

Urban water price monitoring 2026–30

30 September 2025

Pursuant to a referral notice dated 24 September 2025, the Queensland Government has directed the Queensland Competition Authority (QCA) to conduct a price monitoring investigation relating to the monopoly business activities of Unitywater and Urban Utilities, under section 23A of the *Queensland Competition Authority Act 1997* (QCA Act).¹

The price monitoring investigation is for the period 1 July 2026 to 30 June 2030 and will consider a range of matters.

Background

Unitywater and Urban Utilities are council-owned, distributor-retailers, responsible for delivering drinking, recycled and other water to customers, collecting and treating sewerage, and charging for water and sewerage services for the following local government areas in south east Queensland:

- Unitywater – City of Moreton Bay, Noosa Council and Sunshine Coast Council
- Urban Utilities – Brisbane City Council, Ipswich City Council, Lockyer Valley Regional Council, Scenic Rim Regional Council and Somerset Regional Council

While these businesses are responsible for setting their own prices, the Queensland Government has directed us to monitor prices. The price monitoring regime is intended to have an informative rather than determinative purpose and does not directly bind these businesses. This regime serves to support the transparency and accountability of Unitywater's and Urban Utilities' price-setting processes. Nonetheless, it is open for these businesses to depart from our findings and set prices differently.

Our last price monitoring review for these businesses was completed in 2014, when we undertook an investigation for the period 1 July 2013 to 30 June 2015.

¹ The referral notice is available on our website at <https://www.qca.org.au/project/urban-retail-water/>.

Proposed approach to this review

When we conduct our review, we will have regard to the terms of the referral and the matters we are required to consider in the QCA Act.² Our investigation will be undertaken in two parts.

- Part 1: An interim report in May 2026 – for the period 1 July 2026 to 30 June 2027
- Part 2: A draft report in December 2026, followed by a final report in April 2027 – for the period 1 July 2027 to 30 June 2030

We are also required to prepare annual reports comparing forecasts against actual outcomes during the period.

The development of our interim report (Part 1) will focus on, among other things, the businesses' proposed prices, revenues and bill impacts for 2026-27. We will also consider the businesses' governance frameworks, policies and procedures (including procurement practices), as well as the reasonableness of productivity and efficiency measures. We may also identify opportunities for productivity targets, if appropriate.

Building on our interim report, Part 2 will consider the prudence and efficiency of forecast costs of the businesses (including operating costs, capital expenditure and return on assets) as well as water bill impacts from 1 July 2027 to 30 June 2030. We expect Unitywater and Urban Utilities will provide detailed information on their proposed costs and prices in their 31 August 2026 submissions.

Timeline

The following timeline is provided to assist interested parties with our review process.

Part 1	Date
Business submissions due for interim report	By 24 December 2025
Interim report to government	29 May 2026
Interim report published	Early June 2026
Part 2	Date
Business submissions due	By 31 August 2026
Stakeholder submissions due	By 5 October 2026
Draft report provided to government	By 24 December 2026
Draft report published	December 2026
Submissions on the draft report due	By 19 February 2027
Final report provided to government	By 30 April 2027
Final report published	Early May 2027

² During our price monitoring investigation, we must have regard to the matters in section 26 of the QCA Act including, for example, the need for efficient resource allocation, the protection of consumers from abuses of monopoly power and an appropriate rate of return on assets (see section 26(1) of the QCA Act).

Submissions

Public involvement is an important part of our review process, and we encourage all stakeholders, including members of the community, to participate in our review. There will be opportunities to make submissions during our price monitoring investigation. For instance, stakeholder submissions relating to our Part 2 process are requested by 5 October 2026 and 19 February 2027. We will keep stakeholders informed of opportunities to participate in our investigation.

Confidentiality

In the interests of transparency, and to promote informed consultation, we intend to make all submissions publicly available. However, if a person making a submission believes that information in it is confidential, they should claim confidentiality over the relevant information (and state the basis for that claim). We will assess confidentiality claims in accordance with the QCA Act. Among other things, we will assess if disclosure of the relevant information is likely to damage a person's commercial activities, and we will consider the public interest.

Claims for confidentiality should be clearly noted on the front page of a submission, and relevant sections of the submission marked as confidential. The submission should also be provided in both redacted and unredacted versions. In the redacted version, all information claimed as confidential should be removed or hidden. In the unredacted version, all information should be exposed and visible. These measures will make it easier for us to make the remainder of the document publicly available. A confidentiality claim template is available at www.qca.org.au/submission-policy/

The template gives guidance on the type of information that may help us to assess a confidentiality claim. We encourage stakeholders to use this template when making confidentiality claims.