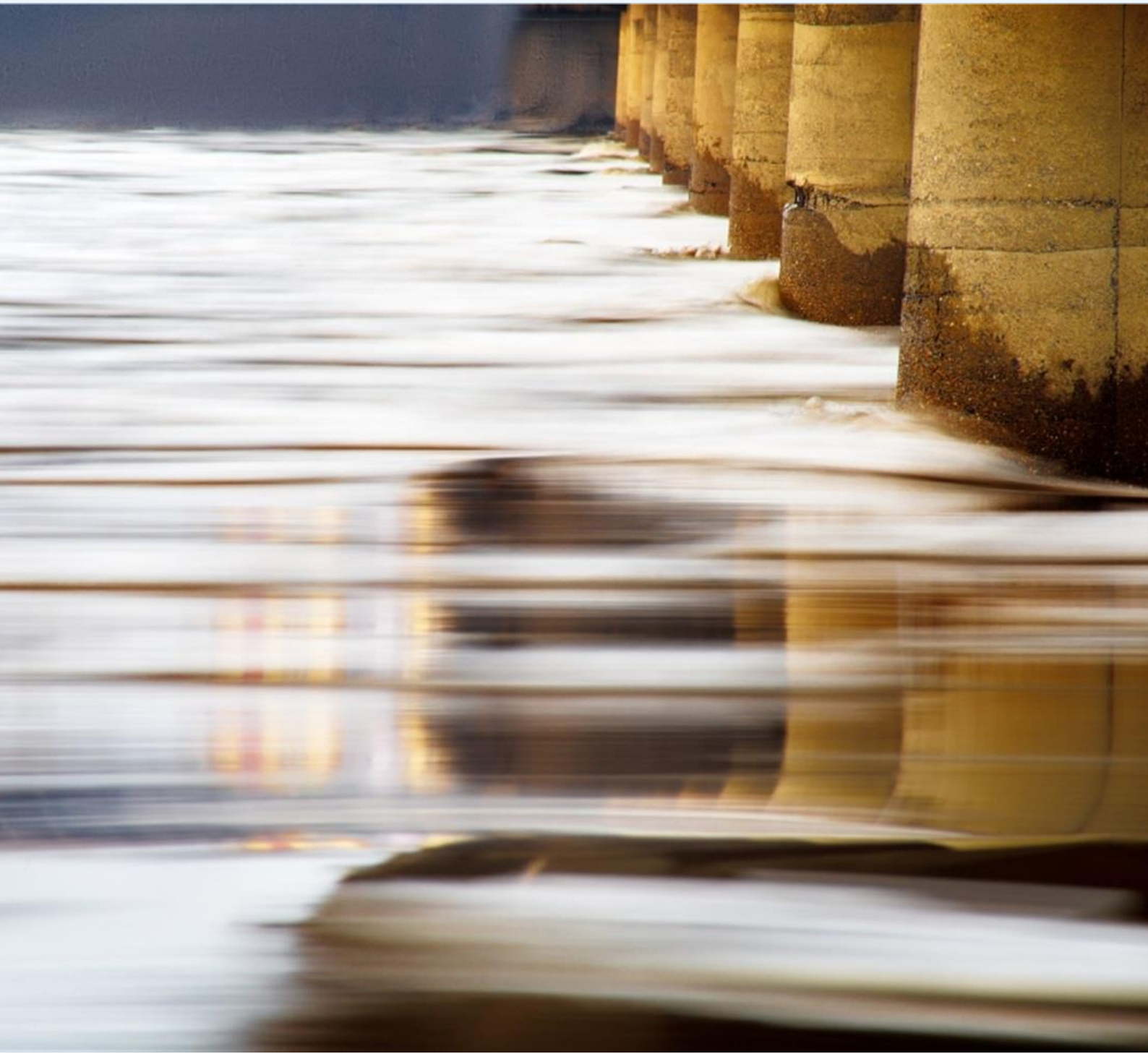


Your Water Quality Matters Survey Results

What we've heard from you

yass valley council

the country the people



Your Water Quality Matters Survey Results 2023

Works to date

In 2019, we assessed the WTP's performance. The evaluation report concluded that many of the assets, systems, and processes within the WTP needed to be upgraded.

Based on these results, we worked with the New South Wales Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (now DPE Water) and New South Wales Health to identify priority actions. A new WTP with a softening process was identified as the best option but was not endorsed by the DPE Water. Instead, these agencies required Council to implement Stage 1 works to address immediate issues.

