

GVW CUSTOMER ACCOUNTABILITY PANEL

MEMBER GUIDEBOOK

**THiNK WATER
AND BEYOND**

Partnering for healthy and
prosperous communities





Acknowledgment of Traditional Owners

We recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First Peoples of this nation. Their lore, traditions and customs nurture the land and water, creating wellbeing for all. Goulburn Valley Water operates on the lands of the Yorta Yorta and Taungurung, and we respectfully acknowledge them as the Traditional Owners of the land and water on which we rely.

We recognise their ongoing connection to land, water and community, and pay respect to their tribal Elders. We celebrate their continuing culture and respect the memory of their ancestors. We are committed to honouring Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' unique cultural and spiritual connections to land and water. They have managed water and land sustainably over thousands of generations, and we value their rich contribution to society and our region's future.



Contents

Welcome from Goulburn Valley Water.....	4
Introduction.....	5
What's in this guide.....	5
How this guide can help.....	5
About Goulburn Valley Water.....	6
Our vision.....	6
What we do and what we deliver.....	7
Our region.....	7
Our responsibilities and our assets.....	8
Our customers and community.....	9
Stay connected with Water Matters.....	9
Pricing and price plans.....	10
The role of the Essential Services Commission.....	10
How prices are set.....	10
Price Plan 2023-28.....	11
The Customer Accountability Panel.....	14
What is the CAP?.....	14
How will it work?.....	14
Your role.....	15
Our role.....	15
Expectations of panel members.....	15
Independent facilitators.....	16
Advice from previous panel members.....	16
Customer-led programs.....	17
Exploring values.....	17
Willingness to pay.....	17
Deliberation.....	18
Important information	

Welcome, from Goulburn Valley Water

Welcome to the Goulburn Valley Water Customer Accountability Panel (CAP). The CAP is a key element of engaging regularly with our customers, helping shape the delivery of programs and projects, and getting feedback on our progress delivering key promises of our current five-year plan (the 2023-28 Price Plan).

The Price Plan was developed in consultation with our customers, who have asked us to provide leadership in the growth of the region, while caring for the environment in a time of extreme climate change. They also want us to support customers who need help.

Providing reliable water and wastewater services in a respectful and responsive manner has been a constant pledge to customers as part of our previous consultation process.

As panel members you will be asked to act in a stewardship role for the delivery of this pledge and many more, as we plan projects, set priorities and reflect on the progress of the Price Plan 2023-28.

You will help assess our performance and shape the delivery of some of our customer-focused projects that will roll out over coming years.

As panel members, you will be provided with information to assist your decision-making. Subject matter experts will be invited to provide their expertise and advice as needed.

We know there are no easy answers – all we ask is that you consider balance and compromise. We all share at least one thing in common – our love and passion for the Goulburn Valley region.

Through the process of developing Price Plan 2023-28, customer voices provided a key input into our decision-making. We know how important and valuable feedback from you is, and we're committed to ensuring that opportunity continues over the next five years as part of our Customer Accountability Panel.

So, let's work together to help shape outcomes that aim to benefit us all – now and into the future. Once again, our thanks for sharing your time, your views and your experiences over the coming sessions.

We look forward to working with you.

Daniel Flanagan
Acting
Managing Director



"We know how important and valuable feedback is from our customers, and we're committed to ensuring that opportunity continues over the next five years as part of our Customer Accountability Panel."

Introduction

What's in this guide

This guide has been broken into several chapters and sections.

It will help you to understand exactly what a price plan is and how you can contribute to the five-year delivery of the promises in that document. We will provide you with an understanding of Goulburn Valley Water and what we do, the expectations we have of you as a panel member, and what you can expect of us.

The guide will also explain the role of the customer panels which have come before you and the promises that have been made through that consultation.

You might find it helpful when reading this guide to consider the following:

“You/your” – refers to the customer panel and members

“We/our/us” – refers to Goulburn Valley Water

“Customers” – refers to Goulburn Valley Water customers

“Insync” – refers to the independent researchers and facilitators.

How this guide can help

Customers have helped design the process and set the agenda which you'll be working on and we have gone through an extensive planning phase to ensure all voices can be heard.

