

**Submission
No 5**

**JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON PROTECTING LOCAL WATER UTILITIES
FROM PRIVATISATION**

Organisation: Singleton Council

Date Received: 31 October 2023

Council Reference: 23/71601

30 October 2023

Committee Secretary
Joint Select Committee on Protecting Local Water Utilities from Privatisation
6 Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

To the Joint Select Committee on Protecting Local Water Utilities from Privatisation,

SUBMISSION TO THE JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE INQUIRY INTO PROTECTING LOCAL WATER UTILITIES FROM PRIVATISATION

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the Joint Select Committee inquiry into protecting local water utilities from privatisations.

Singleton Council, as the local water utility, provides water services to approximately 20,000 customers in Singleton, Mount Thorley, Broke and Jerrys Plains and sewer services to approximately 16,500 customers in Singleton.

Council provides water to the Jerrys Plains community through an agreement with AGL Macquarie. AGL Macquarie extracts and treats water at its Bayswater Water Treatment Plant and then supplies bulk treated water to Council for reticulation to its customers. Council is also part owner and scheme manager in a joint venture partnership providing raw water to a mushroom composter and two coal mines.

Council's local water utility provides an essential service to the Singleton community; one which is uniquely tailored to suit the community's needs and at the lowest possible cost. Through Council providing this service to its community, it gives Council the ability to provide responsive and adaptive water and sewer services where levels of service meet community expectations and they are provided by those that have relevant local knowledge and experience. Council also recognises the financial benefit to the wider community in that any profits of the local water utility are directed back to Council for community benefit. As such, Council believes it is essential that local water utilities are protected from privatisation, forced amalgamations and sell-offs.

Providing legislative protection for local water utilities gives certainty to the community that they will continue to receive local water and sewer services that have grown and adapted, often for over 100 years, to meet the specific needs of the community they serve. It also provides protection for the community from unreasonable price increases potentially associated with privatisation or forced amalgamation.

When considering relevant legislation, it is important to give Councils the flexibility to enter into commercial or other arrangements for the supply and purchase of bulk water or the treatment of sewerage if those arrangements best suit the community. For example, Council's agreement with AGL Macquarie provides drinking water to Jerrys Plains at a far lower cost that Council would otherwise be able to achieve. Additionally, Council's joint venture provides a source of income that can be reinvested into its water and sewer services, which helps reduce the impact on customer's bills due to this alternate income source.

Simultaneously, it is important to ensure that the provisions of the *Water Industry Competition Act* continue to allow for private water and sewer suppliers where necessary. In particular to service areas where those alternate arrangements may come at a disproportionate cost to other water and sewer customers if Council were forced to provide that service.

We trust that the NSW Government will deliver the outcome that is in the best interest of the Singleton community in protecting privatisation of local water utilities.

If you have any further enquiries, please do not hesitate to contact Justin Fitzpatrick-Barr on telephone 02 6578 7290 or email [REDACTED]

Yours faithfully,



Justin Fitzpatrick-Barr
Acting General Manager