



Engagement Report Gravelly Beach Service Introduction

April 2024

Executive summary

This report presents the outcomes of the community consultation undertaken for the Gravelly Beach Service Introduction, which was initiated following a petition presented to TasWater by the West Tamar Council in May 2023. The petition, signed by 114 residents, requested the installation of sewerage reticulation to meet the needs of the residential community. The consultation process followed the *TasWater Service Introduction Charges Policy* and *Stakeholder and Community Engagement Policy*.

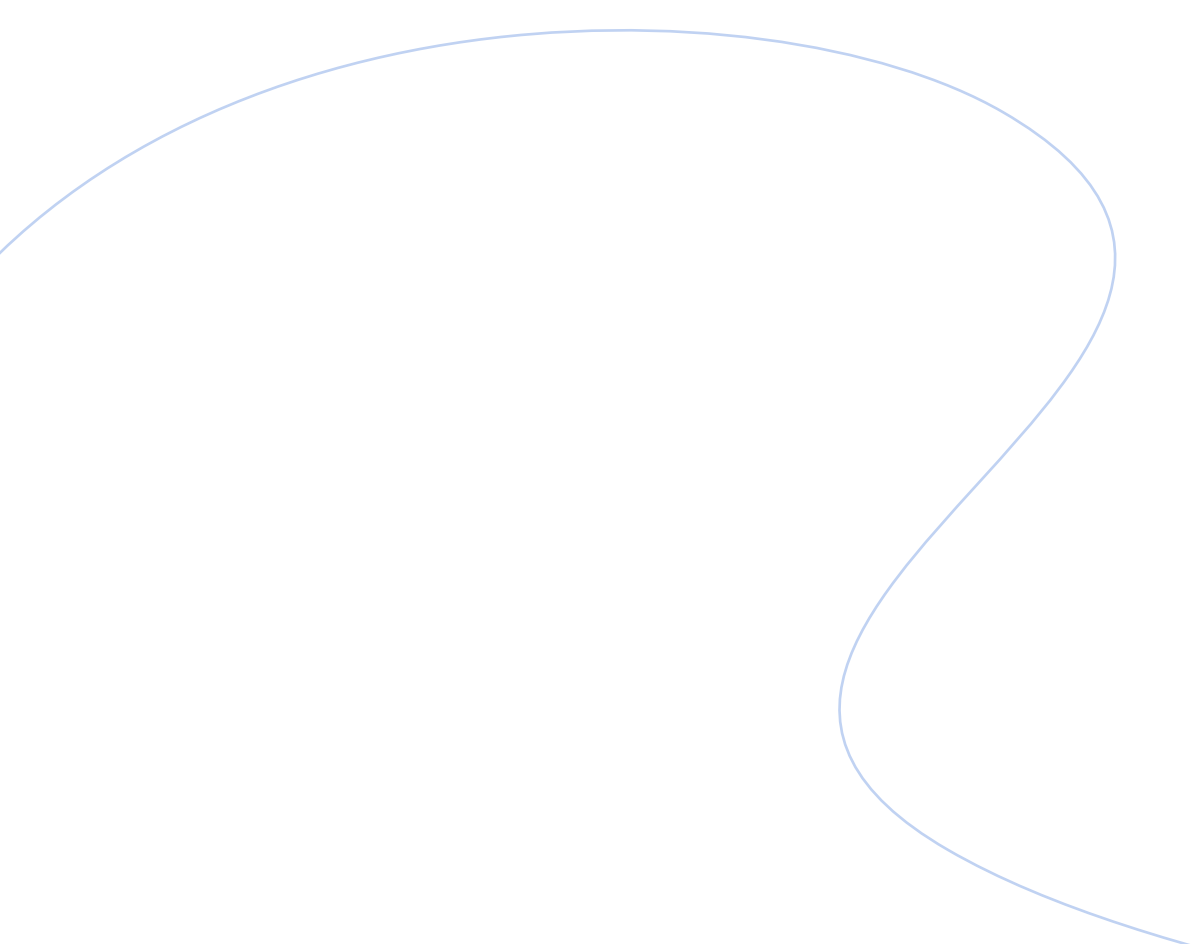
Engagement was aimed at assessing indicative community support to introduce sewerage services. A minimum of 50 per cent of the community needed to support the introduction of service for us to proceed past this phase of consultation.

