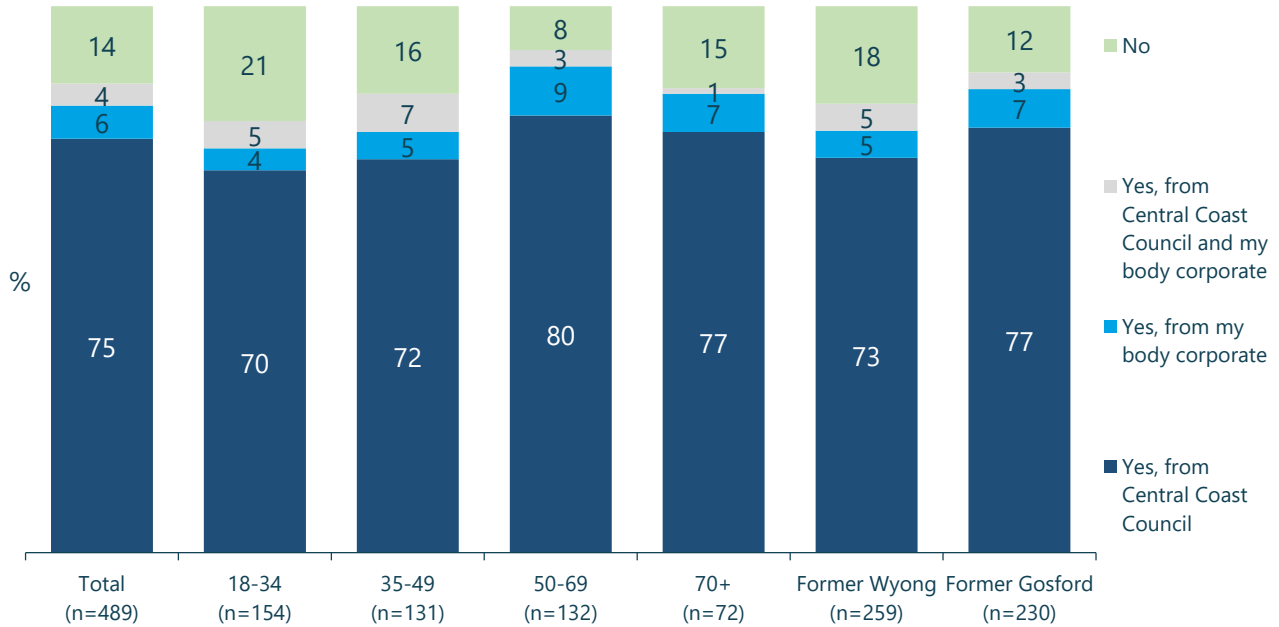


Q. Is your household/business connected to the sewer?

Base: All respondents (Residential - Structured n=510; Residential – Council YVOC n=620; SME n=120)

## A.2 Receive Water Bills and Approximate Water Usage Level

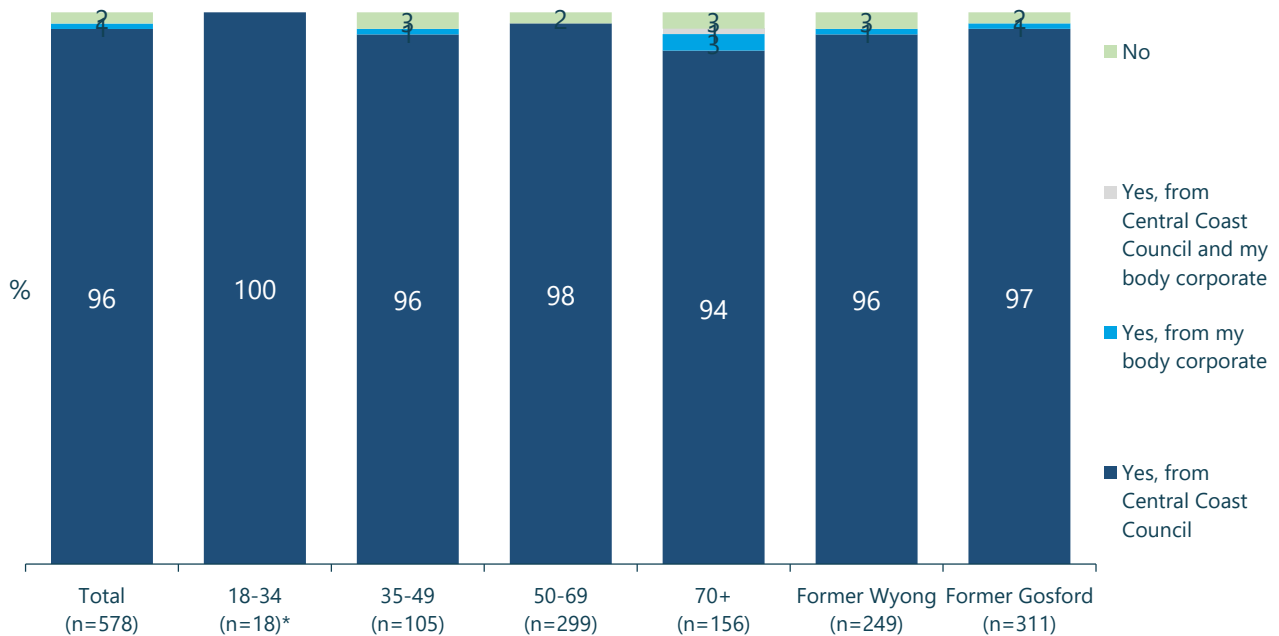
Figure 52: Receive water bills (Residential – Structured)



Q. Do you receive water/sewerage bills from Central Coast Council and/or your body corporate?

Base: All respondents (Residential - Structured n=510)

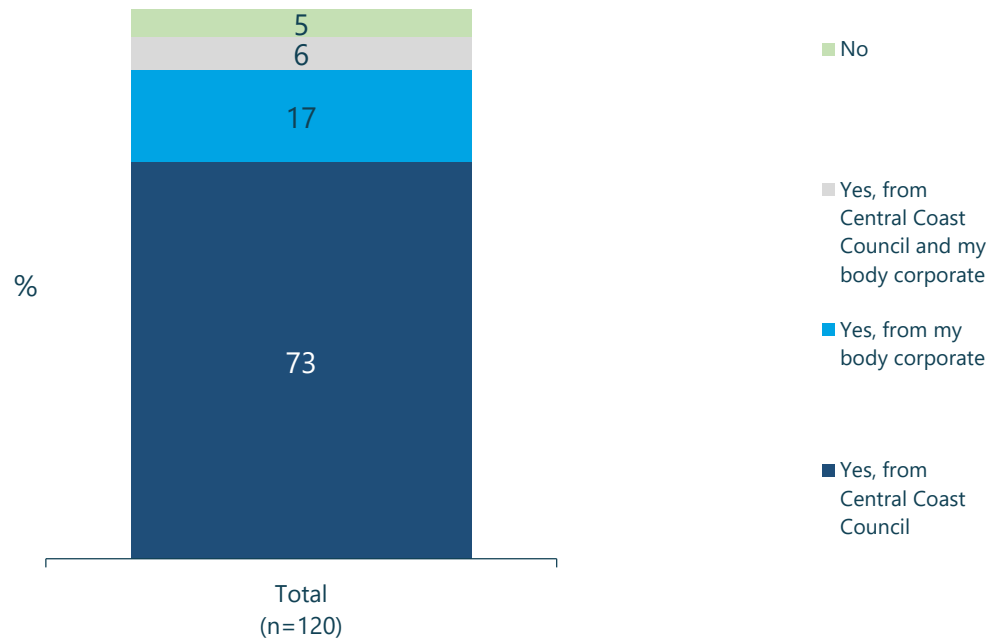
Figure 53: Receive water bills (Residential – Council YVOC)



Q. Do you receive water/sewerage bills from Central Coast Council and/or your body corporate?

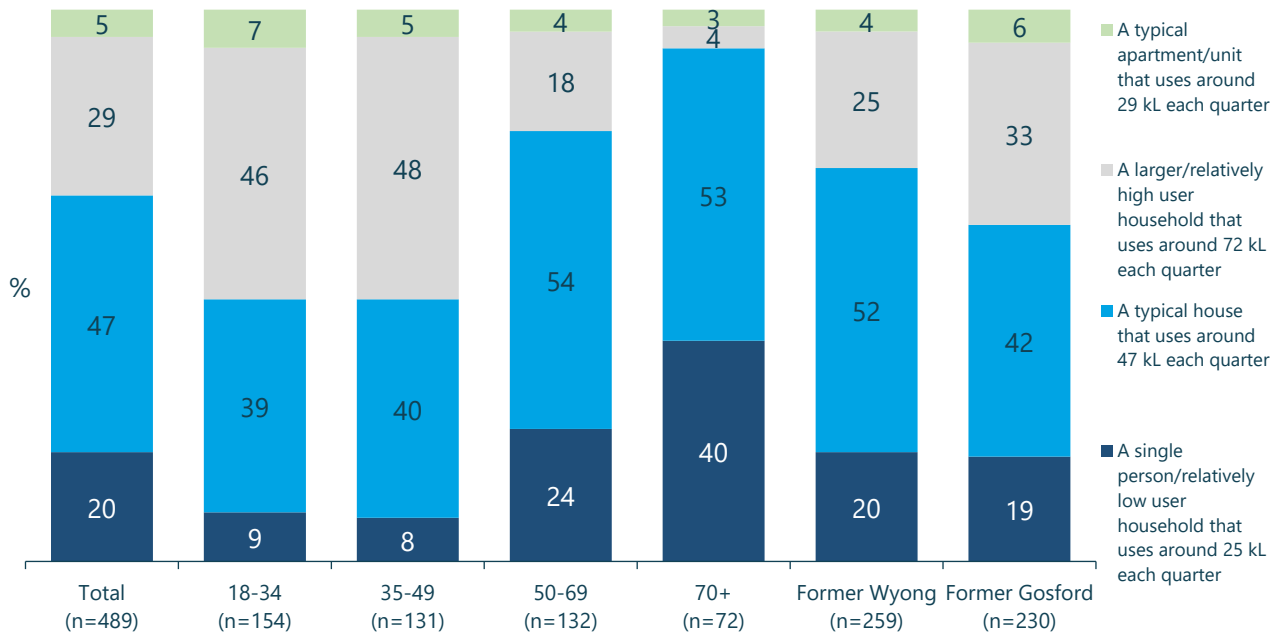
Base: All respondents (Residential – Council YVOC n=620)

Figure 54: Receive water bills (SME)



