

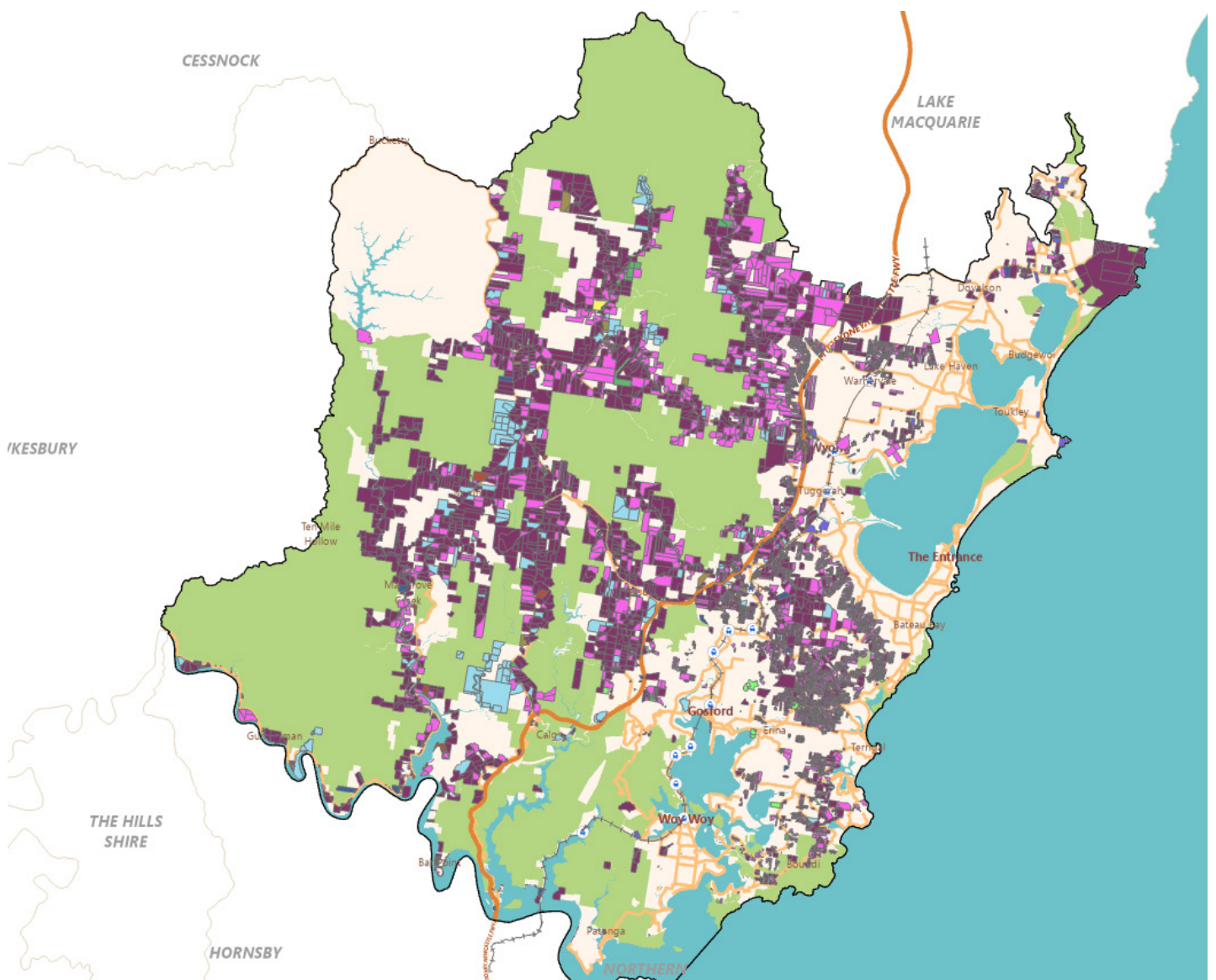
Water and Sewer - Unserviced Properties

Engagement Summary

Central
Coast
Council

Summary

Between 23 November 2023 and 14 February 2024 Central Coast Council sought community feedback to gain a greater understanding of community sentiment regarding connecting unserviced properties to the water and/or sewer network, as well as to ascertain willingness for unserviced properties to pay for connection to water and sewerage in the future.



