

## 6 Customer

### 6.1 Average duration of an unplanned interruption: water—C15

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

Unplanned interruptions include scheduled interruptions, which exceed 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 following factors:

- the scale of the event causing the interruption
- the location of the interruption (e.g. the proximity to a repair crews and the depth of the burst pipe)
- the utility's response policy for outlying areas
- the number of maintenance and repair staff at the utility's disposal.

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

The average duration of unplanned interruptions (water supply) data for all utilities reporting in 2016–17 is in Table A10, Appendix A.

#### 6.1.1 Key findings

A summary of the data for the median average duration of an 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 2015–16		Median		Change from 2015–16 %
	High	Low	Increase	Decrease	2015–16	2016–17	
Major	231	83	9	5	135	134	–1
	Hunter Water	South East Water					
Large	215	65	6	3	93	107	16
	Western Water	Cairns					
Medium	183	30	6	9	106	92	–13
	Riverina Water (W)	Port Macquarie Hastings					
Small	218	26	3	11	120	87	–27
	Cassowary Coast	Livingstone					
<b>All utility groups (national)</b>	<b>231</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>–6</b>
	Hunter Water	Livingstone					

**Table note**

Median average duration of an unplanned interruption: water (minutes) is calculated for all utilities reporting data for C15 in both 2015–16 and 2016–17.

Nationally, the median average duration of unplanned interruptions remained consistent with 2015–16, decreasing from 112 minutes to 106 minutes (6 per cent).

Despite a 20 per cent decrease in the number of water mains breaks (A8) in the Large utility group, the average duration of unplanned supply interruptions, for this group, increased by 16 per cent. This result was driven by increases for Western Water (132 per cent), Townsville Regional Council (21 per cent), Gippsland Water (15 per cent), and Coliban Water (12 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 2012–13 to 2016–17 is presented in Figure 6.1. The figure highlights the large year to year variation of the indicator that can result from a single major mains break.

In 2016–17, Hunter Water Corporation reported a 70 per cent increase in its average duration of unplanned interruptions, which was dominated by a single major mains break in March 2017. The break on the Wallsend main cut supply to over 4,800 properties and resulted in reduced pressure to 1,000 more properties.<sup>17</sup>

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

SA Water Corporation reported a duration of 195 minutes, an increase of 5 per cent from 2015–16. This result is explained by procedures followed to mitigate the safety hazards associated with the repair of cast iron mains. Cast iron pipes were used extensively in South Australia and are more likely to fail from pressure issues. These pipes were repaired under pressure; however, new Work, Health, and Safety measures require the water supply to be shutdown and the area excavated before the pipe is repaired. This process increases the number of shutdowns and is more time consuming than previous practice. Cast iron mains are no longer laid in South Australia but it is predicted future failures will predominantly concern cast iron pipes, and the duration of repairs may increase.

