



Communications and Engagement Strategy 2017-19



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Customer focussed



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Integrity and respect

“Our passion for water will create a ripple effect resulting in healthy people, healthy communities and healthy environment”

This communication and engagement strategy builds on our strengths and identifies areas for growth that align with our organisational vision for a healthy and sustainable Gippsland.

We will build strategic relationships, educate and inspire, highlighting the key role of water and our other core services in health, the environment and the local economy. We will develop our capacity to engage with customers and build our brand to improve reputation and ultimately, trust.



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Background

Gippsland Water’s Communications and Engagement team works closely with all areas of Gippsland Water and the community.

The core responsibilities of the Communications and Engagement team are:

- Corporate communications, including brand management and issues management
- Strategic engagement
- Education and sponsorship
- Internal communications

The views, values and expectations of our customers are well known following substantial research undertaken over the past two years. These insights inform our communications and engagement strategy.

The Essential Services Commission has indicated that we should begin to measure success differently. The focus will be less on the time it takes to respond to leaks and spills and more on customer satisfaction, taking into account trust, value for money, reputation and affordability.

The views of our customers and the community help us shape the decisions we make. By working closely with customers and stakeholders and engaging early and often we can develop projects and programs that work for us, our customers and the community we serve.

Gippsland Water’s stakeholder and engagement program was recently audited, with favourable results. The auditors complimented our stakeholder engagement processes and practices for their ‘maturity and robustness’.



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Corporate communications

OBJECTIVE 1

We will deliver targeted, timely communications to share Gippsland Water’s messages.

This document takes into consideration the Statement of Obligations as set out by the Minister for Water’s Letter of Expectations, Water for Victoria and Gippsland Water’s Strategic Priorities. An external communications plan has been developed for the next 24 months focusing on customer values developed during the price submission, which are:

- Do your job well*
- Be easy to deal with*
- Be affordable and fair*
- Prepare for future growth and protect the environment*
- Be involved*

Gippsland Water’s publicised Five Year Plan (for the regulatory period 2018-2023) provides a basis for external communication including information on key projects, programs of work and Guaranteed Service Levels (GSLs).

We know our customers are interested in various issues including quality of the water, water saving initiatives and the environment (Insync, Gippsland Water Customer Satisfaction Survey Executive Summary Report, November 2016).

We will ensure a steady stream of information based on our five year plan and customer values.

We will provide timely advice to customers affected by planned and unplanned works.

Our messages will be targeted to specific audiences using a mix of traditional and emerging communication tools.

Outcome

Our customers will be informed and engaged.



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Strategic engagement

OBJECTIVE 2

Gippsland Water works collaboratively with customers, stakeholders and the community.

Community engagement continues to be a major focus for Gippsland Water as a means to building trust and organisational reputation. The views of our customers and the community are vital to help us shape the decisions we make.

We will develop our capacity to engage with customers and review of the Customer Consultative Committee.

Under the Statement of Obligations we are required to provide open and transparent processes for engaging so that the service we provide reflects customer and community needs and expectations.

We will seek every opportunity to have a conversation with our community, for example a request for drink bottles from a sporting club will be met with an offer for the drink bottles and a guest speaker to talk about water for health and other key messages including that we are government owned.

We will continue to build engagement capacity within the team and the business with a focus on engagement for specific projects.

We will create strategic relationships that contribute to a healthy and sustainable Gippsland.

We will support and empower the community to make the most of our resources and expertise for a healthier future.

We will partner with the community and build capacity on projects that benefit the environment.

We will support advocacy in to government.

Outcome

Unprompted brand recognition at $\geq 80\%$ at next customer survey.



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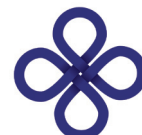
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Education and sponsorship

OBJECTIVE 3

To educate and inspire for improved health outcomes for people, community and the environment.

Education and sponsorship are two of the main drivers of engagement and an opportunity to improve reputation and trust by engaging in a meaningful way. A redeveloped education and sponsorship policy will focus on the key themes of healthy people, healthy communities and healthy environment, realising the capacity of Gippsland Water to influence outcomes in areas of greatest need and strengthening our commitment to Water for Victoria’s Victorian Water Efficiency Strategy 2017-2022.

