

PLANNING
for the **FUTURE**



People's Panel Issues Report

October 2026

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land we work on, the Gunaikurnai people and the Bunurong people, and recognise their strong cultural connection to the land and waterways.

We pay our respect to their Elders, past and present.





Contents

Contents	3
About this report	4
Our issues, your recommendations	6
Issue one: Meter replacement	7
What are digital meters?	7
What do digital meters offer?	7
Why now?	8
Why is this a dilemma for the People's Panel?	8
Options for the panel to consider	8
Implementation by town	10
Does the order of the towns matter?	11
Briagolong digital meter trial	12
Issue two: Service reliability - responding to leaks and bursts	14
Who's responsible for what?	14
Our service standards	15
What's happening now?	16
How we prioritise bursts and leaks	16
Our performance	16
Numbers of bursts and leaks	17
What we've done so far	19
What more could we do to close the gap?	19
Why is this a dilemma for the People's Panel?	20
Options for the panel to consider	21
What are the extra jobs we need?	22

BACKGROUND

About this report

This is a resource for our Planning for the Future People's Panel. It provides information about the two big issues we're asking the panel to consider and provide recommendations on.

The information in this report was developed by subject matter experts across the organisation. It's designed to help you understand each of the dilemmas we're facing, the trade-offs we're weighing up, the potential costs of providing each service and the options that could be possible for us to implement from 2028 to 2033.

If any information in this report is unclear, please let a member of our team know and we will help explain it. Throughout the panel process, you can also request more information for the panel to consider as part of its deliberations.

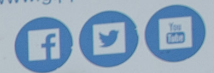
How to read this report

You/your	refers to People's Panel members
We/our	refers to Gippsland Water
Customers	refer to Gippsland Water's customers
QR codes and links	will take you to additional information, including website content



-24 HOUR SERVICE-
1800 057 057

www.gippswater.com.au



Protect
Water

CLEAN P
CLEAR
CHLORIN



87190

805

BACKGROUND

Our issues, your recommendations

We're asking the People's Panel to help us respond to our core challenge:

How can we balance the services our community needs, now and into the future, while keeping bills fair?

We're facing some important choices that will affect the bills our customers pay and the services they receive.

We want you to weigh up what matters most – to you, and to your community.

We want you to work through the trade-offs that shape an affordable bill and reliable services.

AND we want you to collectively decide which options provide maximum value for customers.

We know from engaging with our customers that the two things they value most are that we do our job well and keep our prices affordable and fair.

We believe that doing our job well means:

- replacing our ageing infrastructure with future focused solutions and technology
- maintaining our infrastructure to optimise our network
- using data to understand what is happening now and predict what we could expect in the future
- responding to climate change, saving water and protecting our water supplies
- ensuring our team is the right size to deliver the services our customers want and need
- keeping pace with the water industry

We're also conscious that the cost of living is having a real impact on our customers, and we want to keep our bills as stable as we can.

We want you to help us work out what the right balance is between cost and service for two key issues:

- Meter replacement
- Responding to leaks and bursts

ISSUE ONE

Meter replacement

Globally, nationally and across the state of Victoria, change has been sweeping the water sector. Over the past decade, there has been a significant shift towards innovation that uses data and digital intelligence to optimise systems and get the best results for customers.

One of the main ways digital transformation is happening in the water sector is through digital meters.

What are digital meters?

Like mechanical water meters, digital meters measure the water you use. They use sound to measure flow volumes and send the information back to us using radio frequency.

As our existing mechanical meters reach the end of their life, we have an opportunity to transition to digital meters.

The meters we plan to implement are what we call 'fully integrated meters'. They can be fitted with specialised sensors which help us detect leaks throughout our system of water pipes.

What do digital meters offer?

Digital meters with leak detection offer many benefits:

Data-driven planning and service delivery

Digital meters are more accurate at measuring customer water use over time. They also provide data that helps us:

- detect water leaks in our system
- monitor and manage the health of our whole network
- improve our operational efficiency based on evidence
- better plan the way we maintain and upgrade our infrastructure
- use AI to enhance our business operations.

Save water

Having access to near real-time data will help us let customers know as soon as a leak is detected so it can be addressed quickly.

When we're not losing water through leaks, we can reduce the amount of water we collect from the environment.

Save customers money

By notifying customers when they have a leak, it can help avoid bill shock and avoid unnecessary costs associated with leaks.

Save on operating costs

We only treat the water our customers need, reducing our operating costs.



Better environmental outcomes

Treating water to safe standards is an energy intensive process. The less water we need to collect, treat and pump to our customers, the less energy we need to use.

Better water supply security

Water is always precious, but never more than in dry times. It's not a matter of if we'll face another drought, but when. By reducing water loss, the water we have will go further. This could mean less restrictions for customers or less need to secure additional water sources.

Faster fixes in the network

Digital meters can help us find small leaks before they become large, expensive, unexpected bursts in our pipes. This helps us plan our work, rather than needing to complete costly reactive repairs.

Better customer experience

Letting customers know when they have a leak means they can take action to find and fix the problem, avoiding unnecessary costs associated with leaks.

Fixing network leaks while they are small and manageable also means less customer disruption, because the work can be planned and easily completed.

Keeping pace with the water industry

There has been a significant move toward digital meters across the sector in Australia. Seven of 15 urban water corporations in Victoria are currently rolling out a digital meter program, with many of the remaining corporations completing trials.

Meter replacement options

Why now?

We're facing increasing pressure to make every drop count, manage ageing infrastructure and continue delivering reliable services at an affordable cost.

Our mechanical meters are ageing and will need replacement over the coming years. Now is the ideal time to start the transition, so we're not delaying our adoption of new technology by 15-20 years (the lifespan of a mechanical meter) or investing in mechanical meters only to replace them sooner than needed.

Implementing digital meters will help us meet regulator expectations for leak detection.

Making the change now allows us to keep pace with our industry and the customer experience that is provided by other water corporations. It also means that we can collaborate across the sector and share real-time learnings.

Importantly, digital meters also give us access to quality and near-real time data on our assets. This will help us manage our overall systems much more efficiently, better plan our maintenance and the ability to leverage technology opportunities in the future.

Why is this a dilemma for the People's Panel?

There is a sector-wide shift toward digital meters, but they do come at a cost.

Digital meters cost more than mechanical meters to purchase, and more to manage to achieve maximum benefit for customers.

Our role is to make the most practical, sound, sustainable investments in assets for our customers – not the cheapest.

We'll be providing options for the panel to consider, exploring the trade-offs between the service we provide and the cost for customers.

We want to work with our customers to understand how quickly we should implement our digital meter transformation program, so we can balance service delivery and keeping bills fair.

Questions for the panel to consider:

What is most important for you in weighing up how we implement digital meters?

How fast should we implement digital meters, considering cost effectiveness and equity of access?

Should the increase to bills be applied in the first year or spread across ten years?

Options for the panel to consider:

We've modelled four different scenarios for the People's Panel to consider, to help demonstrate the different impacts of speeding up or slowing down the roll-out of digital meters on customer experience and bills.

We can add the bill increase in full upfront which would recover more costs earlier. This option is shown as "one-off bill increase in 2028/29" in the options table.

Or, we could spread the bill increase across ten years. This option is shown as "Yearly bill increase from 2028/29 – 2033/38" in the options table.

All the options we've modelled would be delivered over more than five years (more than one Price Submission period). We want to show what the costs and service changes could look like over this whole time, not just the first five years covered by our Price Submission 2028.

These numbers are based on our best estimates, with everything that we know and can plan for right now.

Meter replacement options continued

Options to consider	Description	Rate of coverage	Resource increase	Yearly bill increase for owner/occupier	Yearly bill increase for tenant	Yearly bill increase for landlord	One-off bill increase for owner/occupier	One-off bill increase for tenant	One-off bill increase for landlord
10 Year Rollout	Prioritises smaller systems with high cost of water and water loss. Scales organisational capabilities with rollout. Allows time to validate technology and improve processes before targeting our large, complex systems.	8.32% of customers will have digital meters by 2033	2028-33: 5 jobs created	2028-33: \$0.25	2028-33: \$0.07	2028-33: \$0.18	2028-33: \$0.71	2028-33: \$0.19	2028-33: \$0.52
		100% of customers will have digital meters by 2038	2033-38: 2 additional jobs created	2033-38: \$3.23	2033-38: \$0.88	2033-38: \$2.35	2033-38: \$10.15	2033-38: \$2.77	2033-38: \$7.39
8 Year Rollout	Increased pace provides benefits earlier than the ten-year roll-out plan. Going faster requires additional resourcing and slightly increases risk.	43.37% of customers will have digital meters by 2033	2028-33: 8 jobs created + new truck	2028-33: \$1.54	2028-33: \$0.42	2028-33: \$1.12	2028-33: \$4.40	2028-33: \$1.20	2028-33: \$3.20
		100% of customers will have digital meters by 2036		2033-38: \$3.59	2033-38: \$0.98	2033-38: \$2.61	2033-38: \$14.00	2033-38: \$3.82	2033-38: \$10.18
8 Year Rollout (Warragul Drouin)	Prioritises the network that requires us to purchase water from Melbourne system. Going faster requires additional resourcing and slightly increases risk.	23.65% of customers will have digital meters by 2033	2028-33: 7 jobs created + new truck	2028-33: \$1.05	2028-33: \$0.29	2028-33: \$0.76	2028-33: \$3.00	2028-33: \$0.82	2028-33: \$2.18
		100% of customers will have digital meters by 2036	2033-38: 1 additional job created	2033-38: \$3.91	2033-38: \$1.06	2033-38: \$2.85	2033-38: \$13.88	2033-38: \$3.78	2033-38: \$10.09
6 Year Rollout	Fastest meter installation rate with earliest potential benefit realisation. Additional staffing and resource requirements. Challenge to realise benefits at scale and implement learnings due to speed of roll-out.	65.29% of customers will have digital meters by 2033	2028-33: 8 jobs created + new truck	2028-33: \$2.30	2028-33: \$0.63	2028-33: \$1.67	2028-33: \$6.55	2028-33: \$1.79	2028-33: \$4.76
		100% of customers will have digital meters by 2034		2033-38: \$2.81	2033-38: \$0.77	2033-38: \$2.04	2033-38: \$13.32	2033-38: \$3.63	2033-38: \$9.69

Meter replacement options continued

Implementation by town

10 Year Rollout	8 Year Rollout	8 Year Rollout: Warragul Network Prioritisation	6 Year Rollout
2028-2032	2028-2032	2028-2032	2028-2032
Seaspray Erica-Rawson Willow Grove Neerim South Mirboo North Noojee Heyfield-Coongulla Tyers Glengarry Cowwarr Rosedale Toongabbie Glenmaggie	Seaspray Erica-Rawson Willow Grove Moe Darnum Newborough Thorpdale Trafalgar Westbury Yarragon Neerim South Noojee Warragul Buln Buln Drouin Rokeby Nilma	Warragul Buln Buln Rokeby Nilma Drouin	Seaspray Erica-Rawson Willow Grove Tyers Glengarry Cowwarr Rosedale Toongabbie Moe Newborough Darnum Thorpdale Trafalgar Westbury Yarragon Neerim South Noojee Mirboo North Heyfield Coongulla Glenmaggie Warragul Buln Buln Drouin Rokeby Nilma Maffra Stratford Boisdale Sale Wurruk
2033-2037	2033-2037	2033-2037	2033-2037
Rollout finished in 2038.	Rollout finished in 2036.	Rollout finished in 2036.	Rollout finished in 2034.
Moe Darnum Newborough Thorpdale Trafalgar Westbury Yarragon Maffra Stratford Boisdale Sale Wurruk Morwell Boolarra Churchill	Hazelwood North Traralgon South Yinnar Yallourn North Jeeralang/Jumbuk Traralgon Warragul Buln Buln Drouin Rokeby Nilma Briagolong Traralgon Heyfield South Yinnar Yallourn North Jeeralang/Jumbuk Tyers Glengarry Cowwarr Rosedale Toongabbie Morwell Boolarra Churchill Hazelwood	Moe Darnum Newborough Thorpdale Trafalgar Westbury Yarragon Morwell Boolarra Churchill Hazelwood North Traralgon South Yinnar Yallourn North Jeeralang/Jumbuk Sale Wurruk Heyfield-Coongulla Glenmaggie Briagolong Traralgon Maffra Stratford Boisdale Seaspray Erica-Rawson Willow Grove Tyers Glengarry Cowwarr Rosedale Toongabbie Neerim South Noojee Mirboo North	Traralgon Briagolong Morwell Boolarra Churchill Hazelwood North Traralgon South Yinnar Yallourn North Jeeralang/Jumbuk

Meter replacement order of towns

Does the order of the towns matter?

We've grouped the towns in particular combinations for roll-out to achieve maximum value for our customers. We've considered factors like:

Water network

Towns are grouped with the network they belong to. For example, Darnum, Newborough, Thorpdale, Trafalgar, Westbury and Yarragon are all on the Moe system. Applying the roll out to a network in order helps us better observe performance across the whole system. This improves our ability to address leaks, vary the amount of water we treat, and understand how well our assets are functioning.

Cost of water

It costs more to treat water in some systems than others. This could be for a variety of reasons. For example:

- The water treatment technology varies between different water treatment plants
- Some water needs more treatment to meet our standards
- Some water systems require more pumps to move water through the network

We charge the same price for water for all residential customers, though the cost to treat and deliver water in different locations varies. Reducing water loss in systems with higher water production costs will help us make our operations more efficient and cost effective.

Some of our systems have higher levels of 'non-revenue' water. This is water that we've treated and sent out into the network, but it has been lost through a leak before it has reached a customer. This means losing a precious



resource, as well as lost revenue, which adds to our costs and customer bills.

Some of our systems source a small portion of their water from a Melbourne-based network. This includes desalinated water, which is a more expensive water source. As communities grow, we expect our need to draw from this source to increase over time. The eight-year rollout that prioritises Warragul and Drouin and interconnected systems is designed to reduce the need for additional water from this source.

Our capacity to roll out digital meters

If we go too quickly with the roll-out, we might not be able to keep up with the demands the new technology creates. We need to ensure we have the resources available to build the processes and systems we need, identify leaks, fix leaks in the network, notify customers about property leaks and use our data to get maximum value from our systems.

Customer service

The slower we go with the roll-out, the more time it will take to provide equitable service to our customers. All customers will be required to pay the same costs from 2028 but will not have the same access to the digital meter technology until it is rolled out in their town.

Meter replacement trial

Briagolong digital meter trial

We committed to trialling digital meters in our 2023-28 capital investment plan, following customer engagement for Price Submission 2023-28.

We decided to implement the trial in one of our small water systems in Briagolong, based on learnings from the Australian water sector.

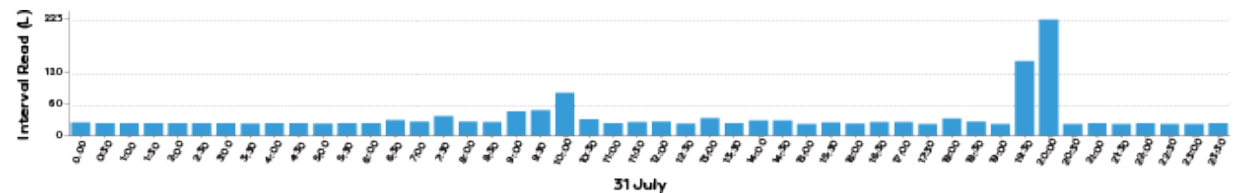
Why did we choose Briagolong?

We ran the trial in Briagolong because:

- It's a closed system with 346 connections, making it a manageable number.
- There is a relatively high cost to treat water in the Briagolong system.
- The rocky soil in Briagolong makes it harder to find leaks.
- Historically there has been lower water security in Briagolong. It was on water restrictions for a short period in 2019-20.
- 20% of the water we treated in Briagolong in 2023/24 was lost through leaks in the network.

Case study: customer leak

A customer leak was found in Briagolong:



You can see that water is being used all the time, even in the middle of the night. This is a sure sign of a leak. With this profile it is likely the leak has been around for a long period of time.



The customer fixed their leaky tap. Now, you can see that water is only being used at regular times in the day.

This resulted in a \$391 reduction in the customer's bill - equating to \$1,173 in annual savings for the customer, and saving 50 litres of water per hour.

What is the difference between a system leak and a customer leak?

A system leak is within the Gippsland Water network of pipes, or what we sometimes call 'before the meter'. This could be in any location from when we treat the water through to the street you live on.

A customer leak is within the pipes on the property you live in, or 'after the meter'.

Meter replacement trial continued

What have we discovered?

So far, the trial has shown the potential benefits of digital meters, detecting leaks in around 15% of properties on the system.

Our early analysis shows that the leaks we found could add up to 28ML per year if they weren't fixed. That's around 11 Olympic swimming pools, for just one tiny town!

It has also helped us understand the challenges of implementing digital meters, and the organisational effort that would be required to achieve maximum benefit.

Impacts of potential leakage:

Average Daily Leakage (kL)	77.86
Average Yearly Leakage (ML)	28
Customer Cost of Undetected Leaks per year	\$69,984
Gippsland Water Cost of Producing Water (per year) at Briagolong water treatment plant	\$72,850



ISSUE TWO

Service reliability - responding to leaks and bursts

We manage extensive water and wastewater networks that supply clean drinking water to your taps and remove wastewater from your homes and businesses.

The water network is made up of underground pipes that run from our water treatment plants, water storages, and water pump stations to your meter and taps.

The wastewater network is made up of underground pipes that take sewage from your home to our wastewater treatment plants for treatment.

Our services are essential

Maintaining this network is critical for delivering services to our customers.

It's critical that we maintain this network by fixing leaks and bursts.

We respond to call outs from customers about burst water mains, service leaks, blocked sewers and other faults 24/7.

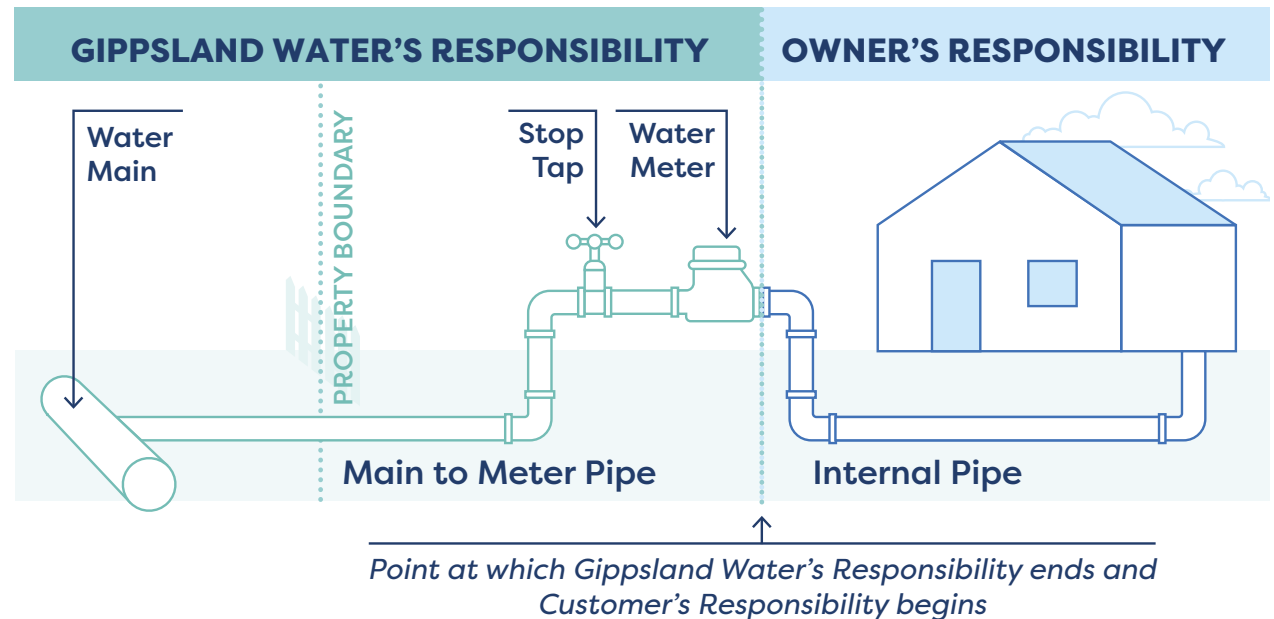


MORE THAN
2,300km
of water mains,
50 TREATED
WATER STORAGES
and **45** pump
stations



MORE THAN
1,900km
of sewer mains,
and **200**
sewer pump
stations

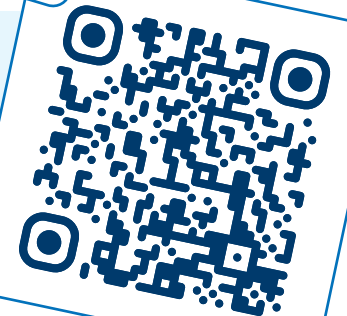
Who's responsible for what?



What happens when you report a leak?

Watch our short video to see how we handle and manage call outs from customers for leaks and bursts.

>> Link launches external website (YouTube)



Service reliability continued

Our service standards

We have standards we need to meet when we deliver our water and wastewater services.

Our service standards are an important way for us to track how we're performing against the commitments we've made to our customers about the experience they can expect from us.

Our service standards are set in line with the Water Industry Standards set by the Essential Services Commission (ESC). They form part of our Customer Charter, and we report back to the ESC on how we're tracking against them each year.

In our last Price Submission, we completed a detailed review of our service standards. This time, we're focusing on where we're falling short - our target for Priority 3 water leaks and bursts and what we can do to improve our performance.

Water service standards	Targets
Maximum number of unplanned water supply interruptions a customer may experience in any 12-month period	5
Average time taken to attend bursts and leaks (Priority 1)	35 mins
Average time taken to attend bursts and leaks (Priority 2)	90 mins
Average time taken to attend bursts and leaks (Priority 3)	1500 mins
Average duration of unplanned water supply interruptions	90 mins
Average duration of planned water supply interruptions	150 mins
Minimum water pressure or flow rate a customer should receive (kPa or L/min)	137.3 kPa (14m)
Sewerage service standards	Targets
Average time taken to attend sewer spills and blockages	40 mins
Average time to rectify a sewer blockage	80 mins* (95 mins service standard)
Maximum time taken to contain a sewer spill	300 mins
Maximum number of sewer blockages a customer may experience in any 12-month period	3

* In 2023, we changed our target from 95 to 80 minutes as we'd been outperforming the service standard. This change was made in recognition of the fact that rectifying a sewer blockage is an important part of doing our job well.

Service reliability continued

What's happening now?

It's getting harder to meet our service standards for responding to water leaks and bursts.

Reportable bursts and leaks increased by 46% from 2023/24 to 2024/25, and in 2025/26 remained 47% higher than 2023/24 levels.

While we're meeting our target for high-priority bursts and leaks, we're falling short in meeting our target for responding to Priority 3 jobs.

Our changing climate

A big reason for the increase is our changing climate. Victoria's climate is highly variable, but in recent decades, we've experienced a warming and drying trend.

This means:

- higher temperatures
- more frequent hot days
- reductions in rainfall during the cooler months
- increases in extreme, short-duration rainfall events

These drier conditions lead to drier soil. As the soil dries out, the ground contracts away from our buried pipes, leaving them unsupported. Movement in the pipes can cause leaks and bursts, contributing to more call outs and putting pressure on our networks and team.

With a warmer future and projections of declining water availability, we can expect more frequent and severe droughts in coming decades, as well as increases in extreme rainfall events.

Based on this forecast, along with our data and reporting, we expect these numbers to continue increasing.

How we prioritise bursts and leaks

Customers know that water supply interruptions can happen from time to time, but they also expect us to respond and restore them quickly.

A big part of doing our job well is making sure we prioritise our work to get the most value for our customers, as well as doing our best to protect property and the environment.

When calls come in, we assign them a priority level of 1, 2, or 3. We also categorise them by 'reportable' and 'non-reportable' work.

Priority levels

The ESC has definitions for each priority level. The levels are based on the actual or potential harm they could cause:

1 Priority 1	Burst or leak which causes, or could cause, substantial damage or harm to customer, water quality, flow, property or environment. For example, a water main break is caused by a complete rupture of an underground pipe, causing sudden, massive water gushing and immediate pressure loss.
2 Priority 2	Burst or leak which causes, or could cause, damage or harm to customer, water quality, flow, property or environment. For example, a moderate water main leak that bubbles to the nature strip, without flooding roads or buildings.
3 Priority 3	Burst or leak which causes, or could cause, no discernible damage or harm to customer, water quality, flow, property or environment. For example, a water main leak caused by a small crack, hole, or loose joint that seeps water slowly over time.

Leaks and bursts are also categorised by whether or not they're reportable to the ESC.

Reportable to the ESC

Reportable bursts and leaks are unplanned faults where water is lost from our water mains, through a damaged pipe, hydrant, valve, fitting or joint.

Non reportable to the ESC

Non-reportable bursts and leaks include leaks on water service pipes, which connect the water main to the customer's meter and any call outs that do not need further action.

Our performance

We aim to respond to high-priority bursts and leaks in 35 minutes and lower priority bursts and leaks within 1,500 minutes (1 day and 1 hour).

During 2025/26, we met our service standard for high-priority call outs 79% of the time, with an average response time of 24 minutes.

For lower Priority 3 bursts and leaks, we met our target 63% of the time, with an average response time of 2,285 minutes (1 day and 14 hours).

The delays occur because we have competing demands for our team and resources. We focus on addressing the high-priority jobs as quickly as possible because they carry more risk.

However, Priority 3 incidents are still important and we want to ensure we're delivering on all our service standards.

We want to address Priority 3 jobs before they become Priority 1 jobs.

Service reliability performance

Reportable	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Number of Priority 1 leaks and bursts	59	72	73	105	146	123
Number of Priority 2 leaks and bursts	12	8	1	0	0	0
Number of Priority 3 leaks and bursts	361	329	293	272	405	430
Total reportable	432	409	367	377	551	553
Percentage increase/decrease of total reportable leaks and bursts		-5.3%	-10.3%	2.7%	46%	0.4%
Non reportable	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Service leaks and non reportable water asset faults	2093	1949	2161	2033	2217	1929
No fault found	726	755	827	882	1013	812
Total non reportable	2819	2704	2988	2915	3230	2741
All leaks and bursts	3251	3113	3355	3292	3781	3294