This guide will help you to better understand the diverse nature of our community and the various roles we play in providing an essential service to our customers.

It will also help you understand some of the topics and projects we'll be talking about, and give a brief overview of our Price Plan 2023-28.

This panel represents a genuine opportunity to make decisions of real substance, and we encourage you to participate, challenge, question, debate and deeply consider the topics presented. If you can think of ways to make the panel or the overall engagement more universal and inclusive, please share them with us.

Keep this guide handy and please return to it at any time throughout your CAP experience to refresh your memory or find more information.



About Goulburn Valley Water

Our vision

We support prosperous and healthy communities by delivering safe, reliable, and affordable water and wastewater services to our customers. Our actions and behaviours are guided by our values:

- Cause no harm
- One team
- Value every dollar
- Encourage ideas
- Own our actions
- Strive to improve

We also operate under five areas of strategic focus:

- Customer centricity
- Digital optimisation
- Safety culture
- Leadership and inclusion
- Carbon and climate.

To ensure we operate within government frameworks and deliver on our vision, we have plans and strategies that set and align our commitments and priorities and report on our progress. These include:

STRATEGY 2035

Strategy 2035 is our overarching vision to think water and beyond. We're leading for our region to be more sustainable, resilient and prosperous, driving the local transition to a low carbon, low water future.

URBAN WATER STRATEGY

The Urban Water Strategy covers anticipated needs and requirements for the next 50 years, to ensure we have the right mix of actions in place to support the development of resilient and liveable communities now and into the future.

PRICE PLAN 2023-28

Every five years, we develop a price plan, which is approved by the Essential Services Commission and sets out our prices, promises, services and major projects. We are committed to delivering four promises to our customers in our Price Plan 2023-28:

- We will provide reliable water and wastewater services customers can trust.
- We will lead action and partner with our communities to grow the region.
- We will care for the environment and adapt to a future impacted by climate variability.
- We will deliver respectful and responsive customer service, balancing affordability, value for money and fairness.

We'll have more detail on the plan further in this guide.

CORPORATE PLAN

Our Corporate Plan documents the plans and budgets for Goulburn Valley Water over an annual period. It guides the direction of the business and provides information to the government and other stakeholders.

ANNUAL REPORT

Our Annual Report is published each October and includes our achievements, financial information and other Victorian Government reporting requirements.

What we do and what we deliver

Each year Goulburn Valley Water delivers essential water and wastewater services to more than 138,200 people in 54 towns across our service area, located in north-central Victoria.

We treat raw water and safely deliver it via our network of water mains and supply infrastructure. While the majority of our customers are residential, we also provide services to businesses and large-scale industrial customers. We're also responsible for collecting, transporting, and treating sewage from customers' homes and businesses.

Once treated to applicable standards, we use the recycled water for irrigation at our farming properties, and supply for reuse on golf courses and farms. In some cases, we release highly-treated water back into local streams. We also beneficially reuse by-products of the treatment process – for example, biosolids and biogas.

Our region

Our service area stretches from Cobram on the Murray River in the north, to Kilmore in the south, to Corop in the west and to Mansfield at the foot of the Alpine Ranges in the east.

Our water supplies primarily come from the Goulburn, Murray, Broken, Steavenson and Delatite rivers. We also source water from smaller streams including Sunday, Sevens, Nine Mile and Mollisons creeks.

Our service area is divided into two main districts; Northern and Southern, each with its own operations team.



We're a water corporation under the Water Act

We operate under the Water Act 1989 and the Water Industry Act 1994, and we follow a range of regulatory obligations set out by the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA), Department of Treasury and Finance, Department of Health, and the Environment Protection Authority. Our economic activities (pricing and performance) are regulated by the Essential Services Commission and we also have obligations under the Energy and Water Ombudsman Victoria.

We must comply with regulations under the Safe Drinking Water Act 2003, Fluoride Act 1973, Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004, Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 and Environment Protection Act 1970.

We are governed by a Board of Directors, responsible for setting strategic direction, establishing goals and objectives for executive management and monitoring the business on behalf of our customers and the Victorian Government.