We will increase our presence at community events, educating and inspiring families and young people about the opportunities of water for personal health outcomes, environmental sustainability and employment. We will develop a community grants program to encourage community projects with a health, community or sustainability focus.

We will offer in-kind support, such as reduced water bills or garden compost, for projects of community benefit. We will work in partnerships on projects like incentives for businesses to allow customers to refill drink bottles with tap water.

Our work with schools will continue – in alignment with our Statement of Obligations, Gippsland Water will make education materials focusing on sustainable water resource management available to schools.

A revised education strategy and new sponsorship strategy will work with Organisational Development to consider ways to encourage interest in Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths. We will work with Operations to increase the role of the Vortex in education and the development of tours at the Soil and Organic Recycling Facility (SORF).

We will educate students and the broader community about sustainable water practices including; water supply and conservation, sustainable water use behaviour, water for health and hydration, and opportunities for personal and career development within the water industry.

We will explore opportunities for the Aboriginal community in education and sponsorship.

Outcome

Customers understand healthy and sustainable behaviours.



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Community reputation

OBJECTIVE 4

To build a level of trust with our customers.

Our strategic priority is to be a leading customer-focussed organisation that is **valued** and **trusted** by our community. As a monopoly provider of water and wastewater services it is vital to maintain a level of trust to ensure meaningful engagement and to help understand customer priorities for improvement.

There is a link between community reputation, brand recognition and trust. Preliminary results of the most recent customer survey indicate a link between customer satisfaction and understanding of ownership. Increasing community awareness that Gippsland Water is government owned as opposed to privately owned could improve customer satisfaction rates.

We will develop an integrated brand strategy that best positions Gippsland Water in the community.

We will support authentic community involvement that resonates with the community and is meaningful.

We will develop a strategy highlighting community ownership in conjunction with our education and sponsorship programs.

Outcome

Improved value for money perceptions and Net Trust Score.



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Community reputation

OBJECTIVE 4

To build a level of trust with our customers.

Factors leading to Trust

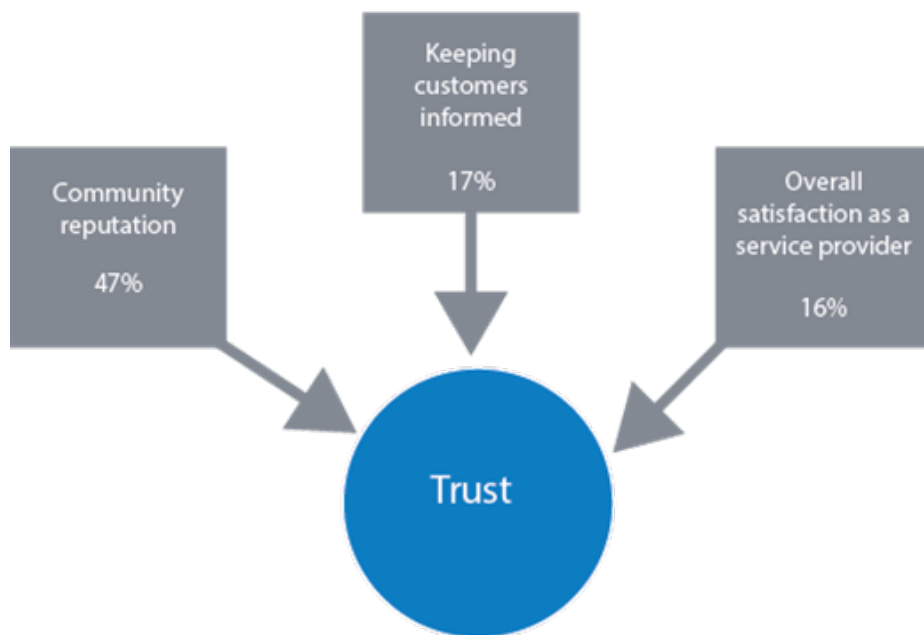


Figure 1: Courtesy of Water Services Association of Australia National Customer Benchmarking