Stage 1 works focused on making immediate improvements to the WTP, to increase community satisfaction with the water supply and reduce risks including:

1. an upgrade of the raw water pump station
2. installation of bubble plume aeration of Yass Dam
3. completing urgent works at the Water Treatment Plant.

Following completion of stage 1, we are now progressing a business case which includes looking at the following three options:

- **Option 1 - Base Case:** This provides basic improvements (new fine sand for the filters and replacing aged equipment).
- **Option 2 - Risk Mitigation Upgrade:** This would include new chemical storage, handling and dosing assets, the replacement of aged electrical assets and power supply and standby generator, inlet outlet modification of existing reservoirs, UV disinfection to address *cryptosporidium* risk from the catchment, filter improvements, amenities, and additional clear water storage. Some of this requires demolition of the old 1938 WTP.
- **Option 3 - WTP Augmentation:** This includes all of option 2 as well as new treatment processes including inclined plate settling tanks, DAF/Filters, and softening.

More information on the above can be found on our website - www.yassvalley.nsw.gov.au/Our-Services/Water-and-Wastewater/Water-and-wastewater-projects/Yass-Water-Treatment-Plant-Upgrade.

This is where our community came in.

We reached out to 3,395 customers served by the Yass Valley Council Water Treatment Plant through a comprehensive survey designed to gather their valuable insights. Of these, we received 491 responses.

The results of this survey will help us in choosing the option that best reflects our customers wants and needs within the Yass Valley.

Upon reviewing and analysing the data, we have compiled a detailed summary outlining the key themes and responses that emerged from this valuable feedback. The findings provide an in-depth understanding of customer concerns, satisfaction levels, and suggestions for improvements, enabling us to better cater to your needs and enhance our water services.

We sent the survey through email and by post to all our customers. The survey was open for a month and closed on 1 September 2023.

Your Water Quality Matters Survey Results 2023

The Yass Valley Council distributed 3,395 surveys to customers within the Yass region. Of those, we received 491 responses.

Most of the respondents were from South Yass region, making up 57% of the total feedback. North Yass residents contributed 26%, with the remaining respondents hailing from places such as Binalong, Murrumbateman, Bowning and other areas of Yass.

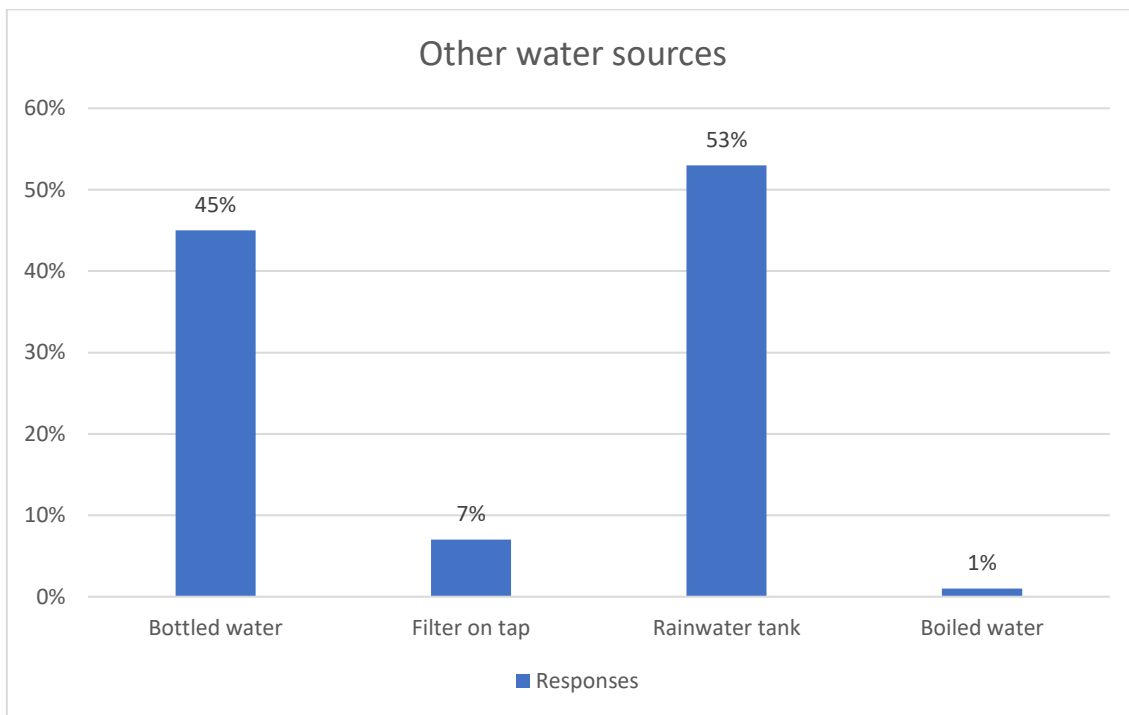
Here is a summary of the feedback received:

