

Business comments

The 2023-24 financial year marked our third full year as Greater Western Water. City West Water and Western Water integrated on 1 July 2021, to form Greater Western Water

We are proud to serve 1.4 million community members who live in our service area. We welcomed 15,918 new customers to our area – bringing our total customer base to 631,537. Over the last year, we have delivered 123,569ML of water, received over 255,300 calls, laid out 389km of mains and our crews attended and repaired over 4,576 faults across our network.

Our operating environment

Our operating environment and our actions influence the individual indicators that make up the Greater Western Water (previously Western Water) five outcome commitments made in our 2020 price submission.

This year, we have focused on transitioning our processes and systems while maintaining our outcome commitments, service offerings and service standards. Our service area stretches 3,700 square kilometres, from Melbourne's CBD and inner and north-west suburbs to Bacchus Marsh and the Macedon Ranges. The region continued to be impacted by high population growth and rising costs of living throughout the year.

The 2023-24 period marks our sixth and final year reporting on outcome measures set in City West Water's 2018 and Western Water's 2020 price submissions. We have worked with our community to understand what is important to them and incorporated this into our first price submission as Greater Western Water. Going forward, we will report on our aligned Greater Western Water 2024 price submission commitments.

In May 2024, we implemented a new billing system to enhance our data processing and customer service capabilities. During the transition period from May to June 2024, some data had to be estimated based on actual figures from the months preceding the system launch (July 2023 to April 2024). This approach was necessary to ensure continuity and accuracy in our billing operations while the new billing system was being fully integrated and calibrated. Throughout this report, we have clearly indicated which data has been estimated to ensure transparency in our reporting.

Customer outcomes

We have five outcome commitments for customers in the previous Western Water area, which reflect the many roles that water and wastewater services play in the lives of our customers and our growing regional communities and economy.

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In the previous City West Water region we have six outcome commitments for customers covering similar themes. These are covered in a separate report.

We have assessed two of our outcome areas as green and three as amber by the RAG status (red, amber, green). Twelve of our indicators were green, two were amber and five were red.

We have assigned 'amber' status for our overall performance.


Outcome 1: Fair and affordable charges for all customers

Output	Unit		16-17	17-18	18-19	19-20	20-21	21-22	22-23	23-24
a Tariff structure review with customers completed by late 2019	Met/not met	Target	N/A	N/A	N/A	Met	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
		Actual	N/A	N/A	On track	Complete				
b Customer satisfaction that the price of water services represents value for money (via survey)	Average rating out of 10	Target	N/A	N/A	≥6	≥6	≥6.5	≥6.5	≥6.5	≥6.5
		Actual	6.2	6.2	6.4	7.6	6.9	6.9	6.6	5.8
c Customer hardship program participants who have cleared outstanding debt	Percentage of participants	Target	N/A	N/A	≥20%	≥20%	≥20%	≥20%	≥20%	≥20%
		Actual	N/A	N/A	17.6%	34%	41.7%	52.8%	41.0%	33.9%*

* Data for May 2024 to June 2024 was estimated based on actual figures from preceding months due to limited access to data reports from our new billing system during the implementation phase.

Note: Our Greater Western Water annual customer satisfaction survey on water quality no longer differentiates customers previously serviced by City West Water or Western Water customers. As a result, the findings represent a whole of Greater Western Water level of satisfaction. Greater Western Water is still committed in honouring its commitments to its customers from both its City West Water and Western Water price submissions.

Note: Grey shaded cells represent indicators and targets that no longer apply beyond 2019-20. They were part of Western Water’s customer outcomes from 2018 to 2020 and are not part of the current set of customer outcomes for 2020 to 2023

Overall outcome 1 performance for the regulatory period: 

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Our customers have told us we need to ensure our prices and charges are fair and affordable for everyone. We also recognise that we provide an essential service and the importance of helping customers who are experiencing financial hardship. Engagement for our 2024 price submission found that affordability remains a top priority for our customers, as is how we support customers who are experiencing hardship or difficulty paying their bills.

Customer satisfaction that the price of water services represents value for money

Greater Western Water is committed to delivering value for money and we understand that affordability is front of mind for our customers.