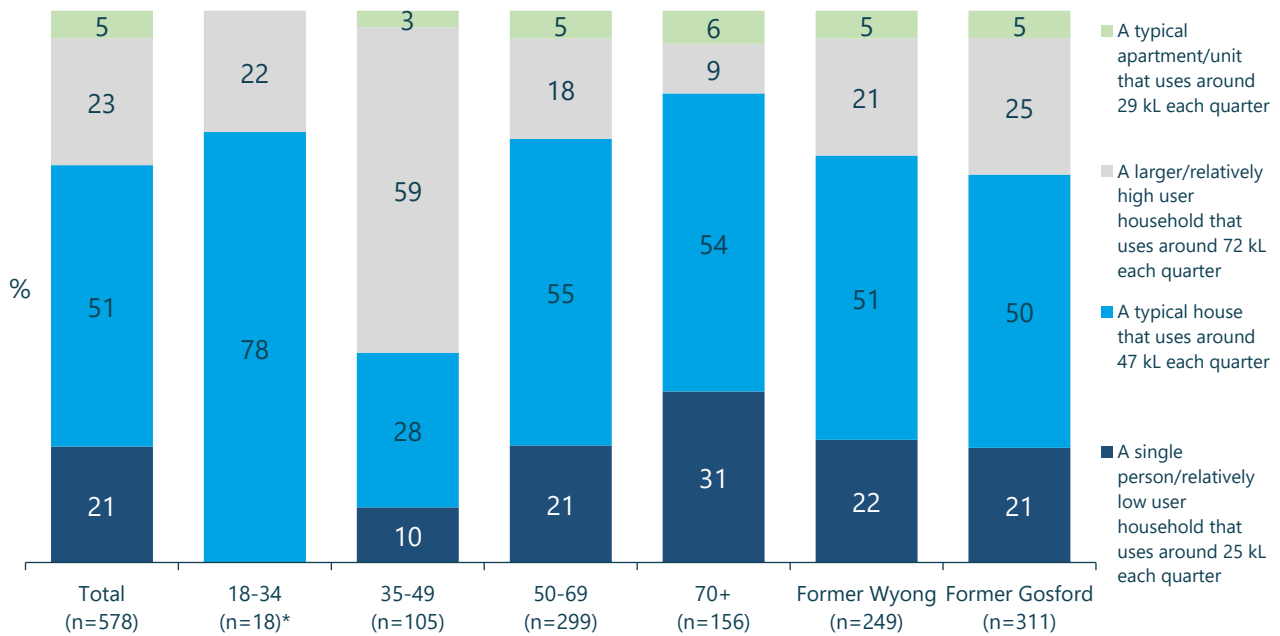
Q. Which of the following best describes the water bills you receive for your business?  
Base: All respondents (SME n=120)

Figure 55: Approximate water usage level (Residential – Structured)



Q. Which of the following would be the closest to representing your own household type?  
Base: All respondents (Residential - Structured n=510)

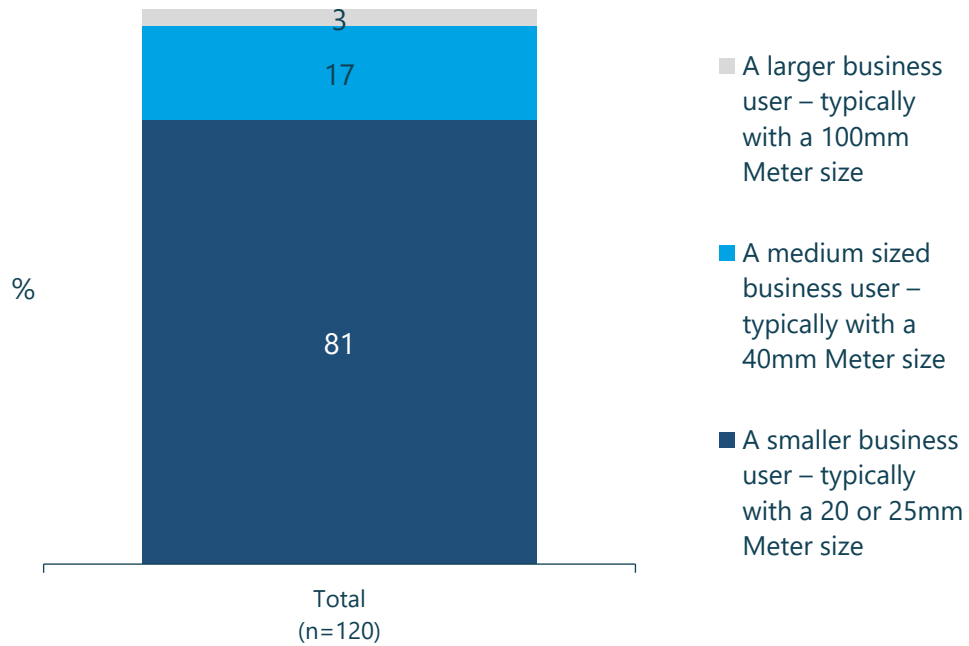
Figure 56: Approximate water usage level (Residential – Council YVOC)



Q. Which of the following would be the closest to representing your own household type?  
Base: All respondents (Residential – Council YVOC n=620)



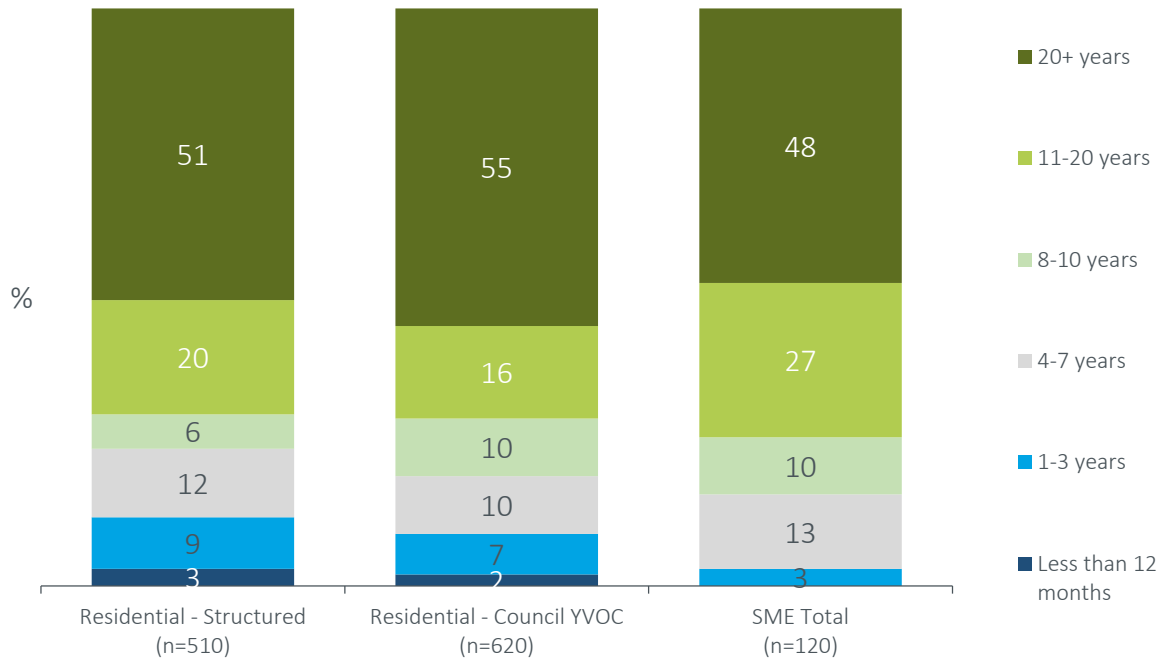
Figure 57: Approximate water usage level (SME)



Q. Which of the following would be the closest to representing your own business type?  
Base: All respondents (Residential – Council YVOC n=620)

### A.3 Length of Residence/Business Operation

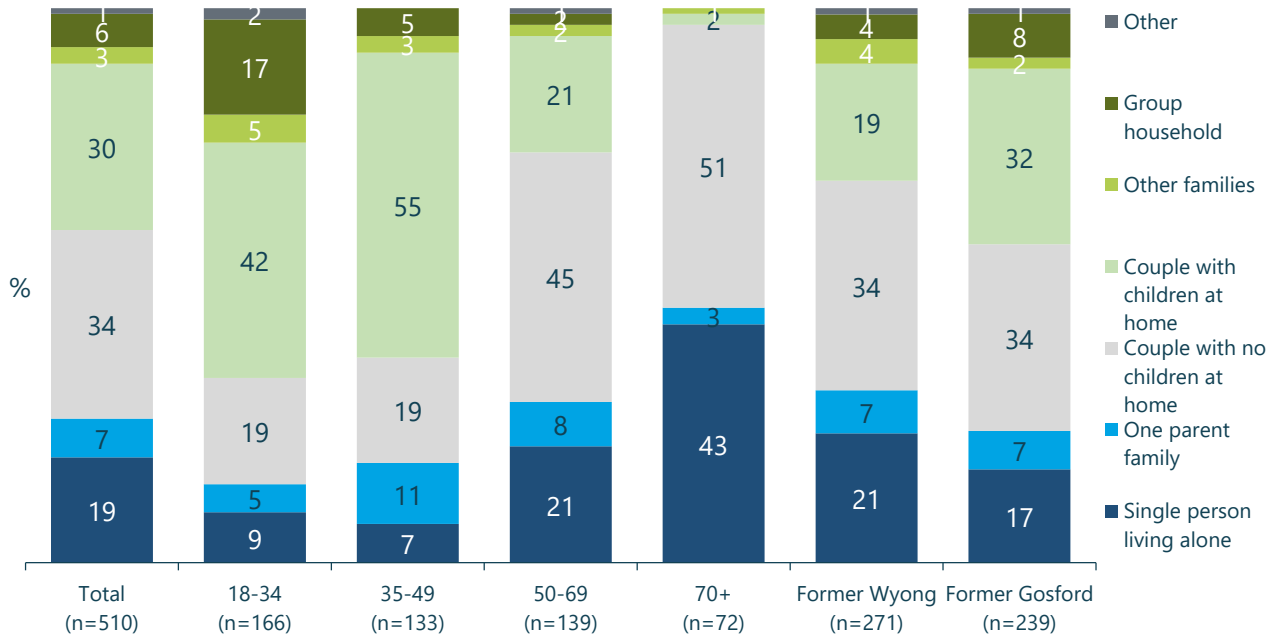
Figure 58: How long respondents have lived in or operated their business on the Central Coast



Q. How long have you lived on the Central Coast/has your business operated on the Central Coast?  
 Base: All respondents (Residential - Structured n=510; Residential – Council YVOC n=620; SME n=120)

## A.4 Household & Business Composition

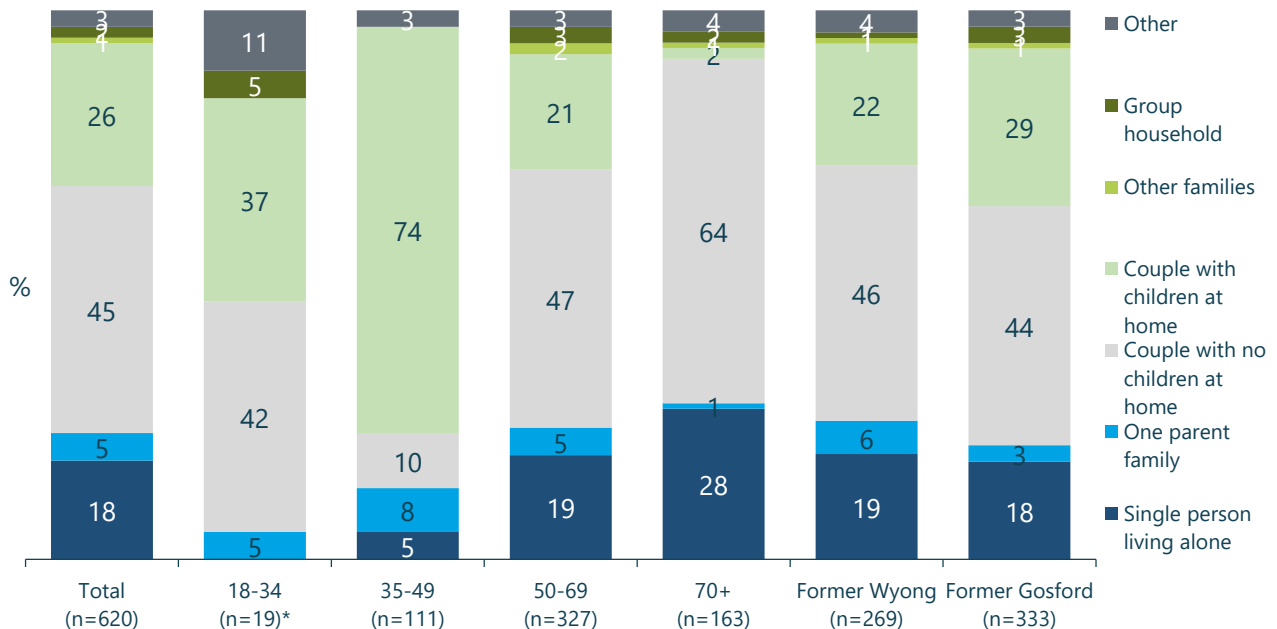
Figure 59: Household composition (Residential – Structured)



