

6 Customer

6.1 Average duration of an unplanned interruptions: water—C15

The average duration of unplanned interruptions (C15) is the average time a customer is without water supply due to an unforeseen interruption that requires attention by the utility.

Unplanned interruptions include scheduled interruptions which exceeded the time limit in the original notification. The indicator is a measure of customer service, the condition of the water network, and how effectively the network is managed.

The average duration is influenced by:

- the scale of the event causing the interruption;
- the location of the interruption—for example, the proximity to a repair crew and the depth of the burst pipe;
- the utility's response policy for outlying areas; and
- the number of maintenance and repair staff at the utility's disposal.

Note that a single event affecting a small number of properties for a long duration can cause large annual variations in this indicator, especially for smaller utilities.

The average duration of unplanned interruptions (water supply) data for all utilities reporting in 2017–18 are presented in Table A10, Appendix A.

6.1.1 Key findings

A summary of the data for unplanned interruption, by utility group, is shown in Table 6.1.

Table 6.1 Overview of results: Average duration of an unplanned interruption: water (minutes).

Utility group	Range		No. utilities with increase/decrease from 2016–17		Median		Change from 2016–17 (%)
	High	Low	Increase	Decrease	2016–17	2017–18	
Major	227	87	4	10	133.8	122.3	-9
	SA Water	South East Water					
Large	1,198	49	3	5	102.8	96.2	-6
	Toowoomba	Cairns					
Medium	266	2	8	9	104	79.3	-24
	Albury	Queanbeyan					
Small	270	19	12	7	120	120	0
	Wingecarribee	Livingstone					
All utility groups (national)	1,198	2	27	31	116.1	116.6	0
	Toowoomba	Queanbeyan					

Table note

Median average duration of an unplanned interruption: water (minutes) is calculated for all utilities reporting data for C15 in both 2016–17 and 2017–18.

Nationally, the median average duration of unplanned interruptions remained consistent with 2016–17. Toowoomba had the highest duration of unplanned interruption of all groups (1,198 minutes); it also recorded the highest duration in 2016–17. Kempsey reported the largest percentage increase (662 per cent).

6.1.2 Results and analysis—Major utility group

A ranked breakdown of the average duration of an unplanned interruption for this utility group from 2013–14 to 2017–18 is presented in Figure 6.1. The figure highlights the large year-to-year variation in the indicator for some utilities that can result from a single major mains break.

SA Water reported the highest median, and both SA Water and Sydney Water Corporation reported increases of 16 per cent compared to 2016–17.

The results reported by SA Water are explained by the procedures followed to mitigate the safety hazards associated with the repair of cast iron mains. Cast iron pipes have been used extensively in South Australia and are more likely to fail from pressure issues. As reported in the 2017 Urban NPR, these pipes were previously repaired under pressure; however, new work, health, and safety measures require the water supply to be shut down and the area excavated before the pipe is repaired.

Central Coast Council reported a third consecutive year of an average duration well above the national and group medians, and only comparable to SA Water. This result in part reflects the more distributed nature of the area served by the utility.

6.2 Total complaints: water and sewerage (per 1,000 properties)—C13

The total number of water and sewerage complaints per 1,000 properties (C13) is a measure of a utility's customer satisfaction and operational performance. A complaint can be a written or verbal expression of dissatisfaction made about an action, a proposed action or a failure to act by the water utility, its employees, or contractors.

Complaints from different customers about the same issue are counted as separate complaints.

Total water and sewerage complaints data for all utilities reporting in 2017–18 are presented in Table A11, Appendix A.

6.2.1 Key findings

A summary of data for total water and sewerage complaints by utility group is shown in Table 6.2. Nationally, there was a 28 per cent decrease in the median number of complaints; this arose from decreases for all utility size groups.

Table 6.2 Overview of results: Total complaints: water and sewerage (per 1,000 properties).

Utility group	Range		No. utilities with increase/decrease from 2016–17		Median		Change from 2016–17 (%)
	High	Low	Increase	Decrease	2016–17	2017–18	
Major	11.1	1.2	7	6	3.6	3.3	-8
	Yarra Valley Water	WC (Perth)					
Large	68.4	0.5	1	7	5.4	3.3	-39
	P&W (Darwin)	Townsville					
Medium	93.4	0.0	12	9	5	4.8	-4
	Mackay	Coffs Harbour					
Small	110.7	1.0	11	13	6.2	5.3	-15
	P&W (Alice)	Kempsey					
All utility groups (national)	110.7	0.0	31	35	5.0	3.7	-28
	P&W (Alice)	Coffs Harbour					

Table note

Median total complaints: water and sewerage (per 1,000 properties) are calculated for all utilities reporting data for C13 in both 2016–17 and 2017–18.

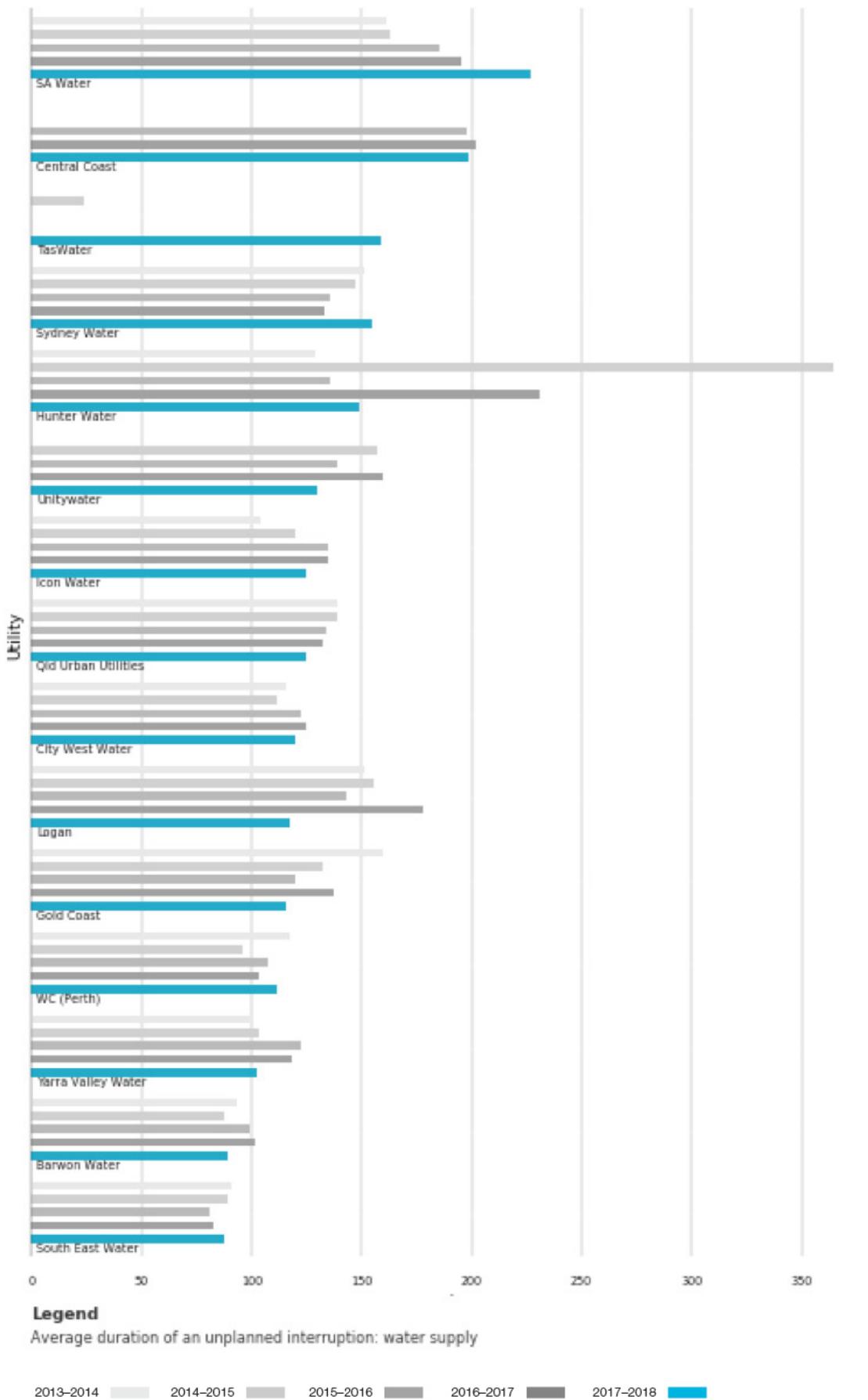


Figure 6.1 Average duration of unplanned interruption: water (minutes)—Major utility group.

6.2.2 Results and analysis—Major utility group

A ranked breakdown of the total water and sewerage complaints from 2013–14 to 2017–18 is shown in Figure 6.2. Notably, Gold Coast City Council and Logan City Council reported significant decreases compared to last year and values below their long-term averages.

6.3 Percentage of calls answered by an operator within 30 seconds—C14

The percentage of calls answered by an operator within 30 seconds (C14) measures the number of calls answered within 30 seconds after the ‘operator’ option is selected. It is a measure of the efficiency of a utility’s customer service centre and is affected by:

- the ratio of customer service staff to customers; and
- severe events, such as storms or floods, that result in a large increase of customer calls.

Data on the percentage of calls answered by an operator within 30 seconds for all utilities reporting in 2017–18 are presented in Table A12, Appendix A.

Table 6.3 Overview of results: Percentage of calls answered within 30 seconds.

Utility group	Range		No. utilities with increase/decrease from 2016–17		Median		Change from 2016–17 (%)
	High	Low	Increase	Decrease	2016–17	2017–18	
Major	85.4	52.6	3	4	67	73.1	9
	SA Water	South East Water					
Large	98.6	75.0	1	4	89.4	83.5	-7
	Goulburn Valley Water	Western Water					
Medium	100	50.0	3	1	94	96	2
	Multiple Utilities	Tweed					
Small	100	45.0	3	3	80	80	0
	Multiple Utilities	Kempsey					
All utility groups (national)	100	45.0	10	12	85.7	82.3	-4
	Multiple Utilities	Kempsey					

Table note

Median percentage of calls answered by an operator within 30 seconds (%) is calculated for all utilities reporting data in both 2016–17 and 2017–18.

6.3.1 Key findings

Nationally, the median percentage of calls answered within 30 seconds remained consistent with 2016–17, decreasing by 4 per cent, to 82 per cent in 2017–18. The challenge faced by Major utilities in managing call volumes and Major and Small utilities in supporting effective customer service staff to customer ratios is highlighted by the variation in median response times of the groups.

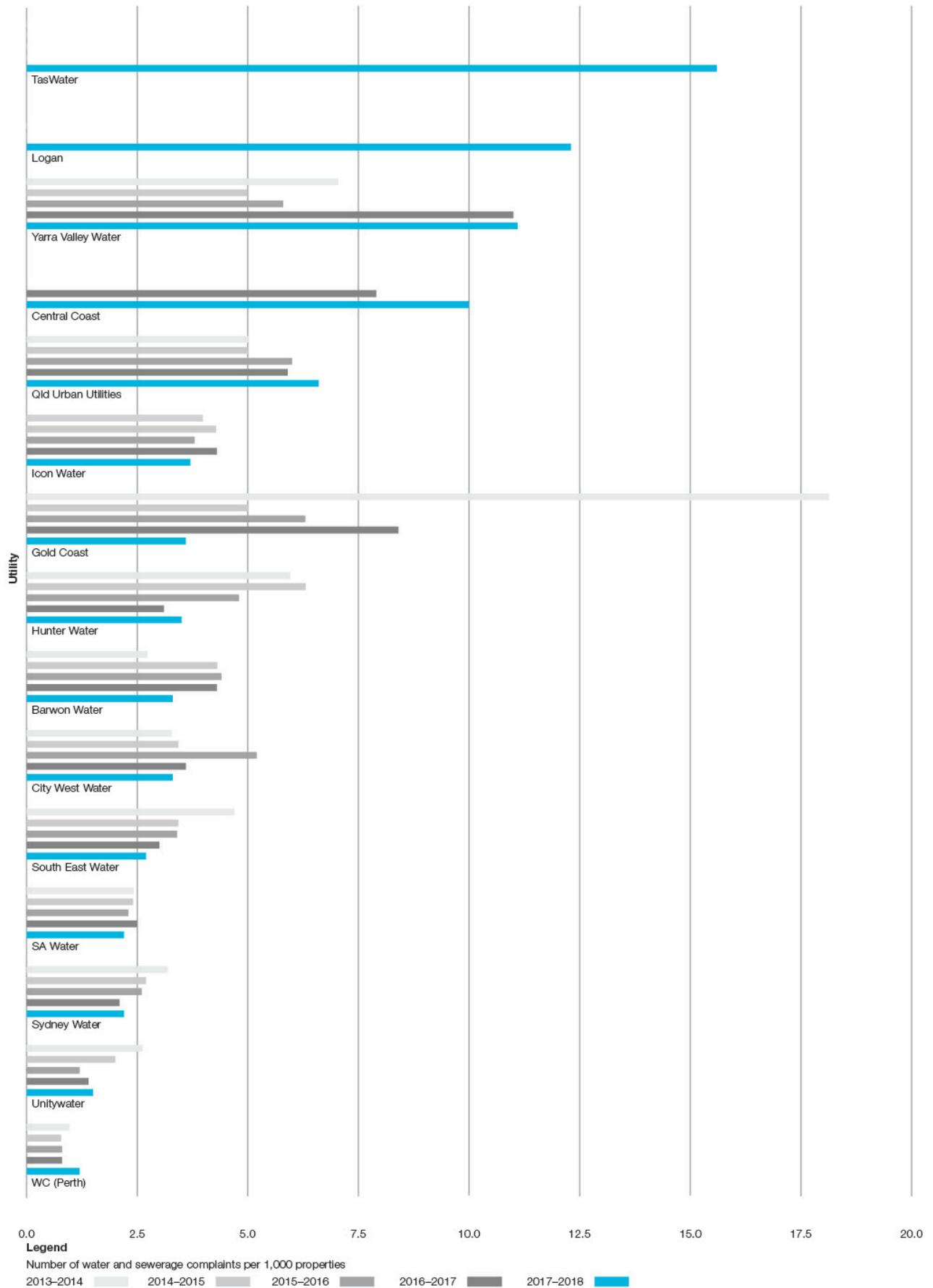


Figure 6.2 Total complaints: water and sewerage (per 1,000 properties)—Major utility group.