Water Quality and Usage: Community Survey Insights

In the survey, 15% of respondents drink town water directly from the tap, with 38% of this group observing improvements since March 2023.

A majority of 85% do not drink town water, with only 39% of this group noticing an improvement since March 2023.

To meet their water consumption needs, these individuals turn to alternative sources such as rainwater tanks (53%), bottled water (45%), various filtration methods (7%), and boiled water (1%).



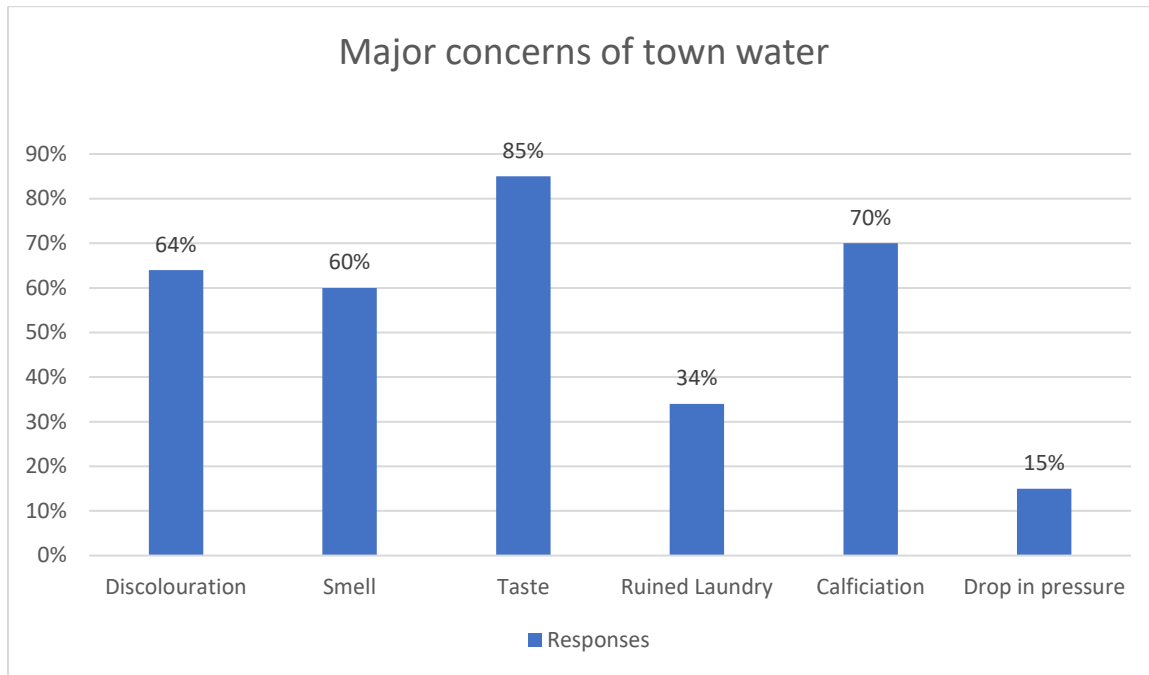
Participants who reported not drinking town water directly from the tap utilised alternative sources to meet their consumption need.

Results shown above indicate a range of preferences when it comes to seeking alternatives to town supplied water.

Your Water Quality Matters Survey Results 2023

Water quality

Water quality was discussed in the survey. The most frequently reported concern in response to water quality was taste, with a significant 85% of participants mentioning it. Calcification was noted in 70% of the survey responses, while discolouration and smell bothered 64% and 60% of respondents. Further, 34% were concerned with ruined laundry, and a minority of 15% reported a concern for drop in pressure.