Q. What is your household type?

Base: All respondents (Residential - Structured n=510)

Figure 60: Household composition (Residential – Council YVOC)



Q. What is your household type?

Base: All respondents (Residential – Council YVOC n=620)

Table 8: Business composition/industry (SME)

	Total (n=120) %
Construction	19
Retail Trade	12
Health Care and Social Assistance	8
Manufacturing	8
Accommodation and Food Services	8
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	8
Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services	6
Education and Training	6
Financial and Insurance Services	5
Rental, Hiring and Real Estate Services	5
Transport, Postal and Warehousing	2
Arts and Recreation Services	3
Wholesale Trade	1
Other	11

Q. In which industry do you operate?

Base: All respondents (SME n=120)

## A.5 Employment Status and Income Category

Table 9: Employment status (Residential – Structured)

	Total (n=510) %	18 to 34 y.o (n=166) %	35 to 49 y.o (n=133) %	50 to 69 y.o (n=139) %	70+ y.o (n=72) %	Former Wyong (n=271) %	Former Gosford (n=239) %
Full time	33	46	59	21	2	34	32
Part time	16	18	17	19	5	13	18
Casual	4	8	4	4	-	5	3
Contract	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
Self-employed	4	5	4	4	1	4	3
Actively looking for work	3	6	3	3	-	2	4
Not looking for work	1	-	1	4	-	1	2
Retired	31	-	2	38	92	30	31
Not able to work	1	-	3	2	-	2	1
Student	3	10	1	1	-	4	2
Home duties	4	5	7	3	-	3	5

Q. What is your employment type?

Base: All respondents (Residential - Structured n=510)

Table 10: Employment status (Residential – Council YVOC)

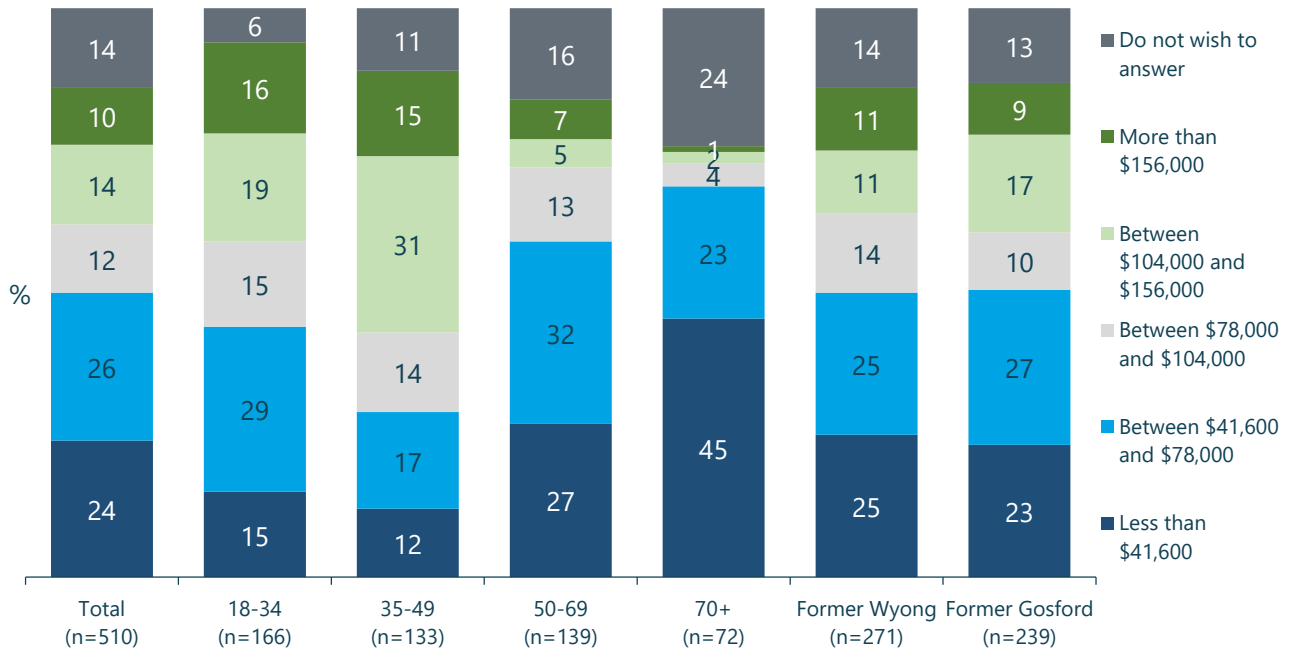
	Total (n=620) %	18 to 34 y.o (n=19)* %	35 to 49 y.o (n=111) %	50 to 69 y.o (n=327) %	70+ y.o (n=163) %	Former Wyong (n=269) %	Former Gosford (n=333) %
Full time	28	74	63	26	1	26	28
Part time	7	11	14	7	2	9	6
Casual	3	5	3	4	2	4	3
Contract	1	-	2	1	-	-	2
Self-employed	8	5	11	10	2	6	11
Actively looking for work	2	-	-	3	1	2	2
Not looking for work	1	-	1	1	-	1	1
Retired	46	-	1	41	91	49	43
Not able to work	2	-	1	4	1	1	3

Student	-	5	-	-	-	-	-
Home duties	2	-	5	2	-	2	2

Q. What is your employment type?

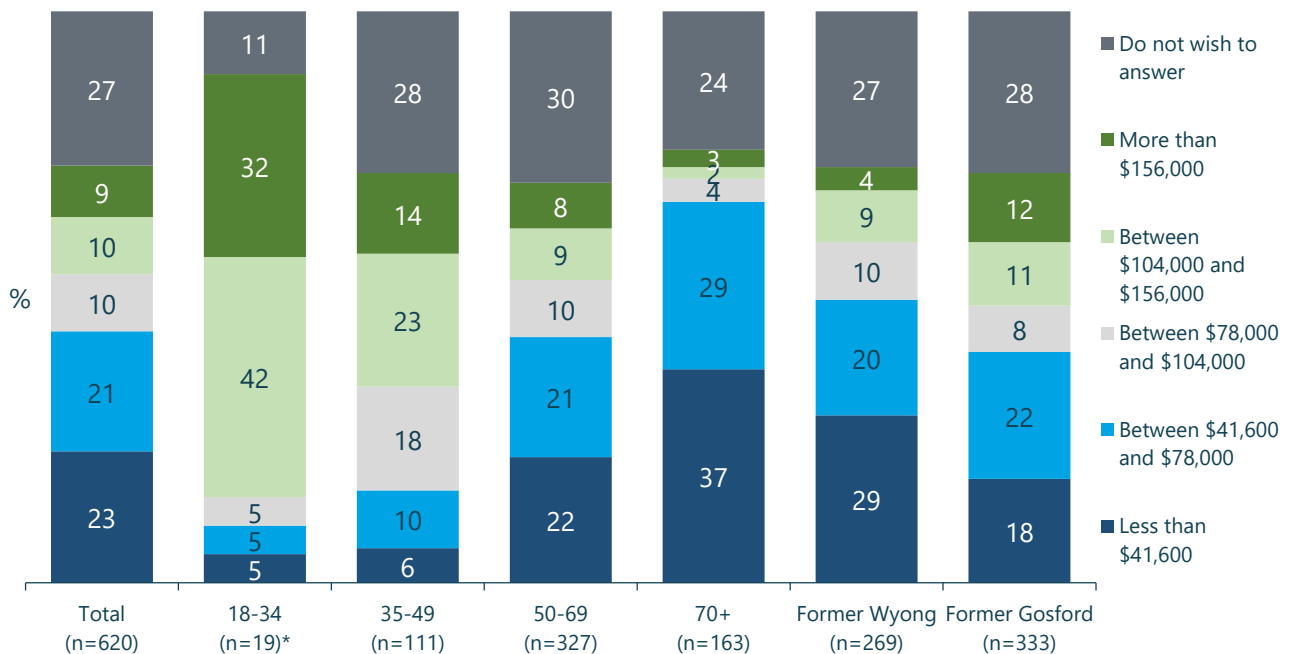
Base: All respondents (Residential – Council YVOC n=620)

Figure 61: Household income (Residential – Structured)



Q. What is your approximate annual household income?  
Base: All respondents (Residential - Structured n=510)

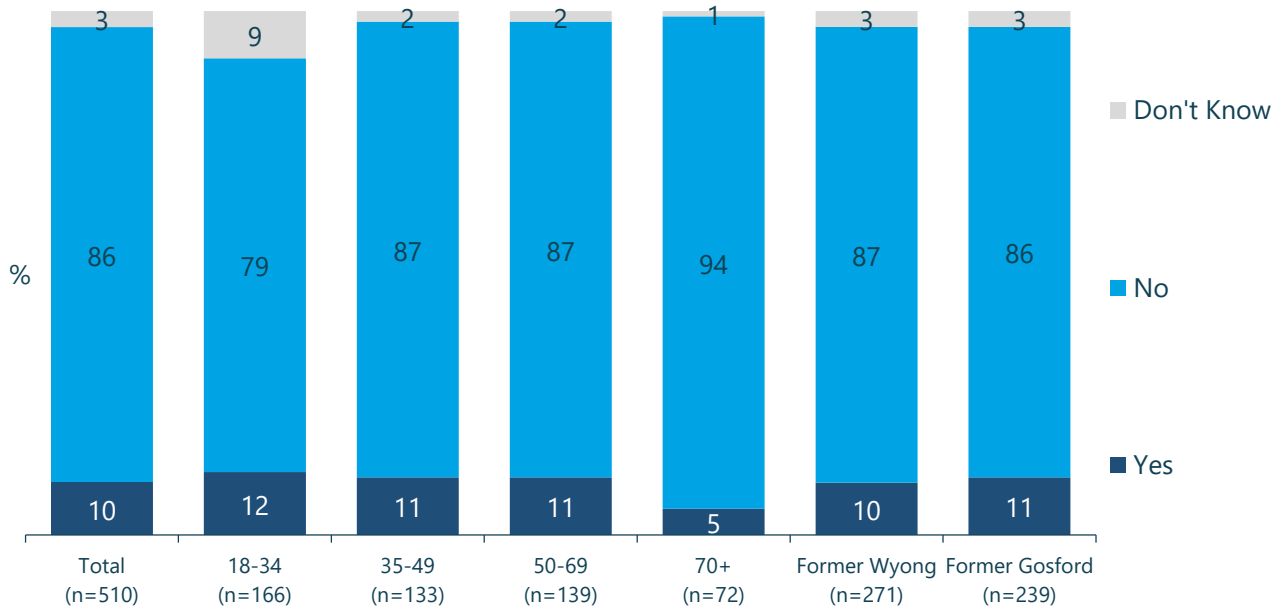
Figure 62: Household income (Residential – Council YVOC)



