



Gippsland
Water

Community report 2019-2020



In 2017, we spoke with our customers about what they expect from us and what they'd like us to focus on over the next five years.

The feedback we received helped shape our 2018 pricing submission to the Essential Services Commission, and eventually our five year plan.

We promised we'd let you know how we're delivering on that plan.

Two years in, we're proud to report to our customers on how we're doing so far.

For more information on our promises, visit
www.gippswater.com.au/our-performance



Do our
job well

We promised to ensure our water quality always meets the Safe Drinking Water Act. We also promised to ensure sewer spills within a house caused by us would be contained within an hour, and planned interruptions would be carried out within the time we said.



100% of the water we supplied met E. Coli standards of the Safe Drinking Water Act.

To meet water quality standards, we complete weekly water testing and independent sample testing.

Of the very few sewer spills within a house recorded, we successfully contained them all within an hour.

Case Study

Catering for future growth



We're investing in our network to make sure we can continue to deliver safe and reliable water and wastewater services to our customers both now and in the future.

Some of the major projects we either finished or made strong progress on in the last year included:

- Completing the final phase of our Moe-Warragul interconnect pipeline, providing the region with greater security of water supply at both ends;
- Building our new Drouin Wastewater Treatment Plant, which will cater to the town's growing population;
- Building the new Sale outfall sewer pump station which will service the Sale, Wurruk and Fulham townships for the next 50 years; and
- Replacing ageing water mains in Warragul's central business district.



Be easy to deal with



We promised we'd be easy to deal with and resolve **88%** of all customer enquiries at the first point of contact.

97% of all enquiries to our call centre were resolved at first point of contact.



During 2019-20, the Energy and Water Ombudsman Victoria received 28 referrals on behalf of our customers, none of which required further action. This is the third year we've been able to resolve all matters and avoid any escalation.



Case Study

Making it easier to connect



We launched our new online services so that customers can do business with us where and when it suits them.

Customers can now view and pay their bills online, manage investment property accounts, and process time extensions for payments.

We also started sending SMS reminders to customers when their bills are due or they had a high water meter read. SMS reminders help our customers to set up payment arrangements earlier if they need to, stop potential water leaks quicker, and to recognise and fix any errors on their account. Customers can sign up for our online services at my.gippswater.com.au.



Be affordable and fair

We promised to be affordable, fair and maintain services to customers who are experiencing hardship.



Prepare and protect

We promised to prepare for future growth and protect the environment.

We are delivering on our promise to keep prices stable.

Our focus on the most vulnerable in our community has helped increase the amount of customers entering into payment plans, and 2,426 customers have entered our hardship program to help manage their bills.

Case Study

Supporting customers in hardship



In April it became clear restrictions relating to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic could mean more of our customers were experiencing hardship.

We reached out to all of our customers in a number of ways to offer assistance, leading to a 41% increase in customer care program registrations and 26% rise in Utility Relief Grant applications from the previous three months.

We also expanded our online services so that customers could request hardship assistance online and offered financial support to tenants who lease our properties.

100% of all biosolids delivered to our organics recycling business were reused in the last 12 months.

Our eight lagoon-based wastewater treatment plants allow us to irrigate treated wastewater. We provide some of this recycled water to a number of local farmers and sporting grounds, supporting local industry and community sporting groups. 100% of the water we recycle is invested back into Gippsland.

Case Study

Planting to reduce our footprint



In winter 2019 we commenced our most important project for reducing our carbon footprint by nearly a quarter by 2025.

With the help of contractors, Gunaikurnai Traditional Owners and Loch Sport Primary School students, we planted 92,000 native plants at our Dutson Downs property. By the end of winter 2020 we will have planted more than 200,000 plants.

These plants will absorb around 70,000 tonnes of carbon over 25 years. This is a unique project within the Victorian water sector and allows us to mitigate the emissions generated from our wastewater treatment activities.



Be involved

We promised to spend at least **\$30,000 per year** on community benefit programs.

We kept our promise by continuing to provide financial and in-kind support for local community projects, partnering with like-minded groups and organisations to have more drinking fountains installed around the region, and supplying drink bottles to schools and community groups.



Case Study

Access to tap water



We partnered with the Latrobe Health Assembly and local businesses to provide Latrobe Valley residents better access to tap water when they're out and about. Community members could fill their drink bottle up for free anywhere they saw a blue 'free drinking water available here' sticker in a participating business's window. More than 100 businesses across Latrobe City signed up and were provided with drink dispensers, offering shoppers an alternative to sugary drinks or bottled water. Our three pop-up events to promote the project were well-attended and we're looking forward to continuing with this project, informed by our goal to promote tap water as the drink of choice.

Case Study

Supporting our community



We helped seven community groups bring water, environment and wellbeing-related projects to life through our Community Support Program this year. We provided funding to Sale Rotary Club, Maffra Secondary College, Rosedale Primary School, and Thorpdale and District Bowling Club for projects such as installing water tanks and irrigation watering systems to help students harvest food and learn about the importance of water. We also provided permanent drinking fountains to be installed at Boolarra Recreation Reserve, Yinnar Recreation Reserve and Kurnai College in Churchill, giving community members more places to rehydrate.

Other achievements



We invested more than **\$51.6M** into capital works projects to strengthen and upgrade our network.



We partnered with local councils and community groups to **donate 17 drinking fountains** for installation at key locations across our service area.



We achieved a **positive shift** towards more constructive behaviours and attitudes in our organisation-wide survey.

Investing in our network

While some scheduling changes have been made, all of our top 10 capital works projects remain on track for completion in the five year pricing period. All changes to timing have been made with a view to achieving better value for money for our customers or enable other more time-critical projects to be brought forward.

Areas for improvement

Almost all of our unplanned outages resulted in water being restored within five hours, however, one event in May took longer due to the complexities of the job being in a high traffic area.

We fell short of our target to have no planned interruptions going over advised times. Five planned interruptions were completed with quality results, but took longer to complete than we expected due to the location of the asset being obstructed or difficult to get

to, or the special techniques, materials and parts required to complete the repair.

In February, we issued a precautionary boil water alert to our customers in Moe and surrounds because their water did not meet safe drinking water standards.

This came after a wet weather event that caused an issue at our Moe Water Treatment Plant. We're strengthening the protections we have in place to prevent this kind of incident from happening again.

We promised, in the event of a boil water alert, that we'd donate \$5,000 to the affected community. We will be reaching out to affected communities for their input on how this \$5,000 might be best spent across the impacted area.

Case Study

Providing more places to fill up



We partnered with local councils to donate 14 drinking fountains for installation across our service area to keep the community hydrated.

Drinking fountains were installed at Ted Summerton Reserve in Moe, the Traralgon Sports Stadium, Bellbird Park's off-leash dog area in Drouin, with fountains set to be installed at Sale mall, Sale Botanic Gardens, Maffra Skate Park and Brooker Park in Warragul later in 2020.

These fountains, along with the three donated through our Community Support Program, are helping us to increase the community's access to tap water. We're already working with councils to install even more drinking fountains in the coming year.

Case Study

Building a constructive culture



We know that with a great culture, we can achieve great things for our community.

That's why we were so pleased to achieve a positive shift towards more constructive behaviours and attitudes in our employee survey, conducted in October.

These positive Organisational Culture Inventory survey results are thanks to clear strategy, strong leadership and improvements across the organisation.



**Gippsland
Water**

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PO BOX 348
55 Hazelwood Road
Traralgon VIC 3844

Account enquiries 1800 050 500
Faults and emergencies 1800 057 057

contactus@gippswater.com.au
www.gippswater.com.au

ABN 75 830 750 413