Engagement efforts directly targeted property owners in Gravelly Beach; we engaged with residents through written notifications, media articles, a community information session, and online platforms.

We received 133 responses out of a possible 292 property owners.

Despite these efforts, concerns arose during the community information session regarding cost allocation, necessity, and impact on property values. Feedback from the session and survey responses highlighted financial constraints, satisfaction with current systems, and reluctance to bear service introduction costs.

This report provides valuable insights for future infrastructure planning and community engagement endeavours.



Purpose

To provide detail of the community consultation undertaken for the Gravelly Beach Service Introduction.

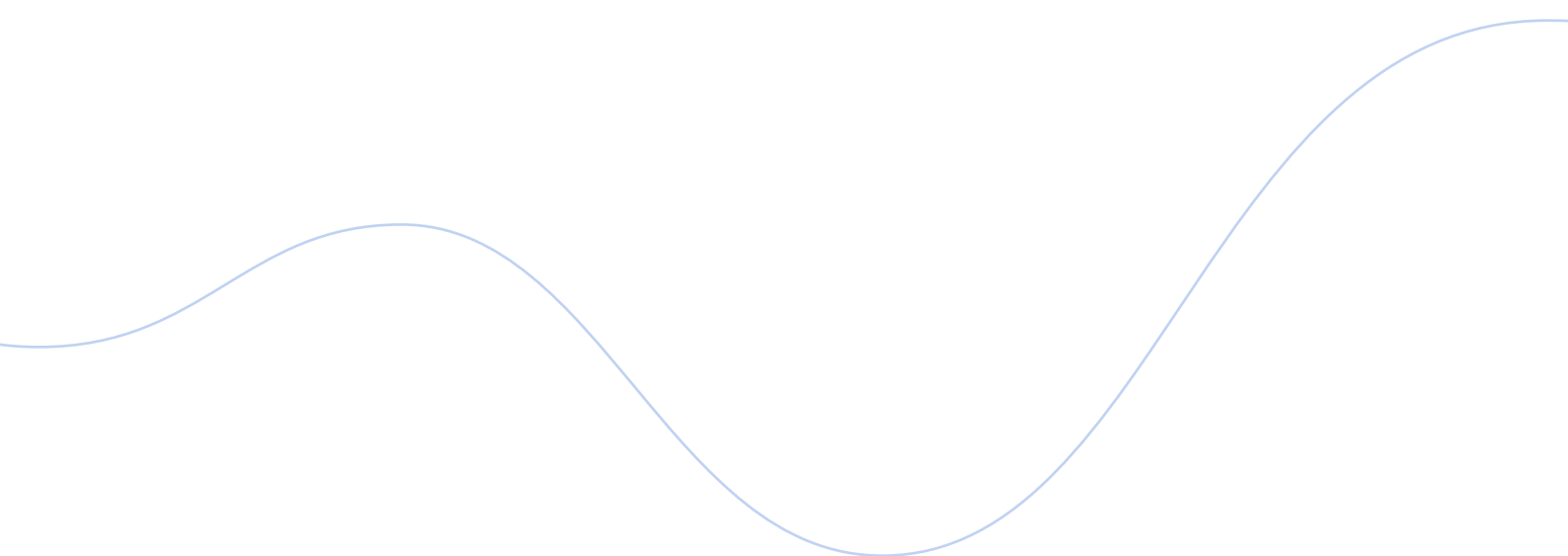
Background

The Gravelly Beach Service Introduction consultation was commissioned following a petition to explore the introduction of a sewer service being presented to TasWater by the West Tamar Council in May 2023. The petition included 114 signatures from residents in both Gravelly Beach and neighbouring suburb Lanena.