Q. What is your approximate annual household income?  
Base: All respondents (Residential – Council YVOC n=620)

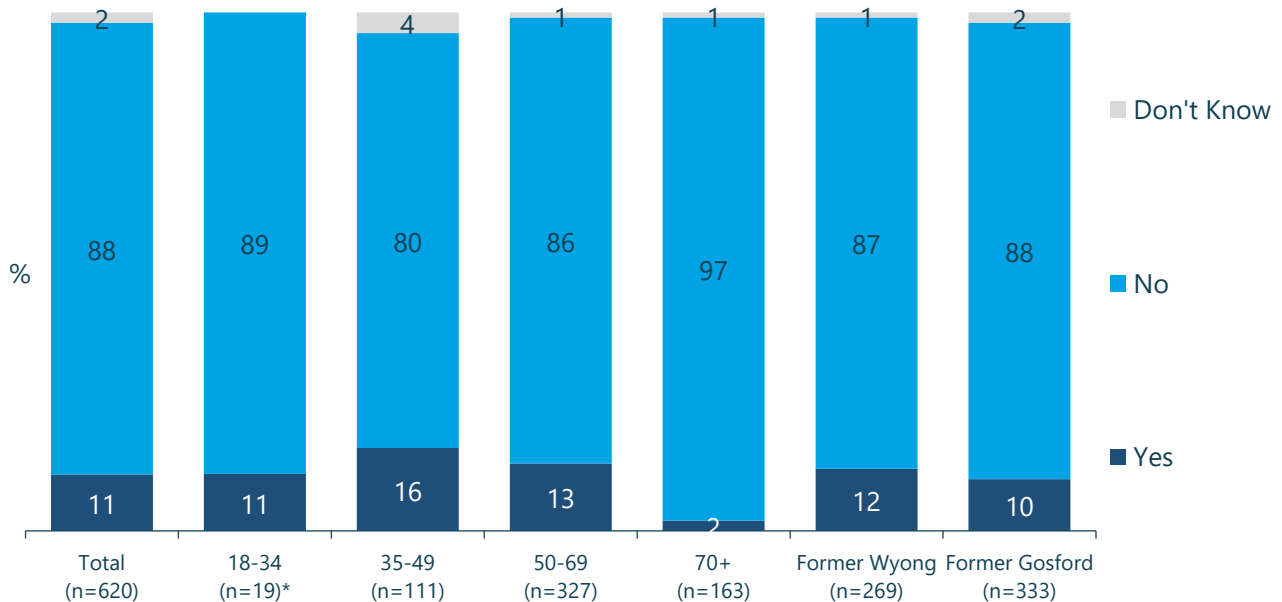
## A.6 Vulnerable Customer Indicators

Figure 63: Experienced difficulty paying water bills (Residential – Structured)



Q. In the last 12 months, have you had any difficulty paying your water bills, e.g. had to ask for an extension or paid late, been on a special payment plan, been disconnected, delayed other payments or borrowed money to pay?  
Base: All respondents (Residential - Structured n=510)

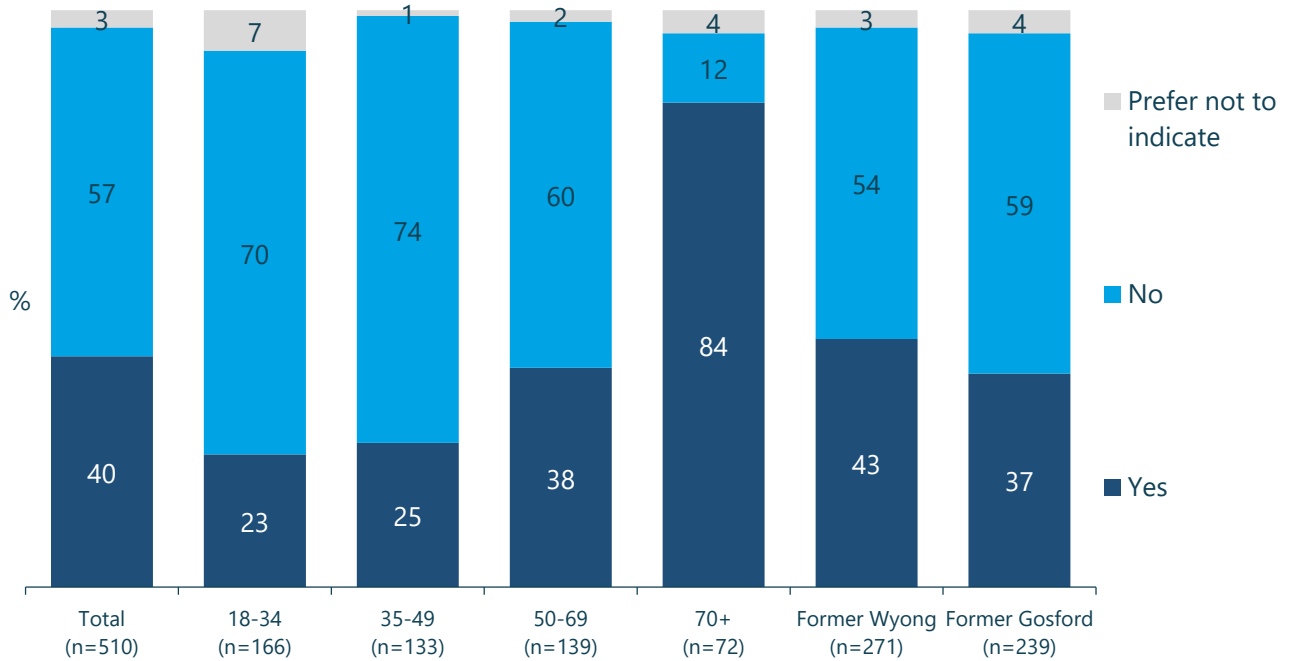
Figure 64: Experienced difficulty paying water bills (Residential – Council YVOC)



Q. In the last 12 months, have you had any difficulty paying your water bills, e.g. had to ask for an extension or paid late, been on a special payment plan, been disconnected, delayed other payments or borrowed money to pay?  
Base: All respondents (Residential – Council YVOC n=620)

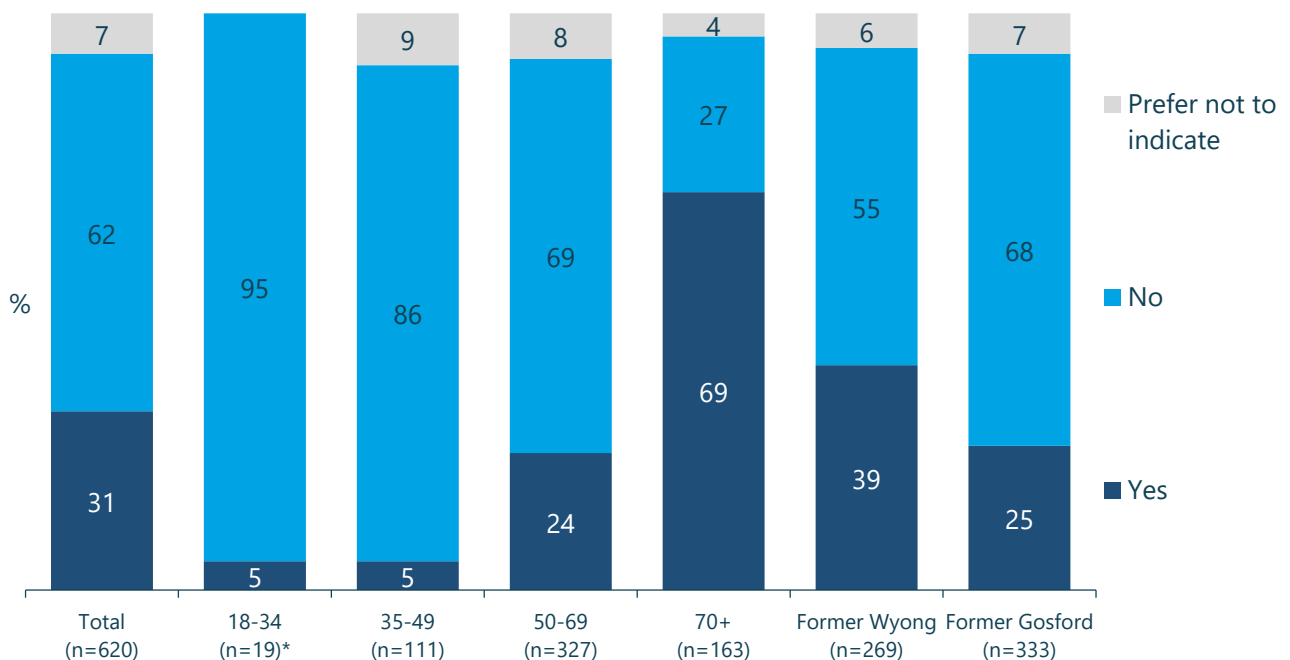


Figure 65: Concession card holder (Residential – Structured)



Q. Do you currently hold a concession card/low income healthcare card?  
Base: All respondents (Residential - Structured n=510)

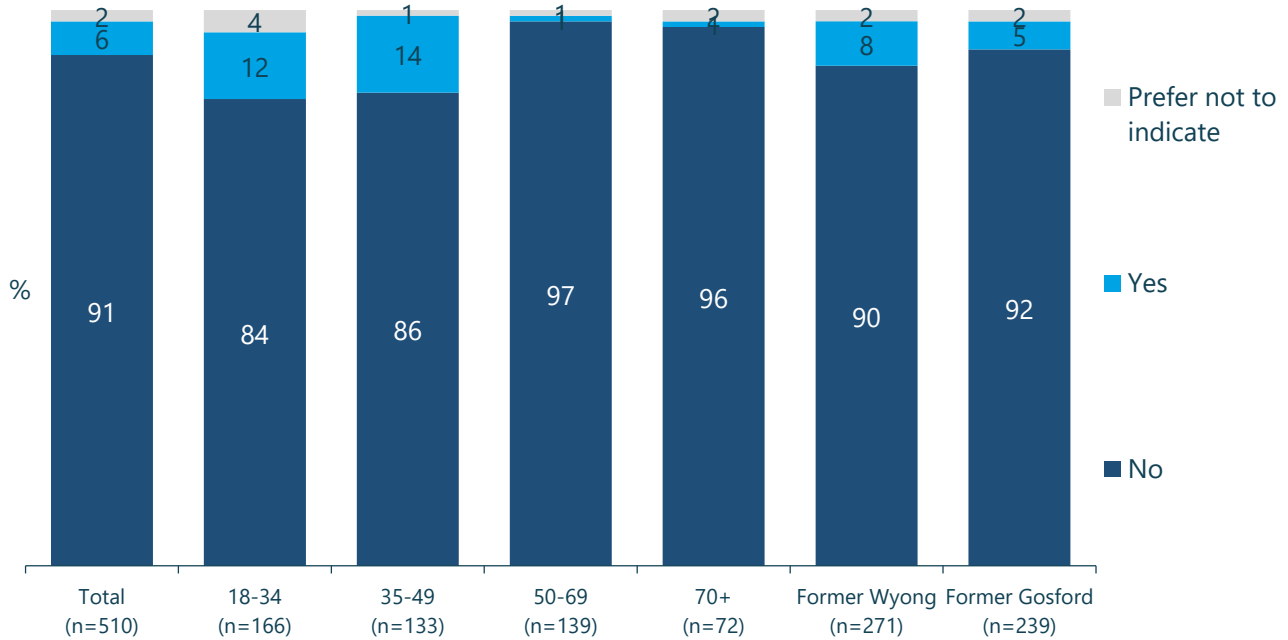
Figure 66: Concession card holder (Residential – Council YVOC)