Background

There are over 7,000 unserved properties in small urban and rural communities on the Central Coast that do not have access to water and/or sewerage services. If not managed properly, these unserved properties can cause risks to public health and the environment through contamination of surface water, land, and groundwater.

The community were invited to participate in a survey conducted by Woolcott Research and there was a link on the Your Voice our Coast (YVOC) website where any community members could participate.

Submissions could be made online or by post.

Engagement Results

Community Survey



- Woolcott Research **surveyed 500 residents and small businesses** connected to the water and/or sewer network (400 residents, 100 businesses).



- Your Voice Our Coast (YVOC) website had a total of 76 surveys completed by the community (72 residents, 4 businesses).

The final total sample was 576 - 472 residents and 104 businesses.

Targeted Survey



- A targeted survey was conducted amongst **1352 unserved property owners**. (1219 residential, 133 business owners).
- Of the total sample, **927 were not connected to the water supply system** and **1351 were not connected to the sewerage system**.

1. Water Supply

Importance and value of connecting properties to the water supply system.

The community (both residents and businesses) clearly indicated that it was **highly important for unserved properties to have access to clean and safe drinking water**.

Residents 83%



Businesses 93%



Similarly, the majority felt it of **great importance to have a reliable and secure drinking water supply**.

Residents 84%



Businesses 91%

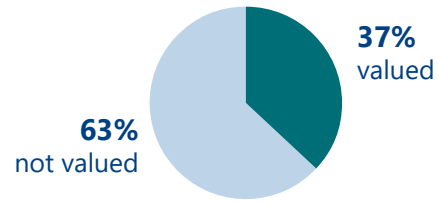


Unserviced property owners who were not connected to the water system were asked how much they would value these benefits.



Just over four in ten of these respondents indicated they would value both clean and safe drinking water and reliable and secure drinking water.

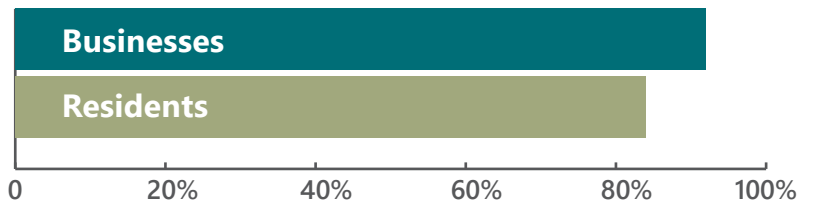
Leaving 55-57% who would not value these benefits.



Lower perceived value was obtained for the benefit of removing the burden of onsite water supply systems – **37% indicated some value** while **63% did not value this aspect.**

2. Sewerage Systems

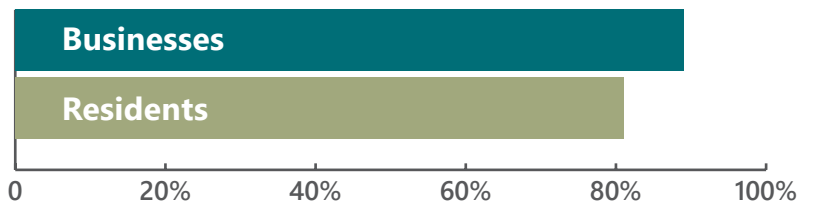
Importance and value of connecting properties to the sewerage system for public health



58% of unserviced property owners not connected to the sewerage system placed some level of value on connection for public health reasons (very highly, highly or slightly value).

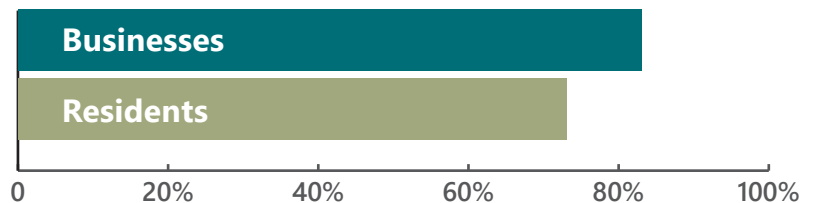
Respondents from the community generally thought this was highly important (residents 82%, businesses 85%). 57% of unserviced property owners not connected to the sewerage system placed some level of value on this aspect.