The petition requested 'that the essential infrastructure of sewerage reticulation be installed to service the residential needs of this waterside locality. The planning principles of servicing the needs of current and increasing urbanised residential density and provision for future growth are prime; basic environmental and health standards must be foremost in such planning. Gravelly Beach is a distinct village precinct and a residential locality of choice in the West Tamar region but continues to miss out on future such planning provision. Please remedy this matter as a priority within the broader TasWater development plan in near future'.

A commitment was made to Council to consult with the community to understand their interest and sentiment towards the introduction of a sewer service.

Our community consultation was designed around the TasWater *Service Introduction Charges Policy*, which outlines the circumstances and terms and conditions that must be met for us to introduce water and/or sewerage services to an area not previously receiving those services and the charges that will apply. There are three stages involved in this policy. This engagement report contains findings from Stage 2.



Stage 1

Initial consultation

We consult with each relevant community on any service introduction proposal. As part of this consultation, we define the proposed service introduction area/s. Using the proposed service introduction area/s property owners and the community are provided the following information:

- High-level, preliminary design work, and
- Estimated service introduction charges per title for the service.

To proceed to stage 2, the service introduction proposal must be commercially viable. If considered viable we proceed to stage 2.

Stage 2

Indicative community support

We consult with the community and provide information on the indicative costs for the service introduction. We survey the community to understand their support of the service introduction. Consideration of service introduction will only proceed to Stage 3 if at least 50 per cent of each relevant community supports the proposal.

Stage 3

Community commitment to service introduction

A detailed design and business case is developed for service introduction as part of this stage. These will provide a more accurate estimate of the project costs and the service introduction charges.

For the proposal to progress to the procurement and construction stage, at least 80 per cent of the owners of developed land within the proposed service introduction area must enter into an agreement committing to connect to the new system and to pay the service introduction charges.

Following the conclusion of Stage 3, the community is advised of the results of the consultation and the next steps for the project.

Community engagement snapshot



In line with the *Service Introduction Charges Policy* our engagement was targeted to **property owners** in Gravelly Beach. Information on the *Service Introduction Charges Policy* was **provided** to the community of Gravelly Beach within the proposed service introduction area. A **community survey** was included with this information and sent via posted mail to 292 property owners.



In addition to our written communication, we also **engaged** with the **community** via proactive media, including print media, radio and a community information session. A dedicated Gravelly Beach Service Introduction webpage on the **TasWater website** was also published, providing further **information** and a link to an online version of the survey.

The numbers:



Written notifications

Sent to **292** property owners



Information fact sheets

Sent to **292** property owners



Community survey

Sent to **292** property owners



Community information sessions

All residents were invited to attend



Media article¹ (The Examiner)

1



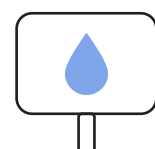
Radio interview (ABC Radio)

1



Public notices² (The Examiner)

2



Project page website visits

146³

¹ Article available here – [Sewerage consultation session for Gravelly Beach residents](#).

² Public notices available here – [Gravelly Beach Public Notice](#).

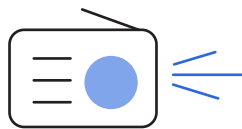
³ From 1 February to March 17, 2024.

Community engagement snapshot

Although our consultation was with a **targeted audience** we utilised print media, The Examiner and local radio to engage with residents of Gravelly Beach, but also the **broader community**.



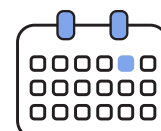
The Examiner published a **media article** on our community consultation to an audience of approximately **38,500 people**.



Callan Paske, Head of Communications and Engagement was interviewed on local ABC Radio. This provided a platform to further explain our *Service Introduction Charges Policy* and **community consultation process**, as well as promote the community information session.

The survey to residents included questions around their interest in connecting to a sewerage service if it became available and what estimated figure they may be prepared to pay for the service. Residents were also asked for their comments/feedback on anything else they would like us to know or consider in relation to the proposed introduction of sewerage services.

Residents had a four-week period to submit their survey responses, with the survey closing on Friday, 15 March 2024.