Key factors influencing perceptions of value for money

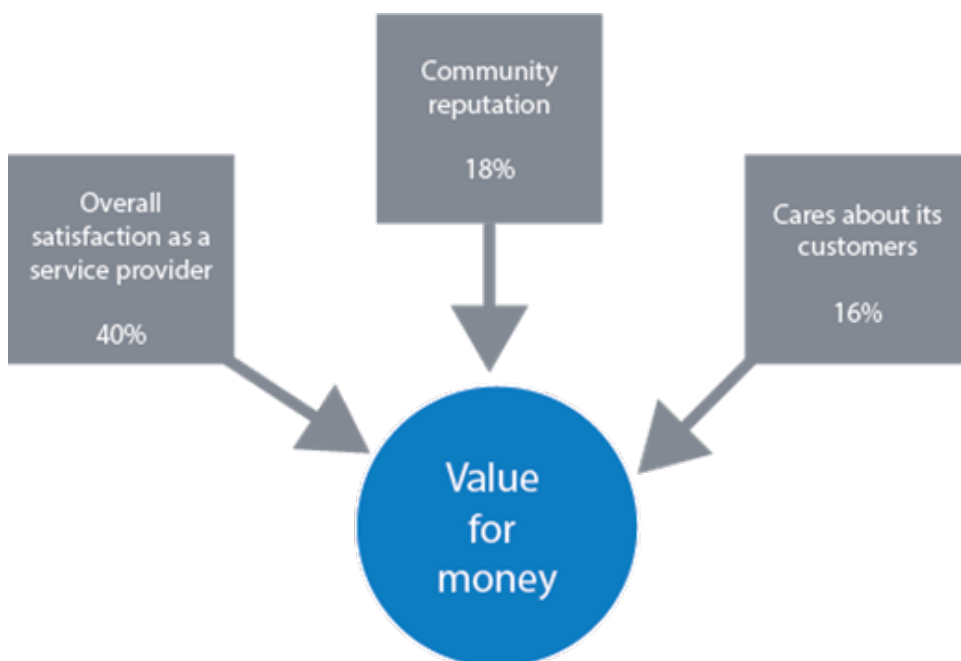


Figure 2: Courtesy of Water Services Association of Australia National Customer Benchmarking



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Internal communication

OBJECTIVE 5

Gippsland Water employees are informed and engaged.

The timely and accurate dissemination of corporate messages is key to keeping Gippsland Water employees engaged and informed.

We will develop an internal communications strategy with the intranet redevelopment the highest priority. The strategy will be based on our strategic priorities, vision and values, with a particular focus on safety and wellbeing. We will work with Gippsland Water's employees to build their own communications and engagement capacity and help them to understand how their role fits in to the 'bigger picture', especially those at remote sites.

Communications will play key role in supporting Organisational Development to improve employee engagement results, particularly in regard to **brand** and **reputation** markers in the annual survey.

A new strategy will be prepared with the redeveloped intranet the centrepiece.

Outcome

Improved 'aligned employer brand' index in employee engagement survey.



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Key themes

Healthy people:

Our core business is to ensure the health of individuals by providing the highest quality water and wastewater services.

We encourage the consumption of water for health and hydration.

We support customers who have difficulty paying their bill and those who may be experiencing domestic violence.

Our employees are our strength and their safety and wellbeing is our priority.

We communicate with customers affected by Gippsland Water's activities.

Healthy communities:

Gippsland Water is connected to the community and works with local groups, businesses and agencies to support projects that improve liveability and/or drive economic growth.

We are a major local employer with almost 300 employees including 20 at our local customer contact centre, and we engage local contractors to work on our projects.

We support local groups and events through sponsorship and provision of portable water fountains and water trailer. Our gift to the community is permanent water fountains in key locations.

Our programs teach the importance of water for health and the environment, and connects women and diverse backgrounds into the water sector as a career of choice.

Gippsland Water is government owned.

Healthy environment:

We are actively working to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions.

The SORF is a key player in Victoria's recycling and composting industry.

We work hard to protect the environment including waterways, native plants and animals.

The community will be kept up to date on water saving initiatives.

We support community programs and initiatives that benefit the environment.



