mosaicLAB

GIPPSLAND WATER SOUNDING BOARD

Customer Outcomes

Summary report

July 2026

About this session

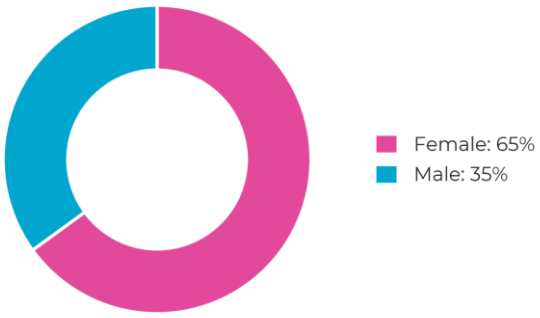
Every five years, Gippsland Water submits a plan to the Essential Services Commission, Victoria's independent regulator of water services, setting out the prices it will charge and the outcomes it will deliver. As part of preparing its 2028 Price Submission, Gippsland Water is engaging with its Sounding Board, a group of customers who have signed up to engage with Gippsland Water in more depth.

This Sounding Board session, held online on 29 July 2026, introduced Gippsland Water's six customer outcomes (do your job well, be affordable and fair, be environmentally responsible, plan for the future, be easy to deal with and be involved) gathered customer input on what matters most about each outcome and explored what success would look like. This report is a summary of the session; for the full record of the discussion, please refer to the *Gippsland Water Customer Sounding Board – Customer Outcomes – What was said report*.

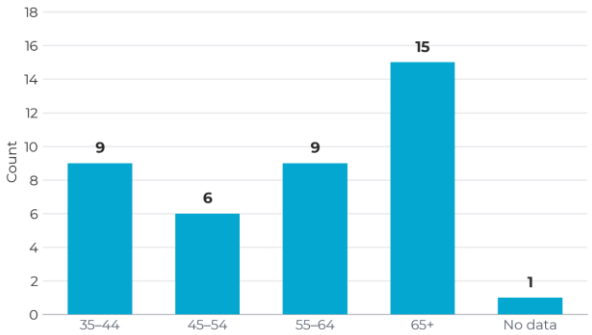
Who took part

40 Gippsland Water customers from across the region took part. Half were from Latrobe City, with Baw Baw and Wellington evenly represented. Sixty-five per cent identified as female and 35 per cent as male, and the largest age group was 65 and over. Financial circumstances ranged from living comfortably to not having enough to meet basic expenses, and three-quarters lived in large towns.

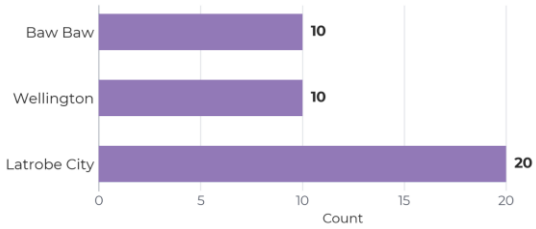
Gender



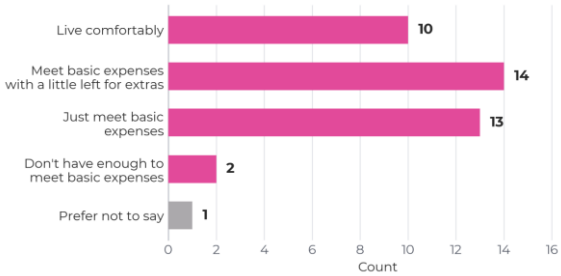
Age range



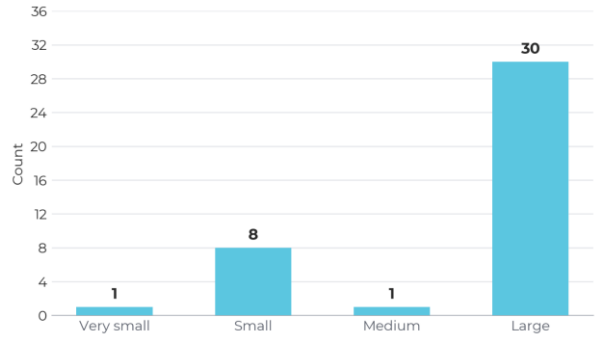
Region



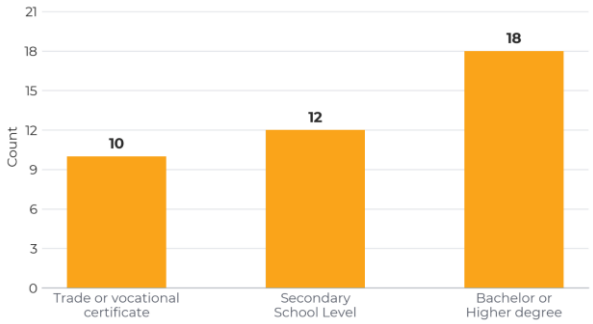
Financial situation



Town size



Education level



Key themes across the session

Communication and **transparency** ran through almost every outcome discussed, from wanting a breakdown of bill costs to an explanation of how Gippsland Water's debt arose and is being managed. **Affordability** was a constant undercurrent, particularly for people on limited incomes, and **education**, especially for children in schools, came up repeatedly as something participants valued and wanted extended. **Planning for the future** centred on population growth, climate change and the water needs of data centres and artificial intelligence. A number of participants wanted a genuine, ongoing say and wanted to know how their input will be used.

What we heard

Hopes for the session

Hopes clustered on how Gippsland Water will plan for the future - population growth, climate change, data centres and the water needs of artificial intelligence - while keeping bills affordable and stable. Several wanted to learn more about how water is treated from source to tap, and a smaller group wanted a genuine say in decisions and the chance to contribute practical ideas.

Questions about the customer outcomes

After hearing an introduction to Gippsland Water's six customer outcomes, participants raised a mix of clarifying questions rather than settled opinions. Several focused on the future: how Gippsland Water is planning for growing demand, including from artificial intelligence and data centres, and what this means for prices out to 2050 and beyond. Others asked about fairness and affordability, including how Gippsland Water's prices compare with the rest of the state and how large, long-standing customers with legacy water arrangements are treated. A few asked about Gippsland Water's debt and whether it has improved, and one participant asked how the current set of outcomes would rate against an ideal.

What matters most, by outcome

Do your job well (8 comments): Participants see this as a baseline expectation - safe water at a reasonable price, with quick, well-communicated fixes. One participant questioned whether it needs to be a stated outcome at all. Other comments were about balancing quality, education and environmental care without pushing up costs, reducing Gippsland Water's debt, and water quality being inconsistent at times.

Be affordable and fair (9 comments): Affordability is seen as essential, particularly for people on limited incomes or facing cost-of-living pressures. Individual comments questioned the fairness of static charges for low-use properties, noted there is no alternative provider to compare prices with, and queried paying water rates on a property not connected to water.

Be environmentally responsible (8 comments): Concerns centre on water quality impacts from logging and from farm and industrial run-off, and on how wastewater is managed and reused. One comment questioned how environmental responsibility will be measured, and noted that events such as bushfires and floods affect water quality.

Plan for the future (7 comments): Education is a recurring theme - about water conservation for future generations - alongside water quality concerns linked to population growth. Individual comments called for new industries to be mandated to capture their own rainwater, and for smart meters to monitor usage and flag leaks quickly.

Be easy to deal with (6 comments): Prompt, easy communication is seen as central, along with compassionate support for customers in financial hardship. Other comments sought flood alerts before flooding occurs and clarity on how many staff are available to take calls from customers.

Be involved (7 comments): Education is the strongest theme - where water comes from, what planning happens behind the scenes, and how to save water - with clear interest in open days and site visits. Comments also noted that younger homeowners may need more education, while older residents have lived through severe restrictions.

What does success look like, by outcome

Do your job well (19 comments): Success is framed as reliability and transparency; - a service so smooth that customers barely notice it, quick answers, no false promises, and publicised measures such as response times and first-contact resolution rates. Comments also sought an explanation of how Gippsland Water's debt arose and is being managed, and raised water taste and chemical treatment.

Be affordable and fair (17 comments): Success is framed around transparency and comparison - understanding what it costs Gippsland Water to deliver water, seeing that breakdown published, and being able to benchmark bills against other water corporations. Support for customers in hardship features strongly, including holding prices during payment plans and more government help with bills.

Be environmentally responsible (14 comments): Success is tied to transparency about treatment and quality - what goes into the water, what affects its taste, and being told about changes - alongside visible action such as signage on wastewater recycling and tree replacement when new infrastructure goes in. Specific concerns include PFAS and microplastics, rubbish entering waterways, and native vegetation clearing leading to silt build-up.

Plan for the future (15 comments): Success includes explaining how data centres will be accommodated in Gippsland in relation to water, and building resilience to population growth and drought. Comments called for early monitoring and planned upgrades, such as replacing worn pipes before they fail, along with recycled water for gardens and compulsory rainwater tanks on new builds.

Be easy to deal with (10 comments): Success is described as publishing measurable performance - issues resolved and time taken - and keeping call centres based in Australia. Comments also sought a dedicated water-quality hotline, advance alerts before major events such as floods, and greater openness and patience with customers in hardship.

Be involved (18 comments): Participants most wanted organised excursions to water treatment plants for the public and school children. Others looked for everyday signs that education is working - fewer people buying bottled water, more public drinking fountains, a presence in schools - and for more transparency on Gippsland Water's financial position and strategy.

Reflections

What participants liked centred on the format: small-group discussion, varied perspectives from across the region, the chance for everyone to speak, and direct access to Gippsland Water's board and leadership. Wishes focused on time and depth - more time in small groups, more in-depth discussion with staff, and pre-reading - alongside some technical frustrations. The dominant wonder, raised by around half of respondents in this category, was how tonight's input will actually be used and whether it will lead to real change.

Next steps

Gippsland Water will work this session's input into potential changes to the customer outcomes. The Customer Reference Group review the potential changes to the

customer outcomes and how Gippsland Water will measure its performance against them before they are included in its Price Submission. The findings will also be reported to the Peoples Panel, a separate deliberative group working through other topics, so Panel members understand the decisions and the customer views behind them. Gippsland Water will report back to participants on how their input was used.

PLEASE NOTE:
This report has been prepared by MosaicLab on behalf of and for the exclusive use of Gippsland Water. The sole purpose of this report is to provide Gippsland Water with materials produced at the Customer Outcomes Workshop on 29 July 2026.

This report has been prepared in accordance with the scope of services set out by Gippsland Water. In preparing this report, MosaicLab has relied upon the information provided by the participants at the session.

A customised AI tool has also been used to help MosaicLab theme and summarise participant feedback and comments.

Gippsland Water can choose to share and distribute this report as they see fit. MosaicLab accepts no liability or responsibility whatsoever for or in respect of any use of or reliance upon this report by any third party.

MosaicLab is a Victorian-based consultancy that specialises in community and stakeholder engagement, facilitation, negotiation, strategic planning and coaching.

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