Engagement timeline

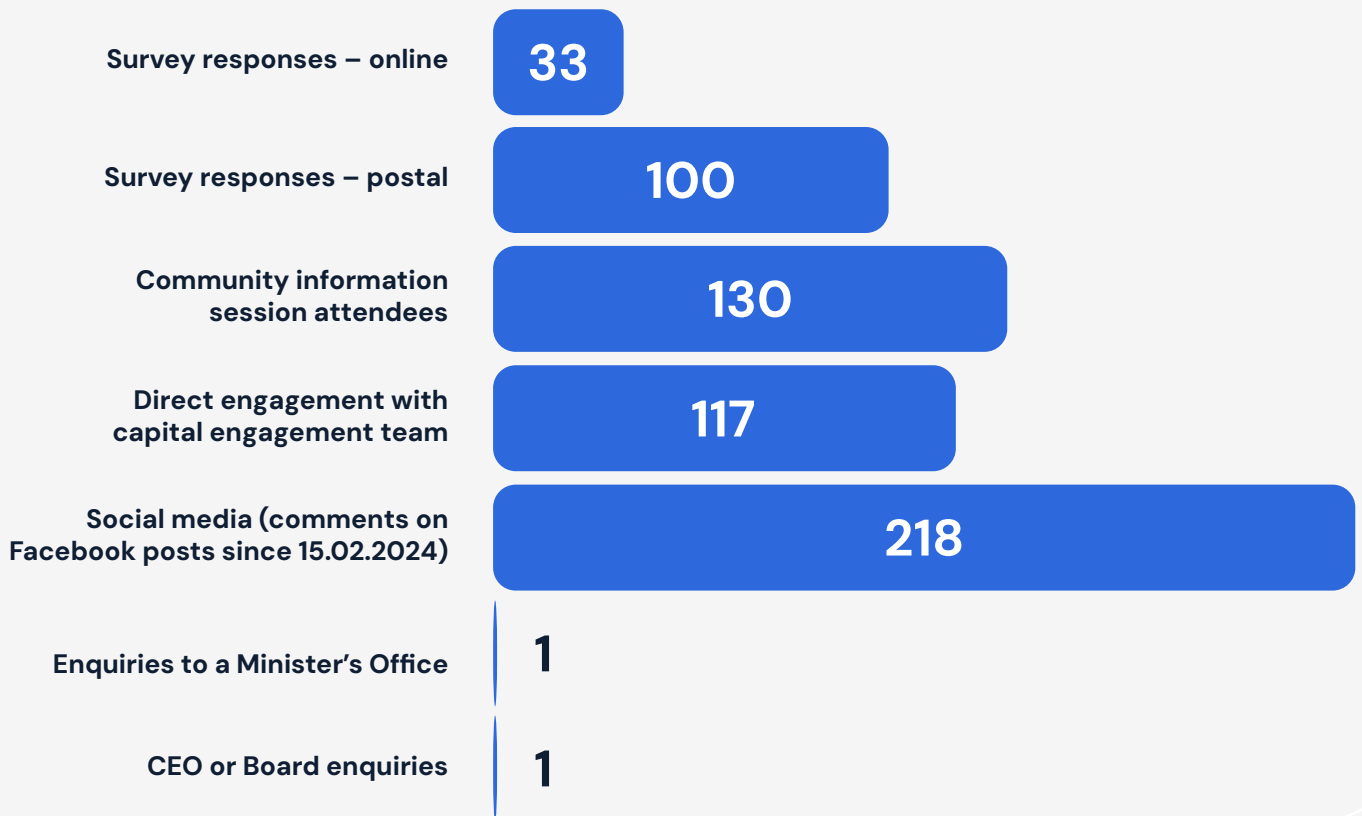


Next steps



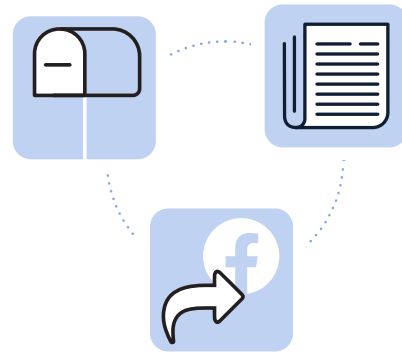
Engagement findings

A total of 600 engagements took place between May 2023 and March 2024, with 218 being unique.



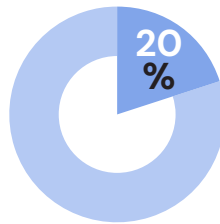
Community information session

Gravelly Beach residents were notified and invited to the **community information session** through correspondence sent via post on 12 February 2024, as well as **public notices printed** in The Examiner newspaper on 17 and 24 February 2024. This public notice was also **shared** by **community members** on the public Gravelly Beach Community Connect Facebook page.



130⁴
community members

A community information session was held on **Saturday, 2 March 2024**. Approximately 130⁴ community members attended the session.



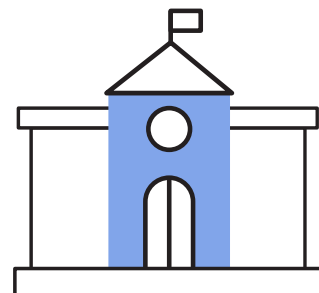
The population of Gravelly Beach is 641⁵ with 292 properties currently connected to water services.

Attendees therefore **represented approximately 20%** of the total population (assuming all were residents).



Some members of the public arrived expecting the information session to be a **town hall style meeting** where we would provide a presentation followed by question time. We had arranged for each TasWater staff member in attendance to have their own station where they could have **meaningful one-on-one or small group conversations**, but this style of communication was not widely accepted by some of the community.

TasWater staff adapted the format of the community session to **accommodate the request** for a town hall meeting. An overview of our *Service Introduction Charges Policy* was provided, along with confirmation that the introduction of service would only proceed to the next phase should **50 per cent** of the community support the introduction. Staff reassured the community that this was a consultation period and TasWater would not be introducing service and imposing costs on people unless there is **community support**.



Approximately 40 residents **stayed after** the presentation to meet one-on-one or in small groups with staff.

⁴ Total information session sign ins, noting that it is possible there may have been a small number that did not sign in upon arrival.
⁵ ABS Census 2021.

What we heard

The main questions and concerns raised by residents at the session included:

Why is the cost of the infrastructure falling to the property owners, not the service provider or government?

If this process proceeds and the service is introduced, will the residents that do not wish to connect be forced to pay the estimated \$30,000–\$80,000?

What would happen to current systems that are working fine?

We have a fully functioning septic system and see no reason to waste money on an unneeded upgrade.

Connection costs and ongoing service charges are too expensive compared to my current wastewater treatment system.

The service introduction charge is extremely high and does not represent value for money.


If the service is introduced, how long would it take for the infrastructure to be built?

Will the current plant be utilised, or would a new treatment plant be built, and if so, where would this be?

What we heard

The feedback received from survey respondents have common themes including:

- Many residents were unaware of the petition that was presented to council.
- Most residents are pensioners or on a low income and would therefore not have access to the required funds to connect.
- The majority of the community are happy with their current septic systems as they are cost effective and work well, and would not be interesting in upgrading to a TasWater sewerage service.
- Residents wouldn't be willing to pay the estimated \$30,000–\$80,000 as they believe it would not increase their property value to the same level.
- The community should not be required to pay for the infrastructure, it should be covered by service providers and/or government.
- Many residents would be willing to pay a connection fee (i.e. from property boundary to dwelling) but not the service introduction costs.



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Survey results

A total of 133 responses were received from 292 property owners, which is a response rate of 45%. The absence of feedback from additional residents could be perceived as a lack of concern or interest around the project.

● YES ● NO ● UNSURE

Figure 1.
Are you an existing TasWater customer?

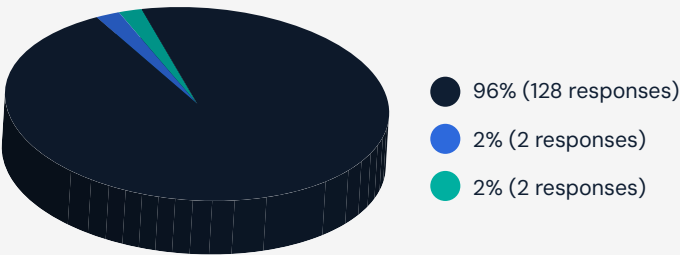


Figure 2.
Does Gravelly Beach require a sewerage network?

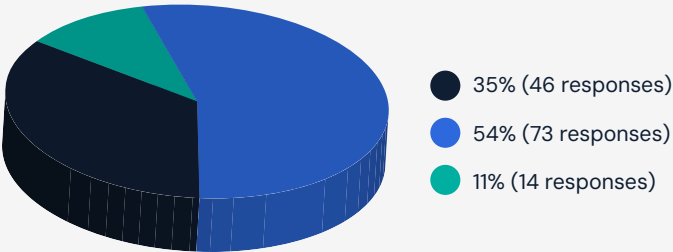


Figure 3.
Would you consider connecting if a sewerage network was available?

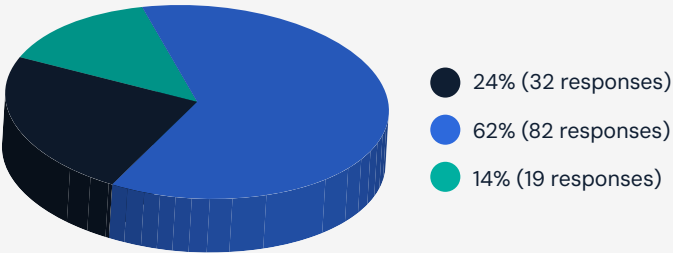
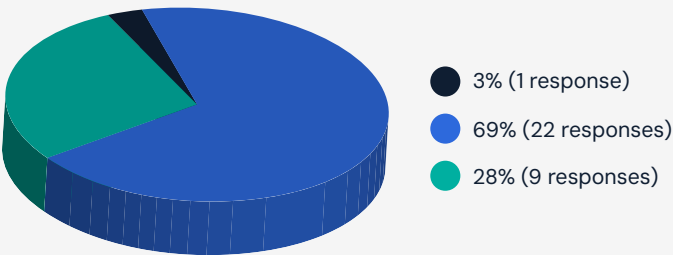


Figure 4.
Would you pay \$30,000–\$80,000?