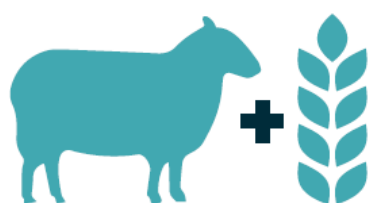
Our assets

To continue supplying water and wastewater services across each district, we manage and maintain:

37 WATER
TREATMENT
PLANTS

26 WASTEWATER
MANAGEMENT
FACILITIES

356 WATER
PUMPING
STATIONS



26 FARMING
PROPERTIES



1,972 KM
WATER MAINS



1,434 KM
SEWER MAINS



140
TANKS AND RESERVOIRS

Our customers and community

We deliver essential services so our customers and community can continue to thrive. Our customers are our priority and we focus on providing an excellent service every time they interact with us.

Our communities are unique and diverse. Community demographics shift across different parts of our service area – towns like Broadford's and Kilmore's proximity to Melbourne makes them prime locations for young families and commuters, while Shepparton is a large urban centre also attractive to professionals and their families. The Greater Shepparton area is home to one of Victoria's largest populations of Traditional Owners, as well as a growing and thriving multicultural community. In the east, towns like Mansfield and Bonnie Doon feature thriving tourism industries.

As Victoria's 'food bowl', the Goulburn Valley is home to a large number of industrial customers such as major food processors, as well as a growing hub of other industrial businesses.

Our service area overlaps two Registered Aboriginal Party boundaries, one catchment management authority and the local government areas of Campaspe, Greater Shepparton, Strathbogie, Mansfield, Mitchell, Moira, and Murrindindi.

Our Customer Charter sets out the details of all our service levels for water, wastewater and trade waste services to our customers. It explains your rights and obligations as customers and the rights and obligations of Goulburn Valley Water and is approved by the Essential Services Commission.

In addition to our key role of customer service, we also meet a wide range of regulatory obligations.

We have a range of reporting responsibilities set by the Minister for Water for our performance and our functions, such as customer and community engagement, emissions reduction, risk management, planning, water services and compliance.

Our actions are guided by policies and procedures, similar to many government authorities, around

business performance, environment, occupational health and safety, risk management, diversity and inclusion, stakeholder engagement, customers and communications.

More broadly across the community, we support environmental outcomes through development and participation in water conservation and efficiency programs. We have a leading education program delivered in schools and kindergartens, as well as in the general community.

We understand the needs of our community may change over time due to population growth and expectations, so we're continually anticipating and planning future growth, and looking at ways we can support the growth of our region to ensure our community prospers.

WaterMatters

Stay connected with Water Matters

Water Matters is our online engagement platform. It provides information about projects, programs and initiatives across our region and allows customers to follow topics they're interested in, receive updates and participate in engagement opportunities.

We encourage CAP members to create a free account and explore the platform, including the Customer Accountability Panel project page.



Scan the QR code or visit:
watermatters.gvwater.vic.gov.au



138,200+
POPULATION



58,081
RESIDENTIAL
CUSTOMERS



6,563
BUSINESS &
INDUSTRIAL
CUSTOMERS

Pricing and price plans

Every five years, we are required to submit a pricing submission to the Essential Services Commission. All Victorian water utilities complete a pricing submission, which sets out the services and service standards we propose to deliver to customers, and the proposed prices customers will pay for these.

The role of the Essential Services Commission (ESC)

The Essential Services Commission is an independent regulator of essential services in Victoria. This includes electricity, gas, water and sewerage. Price, quality and reliability of these services are all looked after by the ESC, on behalf of consumers.

For the water sector this includes:

- Assessing and approving water prices
- Developing water codes and service standards for water businesses
- Monitoring how water businesses are performing
- Doing inquiries, studies and reviews on the water industry.

The ESC has the power to regulate water through a framework and several key pieces of legislation. The Minister for Water is responsible for the Victorian water industry portfolio.

The ESC assesses our pricing submission using a water pricing framework. From there they will set a price determination for the final plan. Each year in June we confirm the set prices to apply from 1 July for our business.

How prices are set

Every year, the Essential Service Commission approves our tariff schedule based on our price plan.

