

Hello,

I recently spoke with an employee regarding concerns we have around TASWATER's pricing structure. I was advised that you were currently undertaking your regular periodic review of TASWATER and as such it might be opportune to provide feedback on the existing pricing conditions in order for this to be taken into account during the present analysis.

I have attached a couple of photos (which have not been altered in any way), they are not from a dodgy hostel in Bangladesh but have been taken at our home – in Judbury, Tasmania, Australia.



The first is of the typical water quality we experience, the second and third detailing the residual sediments being carried in through the water, depositing in our various appliances: kettle, washing machine, dishwasher, hot water system. This is the water we are paying for.

When paying for mains water to be piped into your property, it is reasonable to assume that this would be undertaken for the following key reasons:

- Drinking water
- Use in food/beverage preparation
- Bathing
- Cleaning & waste (dishwashing, laundry, toilet etc)

According to the Boil Water Alert notices we receive from TASWATER, the water we are being provided meets only one of the four needs listed above. In order for us to be able to meet any of the other needs we are required to boil the water prior to use. As compensation, TASWATER has classified our supply as "Limited Water Quality" and is applying a "discount" to the Variable Rate only. This "discount" in real money terms equates to around \$5 per quarter, not per week, per quarter. As a VERY conservative estimate, a family of 3 would need at least 10L of water per day (for drinking, food prep etc), the time and cost to boil this amount of water over a 90day quarter is

obviously far in excess of the \$5 “discount” TASWATER is applying to our bill. It also does not come close to covering the cumulative damage being done to our appliances as they consume the sediment particles carried in through the infrastructure and water supply.

It should be noted, that if this were any other product or service on the market, the ACCC would classify it as “not fit for purpose”, the remedies being: repair, replace or refund. Asking the customer to perform repetitive additional processing on the product in order for it to meet the required needs, largely at their own expense, is something only a company in possession of a monopoly market could openly dictate and more importantly, get away with.

I have read TASWATER’s 2015-2018 Price and Service Plan together with supplementary documents, media releases and have also had discussions with other impacted residents so I am fully aware that our issues are not unique to us nor are they being raised for the first time to either TASWATER or OTTER; so I will refrain from going into unnecessary detail and will simply reiterate the following key points:

- The concept of pricing equity: charging the “*same price for the same service*” across the state (PSP 6.1 pg50), is in itself an equitable statement and a valid target. It is however, only equitable if the two elements of the statement are implemented at the same time i.e. it is **not equitable** to charge all customers the same price when there are still existing deficiencies in water quality and supply infrastructure across the state.

In our particular case, the Judbury Scheme, since its takeover, has received **no infrastructure upgrades**, it is **not chemically treated in any way**, it is **raw water** straight from Dora Creek pumped through existing pipes into our house (facts confirmed to me by John Murray at TASWATER...if the photos weren’t evidence enough). We are therefore being charged essentially full price for simply the pump electricity and a portion of the wages of the employee who comes out “on a rotational basis” (whatever that means) to flush the system i.e. turn on a couple of taps.

Until this disparity is rectified, the notion of “pricing equity” is a theoretical nonsense and I am honestly baffled as to how a regulator could think it is anything other and continue to sanction what is clearly an inequitable pricing policy.

- In my attempts to rationalise this situation and to find some kind of remedy, I have so far received the following responses:

TASWATER: “TasWater’s pricing for fixed and variable water charges is set by the Office of The Tasmanian Economic Regulator (OTTER)”

OTTER: “Complaints around pricing can be directed to the Ombudsman”

Ombudsman: “As the pricing is regulated by OTTER we are unable to change or deal with any issues concerning pricing”

As the regulator, once your stamp of approval is affixed to the pricing regime this not only allows TASWATER to effectively hide behind your skirt but also cuts us (as customers) off at the knees in terms of having a viable avenue for complaints, other than the Courts.

I have provided this feedback with one agenda: that throughout this review, you do not lose sight of the fact that there are real people at the end of this administrative process, receiving water that would not meet World Health Organisation standards and being financially disadvantaged as a result. I ask, as many have already done before, that you please take this current opportunity to rectify this imbalance, as it is simply just wrong.

Thank you for your time,

Emily Devine