Area 1

Agree Gravelly Beach needs a sewerage network*

Would consider connecting*

Percentage based on no. of survey responses

43%

39%

Percentage based on population*

23%

21%

Area 2

Agree Gravelly Beach needs a sewerage network*

Would consider connecting*

Percentage based on no. of survey responses

41%

36%

Percentage based on population*

17%

15%

Area 3

Agree Gravelly Beach needs a sewerage network*

Would consider connecting*

Percentage based on no. of survey responses

24%

10%

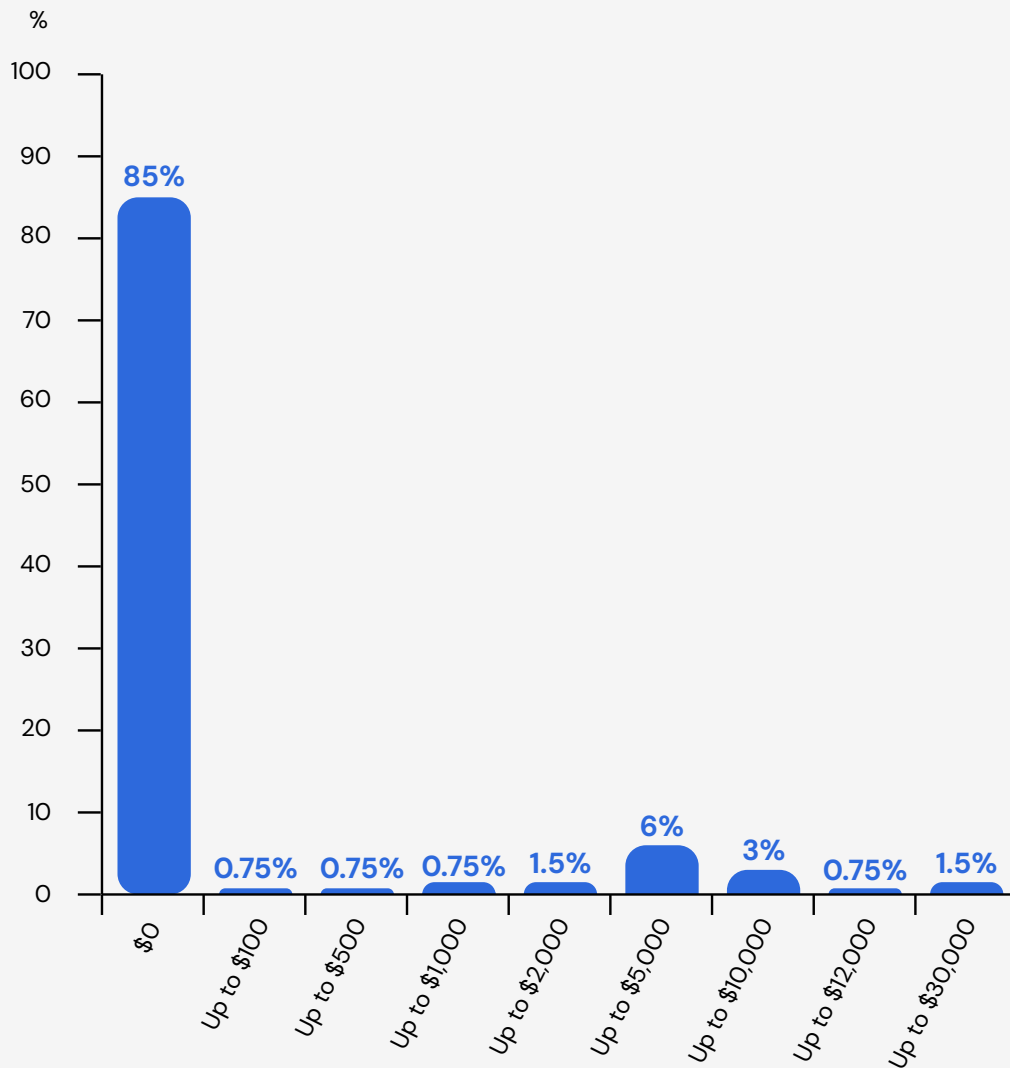
Percentage based on population*

11%

5%

* No survey response considered as 'disagree that Gravelly Beach needs a sewerage network' and 'would not consider connecting'.

How much would you be willing to pay?



Conclusion


The community consultation process for the proposed Gravelly Beach Service Introduction was initiated after a petition was received from the West Tamar Council.

We directly engaged with 292 property owners in Gravelly Beach and asked them to provide feedback via a survey. A total of 133 responses were received. 35 per cent of the survey respondents stated that Gravelly Beach needs a sewerage service and 24 per cent stated that they would consider connecting if a service was introduced. 69 per cent of respondents stated they are not willing to pay the estimated \$30,000–\$80,000 to connect.

The common theme provided through the survey results is that residents are concerned about the financial burden on property owners and the adequacy of their existing systems. Residents stated an inability to afford the estimated costs given they are predominantly low-income earners or pensioners and a strong preference for maintaining their current septic systems, which most believe are operating as sufficiently as they should. Survey respondents were asked to provide a dollar figure that they would be willing to pay for the introduction of service, with 85 per cent of respondents answering zero.

The community and stakeholder consultation for the Gravelly Beach Service Introduction did not meet the community acceptance threshold of over 50 per cent and will therefore not proceed beyond stage 2.

An update will be provided to West Tamar Council and property owners advising of the outcome of the community consultation.



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