The schedule outlines the maximum prices we can charge customers for specific services, such as water delivery and usage, sewage processing, trade waste, water main tapplings and development costs.

Our tariffs are approved by our Board and then advertised on the Goulburn Valley Water website and in local newspapers.



Price Plan 2023-28

Our plan aims to balance our role in driving regional prosperity with affordability for all of our customers. As well as delivering the best water and wastewater services we can, we want to help contribute to healthy and prosperous communities, and customers want us to do this too.

The plan considers action we need to take to address the future challenges Goulburn Valley Water faces; coping with population growth, adapting to a changing climate, contributing to economic growth.

The price plan will ensure we keep delivering reliable and affordable services and support customers who have trouble making ends meet. It will see us continue investing to maintain and improve infrastructure.

OUR PLAN

Price Plan 2023-28 centres around four key promises, which are supported by a range of measures for delivery. These echo what we've heard from customers during the development of our plan.

We will keep prices low and predictable over the next five years and beyond, while we address the things that customers value most:

- Maintaining and improving infrastructure to keep delivering reliable and high quality services
- Increasing water pressure in towns that need it, especially where there is strong growth
- Digitally transforming the business to deliver services more efficiently
- Supporting more customers who need our help
- Reducing our carbon emissions to meet the 2035 net zero target, creating local benefits where we can
- Increasing water security to meet future demands in a changing climate
- Building projects with community and industry to make our region healthier and more prosperous.

PROMISE:

We will supply reliable water and wastewater services customers can trust.

We heard customers want sustainable services they can trust and rely on, now and in the future. This means a supply of clean and high quality drinking water with no interruptions, keeping affected customers informed, and the safe disposal and treatment of wastewater in ways that do not harm the environment.

- Water supply infrastructure upgrades and maintenance
- Ensuring communities don't experience widespread taste and odour events
- Rectifying sewer blockages as soon as possible and keeping customers informed
- Restoring unplanned water supply interruptions as soon as practical and keeping customers informed
- Water pressure improvements in identified towns.

PROMISE:

We will lead action with our partners to grow the region.

We heard customers want us to take a lead in the region, partnering with community, business, and government to grow the health and prosperity in new ways. Supporting community development, creating green spaces, using recycled water more, converting waste to energy, supporting the Regional Aboriginal Plan for Aboriginal communities in the region – these are all ways we could help our region grow.

- Support for community projects and education
- Projects that make the best use of available water, improve liveability and support the transition to net zero carbon emissions
- Development of regional leaders to plan for the future.

PROMISE:

We will care for the environment and adapt to a future impacted by climate variability.

Customers told us they want us to look after and protect our environment and adapt to the future impacts of a changing climate. This includes reducing carbon emissions, making sure our service delivery doesn't harm the environment and ensuring long-term water security in a way that cares for the environment and the people living in it. Our 50-year Urban Water Strategy plans for service delivery in the future - you can read more about it at gvwater.vic.gov.au/water/water-plans-strategies We will partner with Traditional Owners to incorporate Indigenous knowledge in new practices, care for country and re-establish cultural connections with our land and waters.

- Projects that reduce carbon emissions, including those that generate local benefits
- Making sure no communities experience sewer spills that have widespread environmental impacts
- Acting on advice from Traditional Owners to care for Country
- Implementing actions of the Urban Water Strategy to provide secure water and wastewater services in the future.

PROMISE:

We will deliver respectful and responsive customer service, and balance affordability, value for money and fairness.

Customers told us they want a great experience with us, every time they contact us or we contact them. Customers also said they expect services to be fair and affordable for everyone.

This means keeping people informed in different ways, responding quickly and resolving problems and making sure everyone receives value for money, a fair go and extra support when help is needed.

- Informing customers about our price plan commitments and being evaluated on our performance
- Implementing a customer experience improvement program
- Customers being supported and satisfied with their experience with GVW
- A water use behaviour change program.

PLAN HIGHLIGHTS

- Boosting our capital expenditure program by an additional \$74 million to invest in assets and infrastructure to cater for population growth and climate impacts
- Investing more than \$234 million over five years to renew and improve our critical infrastructure to continue delivering safe and reliable services
- Investing \$4 million in supporting and leading projects to support regional growth and prosperity
- Adding \$3 million over the plan to reach our net zero emissions goals through locally-beneficial carbon emissions reduction projects
- \$2 million in additional funding for programs to support customers who need our help.