Importance and value of connecting properties to the sewerage system to preserve the natural environment



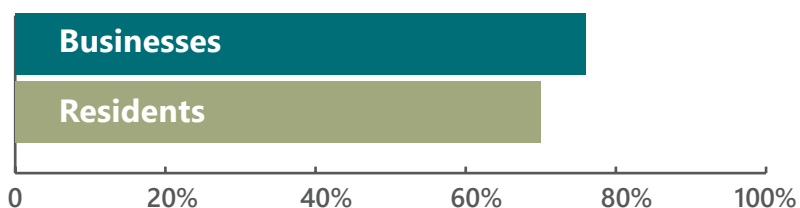
60% of unserviced property owners not connected to the sewerage system placed some level of value on connection for public health reasons.

Importance and value of connecting properties to the sewerage system to support tourism opportunities by protecting recreation waterways



53% of unserviced property owners not connected to the sewerage system placed some level of value on this, as a benefit connection.

Importance and value of connecting properties to the sewerage system to remove the burden of owning and maintaining onsite sewerage systems



51% of unserviced property owners not connected to the sewerage system valued this aspect to some extent. This is understood to relate to the variability in the type of onsite sewerage management systems in place, which include pockets of 'pump out systems'.

Importance of connecting properties to reduce contamination risks

Summarised in the table below is the proportion of respondents who found it extremely important that the risk of each contamination type be reduced, by connecting to Council's system.

For community respondents, contamination of the dams and drinking water was considered extremely important most often, followed by contamination risks to bushland and national parks. There was a similar pattern for the unserviced property owners, albeit there were lower proportions who found each extremely important.

Table 1: Summary table of contamination risks rated as extremely important

Contamination risk type considered 'extremely important' to reduce by connecting to the network	Community (Current water and sewer customers)		Unserviced property owners (not connected to the sewerage system)		
	Residents %	Businesses %	Total %	Residents %	Businesses %
Dams and drinking water catchments	63	61	39	38	50
Ground water	54	50	34	33	44
Recreational waterways	54	46	34	33	43
Wetlands	53	51	34	33	42
Bushlands and national parks	55	49	31	30	40

Importance of considerations to determine priorities for connection

Amongst existing customers, the most important consideration for determining priorities for connecting unserviced properties to the network was clearly 'minimising public health' – this was consistent amongst residents (61%) and businesses (57%).

Opinions amongst unserviced property owners not connected to the sewerage system were slightly more mixed. Both businesses and urban residents ranked 'minimising public health risks' as top priority (businesses 36%, urban residents 34%), however the residential property owners and rural residents ranked 'cost and complexity to extend services and upgrade the existing council network' as their highest priority (36% and 40% respectively).

3. Funding Options

Existing customer survey respondents were asked to rank the fairest way to fund potential connection of unserviced properties, if deemed eligible. Overall, customers preferred Council funded (from water and sewerage revenue), with 49% of residents and 63% of businesses choosing this option as the fairest. It is important to note that this is an indication of community preference only, with additional consultation required once we have determined the likely costs involved with development of particular schemes.

Unserviced property owners were also asked to indicate their likelihood to connect to the Council network at a range of cost options. Responses varied depending on respondent's location and type of on-site system they were using. If respondents were asked to only contribute private plumbing costs, 25% of residents and 42% of businesses would be likely (very + quite) to connect to the water network and 40% of residents and 47% of businesses would be likely (very + quite) to connect to the sewer network. Likelihood to connect decreased as the required contribution increased.

4. Support For Having Water/And Or Sewer Connected

Overall, just over one third of unserviced property owners interviewed, were in support of being connected to Councils water and/or network, however more than half (54%) were not in support, and 9% unsure.

Support was higher amongst businesses with opinions divided equally between supporting and not supporting (46% versus 45% respectively).

There were certain clusters of residents with both majority support to connect and demonstrating willingness to pay at least private plumbing costs. These areas will be prioritised for future feasibility investigation.

What's next?

We would like to thank everyone who completed the survey.

Your valued feedback identified the vast difference of views from our customers and community that will facilitate further investigation into potential service extensions to meet the needs of the community.

To help ensure any future decisions are customer focussed, it is clear that a one size fits all solution will not reflect the individual needs of our diverse community. There were community members passionate to see services extended to unserviced areas, as well as others that were passionate against the extension of water and sewerage services.

Further analysis will help inform a risk and opportunities assessment to guide where further feasibility and targeted willingness to pay discussions are warranted.