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

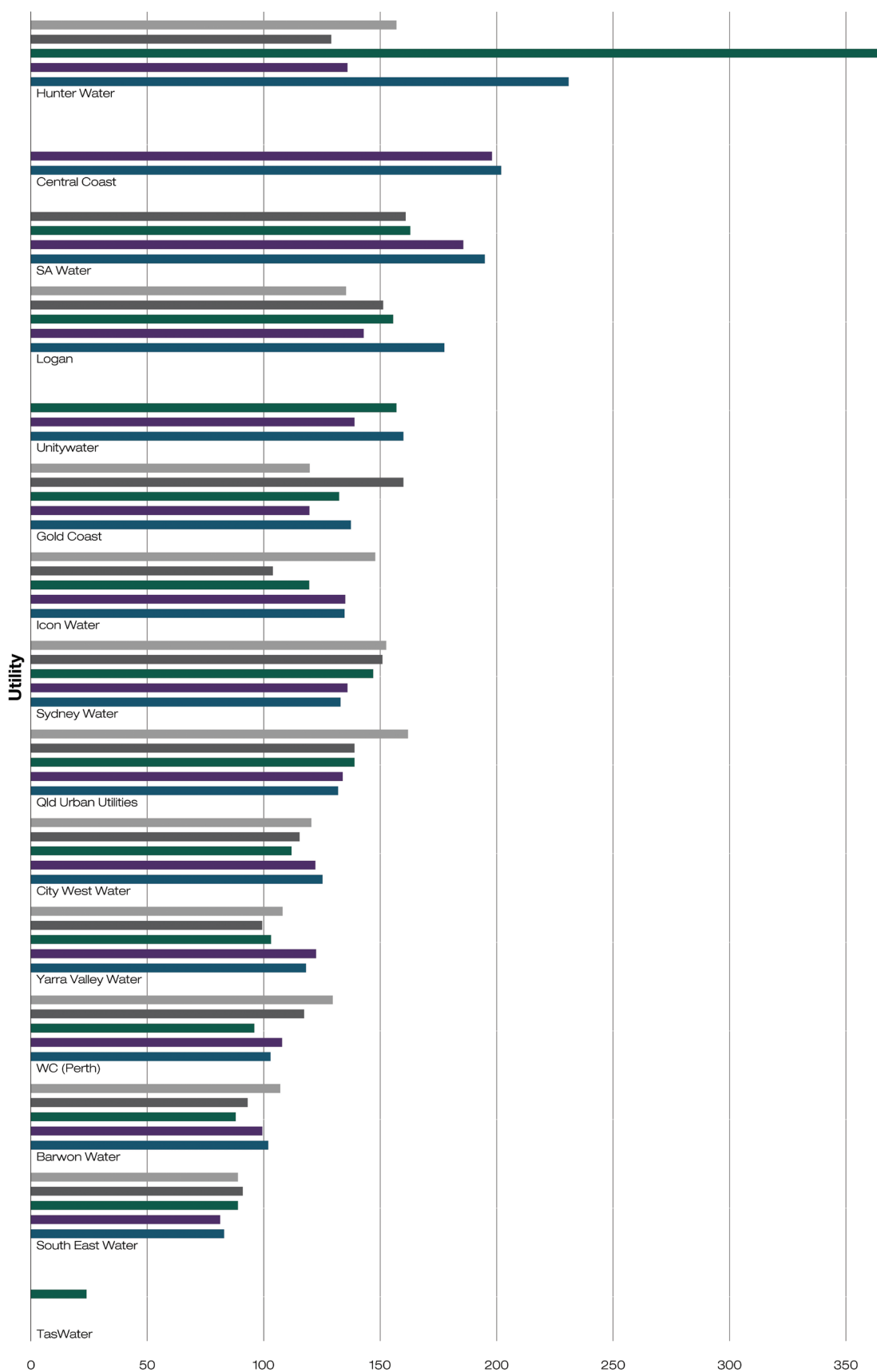
The total number of water and sewerage complaints per 1,000 properties (C13) is a measure of a utilities customer satisfaction and operational performance. A complaint can be:

- a written or verbal expression of dissatisfaction
- made about an action or a proposed action
- result from 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 2016–17 is in Table A11, Appendix A.

<sup>17</sup> Hunter Water Annual Report 2016–2017, page 7



### Legend

Average duration of an unplanned interruption: water (minutes)

2012-13    2014-15    2016-17  
 2013-14    2015-16

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

### 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, the median total number of complaints remained unchanged. However, results within the Major, Medium and Small utility groups showed some downward movement in the median number of complaints.

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

Utility group	Range		No. utilities with increase/decrease from 2015–16		Median		Change from 2015–16 %
	High	Low	Increase	Decrease	2015–16	2016–17	
Major	11.0 <sup>a</sup>	0.8	5	6	4.1	3.4	–17
	Yarra Valley Water	WC (Perth)					
Large	85.1	0.8	7	4	5.0	4.1	–18
	P&W (Darwin)	Townsville					
Medium	57.0	0.3	11	7	6.5	6.9	5
	Mackay	Multiple utilities					
Small	146.0	0	11	10	7.1	6.1	–14
	Central Highlands	Goulburn Mulwaree					
<b>All utility groups (national)</b>	146.0	0	34	27	5.2	5.0	–4
	Central Highlands	Goulburn Mulwaree					

**Table note**

<sup>a</sup> Yarra Valley Water's increase was driven by a change to the interpretation of the indicator following advice from the Essential Services Commission.

Median total complaints: water and sewerage (per 1,000 properties) is calculated for all utilities reporting data for C13 in both 2015–16 and 2016–17.

### 6.2.2 Results and analysis—Major utility group

A ranked breakdown of the total water and sewerage complaints from 2012–13 to 2016–17 is shown in Figure 6.2.

Yarra Valley Water reported the largest increase from 5.8 complaints to 11.0 complaints per 1,000 properties (90 per cent). This increase was driven by a change to the interpretation of the indicator by Yarra Valley Water following advice from the Essential Services Commission. Due to the nature of the change, Yarra Valley Water is not able to restate its historical figures—this should be considered when making comparisons with 2015–16 data.

Hunter Water Corporation reported the largest decrease (35 per cent) in complaints in the Major utility group in 2016–17. Water Corporation—Perth and Unitywater have consistently reported the lowest number of complaints per 1,000 properties since 2012–13.

