

Customer Reference Group – Meeting Summary

Date and Time	13 September 2023 1:00pm
Location	Atkinson Dam (Operators Office)
Attendees	Seqwater – Petrina Douglas, Wendy Scott, Cameron Stewart, Dan Sedunary and Steve Pett. CRG Members – Greg Banff and Ray Mayne
Apologies	David Simon, Errol Gerber, Andrew Jackwitz and Stephanie Gray
Purpose	QCA Price Review – What is important to customers in this price review and how can customers be involved

Welcome & Introductions

Seqwater introduced members of the Operations and Irrigation Team and provided an overview of the agenda.

Purpose of the meeting was to share Seqwater’s first look at draft proposal cost and pricing for the 2025-29.

Agenda items:

- (Phase 2) First look at draft proposal of irrigation costs and pricing for 2025-29
- Seven Mile Lagoon
- Upcoming Customer Irrigation Forum – Tuesday 10 October, 2023

QCA (Queensland Competition Authority) price review

- The Queensland Government issued a referral notice to the QCA directing them to undertake a review of the irrigation pricing practices of Seqwater and Sunwater.
- Purpose of review is to recommend irrigation pricing for the period 1 July 2025 – 30 June 2029.
- Seqwater will work with customers to agree prices from 1 July 2025.
- Submission to QCA is due 30 November 2023.

Seqwater customer engagement strategy

Seqwater’s customer engagement strategy has three phases and we currently are in “phase 2”.

- Phase 1 – Engage/Feedback (March-May 2023). Complete
- Phase 2 – Consult/Feedback (August – September 2023) Current
- Phase 3 – Circle back final proposal (October – November 2023)

Draft Cost and Pricing Proposals

Draft costs and pricing proposal is reflective of a challenging operating environment and a desire for meaningful engagement with customers as Seqwater develop prices for the next period.

Key themes impacting our operating environment:

- Global events such as COVID19 – inflation, availability of goods and services (including labour)
- Natural disasters – both here and overseas – insurance premiums continue to rise
- Higher energy prices
- Rising interest rates have increased cost of debt
- Council Rate increases
- Aging assets requiring continued monitoring and maintenance
- Asset maintenance program review underway – potential changes to Seqwater’s current asset maintenance programs
- Increased regulation – Metering
- Flood costs are excluded

Our customers voice – what they are telling us!

- Engagement with our Customer Reference Groups during Phase 1 of our engagement plan identified what matters most to our customers and what they want taken into consideration for the next price period.
 - Price stability
 - Scheme efficiencies
 - Customers interested in bottom line prices. Engage on expenditure/service trade off’s
 - Customers keen to understand drivers for any significant repair and maintenance works proposed for the next price path period
 - Water reliability/security
 - Customers happy with current service standards
 - Customers would like an online account to manage their water allocations (like Sunwater)
 - Regulatory costs of price reviews minimised
 - When water is available, customers want reliability of supply, if there is an interruption to supply they want it fixed asap
 - Wanting to understand if Seqwater have any plans to grow our business (meaning more water allocations)
 - Community Service Obligations to be continued

What’s new in the next price path?

Water Accounting System and Customer Portal

A new cost effective water accounting system will replace the antiquated manual spreadsheets that are currently used to undertake customer water accounting.

The new system will provide transparency to our customers as they will be able to access their water balances and enter meter reads 24 hours a day/7 days week. This is a cost effective solution for our irrigation customers with the total implementation costs of the system being \$737,272 of which \$135,000 has been received from Water Start as an innovation grant. The ongoing annual license fee will be \$25,000. The costs of the system and the ongoing costs will be shared amongst Seqwater’s 7 irrigation schemes apportioned by customer numbers.

The Lower Lockyer WSS share of the once off cost is \$61,324 and the annual fee for 2023/24 is \$2,546.

Metering Regulations

- Seqwater is upgrading all active customer meters to align with the Qld interim non-urban water meter standard over the next few years.
- Having an upgraded fleet of meters will improve measurement accuracy and reduce maintenance costs.
- Seqwater’s meter of choice “Krohne” has an expected 30 year life span.

Cost Drivers in the Lower Lockyer WSS

- Decrease in cost reflective Part A tariff caused by forecast decreases to:
 - Direct costs (in particular electricity)
 - Indirect costs (driven by a proportional decrease in direct costs relative to the other schemes decreasing indirect allocation)
 - 30 year forecast of non-metering spend
- While costs have decreased the cost reflective Part B tariff has increased caused by a decrease in 20 year annual usage.

Feedback from Customers on proposed costs and prices!

- Customers asked what was in place if no water and ongoing payments considerations; *Seqwater explained that there is a hardship policy in place in the event of no water allocations. Seqwater explained that members could apply for the policy which enables delayed payments.*
- Customers advised not to go in this much detail at the customer forums, we need to keep the pricing session at a high level otherwise we will loose our audience.

Actions

- Seqwater investigate cost of electricity against scheme.
- Seqwater to investigate what year metering project will take place to upgrade and align meters with metering standards.
- Seqwater to investigate a model to average usage percentages change when no allocations of water has been calculated.
- Updated report regarding Seven Mile Lagoon to be presented a next Customer Irrigation Forum in October.

Next Forum

The next Customer forum will be held on Tuesday 10 October 2023 at Lowood Bowls Club.

Meeting closed at 2:25pm.