BILL COSTS

Goulburn Valley Water bills will increase slightly over the next couple of years, but we will remain one of the lowest-priced water corporation in Australia.

To continue delivering services our prices need to increase incrementally over the next five years to invest in our services while balancing affordability for customers. Our region is changing, so we need to make sure our infrastructure and services are prepared for this growth and a changing climate.

The rise has been smoothed over the five year period to help customers manage broader rising costs of living. Bills paid by each customer will differ slightly based on water use and service charges.

Average bill increases (excluding inflation):

Year	Average increase
2023-24	0.7%
2024-25	0.6%
2025-26	1%
2026-27	1%
2027-28	1%

OUR ACCOUNTABILITY FOR DELIVERY - GUARANTEED SERVICE LEVELS

One of our accountability measures are Guaranteed Service Levels - or GSLs. These are a rebate we pay to customers if we fail to meet a specified level of service. We consulted with customers and the Essential Services Commission to agree on a set of five GSLs, which are also linked to the promises and measures we have in our price plan. These are:

- If a customer's water supply isn't restored within 5 hours, we'll pay that customer \$20.
- If we don't respond to a sewer blockage within an hour from when we're notified, we'll pay affected customers \$25 each.
- If we take legal action against a residential customer or restrict water supply in a manner that does not meet the requirements of the ESC's Water Industry Standard - Urban Customer Service's reasonable endeavours, we'll pay that customer \$300.

- If we don't contain a sewer spill that's caused by a fault in our system within five hours, we'll donate \$2000 to the affected community.
- We'll contribute a \$15,000 payment to the affected community if a boil water notice is issued and caused by a fault in our system.

We proactively track these measures and identify where we haven't met the standard. Where a GSL is individual, we'll credit the customer's bill and where there are community payments, we'll pool the funding each year and allocate through a specific community grants application process.

DEVELOPING THE PLAN

We developed our current Price Plan based on significant engagement with our customers over a two-year period.

We staged the engagement process to identify, refine, test and reach agreement. We held more than 2,370 conversations with customers - through surveys, focus groups, stakeholder interviews and a deliberative forum process.

You can find a more detailed breakdown on each stage on pages 17 and 18.

After we engaged with customers on our draft proposal, we submitted our draft price submission to the Essential Services Commission in September 2022 for review and a final round of customer feedback.

The ESC made their final decision in June 2023. The new Price Plan 2023-28 came into effect on 1 July 2023. The ESC's full determination is available online at esc.vic.gov.au

The Customer Accountability Panel

We made a decision to include a customer panel as a commitment in our Price Plan 2023-28, to continue putting customer voices at the centre of the delivery of the plan. We also wanted to ensure we remained accountable for our promises.

The CAP has evolved from our Annual Performance Forum, the customer group that provided stewardship on our Price Plan 2018-23.

To balance experience and fresh perspective, we decided to recruit a mix of members from our existing engagement panels (Annual Performance Forum, Carbon Customer Advisory Group, Pricing Submission Deliberative Forum), as well as from our broader customer base.

To select the panel, we put out a call for expressions of interest through all of our channels - email, social media, newspapers, radio, website and community newsletters and groups.

We received more than 140 expressions of interest, where we then undertook a selection process to ensure the panel was broadly representative of our different customer types. The selection process ensures the involvement of customers with different experiences and from different backgrounds.

What is the CAP?

The Customer Accountability Panel will be a key customer voice in planning for our future and reflecting on our achievements.

It will provide feedback on GVV's actions and progress on key promises and activities from our current five-year plan (the 2023-28 Price Plan).

We'll ask you to rate us on our performance (we'll provide all the information you need to make your decision), and your input will be part of the performance report we submit to the Essential Services Commission every year.

It will also provide opportunities for panel members to share thoughts and preferences on our activities and upcoming projects, and will be a key part of planning and decision making on some of our customer-focused projects that will roll out over the next couple of years.