Filters, rainwater tanks and hot water systems

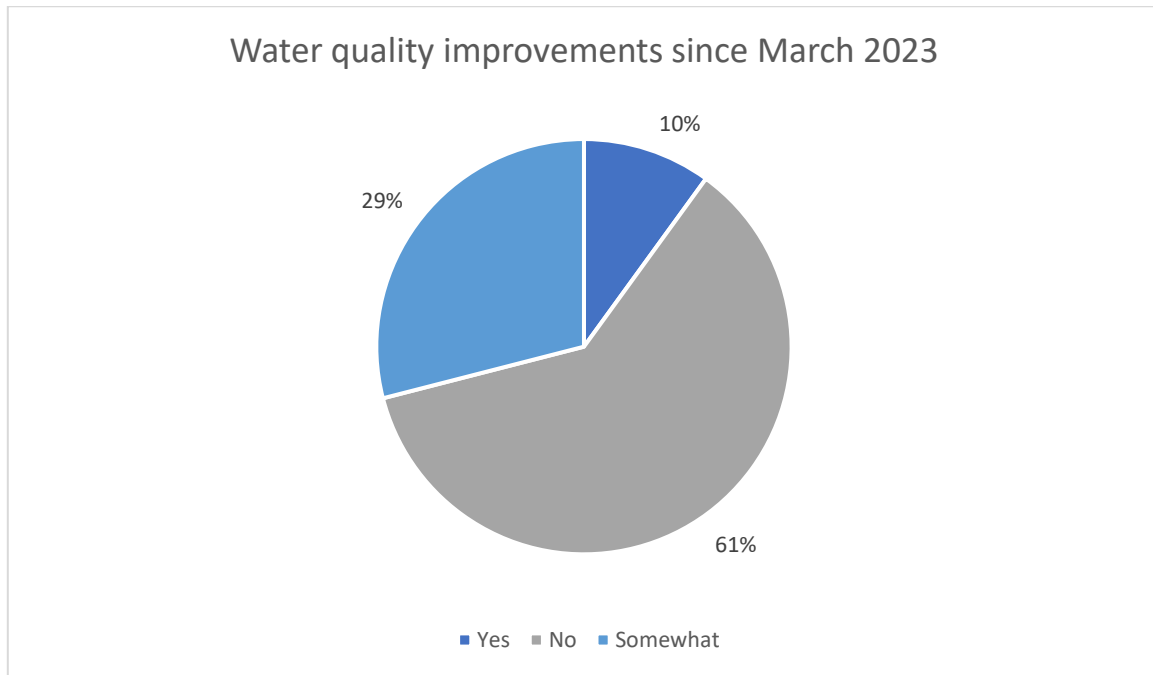
When asked if devices such as household filters for town or drinking water are used, the respondents were almost split at 44% saying 'Yes' and 56% 'No'. Those who did use filters typically replaced their cartridges around 3-4 times per year, with a few replacing them each month. The average cost incurred for each replacement averaged \$154 per year, with notable expenses reaching up to \$1,600.

In the case of those relying on rainwater tanks for drinking or cooking, 38% confirmed using household filters while 62% did not. Cartridge replacements amongst these users also occurred around 3-4 times per year, with some respondents replacing them monthly. Only 28% of rainwater tank users additionally boiled their water before consumption.

On average replacing hot water systems occurred every 10 years; however, there were respondents who replaced their systems as frequently as every 1-2 years, and as infrequently as every 30 years. The cost associated with replacing a hot water system stood at approximately \$1,925. Some participants incurring higher expenses around \$4,500 to \$5,000 but were found to have relatively lower average water bills – \$70 during winter months and \$100 during summer months.

67% of respondents expressed concern for discoloured water within the last year (June 2022 – June 2023) and was experienced roughly 14 times throughout the year. When presented with this problem, only 11% reached out to Council, with the remaining 89% refraining from doing so due to the belief that it would not yield any change.

Your Water Quality Matters Survey Results 2023



Since March 2023, improvements have been observed by 39% of the respondents. A significant 61% stated they had not seen any improvements, while 29% felt there was a slight change, and only 10% witnessed substantial progress.

For those who responded positively about observing improvements since March 2023, their water usage habits displayed certain trends. It's interesting to note that they replaced their hot water systems more frequently than average - approximately every 7.7 years instead of the usual 10. Additionally, when it came to replacing their hot water system, they incurred lesser costs than average by about \$150. Another area where they saved was in replacing cartridges for their filtration devices, shelling out approximately \$50 less than the typical expense.

