
**NARROMINE SHIRE COUNCIL
ORDINARY MEETING BUSINESS PAPER – 25 JUNE 2025
QUESTIONS WITH NOTICE REPORT**

The following Questions with Notice have been received: -

Questions With Notice from Cr Smith

1. COUNCIL HARDSHIP PROVISIONS

If the proposed 15% water rate increase is passed, will Council provide any hardship provisions for residents? If so, what provisions will be available and what criteria needs to be met in order to access these provisions?

Response from Acting General Manager: -

Council's Hardship Policy (published on Council's website) establishes guidelines for the General Manager and Council staff when dealing with ratepayers suffering genuine financial hardship with the payment of rates and annual charges. Assistance to ratepayers and pensioners is provided in accordance with the provisions of the Local Government Act. The Policy is also in accordance with the Office of Local Government Debt Management and Hardship Guidelines 2018, issued under section 23A of the Act. Essential eligibility criteria, supporting documentation requirements and relevant application form are included in the Policy.

2. GRANT FUNDING - WATER TREATMENT PLANT

Is there any likelihood of Council obtaining any further grants/assistance from either the State or Federal Government to assist Council in the purchase of a new water treatment plant for Narromine?

Response from Director Infrastructure and Engineering Services

Council is actively working with the NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) to secure funding under the Safe and Secure Water Program. Council has received "in principle" funding approval through this program and is in the process of finalising the funding deed for the design phase. The program provides funding for 75% of the total project cost.

In addition, Council will continue to pursue all relevant funding opportunities as they arise, noting that DCCEEW is the primary funding body for water infrastructure projects.

Council also applied for funding under the Federal Government's National Water Grid Fund in early 2023. Although that application was unsuccessful, Council intends to apply for future rounds of this program.

**NARROMINE SHIRE COUNCIL
ORDINARY MEETING BUSINESS PAPER – 25 JUNE 2025
QUESTIONS WITH NOTICE REPORT**

Questions With Notice from Cr Howe

3. SMART WATER METERS

*How many smart water meters have failed when installed and after installation?
What has been the cost and the continuous cost to the Ratepayers?
Have the manufacturers been approached for compensation on repairs/replacement and installation of the faulty smart water meters?
What is the current life expectancy of the smart water meters?
Do the Ratepayers pay a software fee on these smart water meters, and if so, what is the fee?*

Response from Director Infrastructure and Engineering Services

How many smart water meters have failed after installation?

As outlined in the February 2025 Council Business Paper – Smart Water Meter Review, a smart water meter consists of two key components: the electronic communication unit (the “smart” component) and the mechanical brass meter body.

Since installations began in 2022, fewer than 10 meters have experienced failure of the electronic components. In contrast, 90 meters have required replacement due to mechanical failure of the brass body. This issue reflects a broader, industry-wide challenge affecting water meters across Australia.

What has been the cost and the continuous cost to the Ratepayers?

20 meters have been replaced at no charge to Council. 70 meters were replaced by Council at a cost of \$220 per meter.

Have the manufacturers been approached for compensation on meter repairs/replacement and installation of the faulty smart water meters?

Yes. Council is actively working with the supplier regarding failure of water meter bodies.

What is the current life expectancy of the smart water meters?

While the supplier states that the smart meter batteries have a 15-year life expectancy, Council follows best practice guidelines to replace mechanical meters every 10 years.

Do ratepayers pay a software fee for the smart water meters? If so, what is the fee?

Ratepayers do not pay any additional charge or fee for having a smart meter installed.

Council's smart meter system operates under an annual subscription paid to Taggle, the owner of the Aqualus smart meter portal. This cost is included in Council's operating expenditure which is recovered through water usage and access charges.