

GWW's 2024 price submission: Engagement summary report:

December 2023

This engagement summary report relates to the engagement undertaken for our 2024 price submission, outlining what we asked, what we heard, and how we have responded to customers' and communities' feedback.

To read more about the price submission, visit www.com.au/pricesubmission.

Acknowledgement of Country

The Greater Western Water region covers Bunurong, Wurundjeri/Woiwurrung, Wadawurrung, Djaara and Taungurung Country.

We respectfully acknowledge the Kulin Nations as the Traditional Owners of the lands and waters upon which we work, operate and rely. We acknowledge the continued cultural, social and spiritual connections that First Nations people have with Country.

We recognise and value that First Nations people have cared for and protected Country for thousands of generations. Country describes land, water, air, sky, people, animals and spirits to which First Nations people are connected.¹

We are committed to working in partnership with local Traditional Owners and First Nations people, to harness collective wisdom to inform the future of the water management landscape while maintaining their cultural and spiritual connections to Country.

¹ Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, aiatsis.gov.au

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Message from the Managing Director

At Greater Western Water, we are guided by our *2030 Strategy* vision of 'Thriving people and Country'.

Melbourne's west is one of the fastest growing regions of Victoria, and one of the most culturally diverse. As an essential service provider, we play an important role in our community and the environment. Genuine and respectful engagement is important to us, particularly our partnerships with Traditional Owners and First Nations people.

Our *2030 Strategy* outlines our purpose of delivering trusted water services for our communities and future generations. Supported by strategic outcomes to deliver value for our customers, support communities to thrive and heal and care for Country.

The 2024 price submission helps us deliver on this purpose through engaging with our community to better understand your values and expectations. We asked how you wanted us to balance our investment in the future while maintaining affordable services.

We began engaging on our price submission in June 2021. Now, we have come full-circle and are reporting back to you on what we have heard throughout this process, and how we have taken your feedback on board.

Your feedback has influenced our submission at every stage. Over 18 months, we heard from more than 8,000 people across our service region.

Early on, you said how you wanted us to engage with you. We took this feedback on board and shifted the way we delivered our work.

At each of the six engagement stages stage, you told us more about your values in relation to the submission. We developed our work further at each point, bringing your feedback in to shape the outcomes.

Our work with you, our customers and communities, is ongoing and I am excited to continue this conversation with you. We will continue to engage with you on our work, from major construction projects to short term service changes and our community support. We will remain accountable to you through our ongoing customer forum and customer outcome performance reports.

On behalf of GWW I wanted to express my thanks for everyone who has gotten involved in this work. From the members of our community panel, who gave up six Sundays to provide detailed feedback; to those of you who filled out our surveys or stopped to have a quick discussion on the work, each of you have had a genuine impact on our work for the next four years.

Maree Lang
Managing Director, Greater Western Water

'Fantastic to see you care enough to speak to your customers, and ask our opinions on the panel and what GWW plan on doing.'
- Confirmation survey respondent

Summary

Greater Western Water (GWW) is Victoria's newest water corporation, bringing together City West Water (CWW) and Western Water (WW).

We developed our first price submission over 18 months in consultation with our customers and communities. The submission is our plan for our prices, the level of service you can expect, and the investments we will make over the next four years (known as our 'regulatory period').

Our consultation focused on understanding our new customer base and their changing needs. To do this, we used a six-stage engagement process. This helped us understand how our customers and communities wanted to be engaged, their values and priorities, their willingness to pay, and key recommendations they wanted us to take forward into the next four years.

We are committed to open, accessible and inclusive engagement. To make sure our work delivered on this commitment, we developed a robust engagement structure using the Essential Services Commission's (ESC) Getting to Fair strategy and Sensitive and Appropriate Engagement Framework, alongside GWW's Community Engagement Framework.

Our work aimed to reach IAP2's 'collaborate' level of participation.² This involved us partnering with our customers and communities to identify key challenges, understand all stakeholder preferences and develop solutions with our communities. To do this, we have used multiple methods of engagement: surveys, focus groups, face-to-face events, community panels and forums.

Engagement goal

To deliver our 2024 price submission, we needed to engage deeply with our customers and communities to understand what you expect from us as your water corporation and your values as a broader community.

The remit of our engagement program was: 'how do we use the voices and values of our customers to achieve a balance of investment in the future, while maintaining an affordable service?'

What we heard

Over the 18 months of our price submission-focused engagement, we heard directly from more than 8,000 members of our community.

The feedback we received can be categorised by seven broad topics:

- keeping our services affordable

² You can learn more about IAP2's levels of participation via their website: <https://iap2.org.au/resources/spectrum/>

- providing reliable services, including responding to unplanned disruptions and harmonising service levels
- supporting waterway health
- getting water from other sources (using alternative water)
- reaching net zero
- supporting customers experiencing hardship
- improving communication to customers, particularly communicating in via customer preferred method.

Results of our engagement

Our goal for the engagement findings was to create our five customer outcomes (our promises to you for the next four years) and our plans for spending and investment.