Q. Do you currently hold a concession card/low income healthcare card?  
Base: All respondents (Residential – Council YVOC n=620)

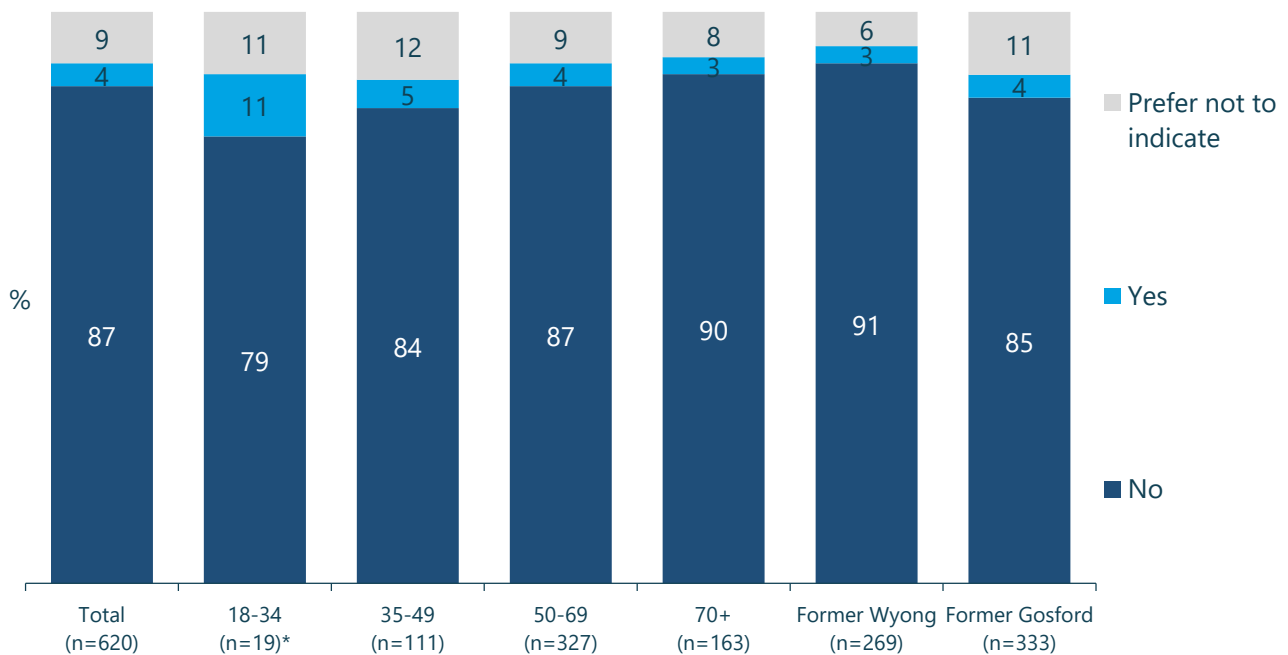
## A.7 Indigenous Status and Language Status

Figure 67: Indigenous status (Residential – Structured)



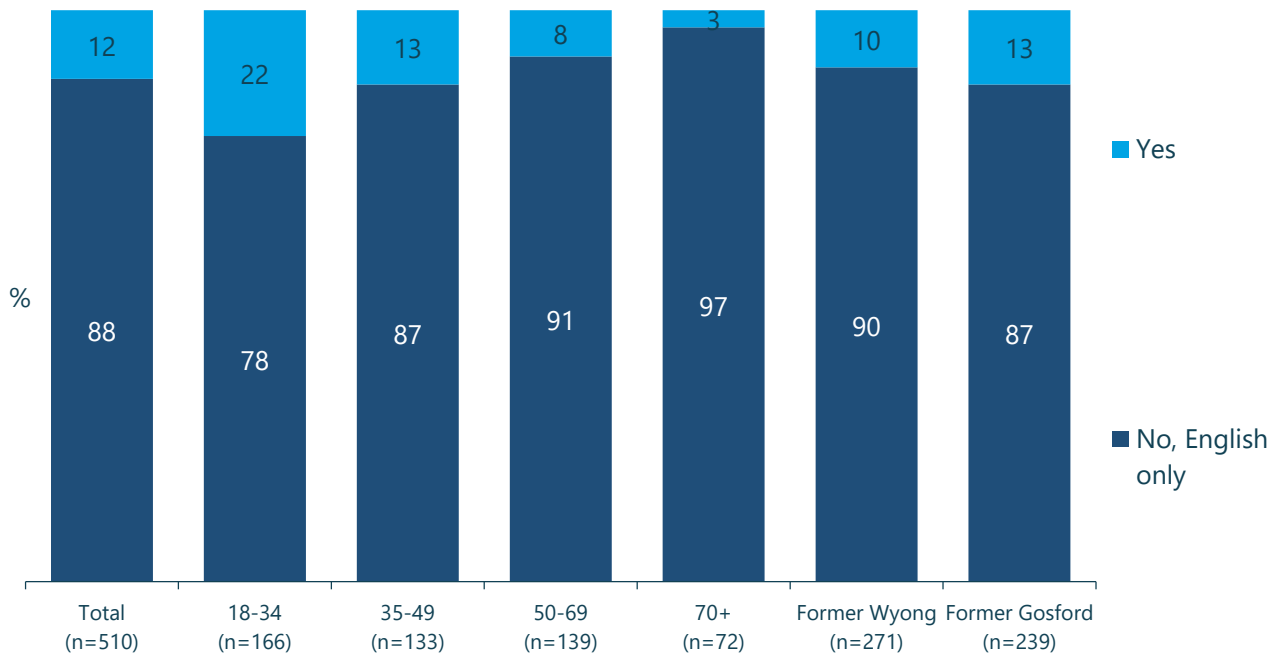
Q. Are you of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin?  
Base: All respondents (Residential - Structured n=510)

Figure 68: Indigenous status (Residential – Council YVOC)



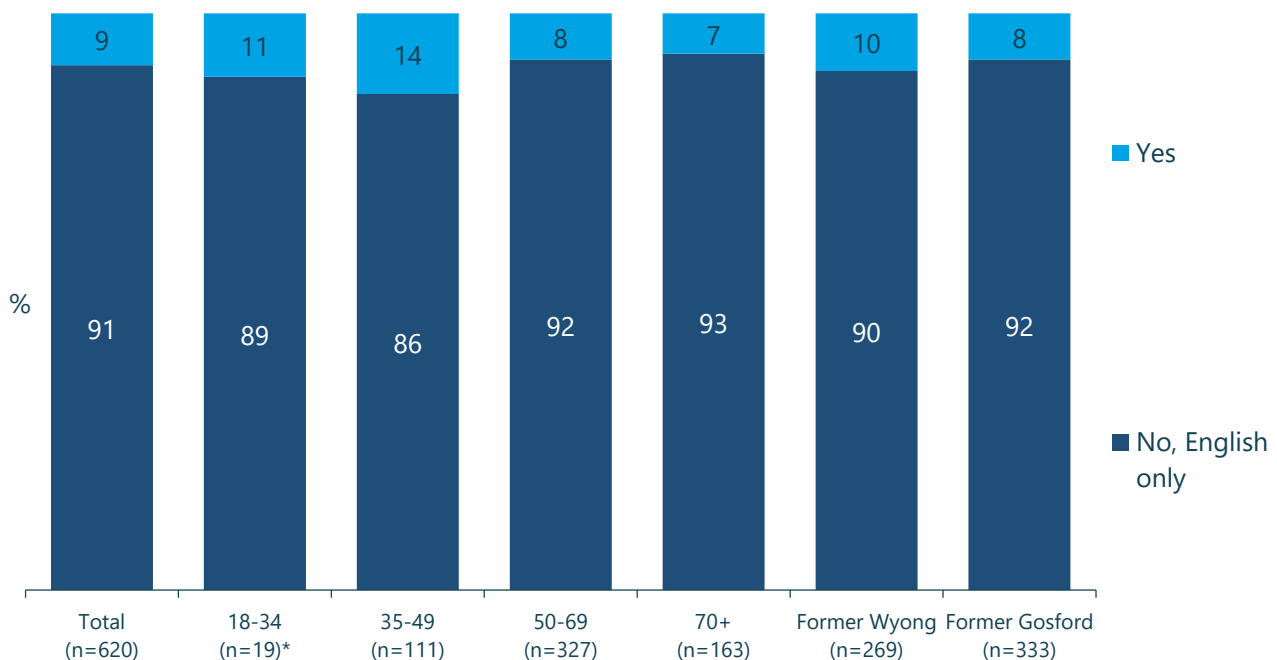
Q. Are you of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin?  
Base: All respondents (Residential – Council YVOC n=620)

Figure 69: Language status (Residential – Structured)



Q. Do you speak a language other than English at home?  
Base: All respondents (Residential - Structured n=510)

Figure 70: Language status (Residential – Council YVOC)



Q. Do you speak a language other than English at home?  
Base: All respondents (Residential – Council YVOC n=620)

## Appendix B: Questionnaires

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### Central Coast Council Residential Questionnaire

#### Survey Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to complete this important survey.

Central Coast Council is asking residential and business customers to provide feedback in relation to the water, sewerage and stormwater services that they provide.

This community feedback will be used to help Council make an informed pricing submission to the independent regulator for NSW (IPART).

Pricing submissions to IPART for water, sewerage and stormwater prices is a process Council undertakes every 3-4 years (in line with the requirements and timings which are set by IPART).

This is a separate process to Council's application to IPART for a Special Variation on rates, which is part of Council's Business Recovery Plan. For more information on this process, please visit [yourvoiceourcoast.com](http://yourvoiceourcoast.com).

Please complete this questionnaire on behalf of your household. It will take around 15 minutes to complete.

Any information provided here will not be stored in association with your personal details. Your responses will remain anonymous, and your answers will only be used in conjunction with other respondents to determine overall trends and community sentiment.

Please use the '>>' (next) button in the lower right hand side of the screen to move to the next question. You can also use the '<<' (back) button to go back, but please DO NOT use your browser's back button.

If you have any questions about this survey, please contact Woolcott Research on (02) 9261 5221 (during office hours) or at [info@woolcott.com.au](mailto:info@woolcott.com.au).

## A. Screening Question

S1. Are you... SR. CHECK QUOTAS

- |                        |   |
|------------------------|---|
| Male                   | 1 |
| Female                 | 2 |
| Non-gender-specific    | 3 |
| Prefer not to indicate | 4 |

S2. Which of the following age groups best describes you? SR. CHECK QUOTAS

- |            |   |
|------------|---|
| 18-24      | 1 |
| 25-34      | 2 |
| 35-49      | 3 |
| 50-59      | 4 |
| 60-69      | 5 |
| 70-84      | 6 |
| 85 or over | 7 |

S3. What suburb do you live in: \_\_\_\_\_ CHECK QUOTAS

S4. Do you, or does anyone in your household, work for any of the following organisations?