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Stakeholders

Key stakeholders, customers and community are:

- Residential customers
- Small and medium businesses
- Major customers
- Community groups

Internal:

- Gippsland Water Board
- Managing Director
- Executive Leadership Team
- Senior Leadership Team
- Employees, particularly at external sites
- Contractors

Third parties:

- Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation (GLaWAC)
- Developers
- Local Government
- Other water corporations
- Water industry associations
- School and education groups
- Media
- Support agencies

Regulatory bodies:

- Minister for Water
- Department of Environment Land Water and Planning (DELWP)
- Local members of state parliament
- Department of Treasury and Finance (DTF)
- Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS)
- Environment Protection Authority (EPA)
- Essential Services Commission (ESC)
- Energy and Water Ombudsman of Victoria (EWOV)
- West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority (WGCMA)



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Action plan

Strategic objective	Strategy	Actions	Timeframe	What we will measure	
We will deliver targeted, timely communications to share Gippsland Water’s messages.	We will ensure a steady stream of information based on our five-year plan and customer values.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular media releases and social media posts communicating the work of Gippsland Water. 	Ongoing	Positive/neutral message sentiment at 95%.	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project specific comms plans e.g. Drouin WWTP upgrade. 	Ongoing		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reporting on GSLs. 	Ongoing		
		We will provide timely advice to customers affected by planned and unplanned works.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a communications matrix. 	30 June 2018	
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design a communications plan for hardship program. 	30 March 2018	
		Our messages will be targeted to specific audiences using a mix of traditional and emerging communication tools.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and adopt a strategy that encourages customers to use digital services. 	30 June 2018	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create an interactive map for website. 	30 December 2018		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Active watching brief on key issues. 	Ongoing		



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Strategic objective	Strategy	Actions	Timeframe	What we will measure
We will work collaboratively with cusotmers, stakeholders and the community.	Continue to build engagement capacity within the team and the business with a focus on engagement for specific projects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop communications strategies for key projects. Review the effectiveness of the Customer Consultative Committee. 	Ongoing 30 March 2018	Unprompted brand recognition at 80% at next customer survey.
	We will create strategic relationships that align with our passion for educating and inspiring people to choose water for health and hydration.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a calendar of events and rsoter for employees to attend. Strengthen key relationships with organisations such as health services, local government, and community organisations. 	30 March 2018 Ongoing	
	We will support and empower the community using our resources and expertise to create healthy communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Redevelop education and sponsorship policies and strategies. 	30 March 2018	
	We will partner with the community and build capacity on projects that benefit health, community and the environment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop strategy for permanent water fountains. Host two open days in 2019. 	Underway 30 December 2019	



Strategic objective	Strategy	Actions	Timeframe	What we will measure
<p>We will build a level of trust with our customers.</p>	<p>Develop an integrated brand strategy that best positions Gippsland Water in the community.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research and develop integrated brand strategy. • Develop a strategy to inform the community we are government-owned. 	<p>19 June 2017</p> <p>30 March 2018</p>	<p>A net trust score of ≥ 0</p>
	<p>Support authentic community involvement rather than just 'being seen'.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Redeveloped education and sponsorship campaign. 	<p>30 March 2018</p>	



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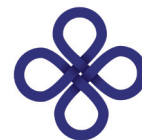
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Strategic objective	Strategy	Actions	Timeframe	What we will measure
<p>We will educate and inspire for improved outcomes for people, community and the environment. We will position Gippsland Water as a great place to work, encouraging women and diverse backgrounds.</p>	<p>Continue to educate students and the broader community about sustainable water practices including water supply and conservation and water for health and hydration.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Redevelop education and sponsorship policies to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Focus on areas of greatest need to create health equity. - Include community grants with defined criteria. - Include incentives for STEM subjects and women. - Include the Vortex and SORF. 	<p>30 March 2018</p>	<p>Customer satisfaction of >=80%</p>
	<p>Increase community awareness and understanding of sustainable water use behaviour.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leverage off the Choose Tap and Target Your Water Use campaigns. 	<p>Ongoing</p>	
	<p>Work with Organisational Development to position Gippsland Water as an employer of choice.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategy to empower and engage Gippsland Water employees. 	<p>May 2018</p>	



Strategic objective	Strategy	Actions	Timeframe	What we will measure
<p>We will keep Gippsland Water employees informed and engaged.</p>	<p>Employees are informed and engaged, with the redevelopment of the intranet the centrepiece of the strategy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and deploy internal communications strategy to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Redevelop the intranet. - Develop a communications plan to help employees understand their role in the 'bigger picture'. - Continue to roll out vision and values and regular updates on strategic direction. - Support Organisational Development to improve employee engagement, particularly around brand and reputation markers in the annual survey. 	<p>30 March 2018</p>	<p>Improved 'aligned employer brand' index in employee engagement survey.</p>



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