To do this, we identified key areas that our customers could have significant influence over, using each stage of our engagement to further solidify the topic. Through our 'deliberation' phase, we had four key areas identified: unplanned interruptions, harmonising service levels, getting water from other sources, and supporting waterway health.

Our five customer outcomes

Upon finalising our engagement program, we have developed our five customer outcomes that reflect what you told us was most important to you. These outcomes are our promises to you for what we will deliver over the next four years:

- **Your water is safe, consistent and resilient:** We deliver safe and consistent water supply that meets your expectations, regardless of where you live.
- **When things go wrong, we fix them:** We minimise the impact of any disruptions and keep you informed while we do.
- **We support our diverse communities and customers:** We help improve the liveability and wellbeing of our communities and support you if you're experiencing hardship.
- **We enable growth and help businesses thrive:** We are a co-leader in development and growth in our region and support attracting sustainable and thriving industries.
- **We heal and care for Country:** We improve the health of our catchments and waterways by limiting and reducing our impact on the environment for all users, including Traditional Owners.

Our engagement journey

We started with:

Our 2030 Strategy and strategic outcomes:

- Delivering value for our customers
- Supporting communities to thrive
- Healing and caring for Country

We were guided by:

- Our Community Engagement Framework
- ESC's Getting to Fair strategy
- ESC's Sensitive and appropriate engagement guidance



Early engagement

July – Dec 2021

Understanding how to engage with customers and exploring principles and prices.

5 tariff reform focus groups
3 stakeholder interviews
6 community focus groups

78 people engaged



Activation

Aug – Sept 2022

Working within GWW to identify challenges and set engagement scope, structure and purpose.

Internal workshoping



Exploration

Oct – Dec 2022

Testing our strategic outcomes – customers, community, Country – with customers and understanding what's most important to them.

10 participants in our stakeholder survey and interviews
Community survey
8 focus groups
Face-to-face engagement in regional communities

3,299 people engaged



Confirmation

June – Aug 2023

Endorsing customer outcomes, selecting performance measures and closing the loop.

Customer forum
Customer survey
Face-to-face community engagement

1,333 people engaged



Deliberation

March – June 2023

Refining customer outcomes and changing our plans based on panel recommendations.

Deliberative panel

44 people engaged



Valuation

Dec 2022 – March 2023

Testing our customers' willingness to pay for their identified priorities.

Best-worst survey
Bill simulator survey
8 focus groups
Customer advisory group

3,294 people engaged

We achieved:

- New customer outcomes, experiences and measures
- 15 community panel recommendations
- Tariff structures reflecting customer views
- Price submission 2024-28

Who we engaged with:

Partners and stakeholders

- Traditional Owners
- Community support organisations
- Industry and community experts
- State and local government
- Development industry

Customers and communities

- First Nations peoples
- Customers experiencing financial hardship
- Customers living with a disability
- Customers from diverse cultural backgrounds
- Young people and international students
- Retirees
- Renters and homeowners
- Small businesses
- Trade waste and industry customers
- Not for profit community groups

Our community and who we heard from

Understanding the west

We serve some of the fastest growing regions in Australia. As a new organisation that brought together both urban, peri-urban and regional areas, our engagement had to work for all members of our community.

Our community is generally younger than other regions of Victoria and is more culturally diverse. We provide support for more than 300 different languages. In our service area, 80 per cent of languages spoken other than English are Vietnamese, Arabic, Mandarin, Hakha Chin and Burmese.

Like much of Australia, there is growing concern from communities in our service region around the increasing cost of living, and we have seen an increase in customers experiencing financial strain.

When developing our engagement program, we wanted to ensure accessibility for all members of our community. This meant keeping our understanding of our community in mind, while also providing specific opportunities for people who may normally have their voices missed in broader engagement activities. We did this by:

- offering our surveys in multiple languages
- offering translation and interpreting services
- conducting engagement activities in different parts of our service region
- providing a variety of ways to engage, including online, over the phone and face-to-face to suit a range of access needs and preferences
- supporting panel members who had caring responsibilities
- providing access to computers and the internet
- making sure all information was in plain English
- reserving spaces on our panels to ensure First Nations peoples can be involved in the work
- recruiting specific groups that may normally be underrepresented in focus groups and panels.

Who we heard from

Over 18 months, we heard from more than 8,000 customers and community members. Overall, we had:

- 7,269 responses to our four surveys
- 209 attendees to our 26 focus groups
- 19 interviews with key stakeholders
- 385 attendees to our seven pop-up events
- 3 members of our community advisory group
- 8 local councils providing feedback
- 44 members of our community panel
- 22 members of our ongoing customer forum
- 5 letters to recognised Traditional Owner groups
- 4 forums with our developer stakeholders
- 3,002 unique visits to our engagement website (YourSay) for the price submission.