How will it work?

The Panel will meet each year – generally in person and on a weekend. There may be opportunities to provide feedback through other processes at different times – these will be optional. The panel will develop its own terms of reference and develop an agreed set of behaviours.

Each session may look a little different depending on the topics we are discussing, but will generally involve a discussion on GVW's performance on our promises and measures that are the foundation of our current price plan (see page 11). We will ask you to consider what we've achieved so far based on a summary of our actions - your feedback will also be a key part of how we rate our performance to the Essential Services Commission.

Some of your work on the panel will also revolve around our three customer-led programs. These have been developed through significant engagement from customers on our 2022 Deliberative Forum panel (see page 17 for more).

The sessions will have facilitated discussions that are designed to allow panel members to work through small pieces of work from reading, listening to presenters, discussing information, coming up with ideas, ranking ideas, writing recommendations, editing, and testing agreement. This work happens in both small groups and with the whole group.

The aim of the panel is for you, as a customer representative, to provide advice and recommendations.

Your role

Your role as a panel member includes both listening and contributing. As a panel member you will:

- Have access to a range of information and hear from speakers who are subject matter experts
- Discuss the issues and ideas with your fellow panel members and weigh up all of the information presented to you.

You don't need to be an expert or a specialist to participate. You will have access to a range of information, including the findings from the previous customer research.

As well as hearing from expert speakers, you will also have the opportunity to have smaller group discussions, share your views and learn more about other people's ideas and perspectives.

Our role

We want your experience on the panel to be fulfilling, productive and enjoyable. We'll take every opportunity to give you a chance to participate safely and comfortably, by offering support and options that meet your needs. This might mean assistance with access to transport, childcare support, digital access and more - we'll work with you individually to make sure you have everything you need to participate at your best.

GVW will make sure you have access to all the information you need to participate, and to understand the topics and content presented. We will ensure our staff and subject matter experts are available to explain any topics we are considering as part of the panel.

We will also provide you with communication ahead of panel sessions, and provide you with a summary after the event.

Expectations of panel members

1. Read this guidebook and other background materials as provided.
2. Attend annual panel sessions and be part of our performance review process.
3. Participate in an open, respectful and thoughtful way.

Independent facilitators

We have appointed independent facilitators Insync to help us run the CAP sessions. Insync is highly experienced in customer engagement and research, and is very familiar with Goulburn Valley Water, the way we operate and the regulatory frameworks which we must follow.

Insync helped us with our previous customer group, the Annual Performance Forum, as well as engagement for our pricing submission process, including our Deliberative Forum in 2022.

Insync's role is to support you as panel members and guide the process in a way that helps you perform your role as effectively as possible.

You will meet the Insync team at the first session.

Advice from our previous Annual Performance Forum members

At the end of the last five year plan, we asked the APF to talk about what they enjoyed about being part of the process and what advice they would give themselves if they were a new customer starting on the panel. They said:

- Be involved and open minded.
- Be yourself, your views matter.
- Pre-read the materials and if you don't understand something, don't be afraid to have it explained.
- It will make sense eventually.
- Love the time you have doing this and being part of the panel.



Developing our customer led programs

As part of our pricing submission conversations, we asked customers to consider this challenge:

How should Goulburn Valley Water contribute to the health and prosperity of our communities while balancing affordability for our customers?

We engaged broadly and deeply to build a pricing submission that reflected what was most important for the business, customers, stakeholders and the community. Our engagement was staged to identify, refine, test and detail the services we included and prices we set.

From this process, we arrived at a set of customer-led projects.

- Supporting customers who need our help
- Carbon abatements with local economic/ liveability benefits
- Leadership to create healthier and more prosperous region.

We included these in our pricing submission and the Essential Services Commission asked us to continue engaging with our customers on their delivery.

That's where you come in.

We've pulled together information from our staged engagement process which shows you how we arrived at these three programs. We also asked customers what kind of projects or initiatives should be prioritised under these programs.

Exploring values - Stage 1

We heard more than 300 stories about priorities, values, expectations and concerns through surveys, interviews, focus groups and meetings. We spoke to customers from all walks of life, and we listened to Traditional Owners, multicultural community representatives and support agencies. Customer service was mentioned largely as a strength, although people from some towns weren't happy with pressure or taste of the water we deliver.

