



28 April 2026

Ms Carmel Donnelly  
Chair  
Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal  
PO Box K35  
Haymarket Post Shop NSW 1240

Dear Ms Donnelly

**Draft report – Prices for Essential Water and Water NSW’s Murray River to Broken Hill pipeline services from 1 July 2026**

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this Draft report on the prices for Essential Water and Water NSW’s Murray River to Broken Hill pipeline services from 1 July 2026.

The Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW (EWON) investigates and resolves complaints from customers of electricity and gas providers in NSW, and water providers, including Sydney Water, Hunter Water, Essential Water and Shoalhaven Water.

Our comments are informed by our investigations into these complaints, and through our community outreach and stakeholder engagement activities. We have not commented on Water NSW’s Murray River to Broken Hill pipeline services.

In our submission to the Issues Paper consultation, we recommended that:

- IPART consider the impact on water affordability for different groups of customers, such as tenants and pensioners, when determining whether price increases are applied predominantly to the fixed water charge or the variable usage charge.
- IPART make recommendations on the existing rebates in its determination. The current pensioner rebate will not remain fit for purpose for customers managing significant price increases over the determination period.
- Essential Water include a section on ‘affordability and financial vulnerability’ in its proposed performance measures during the next determination period.

EWON has also engaged with the NSW Government, expressing our strong support for recommendations made by the NSW Productivity and Equality Commission (PEC) and IPART to reform water rebates in NSW.

We therefore welcome and support that in the Draft report, IPART has:

- carefully considered water affordability for all customers, and specific cohorts of customers at risk of vulnerability, in its analysis and decision-making.
- stated that pensioner rebates are out of step with prices and provide insufficient financial assistance, and reiterated its previous recommendation to NSW Government that it consider:
  - targeting rebates to assist those most in need

- aligning goals, objectives and outcomes of rebates across NSW
- temporarily expanding eligibility to households that hold either a Health Care Card or Low Income Health Care Card
- exploring the merits of a utilities rebates
- expediting the review as soon as possible.
- made a draft decision that Essential Water include the following 'Value for money and affordability' measures in its performance outcomes:
  - number, or percentage, of customers supported under the 'Company Policy: Essential Water Financial Hardship Support' with payment plans or debt waivers program each year
  - percentage of customer accounts 90 days in arrears as proportion of total accounts each year
  - number of water restrictions completed for non-payment each year.

We also support IPART's recommendation that:

- Essential Water publishes, each year on its website, how it has performed against each of its performance measures.

If you would like to discuss this matter further, please contact Dr Rory Campbell, Manager Policy and Systemic Issues (EWON) on 02 8218 5266.

Yours sincerely



**Janine Young**  
**Ombudsman**  
**Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW**