



Gippsland
Water

Customer Reference Group

Terms of Reference

May 2023

Purpose

The Gippsland Water Customer Reference Group (CRG) exists to ensure that customer views and expectations are understood and reflected in Gippsland Water's decisions, services, performance review and plans for the future. The CRG helps to ensure that Gippsland Water takes a customer-centric approach to the way it does business and delivers its services for the community, enabling it to become a trusted, local community partner

Role

The role of the Customer Reference Group is to act as a critical friend to the organisation by:

- Reviewing its significant engagement processes for authenticity and completeness, for example for Price Submissions and Urban Water Strategies
- Contributing thoughts and ideas to the design of engagement processes
- Bringing the specialist perspectives of sophisticated stakeholders to the table
- Attending (if available) engagement activities
- Providing input into the organisation's annual performance reporting

Responsibilities

CRG members will:

- Attend CRG meetings (minimum four per year) and actively participate in discussions at meetings, via email and other online channels as needed
- Provide apologies in advance where meeting attendance is not possible
- Be willing to think laterally and creatively in tackling issues, with the interests, concerns and priorities of stakeholder groups they are familiar with in mind
- Sign and abide by the Gippsland Water Code of Conduct, which includes an obligation to treat members of the CRG, Gippsland Water staff and stakeholders with respect and courtesy
- Disclose any relevant interests and take reasonable steps to avoid real and perceived conflicts of interest
- Represent the views of Gippsland Water and other members fairly and accurately
- Protect and preserve the confidentiality of any information provided or discussed at the CRG that is identified explicitly as being commercial-in-confidence or confidential
- Not speak on behalf of Gippsland Water
- With the exception of the Chair, not speak on behalf of the CRG
- Not use inflammatory language or behaviour of any kind

- Contact Gippsland Water staff only through the CRG Chair and/or CRG secretariat
- Supply the organisation with a 150 word biography and permit their name, image, bio and membership of the CRG to be publicised on the Gippsland Water website and elsewhere.

Gippsland Water will:

- Select an appropriate person to chair the CRG, or provide a staff member to act as Chair
- Provide the CRG with sufficient information to permit members to discharge their role
- Provide members with the a chance to influence the course and conduct of the engagement program
- Listen to members' feedback and use the CRG as a mechanism to understand the interests, concerns and priorities of the community
- Act on commitments made to the CRG in a timely manner
- Provide appropriate meeting facilities, either in person or online
- Provide members with pre-reading at least five business days prior to each meeting
- Ensure that minutes of meetings are recorded and made available to members for confirmation
- Ensure that final minutes of meetings are made available to the public on its website
- Provide administrative support to the CRG (see 'Secretariat' for further information)

The CRG chair will:

- Set the agenda for the CRG
- Chair CRG meetings including ensuring matters before the CRG are resolved
- Review and approve minutes
- Speak on behalf of the CRG where necessary including in public, to the organisation or the board of Gippsland Water
- Conduct a review of the effectiveness of the CRG not less than annually
- Have access to the secretariat provided by the organisation to ensure the proper functioning of the CRG

Membership

The Customer Reference Group will comprise six to 12 members, with the aim of incorporating the perspectives of as many customer cohorts as possible.

Members may, for example, understand the interests, concerns and priorities of families; people experiencing financial hardship; people with a disability; small businesses, industrial customers, property developers, plumbers, Traditional Owners, CALD customers or other cohorts.

Members will be selected in order for the group as a whole to have a wide range of professional skills which may include engineering, economics, finance, engagement, advocacy or regulation.

Gippsland Water will recruit and appoint the members of the CRG.

Members will be appointed until September 2026.

Membership will be on a voluntary basis. Reasonable expenses incurred in the execution of obligations in these Terms of Reference will be reimbursed by Gippsland Water. Only external independent members will be reimbursed for reasonable out-of-pocket expenses incurred in carrying out their Customer Reference Group duties.

Gippsland Water may offer to pay members an additional nominal fee for attendance at events over and above the CRG's four ordinary meetings per year.

Membership may be terminated in writing and with immediate effect by Gippsland Water at any time and for any reason including breach of these Terms of Reference, missing three or more consecutive meetings, breaching the Gippsland Water Code of Conduct or any conflict of interest either real or perceived.

Gippsland Water may fill a casual vacancy or appoint new members on an as needs basis with a term completion date aligned with the continuing CRG members.

Meetings

Meetings may be held in person at Gippsland Water's Traralgon office, other sites as agreed or online via Microsoft Teams, Zoom or similar, by agreement with the Chair.

A quorum shall be at least 50% of the total members.

Decisions will be made by consensus. If a consensus cannot be reached then decisions will be made by show of hands. The Chair shall have a casting vote. No Gippsland Water staff member may vote, unless that staff member is acting as Chair.

Authority

The CRG's roles are clearly defined in these Terms of Reference. The CRG is not a decision-making body and has no authority over the operations of Gippsland Water.

Secretariat

Gippsland Water will provide an administrative resource to assist the CRG by:

- Scheduling meetings and notifying CRG members
- Circulating the agenda and supporting documentation to the CRG at least five working days prior to each meeting
- Preparing agendas in conjunction with the CRG Chair

- Inviting presenters to attend meetings when requested by the CRG
- Taking and preparing minutes of the meetings
- Distributing the minutes to all CRG members within five working days
- Ensuring the minutes are checked by the Chairperson/facilitator and presented for acceptance by CRG members as a true and accurate record at the commencement of the following meeting.

Ongoing role of the CRG

At the completion of the duration of these Terms of Reference (September 2026), Gippsland Water may, at its sole discretion, elect to refine the Terms of Reference in order to give the CRG an ongoing role.



Gippsland Water

PO Box 348
55 Hazelwood Road
Traralgon VIC 3844

General enquiries 1800 050 500
Faults and emergencies 1800 057 057

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

ABN 75 830 750 413