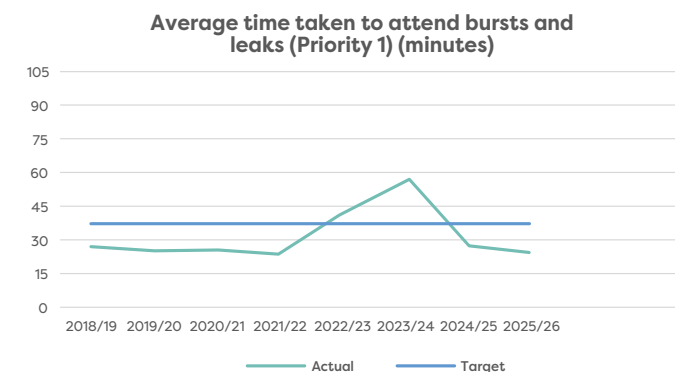
What does a Priority 3 leak look like?

- A small seep from a water main joint that creates a damp patch on a nature strip.
- A pinhole leak in a water main where water slowly surfaces through grass without pooling.
- A small leak from a hydrant, valve, or fitting that is not affecting supply, pressure, or water quality.
- A slow leak that drains into a stormwater pit without causing flooding, erosion, or environmental harm.
- Small pooling in an untrafficked area that poses no safety risk and is not increasing in size.
- A leak identified during routine inspection that has no visible impact on customers, property, water quality, or the environment.

Service reliability performance continued

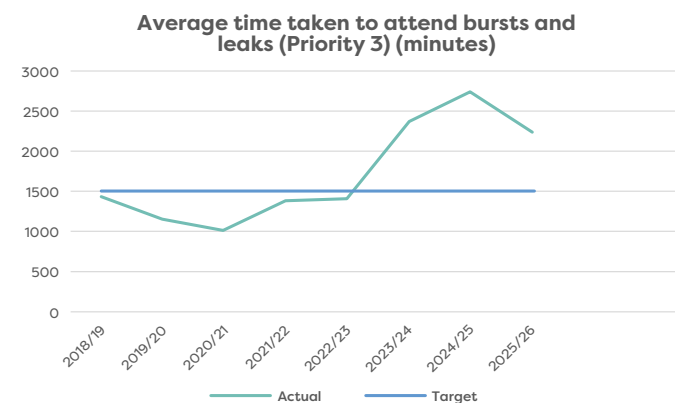
1 Priority 1

Service Standard		2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Average time taken to attend bursts and leaks (Priority 1) (minutes)	Target	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35
	Actual	29	26	28	24	38	52	28	24



3 Priority 3

Service Standard		2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Average time taken to attend bursts and leaks (Priority 3) (minutes)	Target	1500	1500	1500	1500	1500	1500	1500	1500
	Actual	1430	1143	1011	1382	1407	2360	2739	2285



For the past three years, we've had no Priority 2 leaks and bursts. That's why we haven't included a table and chart. Priority 2 leaks and bursts aren't common, and nearly all leaks and bursts fall into Priority 1 or Priority 3.

Service reliability closing the gap

What we've done so far

As we're experiencing significantly more bursts and leaks overall, prioritising high priority jobs has led to increased response times for lower priority jobs. We recognised that we needed to build more resources into our team to start addressing the shortfall.

In our Price Submission 2023-28, we added a trainee Multiskilled Operator and trainee Stores and Warehousing roles to help respond to the increasing workload. In 2025, we added a further two Multiskilled Operators to our team.

Even with these additional team members, we're still falling short of meeting our target for responding to lower Priority 3 jobs.

We could get closer to our target by staff working overtime. However, this is not a sustainable solution long-term and would result in fatigue and burnout for our team – as well as high cost.

What more could we do to close the gap?

Adding more team members will help us meet our target of responding to Priority 3 jobs within 1,500 minutes.

For customers, investing in more team members could look like:

- Faster response times
- Water back on quicker when there's an outage
- Less customers have their water off when there is an outage
- Less chance of dirty water after a main break

We'd achieve this by having more team members available to share the load, allowing us to get to more jobs quickly and manage fatigue during prolonged incidents.



Adding further members to our team will also increase our capacity for preventative maintenance, such as valve maintenance and water main cleaning. While this wouldn't necessarily result in less bursts, it could provide a better customer experience – especially during outages.

More valve maintenance and water main cleaning could mean we get water back on quicker when there's an outage, and less customers needing their water turning off for us to fix a leak or burst.

Valve maintenance

Valve maintenance involves inspecting, cleaning, testing and repairing valves across the water supply network. Reliable valves allow sections of the network to be isolated safely and accurately during works, meaning less customers need to have their water turned off.

Identifying faulty valves before they break allows works to occur as planned maintenance, which is generally cheaper than emergency repairs. Completing works under controlled conditions is also easier and safer for our team than implementing a fix during an emergency situation.