A comparison of water bills across seasons disclosed that the average water bill in winter (June) amounted to approximately \$202.39. On the other hand, during the summer months (February), the average water bill increased to around \$282.22. Many people noted in the feedback that they do not want to pay any extra for clean water usage.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the survey results provide a valuable snapshot of our community's water usage habits, priorities, and concerns.

The survey identified the most common water quality issues, such as taste, calcification, discolouration, and smell. It highlighted usage patterns regarding filters, rainwater tanks, and hot water systems while revealing concerns about water quality and council responsiveness. Some improvements have indeed been observed by the community; however, more work is required to deliver consistent, sustainable progress. The survey responses also noted the fluctuation in water bills, with costs rising during summer months.

Now that we have received and reviewed the results of this survey, our next step is to choose the option that best reflects our customers wants and needs within the Yass Valley. We will update members by the end of the year with the preferred option.

Your Water Quality Matters Survey Results 2023

Breakdown of responses

Do you drink town water?

- 15% responded 'Yes'
 - 38% have noticed some improvements since March 2023
- 85% responded 'No'
 - 39% have noticed some improvements since March 2023

If not, what are the other sources?

- Rainwater tank - 53%
- Bottled water - 45%
- Some sort of filter - 7%
- or boiled water - 1%

What are the major concerns you have with town water? Please select all that are applicable.

- Taste (85%)
- Calcification (70%)
- Discolouration (64%)
- Smell (60%)
- Ruined Laundry (34%)
- Drop in pressure (15%)

If you use town water for drinking water, do you use any devices such as household filters?

- 44% said 'Yes'
- 56% said 'No'

If you use town water for drinking water, how often do you replace cartridges? (times per year)

- Average was 3.35 times per year

If you use town water for drinking water, how much does it cost to replace each cartridge?

- Average was around \$154
 - Some notable responses included \$1600, \$1040, \$500, \$25

If you use rainwater tanks for drinking or cooking, do you use any devices such as household filters?

- 38% said 'Yes'
- 62% said 'No'

If you use rainwater tanks for drinking or cooking, how often do you replace cartridges?

- 3-4 times per year

If you use rainwater tanks for drinking or cooking, do you boil water from rainwater tank for drinking?

- 28% said 'Yes'
- 72% said 'No'

Your Water Quality Matters Survey Results 2023

How often do you replace your hot water system?

- Average was every 10 years
 - Notable responses included 1-2 years and 30 years. There was no difference to the bill if they replaced their hot water system more or less frequently.

How much does it cost you to replace your hot water system?

- Averaging about \$1,925
 - Those who responded with around \$4,500 to \$5,000, oddly their water bill was on average \$70 in the winter months and \$100 in the summer months.

Have you been affected by discoloured water within the last year (June 2022-June 2023)?

- 67% said 'Yes'
- 33% said 'No'

If yes, how many times did it occur?

- Average of 14 times in the last year

Did you contact Council?

- 11% said 'Yes'
- 89% said 'No'
 - Many who responded no, also noted that nothing would happen if they did.

Have you noticed any improvements since March 2023?

- 10% said 'Yes'
 - For those that responded Yes to this question, about 45% boil water from the rainwater tank, they replace their hot water system more frequently (7.7 years), it cost them about \$150 less than average to replace their hot water system, and it cost them less to replace their cartridges by about \$50.
- 61% said 'No'
- 29% said 'Somewhat'

What was your approximate water bill in the winter (June)?

- Average was \$202.39

What was your approximate water bill in the summer (February)?

- Average was \$282.22

Regional responses:

- South Yass – 57%
- North Yass – 26%
- Murrumbateman – 4%
- Binalong – 4%
- Bowling – 2%
- Wider Yass region – 6%

Appendix – Copy of survey

Good water quality – it's important to all of us!

Yass Valley Council recognises that we all value clean, clear, healthy, and tasty water straight from the tap. This is important for our families, customers, and communities serviced in Yass, Binalong, Bowning, and Murrumbateman by the Yass Water Treatment Plant (WTP).

For these reasons, Yass Valley Council has been endeavouring to improve the water quality produced at the Yass WTP, specifically since 2019.

In investigating options to improve performance, Yass Valley Council want to make sure we capture all your concerns. This feedback will help us decide the best way forward, ensuring you receive the best water quality possible.

Tell us what you think!