Hearing from people with diverse opinions and experiences makes sure findings are robust and appropriate for the entire group – not just the vocal few or the general majority. We wanted to ensure our price submission accurately reflected the voices of all our customers. To do this, we recruited a range of participants to be involved in our work:

- homeowners
- renters
- First Nations peoples
- small business owners
- culturally and linguistically diverse customers
- young people
- retirees
- customers who have experienced payment difficulties
- customers who identified as living with a disability.

What was heard and how GWW are delivering on your expectations

'Try to keep bills as low as possible while also meeting with requirements. Cost of living is rising and people are struggling to pay their bills.' - Bill simulator survey comment

It was important to us to provide our customers and communities with a focus for their feedback, so that what they told us could have the biggest impact on our work.

Through our six stages of engagement, we consolidated and clarified what was most important to our customers and took those topics forward into the next stage of our engagement. Ultimately, we identified key areas that were most important to customers and used these to develop our customer outcomes.

We heard that ensuring affordability was your highest priority. Rather than testing affordability against your other priorities, we made it the overarching theme of our engagement. Regardless of other priorities, we committed to ensuring bills remain affordable. In our exploration survey, we asked what was more important to you, outside of affordability. In our bill simulator and best-worst survey, we let you know that we were aiming for stable bills and participants were warned if choices resulted in higher costs to customers.

The tables in each of the below listed stages summarise the questions we asked you, what you told us, and how we will deliver against your feedback.

Early engagement

Our early engagement investigated how our new customer base wanted to be communicated with. This work focused on making sure our engagement approach was accessible and appropriate for all.

Our joint tariff reform focus groups (with Yarra Valley Water and South East Water) asked participants their tariff design preferences for fixed vs variable tariffs, inclining step tariffs, the sewage disposal charge and the water meter charge.

Table 1: Summary of public feedback and GWW responses for early engagement

We asked you	You told us	How we will deliver
How do you want us to engage and communicate with you?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change the way we deliver surveys by offering the opportunity to win a water bill credit ('win \$50 off your next water bill'). • Make sure we pay for the time of participants in focus groups, panels and forums. • Be transparent with our communication materials and purpose. • Allow enough time to recruit participants. • Use community events (such as farmers markets and charity events) to engage with the community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our three largest and most influential surveys (exploration and valuation phases) offered the opportunity to win \$50 and \$100 off your bill. • All focus group, community panel and customer forum participants were paid for their time, and all recruitment programs had at least three weeks. • All information was in plain English, with updates available on our easy-to-access YourSay page. • We held face-to-face events in locations people already were, such as the Woodend Farmers Market.
How much of the water/wastewater charges should be fixed and how much based on usage, and should the water usage charge and sewage disposal charge be combined?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most participants wanted slightly more variable tariffs – meaning more of a 'user pays' system. • Your preference for usage price steps (the price you pay for a set amount of water, which increases as you 'step' up) was to have three – not two. You also told us that three steps may be unfair on large households. • To remove the sewage disposal charge and combine it with other charges. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our price submission proposes that we align tariffs over time, increasing the proportion of variable rates in the western region. • We are proposing to reduce the number of drinking water usage steps from three to two in the previous WW region to make it in line with the CWW charges. • We have proposed to combine the residential water usage and the sewage disposal charges.

Activation

This first phase of our 2022 engagement focused on identifying our biggest challenges where customers could have the most influence over our work.

We outlined our remit for our public engagement: 'how do we use the voices and values of our customers to achieve a balance of investment in the future, while maintaining an affordable service?'

We also decided to use our *2030 Strategy* as our engagement anchor point and identified 10 key challenges we faced as a business. These were:

- reliability – how quickly we should align service levels across the region and how we should manage unplanned interruptions
- the balance between affordability and system reliability
- how we achieve net zero
- how we go about healing and caring for Country
- how we support our customers – particularly those who experience hardship
- what digitisation of services customers would value
- what opportunities we should investigate to improve climate resilience through alternative water use
- the ways we deliver against our compliance obligations
- the level of investment in integrated water management solutions
- how we support environmental (waterway) health.

Exploration

To understand customers' values and priorities, we tested our *2030 Strategy* outcomes of 'customers, communities and Country'. We also asked about the ten key challenges identified in the activation phase.

We understood that affordability would always be a key priority – a priority we are committed to meeting. We wanted to understand what was important outside of affordability.

Outside affordability, you told us you had six key priorities:

- **Unplanned disruptions:** An unplanned disruption is when your service doesn't work. When you turn the taps on, nothing comes out or when you empty the sink or flush the toilet the water doesn't go away. These are different to planned disruptions, where customers are notified in advance.
- **Harmonising service levels:** GWW customers receive water and sewerage services through local and centralised assets, which vary depending on where you live. This means that not everyone gets the same quality and reliability of water supply. This is referred to as 'different service levels'.
- **Getting water from other sources:** With a growing population and changing climate affecting how much water comes into our storages each year, the water industry is looking at alternative water solutions. Getting water from other sources through this engagement meant increasing our use of fit-for-purpose recycled water and treated stormwater for a variety of purposes.
- **Supporting waterway health:** GWW is not directly responsible for waterway health but how we store, use and discharge water can have an impact on waterway health. Supporting waterway health for this engagement meant investment to improve the quality of water we discharge, increase capacity in our network to minimise possible sewer spills and working with local partners.
- **Reaching net zero:** GWW has committed to reaching net zero by 2030. How we get there can be influenced by customers. This can include investment in trees to support biodiversity and renewable energy installations to support the local economy.
- **Supporting customers experiencing hardship or payment difficulties:** It is a business priority to ensure all customers can access our services and, legally, we are required to provide support for customers experiencing hardship. We currently provide customers a higher service than the government requires.

Table 2: Summary of public feedback and GWW responses during exploration stage

We asked you	You told us	How we will deliver
Does the three outcomes of 'customers, community and Country' from our 2030 Strategy resonate with you?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The three outcomes of the 2030 Strategy resonated with you. Affordability is top-of-mind for all customers. Some customers felt that the area of 'supporting customers experiencing hardship' sat better in the 'community' outcome. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We continued to use our 2030 Strategy as the anchor for our engagement. Affordability became central to our price submission. Our customer outcomes reflect feedback from this stage as we moved 'supporting customers experiencing vulnerability' into the 'community' area.
What do you prioritise other than affordability?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The six areas most important to you were: unexpected disruptions, aligning service levels, water from other sources, supporting waterway health, reaching net zero, and supporting customers experiencing hardship. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The six areas you identified became the basis for our price submission engagement. We took them forward into our valuation phase.

Valuation

In our valuation stage, we asked participants their willingness to pay for the priorities identified. This allowed us to understand where we should spend our money.

We wanted to be as open with all our customers as possible. In the two surveys, we stated that our aim was to keep bills stable.

Ultimately, we identified four key areas our customers and communities wanted, taking these into our deliberation phase:

- unexpected disruptions
- harmonising service levels
- getting water from other sources
- supporting waterway health.

Table 3: Summary of public feedback and GWW responses during valuation stage

Phase	We asked you	You told us	How we will deliver
Valuation	What financial value do you place on the areas you prioritised?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Of the six highest-priority areas from the exploration phase, the four you saw the biggest spends in were: unexpected disruptions, aligning service levels, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We took the four topics with the largest suggested spend to our deliberative panel. We have proposed an increase in our customer support

Phase	We asked you	You told us	How we will deliver
		using water from other sources and waterway health. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall, you were comfortable with an increase in spend in all four areas. • You were comfortable with an increase in spending to support customers experiencing hardship. • You wanted us to focus our efforts to reach net zero in investing in energy-efficient operations and local job investments. 	programs, providing individualised services for residential and small business customers experiencing hardship. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reaching net zero is one of our customer outcome targets and we will investigate local solutions. • Priorities identified through valuation were used to support development of our customer outcomes

Deliberation

We asked our community panel: 'How do we keep providing affordable services for all our customers, while preparing for the future?'

Using the four topics identified in the earlier engagement, we asked our panel to develop recommendations of what we should do to meet the expectations of our customer base.

Table 4: Summary of public feedback and GWW responses during deliberation phase

We asked you	You told us	How we will deliver
How do we keep providing affordable services for all our customers, while preparing for the future?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our panel told us that they would prefer to keep the level of unplanned interruptions the same and not increase spending in that area. • They preferred us to increase spending on communication with customers about when outages happen. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will deliver a large renewals program to ensure we can maintain the same level of unplanned disruptions and uplift our asset monitoring systems to provide better communication for customers when outages happen.
How do you want us to deliver on the four priorities identified in earlier engagement?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The panel told us they wanted to see the same level of service across all parts of the service region, particularly for drought resilience and water quality. They were comfortable with taking time to deliver this, with their recommended spend taking 10-20 years before service levels aligned 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will deliver three major projects which will help us progress towards equitable access to water and sewerage services in the long-term. • Through a partnership model with local councils, we will invest in stormwater

We asked you	You told us	How we will deliver
	<p>prioritising the highest risks areas first.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They wanted us to increase spending on alternative water schemes that support liveability and save drinking water, including stormwater harvesting and agriculture. • Improving waterway health was the highest priority of the panel, based on the spend allocated towards it. 	<p>harvesting schemes that will allow non-drinking water to be used in public spaces.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will upgrade five treatment plants to increase capacity and treatment levels to support waterway health.

Confirmation

Our final public engagement phase checked back in with our broader customer base to make sure we had accurately reflected their values in our customer outcomes and responses to our community panel.

In face-to-face engagement, we asked if our customer outcomes reflected what customers expected us to do and represented values important to them. Our survey asked if you agreed with our panel’s 15 recommendations and GWW’s response to them.

Table 5: Summary of public feedback and GWW responses during confirmation phase

Phase	We asked you	You told us	How we will deliver
Confirmation	Do the recommendations made by our community panel resonate with you?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We heard that the panel’s recommendations accurately reflect your expectations. • You felt our response to the panel’s recommendations was appropriate – however needed more clarity about how much everything would cost. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our plans to deliver against the panel’s recommendations have been supported by a wider customer group – meaning we are confident our delivery will meet your expectations. • We provided costings for each delivery option for recommendations in our price submission.
	Do our customer outcomes meet your expectations?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You supported our customer outcomes, saying they represented values that you expect from us and are important to you. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We confirmed our five customer outcomes and will report against them over the next four years.

How we engaged

Our public engagement program was delivered over 18 months in six stages: early engagement, activation, exploration, valuation, deliberation and confirmation. These were developed so the findings from one were fed through to the next, being further refined at each stage.

We ensured that anyone who wanted to be involved in our work, could be. To do this, we provided multiple different ways for people to get involved, including online surveys, face-to-face events, online focus groups and forums, a dedicated email address and number.

We paused our price submission engagement from December 2021 to August 2022 while the business focused on the integration of City West Water and Western Water. In August 2022, we began our focused engagement program, looking at the key challenges we face as a business.

Table 6: Summary of our six stages of public engagement

Stage	Purpose	Activity	Demographic groups engaged
Early engagement	Understanding tariff preferences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Five tariff focus groups – 44 attendees Three stakeholder interviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Residential customers Business customers Young people Culturally and linguistically diverse Retirees Industrial and agricultural customers
	June – December 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explorative focus groups – 28 participants 	
Activation	Internal buy-in and desktop research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 12 interviews with key internal stakeholders 3,200 customer survey results reviewed through desktop research 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internal stakeholders Reviewing Australia-wide studies
Exploration	Exploring how our <i>2030 Strategy</i> resonated with customers and community and understanding values and priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customer survey – 3,097 responses (invitations sent to 50,000 customers) Eight focus groups – 69 attendees Stakeholder survey and interviews – 10 Face-to-face engagement in regional communities – 123 community members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Renters Homeowners Small businesses Customers who identified as experiencing payment difficulties Young customers and international students Retirees Culturally and linguistically diverse customers Customers who identify as living with a disability Trade waste customers
October – December 2022			

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not-for-profit community advocacy groups
Valuation December 2022 – March 2023	Understanding customers' willingness to pay for priorities identified in earlier engagement stages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bill simulator survey – 2,177 responses (sent to 100,000 customers) • Best-worst survey – 949 responses (sent to 50,000 customers) • Eight focus groups – 68 attendees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As above, not including trade waste customers
Deliberation March – June 2023	Community panel made up of 44 members to provide recommendations on how to deliver on customer expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Panel – 44 members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Panel representative of the wider GWW community
Confirmation May – September 2023	Re-testing our findings from the previous 18 months to ensure we had accurately reflected our communities' expectations and needs into our submission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliberative panel recall day – 44 panel members) • Customer forum - 22 participants • Stakeholder interviews – three participants • Pop up events - 262 attendees • Survey – 1,046 participants (sent to 50,000 customers) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Panel and forum representative of the wider GWW community • Communities in the five local government areas that had proportionally lower engagement responses

Engagement activities

It is important that anyone who wanted to be involved in our work had the opportunity to do so. To achieve this, we used multiple different engagement activities.

Alongside our public engagement, we worked with key stakeholders and partners. A summary of this engagement is available in Appendix 2.

Surveys and focus groups

To reach the largest cohort of our community, we sent surveys to 350,000 of our customers. Overall, we received survey responses from 7,269 customers. Surveys were all written in plain English. Our exploration survey offered phone translation services and our best-worst survey was translated into Vietnamese, Arabic and Mandarin.

However, quantitative research is not enough to understand the value placed on a decision. While our surveys did provide free text options, majority of respondents did not use those options, meaning our understanding of the value respondents placed on their decision is limited.

To understand the reasonings behind our customers' and communities' survey responses, we used focus groups throughout our engagement program.

Exploration survey

This survey was sent to 50,000 customers and was made up of 10 multiple-choice and free-text questions. This allowed a broad, but high-level of involvement, as participants who had less time, lower literacy or digital skills could still participate. The survey also provided a phone number for our customer and translation service, so participants could complete the survey over the phone. This resulted in a larger-scale data set, with more than 3,000 respondents, allowing our early engagement reflect the wider community perspective.

Listening to feedback we received in our earlier engagement, we offered the incentive of winning '\$50 off your next water bill' (five winners).

Exploration focus groups

Using the same questions from the exploration survey, we ran a series of eight focus groups that explored what the *2030 Strategy* outcomes of 'customers, community and Country' meant to them. They then investigated which of the survey's multiple-choice options 'fitted' under each of the outcomes.

Participants were offered \$100 to attend the 90-minute session. They represented different demographic groups, including homeowners, renters, small business owners, culturally and linguistically diverse people, people who identify as having a disability, customers who identified as experiencing payment difficulties, young customers and international students, and retirees.