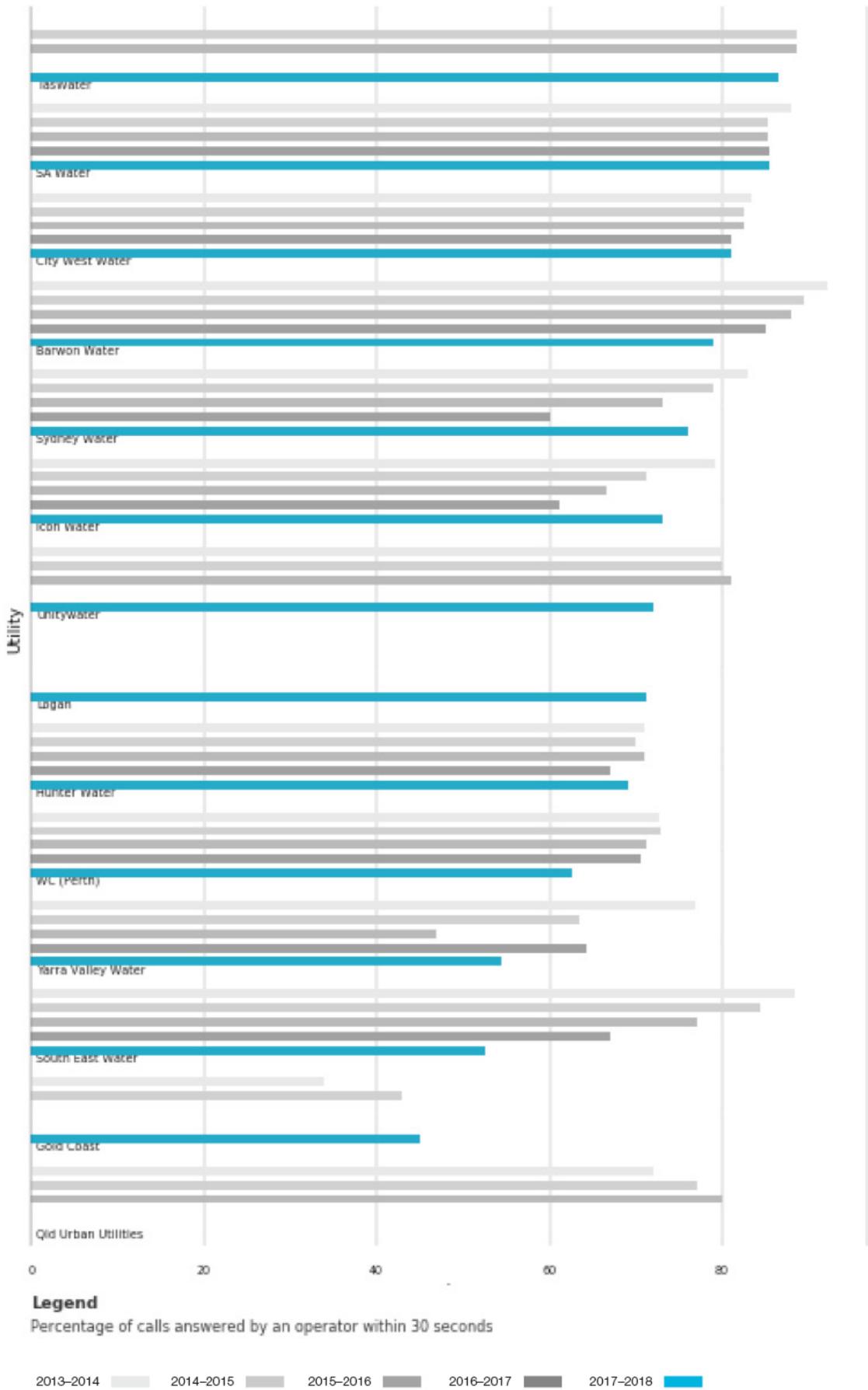


Figure 6.3 Percentage of calls answered by an operator within 30 seconds—Major utility group.

6.3.2 Results and analysis—Major utility group

A ranked breakdown of the percentage of calls answered by an operator within 30 seconds from 2013–14 to 2017–18 is shown in Figure 6.3.

Tasmanian Water and Sewerage Corporation reported the highest percentage at 86.6, but was not included in Table 6.3, as they did not report this indicator last year for comparison. Sydney Water Corporation reported the largest increase compared to last year, bringing it back in line with its long-term average.

South East Water reported the biggest decrease in performance (21 per cent) for this indicator.