- Water supply or sewerage services
- Market research
- IPART (the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal)
- NSW Health in a role related to water quality regulation
- NSW Environment Protection Authority

- |     |   |                   |
|-----|---|-------------------|
| Yes | 1 | THANK & TERMINATE |
| No  | 2 |                   |

## B. General Questions

1. Is your household connected to town water?

- |     |   |
|-----|---|
| Yes | 1 |
| No  | 2 |

2. Is your household connected to the sewer?

- |     |   |
|-----|---|
| Yes | 1 |
| No  | 2 |

IF NO TO Q1 AND Q2 THEN SKIP TO SECTION F

3. Do you receive water/sewerage bills from Central Coast Council and/or your body corporate? SR.

Yes, from Central Coast Council	1
Yes, from my body corporate	2
Yes, from Central Coast Council and my body corporate	3
No	4

4. IF CODE 4 AT Q1: Does your landlord charge you all or part of your water/sewerage bill as a specific charge separate from the rent? SR.

Yes            1            CONTINUE  
No             2            TERMINATE

5. Which of the following would be the closest to representing your own household type?

A single person/relatively low user household that uses around 25 kL each quarter	1
A typical house that uses around 47 kL each quarter	2
A larger/relatively high user household that uses around 72 kL each quarter	3
A typical apartment/unit that uses around 29 kL each quarter	4

*(current usage charge per kl is \$2.07)*

### C. Priorities for water and sewerage services

6. When you think about your water and sewerage services, what are the three things you want Central Coast Council to focus on and improve on the most? REQUIRE AT LEAST ONE ANSWER

a. \_\_\_\_\_  
b. \_\_\_\_\_  
c. \_\_\_\_\_

7. Of the following options, what would you like Central Coast Council to focus and improve on **the most** in relation to the water & sewer assets? ROTATE ORDER ANCHORING OTHER AT THE BOTTOM. SR

A. Improve drinking water quality  
B. Reduce frequency of unplanned water interruptions  
C. Reduce water main breaks  
D. Improve odour control  
E. Reduce sewer main breaks and chokes  
F. Other (please specify)

## D. Performance

8. Thinking about the last 12 months, how satisfied have you been with the following (where 1 is low satisfaction and 5 is high satisfaction):

	Low				High	Don't Know
Water quality (including taste and clarity)	1	2	3	4	5	6
Reliability of water supply (lack of flow interruptions)	1	2	3	4	5	6
Response time to fix interruptions	1	2	3	4	5	6
Water pressure	1	2	3	4	5	6

9. Now, thinking about sewerage services in the last 12 months, please indicate if your household has been impacted by the following:

	Yes	No	Don't Know
Sewage overflows on the property	1	2	3
Sewage overflows in the community (beach or lake displaying 'no swimming' signs)	1	2	3

10. Based on what you have experienced yourself or heard about from others, how concerned are you by the frequency of sewage overflows (caused by blockages and chokes in the sewer system) that flow into the natural environment (e.g. bushland, river, beaches or lakes):

No concern	1
	2
	3
	4
High level concern	5

11. Still thinking about the last 12 months, how satisfied have you been with your water and sewerage supplier in the following ways (where 1 is low satisfaction and 5 is high satisfaction):

	Low				High	Don't Know
Being easy to deal with	1	2	3	4	5	6
Having information available in relation to any outages/service interruptions	1	2	3	4	5	6

## E. Drainage

12. At the moment the stormwater drainage charge is included in your water bill and the pricing is determined by IPART. IPART have suggested that Council investigates the possibility of having the pricing set by Central Coast Council as part of the general rates, to be in-line with how other Councils charge for this. In principle, if the amount was to remain at a similar level, how supportive would you be for the stormwater drainage fee to be set by Central Coast Council under general Council rates?

Very supportive	1
Supportive	2
Neutral	3
Unsupportive	4
Very unsupportive	5
Don't know	6

13. At the moment, due to the way drainage charges were originally set up, a small proportion of the Council's population does not contribute to the funding of drainage infrastructure. To what extent do you support the idea of all property owners within the Central Coast region contributing towards that cost?

Very supportive	1
Supportive	2
Neutral	3
Unsupportive	4
Very unsupportive	5
Don't know	6



## F. Scarcity Pricing

14. Central Coast Council charges customers for water and sewerage services. Prices for these services are set by IPART, who is the independent pricing regulator in NSW.

For their water services, residential customers pay a FIXED charge per household, and a USAGE charge that varies with the volume of water used by the household. So customers can control their overall bill by varying the amount of water that they use. Were you aware of this?

Yes	1
No	2

15. In response to our variable climate, some other water providers have moved towards a pricing system that involves increasing the USAGE charge for water **during times of drought**. This means is that when water reserves run low, there is an increase in the USAGE price for water. Increasing the USAGE price then encourages residents to use less water – it generally doesn't result in an increase in revenue for the provider because people use less and the cost to supply water also increases when water reserves are low.

Central Coast Council is interested in knowing how supportive you would be of the introduction of this pricing system. They are proposing that when the dam levels fall below 50% the USAGE price for water increases. If a household didn't reduce their consumption pattern, this could result in an increase of around \$10 per quarter on the average household bill when dam levels are lower - however, the exact USAGE and FIXED charges would be determined by IPART.

How supportive are you of Central Coast Council introducing this pricing system (increased usage charge during times of drought)?

Very supportive	1
Supportive	2
Neutral	3
Unsupportive	4
Very unsupportive	5

**G. Price Alignment**

16. As you may know, Central Coast Council was formed from the amalgamation of the former Gosford and Wyong Councils. Each of the former Councils had responsibility for the provision of water and sewerage services to their residents. Now that they have been combined they have aligned the prices for water rates, but there are still different sewerage service charges.

Historically, residents of the former Gosford City Council paid higher service charges as Gosford Council received more revenue to invest in infrastructure.

To support the vision of ‘One – Central Coast’, Central Coast Council is interested to know how supportive you would be for a single price for sewerage services to be introduced for all Central Coast residents in the future, so that any future investment in sewerage services will be based on asset expenditure requirements, not on previous local government area boundaries.

How supportive are you of the idea of introducing a single price so that all Central Coast Council residents pay the same amount for their sewerage services?

- Very supportive 1
- Supportive 2
- Neutral 3
- Unsupportive 4
- Very unsupportive 5
- Not sure 6

17. To give you a better idea of the likely impact on your own household, customers in the previous Wyong LGA may pay a slightly higher price to offset the lower charges for the previous Gosford LGA .

At the moment the prices are as follows (based on residential houses):

	Price (per quarter)
	\$
Former Gosford Council area	99.66
Former Wyong Council area	91.55

The proposal would be for a single price. As an example - an average of the two would be \$95.60.  
How supportive are you of this?

Very supportive	1
Supportive	2
Neutral	3
Unsupportive	4
Very unsupportive	5

## H. Demographic Questions

18. Which of the following best describes the dwelling where you are currently living? SR

I/We own/are currently buying this property	1
I/We currently rent this property	2

19. How long have you lived on the Central Coast? SR

Less than 12 months	1
1-3 years	2
4-7 years	3
8-10 years	4
10+ years	5
20+ years	6

20. What is your household type? SR

Single person living alone	1
One parent family	2
Couple with no children at home	3
Couple with children at home	4
Other families	5
Group household	6
Other (please specify)	7

21. What is your employment type?
- |                           |    |
|---------------------------|----|
| Full time                 | 1  |
| Part time                 | 2  |
| Casual                    | 3  |
| Contract                  | 4  |
| Self-employed             | 5  |
| Actively looking for work | 6  |
| Not looking for work      | 7  |
| Retired                   | 8  |
| Not able to work          | 9  |
| Student                   | 10 |
| Home duties               | 11 |
22. What is your approximate annual household income?
- |                                 |   |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Less than \$41,600              | 1 |
| Between \$41,600 and \$78,000   | 2 |
| Between \$78,000 and \$104,000  | 3 |
| Between \$104,000 and \$156,000 | 4 |
| More than \$156,000             | 5 |
| Do not wish to answer           | 6 |
23. Do you currently hold a concession card/low income healthcare card
- |                        |                        |
|------------------------|------------------------|
| Yes                    | 1 (CODE AS VULNERABLE) |
| No                     | 2                      |
| Prefer not to indicate | 3                      |
24. In the last 12 months, have you had any difficulty paying your water bills, e.g. had to ask for an extension or paid late, been on a special payment plan, been disconnected, delayed other payments or borrowed money to pay?
- |     |                        |
|-----|------------------------|
| Yes | 1 (CODE AS VULNERABLE) |
| No  | 2                      |

Don't know 3

25. Are you of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin? MR (CODES 2&3 ONLY)

No 1

Yes, Aboriginal 2

Yes, Torres Strait Islander 3

Prefer not to say 4

26. Do you speak a language other than English at home? SR

Yes 1

No, English only 2

Thank you very much for your time.

## Central Coast Council SME Questionnaire

### Survey Introduction

Good afternoon/evening, I'm [PROVIDE NAME] from Woolcott Research. We are doing an important study for Central Coast Council to obtain feedback from business owners and managers in relation to the water, sewerage and stormwater services that they provide.

This feedback will be used to help Council make an informed pricing submission to the independent regulator for NSW (known as IPART).

Pricing submissions to IPART for water, sewerage and stormwater prices are mandatory, and occur every 3-4 years.

This is a totally separate process to Council's application to IPART for a Special Variation on Council rates, which is part of Council's Business Recovery Plan.

Do you have time to complete the survey now?

IF NO: Arrange call-back.

### A. Screening Question

S1. Firstly, can I confirm whether you are an owner or manager of the business I am calling? SR

- |                        |               |
|------------------------|---------------|
| Yes, owner/ proprietor | 1             |
| Yes, senior manager    | 2             |
| No, other employee     | 3 - TERMINATE |

S2. And to make sure we speak with a good cross-section of the business community, approximately how many staff does your business employ...

- |                           |   |           |
|---------------------------|---|-----------|
| Non employing/sole trader | 1 |           |
| 1-4 Employees             | 2 |           |
| 5-19 Employees            | 3 |           |
| 20-199 Employees          | 4 |           |
| 200+ Employees            | 5 | TERMINATE |

S3. And what is the postcode of your business address? \_\_\_\_\_ CHECK  
QUOTAS

**B. General Questions**

1. Is your business connected to town water?

- Yes 1
- No 2

2. Is your business connected to the sewer?

- Yes 1
- No 2

IF NO TO Q1 AND Q2 THEN SKIP TO SECTION F

3. Which of the following best describes the water bills you receive for your business? READ OUT. SR.

The business gets bills from Central Coast Council	1
The business gets bills from the body corporate for the premises	2
The business gets bills from Central Coast Council and from the body corporate for the premises	3
No	4

4. IF CODE 4 AT Q3: Does your landlord/managing agent charge you all or part of your water/sewerage bill as a specific charge separate from the rent? SR.