Valuation surveys: bill simulator and best-worst

Our bill simulator and best-worst surveys tested the willingness to pay for key priorities. Sent to 150,000 customers, this was our largest piece of engagement for the price submission. Survey participants were offered an incentive of winning '\$100 off your next water bill' (10 winners). You can see the bill simulator survey and best-worst survey in Appendix 3.

We developed two separate surveys to ensure accessibility. The bill simulator survey allowed respondents to see 'in real time' the bill impacts of their decisions against groups of customers (such as small household renters, large household owners). The best-worst survey tested similar questions but was more accessible. Respondents were asked to choose the option they thought was the 'best' and 'worst' for addressing the issue raised in each question. This technique has been shown to be easier for people with lower levels of English literacy and/or numeracy than a full ranking exercise or the bill simulator.

Having access to both surveys allowed our customers to choose how to respond to us in a way that suited them. It also gave further transparency around the costs of our services.

Bill simulator focus groups

Similar to our exploration survey, we wanted to use focus groups to better understand the reasons our customers chose specific responses. The bill simulator groups used the survey as the basis for conversation, discussing the benefits and challenges associated with each question.

Confirmation survey

Our confirmation survey was sent to 50,000 of our customers. While this survey had no incentive attached to it, we still received sufficient feedback to confirm that our conclusions accurately reflected our customers' expectations and values.

Using free text and a 'disagree' to 'agree' slider, we were able to understand the level of support our customers had for our plans.



Figure 1: Members of our community panel

Community panel

Our panel, made up of 44 members of our community, came together over six Sundays to examine, challenge and make recommendations on our engagement findings so far.

To ensure our price submission was based on robust engagement, we used a combination of statistical and deliberative feedback. We shared the quantitative survey results from previous engagement with our panel to support their decision making and recommendations.

Recruitment for our community panel is outlined in Appendix 1.

Face-to-face events

In October-December 2022 and August 2023, we ran a series of pop-up events in locations that had high foot-traffic.

These events allowed us to reach people we normally would not be able to – including those who had limited access to the internet. At these events we asked one or two questions, using visual aids to show how people voted.



Figure 2: Melton pop up, August 2023

Remaining accountable to you

We are accountable to you, our customers. Throughout this regulatory period, we will regularly report back to you on our performance against what our customers and communities have asked us to deliver. If our performance does not meet your expectations, we will change and further develop our work to better reflect your needs.

Ongoing development

We know the key values of our price submission will remain the same over the next four years: affordability, reliable and safe water, supporting the health of our

environment. But the way we deliver on these values will change and adapt to suit the changing needs of the west.

Our commitment to you is that as we develop and change our delivery, we will check back in with you. This will be done in different ways, from our reporting on the five customer outcomes, our meetings with the customer forum and direct engagement on specific projects.

Reporting on our five customer outcomes

Our price submission's five customer outcomes are the promises we are making to you to deliver over the next four years.

These outcomes were endorsed by customers in face-to-face pop-ups throughout August 2023 and by our customer forum.

We will report on our ongoing progress against each of these outcomes and their relevant targets via our *Outcomes Performance Report*. We review our performance against these outcomes using the ESC's 'red, amber, green' rating method. We publish an annual report and a mid-year update on our website:

<https://www.gww.com.au/about/corporate-information/our-strategies-plans-reports/customer-outcomes-performance-reports>

Ongoing stewardship through our customer forum

Ensuring we have a mechanism to remain accountable to our customers and communities is an important part of our engagement with you.

We have set up a customer forum, that gives our customers ongoing oversight into how we are delivering on our promises. Made up of 15 members from our deliberative panel and seven new members, this forum will meet annually to review our progress against our outcomes. They will also identify where outcomes and measures need to change to better reflect their original intention or changing community priorities.

Future engagement

Our 2024 price submission engagement program wrapped up in September 2023. However, you can still have your say on our engagement and our price submission.

The ESC will be running an engagement program for several months following presentation of our price submission to them on 28 September 2023. You can get involved in this work by visiting the ESC website or Engage Victoria pages:

www.esc.vic.gov.au/water/water-prices-tariffs-and-special-drainage/water-price-reviews and <https://engage.vic.gov.au/essential-services-commission>.

GWW engages with our communities on a wide variety of our projects. You can get involved in our work by visiting our YourSay page: <https://yoursay.gww.com.au/>.

Appendix 1: Recruitment and demographics of our deliberative panel

Recruitment

For the panel process to be impartial, our facilitator (MosaicLab) hired Sortition Foundation to manage the recruitment. An expressions of interest period was conducted in January to February 2023 with 9,000 invitations sent to randomly selected residential and small business addresses across our service region. Everyone aged 16 years or over and living or working at an address that received an invitation was invited to register interest.

The people who registered their interest were placed in a 'pool' which was used by Sortition Foundation to select the final panel. Panellists were chosen from the pool to proportionally represent the population of our service region as well as possible - such as location, homeowner/renter, age, gender, level of education, residential or small business customer.

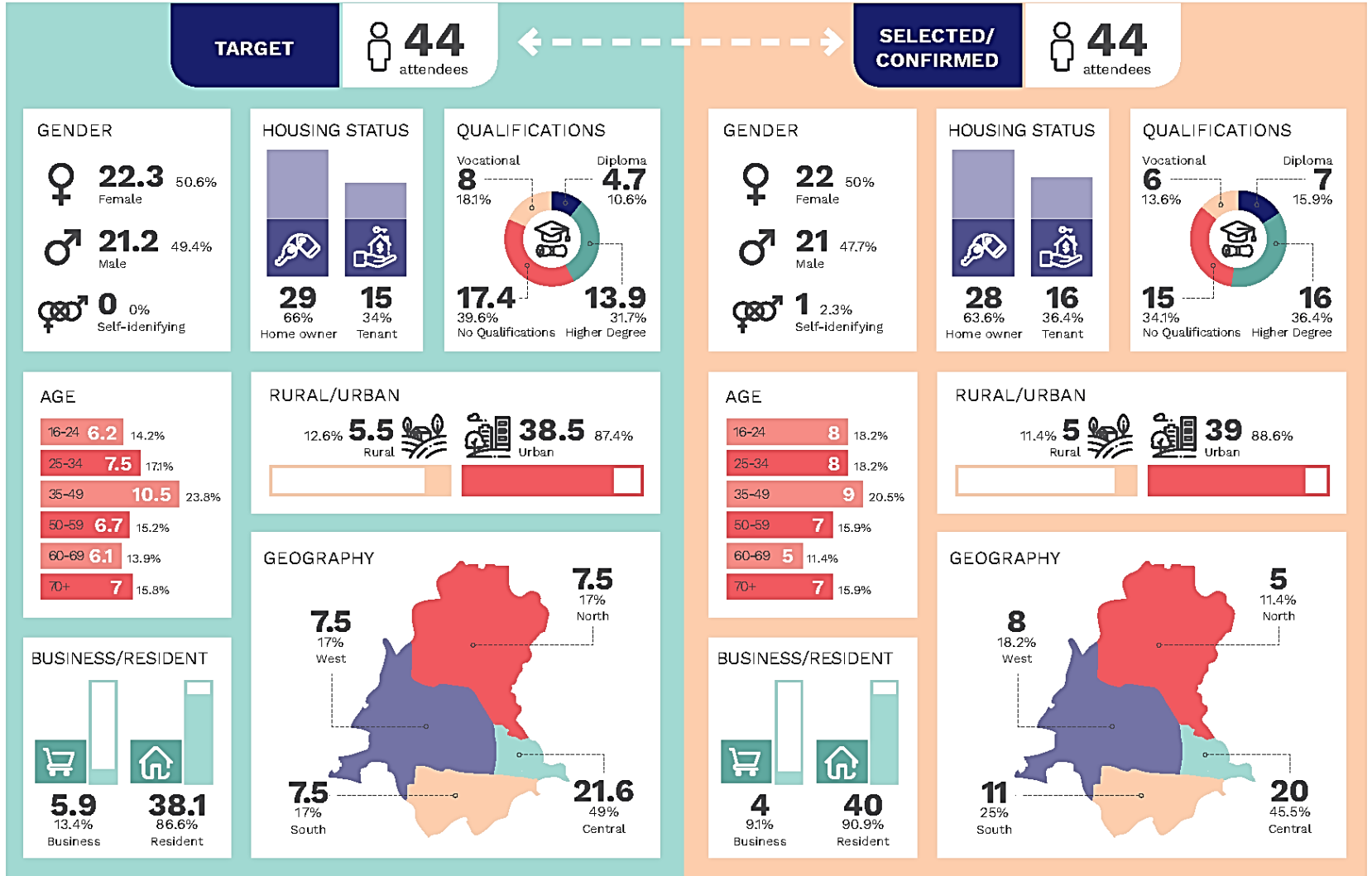
As it was unlikely that our randomised selection of addresses would ensure First Nations representation on our panel, two spaces were reserved for people who identified as First Nations. First Nations community organisations were approached directly for recruitment support.

THE GREATER WESTERN WATER PRICING SUBMISSION COMMUNITY PANEL AS COMPARED TO DEMOGRAPHICS OF THE SERVICE AREA



Greater Western Water

About our Panel participants



Appendix 2: Parallel engagement

Our engagement did not only focus on our customers. We wanted to ensure all members of our community had the opportunity to have their voices reflected in our submission.

This report focuses on the feedback we received through our public consultation. During the price submission program, we also developed engagement strategies to ensure we heard from our stakeholders and partners.

The below provides a summary of the engagement undertaken with each of these key stakeholder groups. Further details of this engagement are available in our price submission: www.com.au/pricesubmission.

'I am particularly gladdened to see healing and caring for Country and I hope that this will be done in collaboration with First Nations communities.' – Feedback from focus group participant

Engaging with our Traditional Owner partners

We are committed to working with Traditional Owners and First Nations peoples. This extends beyond our price submission and this regulatory period.