We have approximately 20,000 valves across our water network. Right now, we perform maintenance on approximately 1,000 valves each year.

Water main cleaning

We use a preventative maintenance technique called 'air scouring' to clean water mains. Air scouring uses air and water to remove natural sediment that builds up inside water mains. We target areas where we've received water quality complaints.

Regular mains cleaning helps maintain high drinking water quality and increases customer satisfaction.

Service reliability options

After a water main break, the sediment build up can break off. We flush this water out of the system. More regular mains cleaning would mean cleaner pipes and less need for prolonged flushing after bursts or breaks. This is a better outcome for our environment, as less water needs to be used to flush the pipe.

Our water network is made up of approximately 2,300 kilometres of mains. We clean about 30 km of mains each year.

Why is this a dilemma for the People's Panel?

We expect the drying climate to continue and water leaks and bursts to stay at the higher numbers we've experienced over the past three years.

This means we need to invest more in our team to meet the service standards we've committed to deliver for our customers. But adding more staff does come at a cost.

We want to work with our customers to understand how much more we should invest to meet our targets and deliver preventative maintenance, so we can balance service delivery and keeping bills fair.

Questions for the panel to consider:

To what extent should we increase expenditure to respond faster to lower Priority 3 water leaks and bursts?

To what extent, if any, should we increase expenditure to do more proactive maintenance to reduce the impact of water leaks and bursts on customers?

Should the increase to bills be applied in the first year or spread across the five years?

Options for the panel to consider:

We've modelled three different scenarios for the People's Panel to consider, to help demonstrate the different impacts of investing more in responding to the increase in breaks will have on customer experience and bills.

We can add the bill increase in full upfront which would recover more costs earlier. This option is shown as "one-off bill increase in 2028/29" in the options table.

Or, we could spread the bill increase across five years. This option is shown as "Yearly bill increase from 2028/29 - 2032/33" in the options table.

All three models account for leaks and bursts continuing at the numbers we experienced over the past three years due to the changing climate.



Service reliability options continued

Options to consider	Description	Community benefit	Resource increase	Yearly bill increase from 2028/29 – 2032-33 for owner/occupier	Yearly bill increase from 2028/29 – 2032-33 for tenant	Yearly bill increase from 2028/29 – 2032-33 for landlord	One-off bill increase in 2028/29 owner/occupier	One-off bill increase in 2028/29 for tenant	One-off bill increase in 2028/29 for landlord
Meet target	Meet our existing target to respond to Priority 3 leaks within 1,500 minutes	We'll meet the service standard commitment we've made to our customers	5 jobs created - 4 Multiskilled Operators 1 Coordinator	\$2.90	\$0.79	\$2.11	\$8.26	\$2.25	\$6.01
Meet target + preventative maintenance	Meet our existing target + Increase valve maintenance	We'll meet our commitment + Undertake maintenance on 1300 more valves	7 jobs created - 6 Multiskilled Operators 1 Coordinator	\$3.71	\$1.01	\$2.70	\$10.59	\$2.89	\$7.70
Meet target + enhanced preventative maintenance	Meet our existing target + additional valve maintenance activities + additional air scouring	We'll meet our commitment + Undertake maintenance on 1050 more valves + Complete an additional 45km of water main cleaning	9 jobs created - 8 Multiskilled Operators 1 Coordinator	\$4.53	\$1.23	\$3.30	\$12.91	\$3.52	\$9.39

Service reliability jobs needed

What are the extra jobs we need?

Multi Skilled Operator

Our Multiskilled Operators play a crucial role in ensuring our customers have safe and reliable drinking water and that sewage is taken from homes and business for safe recycling or discharge to the environment.

They're responsible for fixing leaking water and sewer mains, fixing leaking water service pipes and carrying out general maintenance on our water and sewer pipes to ensure these services are reliable.

To do this, they operate, maintain and inspect our water and wastewater assets, which includes pipes, pump stations, valves, maintenance holes, pressure control stations, and storage tanks/basins.

We'll need more Multiskilled Operators to meet our target and carry out the additional preventative maintenance outlined in the three options.

Coordinator Field Services

Our Coordinators in Field Services look after a team of Multiskilled Operators.

They lead the day-to-day activities and are responsible for the operation and maintenance activities on our water and sewer assets and make sure this is done safely and environmentally responsibly.

With the growing team of Multiskilled Operators needed to meet our target and carry out additional preventative maintenance, we'll need one more Coordinator Field Services to manage their day-to-day activities and ensure we're focusing effort in the right areas.







**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