- Yes 1 CONTINUE
- No 2 TERMINATE

5. Which of the following would be the closest to representing your own business type? RAED OUT

A smaller business user – typically with a 20 or 25mm Meter size	1
A medium sized business user – typically with a 40mm Meter size	2
A larger business user – typically with a 100mm Meter size	3

*(current usage charge per kl is \$2.07)*

**C. Priorities for water and sewerage services**

6. When you think about your water and sewerage services, what are the three things you want Central Coast Council to focus on and improve on the most? REQUIRE AT LEAST ONE ANSWER

- a. \_\_\_\_\_
- b. \_\_\_\_\_
- c. \_\_\_\_\_

7. Of the following options, what would you like Central Coast Council to focus and improve on **the most** in relation to the water & sewer assets? ROTATE ORDER ANCHORING OTHER AT THE BOTTOM. SR

- A. Improve drinking water quality
- B. Reduce frequency of unplanned water interruptions
- C. Reduce water main breaks
- D. Improve odour control
- E. Reduce sewer main breaks and chokes
- F. Other (please specify)

#### D. Performance

8. Thinking about the last 12 months, how satisfied have you been with .... READ OUT FIRST OPTION (where 1 is low satisfaction and 5 is high satisfaction). And how about.... ? READ OUT NEXT OPTION.

	Low				High	Don't Know
Water quality (including taste and clarity)	1	2	3	4	5	6
Reliability of water supply (lack of flow interruptions)	1	2	3	4	5	6
Response time to fix interruptions	1	2	3	4	5	6
Water pressure	1	2	3	4	5	6

9. Now, thinking about sewerage services in the last 12 months, please indicate if your business has been impacted by .... RAED OUT FIRST OPTION. And have you been impacted by..... RAED OUT NEXT OPTION.

	Yes	No	Don't Know
Sewage overflows on the property	1	2	3
Sewage overflows in the community (beach or lake displaying 'no swimming' signs)	1	2	3



10. How concerned are you by the frequency of sewage overflows (caused by blockages and chokes in the sewer system) that flow into the natural environment (e.g. bushland, river, beaches or lakes). Please use a scale from 1 to 5 where 1 means you have no concern, and 5 means you are highly concerned, based on what you have experienced yourself or heard about from others.

- No concern 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- High level concern 5

11. Still thinking about the last 12 months, how satisfied have you been with your water and sewerage supplier in terms of..... READ OUT FIRST OPTION (where 1 is low satisfaction and 5 is high satisfaction)? And how about.....READ OUT NEXT OPTION?

	Low				High	Don't Know
Being easy to deal with	1	2	3	4	5	6
Having information available in relation to any outages/service interruptions	1	2	3	4	5	6

## E. Drainage

12. Currently if a business resides in a 'business only / non-residential' complex, then the drainage charge is based on the total land size of the complex. It is then divided up based on the number of businesses in the complex. If a business resides in a complex that also includes residential premises, then each property is charged a set amount. To what extent do you support all business properties being charged the same set amount? Would you be.... READ OUT SCALE

- Very supportive 1
- Supportive 2
- Neutral 3
- Unsupportive 4
- Very unsupportive 5
- Don't know 6

13. At the moment the stormwater drainage charge is included in your water bill and the pricing is determined by IPART. IPART have suggested that Council investigates the possibility of having the pricing set by Central Coast Council as part of the general rates, to be in-line with how other Councils charge for this.

In principle, if the amount was to remain at a similar level, how supportive would you be for the stormwater drainage fee to be set by Central Coast Council under general Council rates?

Would you be.... READ OUT SCALE

Very supportive	1
Supportive	2
Neutral	3
Unsupportive	4
Very unsupportive	5
Don't know	6

14. At the moment, due to the way drainage charges were originally set up, a small proportion of the Council's population does not contribute to the funding of drainage infrastructure. To what extent do you support the idea of all property owners within the Central Coast region contributing towards that cost? Would you be.... READ OUT SCALE

Very supportive	1
Supportive	2
Neutral	3
Unsupportive	4
Very unsupportive	5
Don't know	6

## G. Price Structure

15. Central Coast Council charges customers for water and sewerage services. Prices for these services are set by IPART, who is the independent pricing regulator in NSW.

For their water services, business customers pay a FIXED charge per property, and a USAGE charge that varies with the volume of water used by the property. So customers can control their overall bill by varying the amount of water that they use. Were you aware of this?

Yes	1
No	2

## H. Scarcity Pricing

16. In response to our variable climate, some other water providers have moved towards a pricing system that involves increasing the USAGE charge for water **during times of drought**. This means is that when water reserves run low, there is an increase in the USAGE price for water. Increasing the USAGE price then encourages residents to use less water – it generally doesn't result in an increase in revenue for the provider because people use less and the cost to supply water also increases when water reserves are low.

Central Coast Council is interested in knowing how supportive you would be of the introduction of this pricing system. They are proposing that when the dam levels fall below 50% the USAGE price for water increases. If a business didn't reduce their consumption pattern, this could result in an increase of around \$10 per quarter on the average bill when dam levels are lower - however, the exact USAGE and FIXED charges would be determined by IPART.

How supportive are you of Central Coast Council introducing this pricing system (increased usage charge during times of drought)?

Very supportive	1
Supportive	2
Neutral	3
Unsupportive	4
Very unsupportive	5

## I. Price Alignment

17. As you may know, Central Coast Council was formed from the amalgamation of the former Gosford and Wyong Councils. Each of the former Councils had responsibility for the provision of water and sewerage services to their residents and businesses. Now that they have been combined they have aligned the prices for water rates, but there are still different sewerage service charges.

Historically, businesses of the former Gosford City Council paid higher service charges as Gosford Council received more revenue to invest in infrastructure.

To support the vision of 'One – Central Coast', Central Coast Council is interested to know how supportive you would be for a single price for sewerage services to be introduced for all Central Coast businesses in the future, so that any future investment in sewerage services will be based on asset expenditure requirements, not on previous local government area boundaries.

How supportive are you of the idea of introducing a single price so that all Central Coast Council businesses pay the same amount for their sewerage services? Would you be.... READ OUT SCALE

Very supportive	1
Supportive	2
Neutral	3
Unsupportive	4
Very unsupportive	5
Not sure	6

18. To give you a better idea of the likely impact on your own business, customers in the previous Wyong LGA may pay a slightly higher price to offset the lower charges for the previous Gosford LGA .

#### IF CODE 1 AT Q5:

At the moment the sewerage service charge for the former Gosford Council area for a commercial connection with a 25mm Meter size is \$186.86 per quarter, while the price in the former Wyong area is lower at \$123.17 per quarter.

How supportive are you of the creation of a single price for all businesses? As an example - an average of the two would be around \$155. Would you be.... READ OUT SCALE.

Very supportive	1
Supportive	2
Neutral	3
Unsupportive	4
Very unsupportive	5

#### IF CODE 2 AT Q5:

At the moment the sewerage service charge for the former Gosford Council area for a commercial connection with a 40mm Meter size is \$478 per quarter, while the price in the former Wyong area is lower at \$315 per quarter.

How supportive are you of the creation of a single price for all businesses? As an example - an average of the two would be around \$386. Would you be.... READ OUT SCALE.

Very supportive	1
Supportive	2
Neutral	3
Unsupportive	4
Very unsupportive	5

#### IF CODE 3 AT Q5:

At the moment the sewerage service charge for the former Gosford Council area for a commercial connection with a 100mm Meter size is \$ 2,989 per quarter, while the price in the former Wyong area is lower at around \$1,970 per quarter.

How supportive are you of the creation of a single price for all businesses? As an example - an average of the two would be around \$2,480. Would you be.... READ OUT SCALE.

Very supportive	1
Supportive	2
Neutral	3
Unsupportive	4
Very unsupportive	5

## J. Demographic Questions

19. In which industry do you operate? SR

Accommodation and Food Services	1
Administrative and Support Services	2
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	3
Arts and Recreation Services	4
Construction	5
Education and Training	6
Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services	7
Financial and Insurance Services	8
Health Care and Social Assistance	9

Information Media and Telecommunications	10
Manufacturing	11
Mining	12
Other	13
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	14
Public Administration and Safety	15
Rental, Hiring and Real Estate Services	16
Retail Trade	17
Transport, Postal and Warehousing	18
Wholesale Trade	19

20.	How long has your business been operating on the Central Coast? SR	
	Less than 12 months	1
	1-3 years	2
	4-7 years	3
	8-10 years	4
	10+ years	5
	20+ years	6

Thank you very much for your time.

## Appendix C: YVOC Promotional Activities

### *Promotional Activities for the Council YVOC Survey*

Central Coast Council carried out promotion of the survey on the Your Voice Our Coast website to ensure the community and stakeholders were aware of the opportunity to participate.

<p><b>Your Voice – Our Coast website</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Page launched on 1 March</li> <li>• 1-28 March (consultation): 1,112 page visits</li> <li>• <a href="http://yourvoiceourcoast.com/all-projects/its-time-talk-water-sewer-and-stormwater-prices">yourvoiceourcoast.com/all-projects/its-time-talk-water-sewer-and-stormwater-prices</a></li> </ul>
<p><b>Media Releases</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 March 2021 – Council invite community to provide feedback on water, sewer and stormwater prices</li> <li>• 25 March 2021 – Council reminds community to have their say on water, sewer and stormwater prices</li> <li>• Copies of the media releases can be found in <b>Appendix C1</b></li> </ul>
<p><b>Coast Connect articles</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Electronic newsletters reaching 11,000+ residents</li> <li>• 3 March, feature article: It's time to talk water, sewer and stormwater prices</li> <li>• 10 March, article: It's time to talk water, sewer and stormwater prices</li> <li>• 17 March, article: Tell us your water, sewer and stormwater values</li> <li>• 25 March 2021, link to survey: Water, sewer and stormwater prices survey closing soon - Have Your Say</li> <li>• Copies of the articles can be found in <b>Appendix C2</b></li> </ul>
<p><b>Print advertising</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Newspaper advertising with a total print run of 170,000</li> <li>• Central Coast Chronicle – ½ page advertisement – 3 March 2021</li> <li>• Coast Community News – ½ page advertisement – 5 March 2021</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pelican Post – ½ page advertisement – 11 March 2021</li> <li>• Copies of the advertisements can be found in <b>Appendix C3</b></li> </ul>
<b>Radio</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Radio advertising, running from 1-28 March</li> <li>• Reaches 140,000 residents</li> </ul>
<b>Electronic direct mails (EDMs)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two EDMs were distributed</li> <li>• Copies of the EDMs can be found in <b>Appendix C4</b></li> </ul>
<b>Online discussion groups</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 15 March 2021, online discussion group 1 – 10 participants</li> <li>• 17 March 2021, online discussion group 2 – 10 participants</li> </ul>
<b>Internal communications</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internal communications to 2000+ Council employees</li> </ul>
<b>Letters</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1,455 letters distributed to residents who live in the non-declared drainage area</li> <li>• 123 letters and emails to category 3 customers (high-users of water)</li> <li>• A copy of the letters can be found in <b>Appendix C5</b></li> </ul>



## *Appendix C.1 – Media Releases*

*1 March 2021*

### *Council invite community to provide feedback on water, sewer and stormwater prices*

Central Coast Council is calling on the community to have their say on water, sewer and stormwater pricing.

Water, sewer and stormwater prices are set by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART), who undertake a review of pricing every three to four years (the period is determined by IPART).

This latest review by IPART requires Council to propose pricing for these services by September 2021 that will take effect from 1 July 2022 until 30 June 2026.