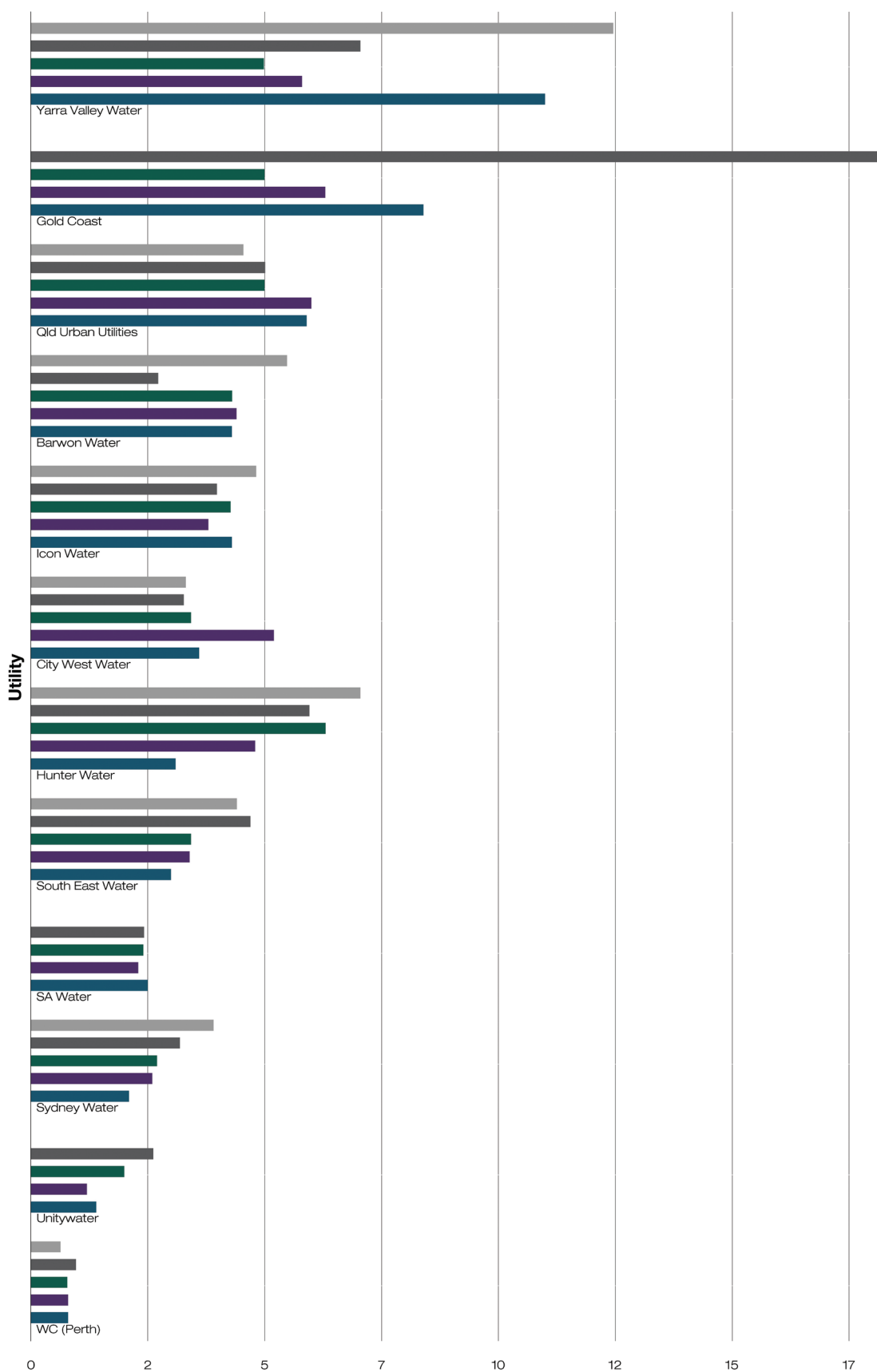


Figure 6.2 Total complaints: water and sewerage (per 1,000 properties)—Major utility group

## 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 effective ratio of customer service staff to customers
- the occurrence of severe events (e.g. storms or floods that result in a large increase of customer calls).

Percentage of calls answered by an operator within 30 seconds data for all utilities reporting in 2016–17 is in Table A12, Appendix A.

### 6.3.1 Key findings

A summary of data for the percentage of calls answered within 30 seconds, by utility group, is shown in Table 6.3. Nationally the median percentage of calls answered within 30 seconds remained consistent with 2015–16, decreasing 2 per cent from 2015–16 to 86 per cent in 2016–17. 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.

