

Supplementary questions: Leeton Shire Council

1. If there were legislation to ban privatisation of local water utilities, what critical functions or operations would need to be protected (for example, ability to outsource to the private sector, ability for single counties or county councils to collaborate)?

Leeton Shire Council utilises the private sector in times of short-term staff shortages or where specialised skill sets are required. Some examples include:

- Electrical contractors.
- Structural Engineering services.
- Consultancy firms to assist in master planning, documentation development, independent water testing services etc.
- Specialised plant and machinery utilisation where the required tasks are out of the ordinary in nature.

Day to day operational function is managed entirely inhouse and the quality of services provided confirms this is the best business model for Council to continue with.

Council supports the prevention of privatisation of local water utilities, however, would require the flexibility to continue this arrangement of maintaining the ability to engage with the private sector on an "as needed" basis. This will ensure that Council can continue to deliver the services to our communities at the highest possible standards whilst ensuring these services are managed cost affective for our community.

2. What has been your experience with funding programs such as the Safe and Secure Water Program and Town Water Risk Reduction Program? What improvements could be made to these programs to benefit your council?

Leeton Shire Council has engaged with the Safe and Secure Water Program for the purpose of developing the IWCM (Integrated Water Cycle Management plan) as well as the Leeton water Scoping Study; the latter of which was completed more than a year ago. As noted during the inquiry, there is significant duplication in requirements for our water utility department when it comes to planning. Example provided is in relation to the IP&R framework (Integrated Planning and Reporting) which requires Council to develop Asset Management Plans for our Assets. Whilst this program has been successful in enabling Council to progress these documents it would be more beneficial to have the ability to utilise this funding source to deliver asset renewals, upgrades and enable bottom line improvements for the water and wastewater reserves.

3. Do you support a community service obligation (CSO) funding model for local water utilities? If so, why would this be preferable to other funding models?

No, Leeton Shire Council believes a direct fee for service is what best suits the responsible management of water utilities. This fee should be standardised across the shire and formulated in a way to encourage water conservation. Having a set and common fee for the utilisation of water resources sends a fair and sound message to the communities encouraging modest and responsible utilisation of this crucial resource. If this was to be subsidised in any way, it is expected negative environmental impacts would be observed.