There was an expectation that we will secure future water supplies. Others said they wanted us to provide (more) support to customers who need help, respond quickly to issues and complaints, make recycled water more available, provide information on how to save water and make public spaces green.

Seven out of every 10 customers encouraged us to lead or get involved in new initiatives that make a positive impact on the health and prosperity of the region. Traditional Owners told us we should partner more to care for country, support economic development and employ young people. Other community representatives asked us to provide more education and support services.

Many people wanted us to keep delivering our water and wastewater services to a high standard.

Willingness to pay - Stage 2

We drew out six common topics from the stage 1 feedback to delve into further. People said they valued these services so we surveyed again and ran more focus groups to find out how much money customers thought we should or should not invest in:

1. Playing a leadership role in the region
2. Increasing water pressure in identified towns
3. Improving customer experiences by leveraging digital technologies
4. Providing support to customers in need
5. Delivering carbon emissions abatement options that deliver local benefits
6. Incorporating community amenities in the Fryers St Shepparton office building upgrade.

Deliberation - Stage 3

There were varying views on three of the topics we explored and we didn't think we should be judge and jury, so we decided to create a deliberative forum to make recommendations. We recruited a group of 40 representative customers to advise us. The panel met over six sessions to deliberate on six questions (below, in bold).

Combining their own experiences with briefings from experts, panel members voted on the following options to include in our pricing submission:

How much customer money should be put towards GVW leading to create a healthier and more prosperous region? Which ways of achieving this are you most in favour of?

The customer panel thought we should invest and lead in this space, but also considered the financial impact on some customers and thought partnering with others was the best way forward.

Customer recommended investment: \$4 million over 5 years.

The panel thought we should prioritise projects relating to community, develop regional leaders and play a lead role to create opportunities for net zero (i.e. waste-to-energy plants).

How much customer money should be put towards carbon emissions abatement that has local economic and liveability benefits? Which ways of achieving this are you most in favour of?

Customers believed we should invest to benefit local communities in the future, but they also acknowledged the value of other ways to deliver carbon emissions abatement - something we have pledged to do, working towards net zero by 2035.

Customer recommended investment: \$3 million over 5 years.

The panel told us priority projects should create local jobs and environmental benefits, and we should partner with others in this space. They also voted for creating cultural, employment and economic benefits for Traditional Owners.

How much customer money should be put towards supporting customers in need? Which ways of achieving this are you most in favour of?

The panel thought there would be a number of benefits from supporting more customers in need, and in new ways, but asked if Goulburn Valley Water was always best placed to lead.

Customer recommended investment: \$2 million over 5 years.

Priority projects voted for by customers were partnering with organisations to assist customers to save money, identifying and repairing leaks for customers who can't afford repairs, establishing student scholarship programs, and providing more targeted customer case management.

Draft submission

These recommendations were incorporated into our draft pricing submission - built into the pricing we proposed and actions we planned under our four promises.

Finalising the Price Plan

The Price Plan was finalised in May 2023 and came to life in July 2023.

Funding was included for customer support - the Supporting Customers Who Need Help Program.

Five project were included in the program:

- Water efficiency
- Leak repair
- Billing
- Youth pathways
- New arrivals, new needs

Funding for the other program was not included and was unable to be secured to deliver in the 2023-28 price period.

Important information

Key contacts

Please direct correspondence regarding attendance and general enquiries through to:

Amy Turner

amyt@gvwater.vic.gov.au

Payments

Panel members will be paid for their participation in the CAP. Attendees will receive a payment for each major annual session, as well as payments for additional out-of-session assessments.

We'll also reimburse travel costs to the in-person sessions. We'll provide more information about the payment process prior to and during the session.

Remember: enjoy the process!

Once again, thanks so much for your involvement in our Customer Accountability Panel. We recognise participating in something like this requires a significant investment of your time and we really appreciate and value all of your feedback.

We look forward to working with you and we hope you enjoy your time on the panel.



THiNK WATER AND BEYOND

Partnering for healthy and
prosperous communities