**Table 6.3 Overview of results: Percentage of calls answered within 30 seconds (%)**

Utility group	Range		No. utilities with increase/ decrease from 2015–16		Median		Change from 2015–16 %
	High	Low	Increase	Decrease	2015–16	2016–17	
Major	89	60	3	7	75	69	–8
	TasWater	Sydney Water					
Large	97	84	3	3	90	90	0
	Goulburn Valley Water	Gippsland Water					
Medium	99	50	2	6	98	94	–4
	East Gippsland Water	Tweed					
Small	100	40	4	2	69	79	14
	Westernport Water	Kempsey					
All utility groups (national)	100	40	12	18	88	86	–2
	Westernport Water	Kempsey					

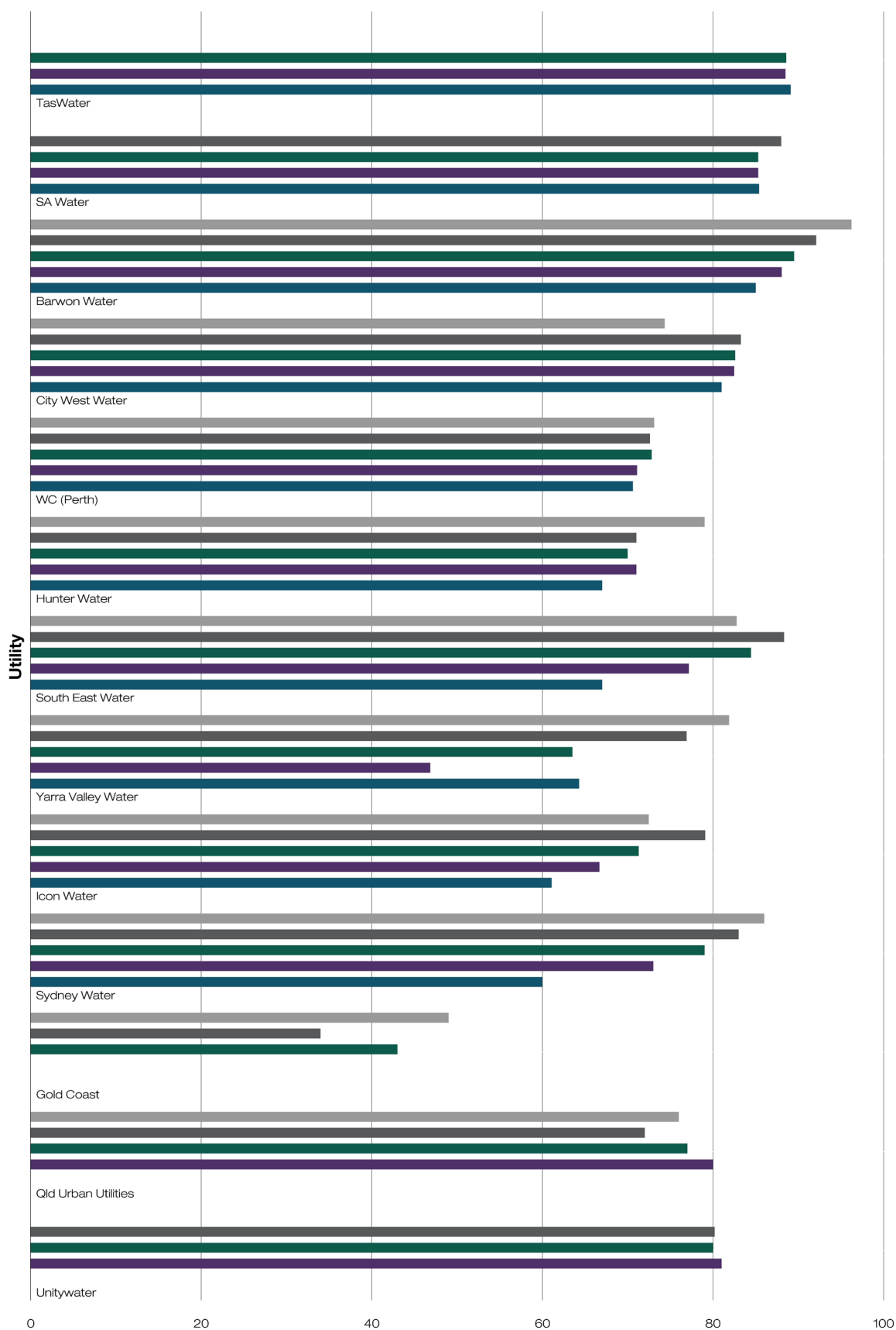
**Table note**

Median percentage of calls answered by an operator within 30 seconds (%) is calculated for all utilities reporting data in both 2015–16 and 2016–17.

### 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 2012–13 to 2016–17 is shown in Figure 6.3.

The Major utility group reported an 8 per cent decrease in its median percentage of calls answered by an operator within 30 seconds in 2016–17. This result reflects an ongoing downward trend, as shown in Figure 6.3 for many utilities. The highest percentage of calls answered within 30 seconds, was reported by TasWater (89 per cent), and the lowest was reported by Sydney Water Corporation (60 per cent).



#### Legend

Percentage of calls answered by an operator within 30 seconds (%)

2012-13 2014-15 2016-17  
2013-14 2015-16

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