To work with our Traditional Owner partners, we sent a letter in March 2023 to each of the five formally recognised Traditional Owner groups within the GWW service region advising them of the price submission process. These letters provided information on the price submission and offered briefings on the process and anything of interest to Traditional Owners.

We have also set up ongoing quarterly meetings (beginning early 2023) with each Traditional Owner group. This provided an opportunity to further discuss the development of the price submission if of interest to Traditional Owners.

Community Advisory Group

To ensure our engagement program was robust, we set up a Community Advisory Group. This group met four times through the latter part of our engagement program.

The group provided advice and questioned our work to make sure we had heard from the voices of all our community, not just the vocal few or generalised majority. In September 2023, the group provided our Board with a letter of support for our price submission engagement.

Local councils

Our service area includes 11 local councils. We are committed to ongoing relationships with our councils to help us better support our customers and communities. In previous regulatory periods, City West Water and Western Water partnered with local councils to deliver projects. It is important to us that we continue this work.

Like all our engagement, we wanted to speak with local councils in a way that suited them. We provided opportunities for feedback throughout our price submission development through surveys, interviews, direct communication between our Managing Director and council CEOs and ongoing conversations with our Integrated Water Management (IWM) team.

We received feedback from eight local councils: Brimbank City Council, City of Hobsons Bay, Hume City Council, Macedon Ranges Shire Council, Maribyrnong City Council, Melbourne City Council, Wyndham City Council and Yarra City Council.

Development industry

The west is growing rapidly. For us to meet the current and future needs of our customers, we spoke with the development industry to understand what they expect will be needed in our area.

To hear from the industry, we set up a forum that met three times during our price submission engagement. Their feedback was directly incorporated into our fourth customer outcome 'we enable growth and help businesses thrive'.

Appendix 3: Bill simulator and best worst surveys

Figure 3: Bill simulator survey

Greater Western Water

Have Your Say

insync

Inputs – How should Greater Western Water structure their service levels to meet customer needs? Please adjust the controls to match your desired preference. Average bill impacts based on your preferences are calculated in the blue-shaded pane.

Question 1 of 6

Unexpected disruptions to your water or sewerage services are inconvenient. When you turn the taps on, nothing comes out. When you empty the sink or flush the toilet, the water doesn't drain away. Each year, about one in 12 customers experience an unplanned water outage. One in 200 has an unplanned sewerage interruption. If GWW replaces pipes sooner, these water and sewerage outages will become less common. But replacing these pipes could increase costs.

What is the **maximum** number of unplanned outages you (or any customer) should have to tolerate in a 12-month period?

More than five Please move the slider to select your desired preference. Three (or two for sewerage)

Question 2 of 6

GWW supplies water and sewerage services to Melbourne's west. This includes inner city suburbs like Footscray and Carlton, growing areas like Sunbury and Melton, and towns in the Macedon Ranges like Woodend and Gisborne. However, not everyone currently gets the same quality and reliability of water supply.

People in some parts of the GWW service area might be more likely to have water restrictions, be more likely to be asked to boil their water before drinking, or have unplanned water outages. Addressing these issues will take time (more than 15 years) and cost hundreds of millions of dollars. This cost would be built into GWW's pricing over time, so all GWW customers would help pay to deliver these projects.

How would you like GWW to address this challenge over the next four years?

Outputs – See the effect your preferences have on an average bill for GWW customers.

	Small household - renters with concession Change per quarterly bill \$0.00 (0.0%)
	Medium household - renters Change per quarterly bill \$0.00 (0.0%)
	Medium household - home owner Change per quarterly bill \$0.00 (0.0%)
	Large household - home owner Change per quarterly bill \$0.00 (0.0%)

Figure 4: Best-worst survey



It's Your Choice



This is page 2 of 9

GWW supplies water and sewerage services to Melbourne's west. This includes inner city suburbs like Footscray and Carlton, growing areas like Sunbury and Melton, and towns in the Macedon Ranges like Woodend and Gisborne. The quality of water and services can be very different across these different areas.

If the community wants all customers to have the same levels of service, there are many challenges to overcome. How would you like GWW to address these challenges?

In your opinion, which is the **BEST option in this list?**

- A. Don't do anything. This will keep bills as cheap as possible, although services could get worse in some areas.
- B. Invest in improving the taste of water, which can be quite different across GWW's service area.
- C. Invest in water supplies to reduce the chance of some towns having water restrictions.
- D. Invest in the network so that there are fewer unplanned interruptions to the water supply.
- E. Invest in the wastewater network so that there are fewer unplanned interruptions to sewerage services.

In your opinion, which is the **WORST option in this list?**

- A. Don't do anything. This will keep bills as cheap as possible, although services could get worse in some areas.
- B. Invest in improving the taste of water, which can be quite different across GWW's service area.
- C. Invest in water supplies to reduce the chance of some towns having water restrictions.
- D. Invest in the network so that there are fewer unplanned interruptions to the water supply.
- E. Invest in the wastewater network so that there are fewer unplanned interruptions to sewerage services.

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