Council Director Water and Sewer, Jamie Loader said community feedback is a crucial part of putting together Council's submission.

"We want to find out what's important to you about how we provide water, sewer and stormwater services to the Central Coast," said Mr Loader.

"We will then balance this information with our assessment of how much it costs to produce water, treat sewage and ensure that stormwater is managed.

"We want to assure the community this does not mean prices go up automatically, they could in fact go down or remain the same.

"IPART will independently consider Council's submission, which will include community feedback, and will set a fair price for customers."

Council Administrator, Dick Persson AM said that he wanted the community to understand that this submission to IPART for water, sewer and stormwater prices is completely separate to the application for a rate rise that Council recently lodged.

"Council applied to IPART for a 15% rate rise to help with Council's financial recovery. This process is called a Special Variation application and is a one-off application as part of our Business Recovery Plan," Mr Persson said.

"Water, sewer and stormwater prices are required to be separately reviewed every three to four years and that is what this process is for.

"I encourage everyone to get involved in how Council will deliver what is one of the very essential services we can and must deliver."

Community members can have their say by completing an online survey at [yourvoiceourcoast.com](http://yourvoiceourcoast.com).

ENDS

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*25 March 2021*

*Council reminds community to have their say on water, sewer and stormwater prices*

Central Coast Council is reminding the community to jump online and fill out the survey on water, sewer and stormwater pricing by 28 March.

Water, sewer and stormwater prices are set by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART). The latest review by IPART requires Council to propose pricing for these services by September 2021 that will take effect from 1 July 2022 until 30 June 2026.


Community feedback is a crucial part of putting together Council's submission to IPART.

Community members can have their say by completing an online survey at [yourvoiceourcoast.com](http://yourvoiceourcoast.com) by 28 March 2021.

Council are required to prepare and lodge this submission on water, sewer and stormwater prices due to timing previously set by IPART – it has not been brought forward in line with Council's application to IPART for a Special Variation on rates.


## Appendix C.2 – Coast Connect

3 March, feature article: *It's time to talk water, sewer and stormwater prices*



### Coast Connect

3 March 2021




#### It's time to talk water, sewer and stormwater prices

Every few years Council reviews how much it costs to produce drinking water, treat sewage and manage stormwater.

Part of this involves us checking in with you to make sure your views are considered.

The time to have your say has come again – tell us what's important to you about how we provide these services and how they should be priced.


[Fill in our online survey >](#)



#### Referendum: Reduction of Councillors and wards

Council resolved to hold a Constitutional Referendum for the reduction of Councillors (from 15 to 9) in conjunction with the September 2021 Local Government Elections. First we want to know what you think.

[Have Your Say >](#)



#### Administrator appoints new CEO

Council Administrator, Mr Dick Persson AM has announced Mr David Farmer as Council's new Chief Executive Officer. Mr Farmer has had up to 40 years' experience in Local Government and will commence in April.

[Read more >](#)

*10 March, article: It's time to talk water, sewer and stormwater prices*



### **Have your say on Councillor and ward numbers**

Council resolved to hold a Constitutional Referendum for the reduction of Councillors (from 15 to 9) in conjunction with the September 2021 Local Government Elections. First we want to know what you think.

**Have Your Say >**



### **It's time to talk water, sewer and stormwater prices**

Every few years Council reviews how much it costs to provide water, sewer and stormwater services. This involves making sure your views are considered. Tell us what's important to you about how we provide these services.

**Fill in our online survey >**

*17 March, article: Tell us your water, sewer and stormwater values*



### **Tell us your water, sewer and stormwater values**

Every few years Council reviews how much it costs to provide water, sewer and stormwater services for the region. Part of this involves finding out what's important to you about how we provide these services.

**Fill in our online survey >**



### **How do you use our open spaces?**

We are developing an Active Lifestyles Strategy for the region and want to hear how you currently use open spaces, what you value and what you want to see in the future to encourage healthy and active outdoor lifestyles.

**Help plan an active future >**

25 March 2021, link to survey: [Water, sewer and stormwater prices survey closing soon](#)

## Contact us

### Gosford Office

49 Mann Street  
Gosford NSW 2250  
Ph: 1300 463 954

### Wyong Office

2 Hely Street  
Wyong NSW 2259  
Ph: 1300 463 954

### Email us

[ask@centralcoast.nsw.gov.au](mailto:ask@centralcoast.nsw.gov.au)

## Important links

[Water, sewer and stormwater prices survey closing soon - Have Your Say](#)

[Rates Harmonisation – Overview and FAQs](#)

[Be part of Graffiti Removal Day on Sunday 28 March](#)

[IGNITE Business Launchpad program for youth](#)

[We're planning a new fenced off-leash area at Helen Reserve, Gorokan](#)



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[Web version](#) / [Unsubscribe](#) / [Preference Centre](#)

## Appendix C.3 – Print Advertising

Central Coast Chronicle – ½ page advertisement – 3 March 2021

Coast Community News – ½ page advertisement – 5 March 2021

Pelican Post – ½ page advertisement – 11 March 2021



**HAVE YOUR SAY**

**Central Coast, it's time to talk water, sewer and stormwater prices.**

Did you know your water, sewer and stormwater prices are set by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART)?

Central Coast Council is currently preparing a submission for IPART's next review of the prices for the Coast and we want to ensure your views are considered.

We want to find out what's important to you about how we provide water, sewer and stormwater services.

This information will then be used to form our submission to IPART.

Have your say by completing our online survey.

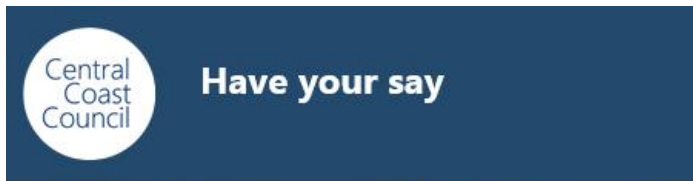
*Council are required to prepare and lodge this submission on water, sewer and stormwater prices due to timing previously set by IPART – it has not been brought forward in line with Council's application to IPART for a Special Variation on rates.*

**yourvoiceourcoast.com**

Central Coast Council

## Appendix C.4 – EDMs

### 2 March – It's time to talk water, sewer and stormwater prices



### It's time to talk water, sewer and stormwater prices

Hey Alexis,

Every few years Council reviews how much it costs to produce drinking water, treat sewage and manage stormwater.

Part of this involves us checking in with you to make sure your views are considered.

The time to have your say has come again.

Tell us what's important to you about how we provide water, sewer and stormwater services.

[Fill in our survey](#)

#### Contact us

##### Gosford Office

49 Mann Street  
Gosford NSW 2250  
Ph: 1300 463 954

##### Wyangong Office

2 Hely Street  
Wyangong NSW 2259  
Ph: 1300 463 954

#### Important links

[Have your say on other community projects](#)

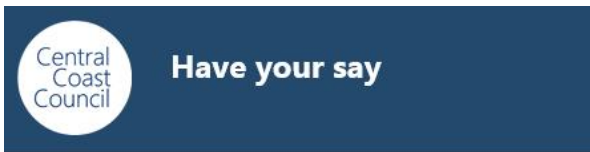
[Water usage calculator](#)

[How to resolve neighbourhood concerns](#)

[How we manage our coastline](#)

[Stay up to date as we respond to COVID](#)

## 18 March – Help us plan the Coast’s water future



### Planning the Coast’s water future

Hey Alexis,

We just wanted to remind you that you can still have your say on two important water projects that Council are currently working on.

#### Survey 1: Water, sewer and stormwater prices

Every few years Council reviews how much it costs to produce drinking water, treat sewage and manage stormwater. Part of this involves us checking in with you to make sure your views are considered. The time to have your say has come again. Tell us what’s important to you about how we provide water, sewer and stormwater services.

[Take our short survey](#)

#### Survey 2: Our future water supply

We are currently investigating and considering nine different options to secure the future of water on the Coast – including dams, desalination, environmental flow substitution, recycled water and more! Tell us what you think about our shortlist of options for our long-term water supply.

[Take our short survey](#)

#### Contact us

##### Gosford Office

49 Mann Street  
Gosford NSW 2250  
Ph: 1300 463 954

##### Wyong Office

2 Hely Street  
Wyong NSW 2259  
Ph: 1300 463 954

#### Important links

[Have your say on other community projects](#)

[Water usage calculator](#)

[How to resolve neighbourhood concerns](#)

[How we manage our coastline](#)

[Stay up to date as we respond to COVID](#)



## Appendix C.5 – letters and emails

1,455 letters distributed to residents who live in the non-declared drainage area



12 March 2021

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

Dear resident,

### **It's time to talk about water, sewer and stormwater prices**

On the Central Coast, water, sewerage and stormwater prices are set by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART).

As such, every three to four years, Central Coast Council is required to review how much it costs to produce drinking water, treat sewage and manage stormwater for our community.

This latest review requires Council to propose pricing to IPART for these services by September 2021. Any change will take effect from 1 July 2022 and be in place until 30 June 2026.

This submission to IPART for water, sewer and stormwater prices is separate to the application for a rate rise that Council recently lodged to IPART for a 15% rate rise to help with Council's financial recovery. This process is called a Special Variation application and is a one-off application as part of our Business Recovery Plan.

### **Stormwater drainage charge**

As your property is not currently located within a declared drainage area, we are proposing that your property will continue to not be levied the stormwater drainage charge during the next 4-year IPART determination commencing on 1 July 2022.

### **Have your say**

We want to find out what's important to you about how we provide water, sewer or stormwater services and how they should be priced.

You can have your say by completing an online survey at [yourvoiceourcoast.com](http://yourvoiceourcoast.com)



Wyong Office: 2 Hely St / PO Box 20 Wyong NSW 2259 | P 02 4350 5555  
Gosford Office: 49 Mann St / PO Box 21 Gosford NSW 2250 | P 02 4325 8222  
E [ask@centralcoast.nsw.gov.au](mailto:ask@centralcoast.nsw.gov.au) | W [www.centralcoast.nsw.gov.au](http://www.centralcoast.nsw.gov.au) | ABN 73 149 644 003

123 letters and emails to category 3 customers (high-users of water)



2 March 2021



Dear General Manager,

**It's time to talk about water, sewer and stormwater prices**

On the Central Coast, water, sewer and stormwater prices are set by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART).

Every few years, Central Coast Council is required to review how much it costs to produce drinking water, treat sewage and manage stormwater for our community.

This latest review requires Council to propose pricing to IPART for these services by September 2021. Any change will take effect from 1 July 2022 and be in place until 30 June 2026.

This submission to IPART for water, sewer and stormwater prices is separate to the application for a rate rise that Council recently lodged. Council applied to IPART for a 15% rate rise to help with Council's financial recovery. This process is called a Special Variation application and is a one-off application as part of our Business Recovery Plan. Water, sewer and stormwater prices are required to be reviewed every three to four years and that is what this process is for.

**Have your say**

We want to find out what's important to you about how we provide water, sewer and stormwater services.

You can have your say by completing an online survey at [yourvoiceourcoast.com](http://yourvoiceourcoast.com).

Should you have any concerns regarding the IPART submission process, please contact Council on 1300 463 954 or [ipart enquiry@centralcoast.nsw.gov.au](mailto:ipart enquiry@centralcoast.nsw.gov.au)

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "J. Loader".

Jamie Loader  
Director, Water and Sewer