Council is asking all our water supply customers to fill out the attached survey, which covers the below topics including:

- your general satisfaction with your water supply (quality and supply)
- the ways households improve their water (devices such as filters, boiling, using bottled water, or rainwater tanks or a combination of these)
- how you use water and where it comes from (town water, rainwater tank, or bottled water for example)
- household costs to improve water (filters, bottled water, replacement of hot water systems and washing machines)
- people's willingness to pay towards improved water quality (\$ per year).

You can complete the survey by:

- Filling out the enclosed survey and returning it in the prepaid envelope
- Filling out the survey and dropping it in to the Council Office at 209 Comur Street, Yass
- Filling out the survey and emailing to council@yass.nsw.gov.au

Your feedback is important - please return the survey by 1 September 2023.

About the Yass Water Treatment Plant

The Yass Water Treatment Plant (WTP) was built in 1938 to treat water from the Yass Dam, which is the main water source of the Yass Water Supply System. It was upgraded in 1990 and now services approximately 7,500 people in our region.

Unfortunately, over the years, Yass residents have complained about receiving poor water quality, including a metallic/poor taste, unpleasant odour, and discolouration. We know something needs to be done.

Through our monitoring systems and evaluations of the Water Treatment Plant, we have identified a shortlist of upgrade options, starting from a 'do minimum' scenario for comparison. To identify which of these will best suit our community, we need to hear directly from you.

Your Water Quality Matters Survey Results 2023

Works to date

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Based on these results, we worked with the New South Wales Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (now DPE Water) and New South Wales Health to identify priority actions. A new WTP with a softening process was identified as the best option, but was not endorsed by the DPE Water. Instead, these agencies required Council to implement Stage 1 works to address immediate issues.

Stage 1 works focused on making immediate improvements to the WTP, to increase community satisfaction with the water supply and reduce risks including:

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- **Option 1 - Base Case:** This provides basic improvements (new fine sand for the filters and replacing aged equipment).
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- **Option 3 - WTP Augmentation:** This includes all of option 2 as well as new treatment processes including inclined plate settling tanks, DAF/Filters, and softening.

More information on the above can be found on our website - www.yassvalley.nsw.gov.au/Our-Services/Water-and-Wastewater/Water-and-wastewater-projects/Yass-Water-Treatment-Plant-Upgrade.

This is where you come in.

For us to understand which option will best suit our community's needs, we need to hear from you!

What happens after we receive your feedback?

We will collate and analyse all the surveys we receive from community members and create a summary report identifying key themes and feedback.

This feedback will be considered alongside our technical and financial evaluation of the Water Treatment Plant, to help us identify which of the above options best fits our community needs.

This preferred option will then be developed further, with the final business case due in December 2023. We thank for your interest in this project!

Your Water Quality Matters Survey Results 2023

Water source

1. Do you drink town water directly from the tap without any improvements such as filters?

Yes No

2. If not, what are the other sources?

Rainwater tank Bottled water Other _____.

3. What are the major concerns you have with town water? Please select all that are applicable.

Discolouration Smell Taste Ruined laundry Drop in pressure / blocked water meter

Calcification in hot water system / shower head Other _____.

Water usage and sources

4. If you use town water for drinking or cooking,

a. Do you use any devices such as household filters?

Yes No

b. How often do you replace cartridges?

_____ times per year.

c. How much does it cost to replace your water cartridge each time?

\$ _____.

5. If you use rainwater tank for drinking or cooking,

a. Do you use any devices such as household filters?

Yes No

b. How often do you replace cartridges?

_____ times per year.

c. Do you boil water from the rainwater tank for drinking?

Yes No

6. How often do you replace your hot water system?

_____.

7. How much does it cost to replace your hot water system?

\$ _____.

Your Water Quality Matters Survey Results 2023

Discoloured Water

8. Have you been affected by discoloured water within the last year (June 2022 – June 2023)?

Yes No

9. If yes, how many times did it occur?

_____ in the last year.

10. Did you contact the Council?

Yes No

Stage 1 Works

11. Have you noticed any improvements since March 2023?

Yes No Somewhat

a. If yes, please describe _____.

Cost of water – Water Bill

12. What was your approximate water bill in the winter (June)?

\$ _____.

13. What was your approximate water bill in the summer (February)?

\$ _____.

14. Please provide street name and town of your water supply.

Street name: _____.

Town/Village: North Yass South Yass Murrumbateman Bowning Binalong