FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

6 JULY 2026

TELSTRA CONTRACTORS CAUGHT ILLEGALLY ACCESSING COUNCIL DRINKING WATER SUPPLIES

Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council has strongly condemned the repeated unauthorised extraction of water from Council's drinking water network by contractors undertaking works on behalf of Telstra as part of the fibre installation project in Gundagai.

Council has identified instances where contractors working on behalf of Telstra have accessed Council water infrastructure without authorisation and without purchasing water through the proper channels provided by Council.

Council operates a dedicated overhead filling station which allows contractors and members of the public to lawfully purchase water. In one instance the contractor was caught filling from Council water mains just metres from an authorised filling station and bypassing the proper system. There is simply no justification for bypassing an authorised filling station and accessing Council's drinking water network directly.

While the financial loss associated with the unauthorised use of water is relatively small, Council's primary concern is the potential risk posed to the integrity and safety of the town's drinking water supply.

Improper connection to water mains or hydrants has the potential to create serious risks, including contamination of the drinking water network through the introduction of contaminants or backflow, damage to water infrastructure, leakage from improperly sealed hydrants and potential impacts on public health.

One of the unauthorised extractions was identified following complaints from residents regarding dirty water, prompting Council investigations into activities occurring on the network.

Council's drinking water system is a critical community asset and is subject to strict regulatory requirements. Any unauthorised interference with that system is unacceptable.

What makes these incidents particularly disappointing is that local residents and businesses are currently being asked to comply with water restrictions and play their part in conserving a valuable community resource.

Council has raised these matters with Telstra and has expressed its concerns regarding the conduct of contractors undertaking works on its behalf. Council is extremely disappointed that, despite these matters previously being brought to Telstra's attention and the correct procedures being clearly communicated, the company has failed to take meaningful action to prevent further incidents involving its contractors. As a result, Council has continued to experience instances of unauthorised access to Council's drinking water network.

Regrettably, Council has also found it necessary to raise ongoing concerns with Telstra regarding contractor compliance with appropriate traffic management requirements which affects traffic and pedestrian safety.

Council expects all organisations operating within the local government area to comply with the same rules and standards that apply to every member of the community. Large organisations and their contractors should be setting the standard for compliance, not disregarding the very requirements expected of every other water user.

Council encourages residents to report any suspected unauthorised use of Council water supplies or interference with Council infrastructure.

The community should not be left to bear the costs, risks and consequences associated with unauthorised access to essential public infrastructure.

Council will be exploring prosecution of those involved, including reporting the matters to Police.

Council will not tolerate the unauthorised use of community assets and will continue to take appropriate action to protect the integrity of its drinking water network and the safety of the community.

ENDS

Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council
www.cgrc.nsw.gov.au

For further media information contact:

Roger Bailey – Interim General Manager

Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council on

1300 459 689