Customer satisfaction survey results about value for money were likely impacted by the ongoing cost of living pressures. We passed considerable savings to our customers in our tariff basket application in 2021-22 by charging below the Essential Services Commission's maximum allowed prices in 2022-23 and 2023-24 for customers in the previous Western Water area. We have some of the lowest bills in Victoria.

Supporting customers in hardship

We are committed to supporting customers experiencing hardship.

We believe that financial stability can be successfully attained when working together with customers who are experiencing short and long-term financial difficulties. We are committed to ensuring customers are aware that there is support available and that we will help them find the right information and tools when they reach out to us. We encourage customers to communicate their financial difficulties early, we provide multiple channels (direct phone calls and email) for customers and/or financial counsellors and case worker organisations to access support, and we ensure staff are adequately trained to manage and handle cases professionally and with appropriate care.

Our customer support program includes a dedicated phone line, manned by a team specially trained to provide tailored options to residential and small non-residential customers experiencing financial difficulties. Financial support applications are assessed and reviewed on a case-by-case basis, so that each customer receives the assistance option that is most appropriate to their circumstances. The most common forms of support options provided by our customer support program include:

- Flexible and affordable payment plans, which have been customised to each customer's unique circumstances

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- Referral to a financial counselling agency or the Thriving Communities partnership 'One stop, One story' app
- Family and domestic violence support including full or partial waivers, securing and restricting access to accounts
- Utilising payment history data and reports to identify and proactively outreach 'at risk' customers to regularly follow up and reassess situations if necessary
- High usage leak adjustments
- Water Assist Program for general plumbing and maintenance repairs
- Hardship grants
- Utility Relief Grants
- Incentivised payment plans

Our measure of success for the hardship program is the percentage of participants who clear outstanding debt. We are pleased to report that over 30 per cent of customers in the hardship program cleared outstanding debts.

Overall self-rating


For the above reasons, we consider our overall performance for Outcome 1 as 'amber'.

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h	Number of Safe Drinking Water Act non-compliances (water sampling and audit)	Number	Target	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
			Actual	5	0	1	0	0	0	0
i	Customers experiencing more than 5 water supply interruptions	Number	Target	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
			Actual		0	0	0	0	0	0*

* Data for May 2024 to Jun 2024 was estimated based on actual figures from preceding months due to limited access to data reports from our new billing system during the implementation phase.

Note: Grey shaded cells represent indicators and targets that no longer apply beyond 2019-20. They were part of Western Water’s customer outcomes from 2018 to 2020 and are not part of the current set of customer outcomes for 2020 to 2023.

Overall outcome 2 performance for the regulatory period: 

Business comment

Our customers expect high quality services from our networks, and we hold ourselves accountable when it comes to providing core water and sewerage services. We met all of our six reliability targets for Outcome 2 in 2023-24.

Water network reliability

Our average time to respond to priority 1 water incidents in 2023-24 has increased compared to 2022-23. However, we achieved our target and there has been a decrease in the number of bursts and leaks per 100km of water main since 2022-23.

Our guaranteed service level scheme provides customers a payment in recognition of the lower level of service they received during the year. The scheme compensates customers who may have had interruptions during peak hours or who may have had an interruption that lasted longer than the time advised in our outage notification. Additionally, the guaranteed service level scheme has been expanded to customers in the area previously serviced by Western Water. These customers will now be compensated if:

- they experience more than three unplanned water supply interruptions within any 12-month period

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- they are not given at least two business days' notice of a planned water supply interruption
- a sewer blockage is not restored within five hours of notification
- a spill is not contained within five hours of notification
- a sewage spill in a house is caused by the business or a failure of the business' system(s)

Drinking water quality

At all times throughout 2023-24, the water quality across our entire service area was compliant with the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines. Aesthetic-related complaints in the area previously serviced by Western Water increased in 2023-24 compared to 2022-23, with the majority relating to colour rather than taste and odour. This can be attributed to the water supply from Melbourne Water's Greenvale Reservoir that varies in colour depending on the catchment source.

The Greenvale Reservoir supply can also cause naturally occurring sediments to settle across the Greater Western Water network. Two major water main bursts in 2024 disturbed these sediments and resulted in a significant number of calls from impacted customers after the repairs had been completed. These events combined with an ongoing increased trend in water complaints across all retailers saw a higher level of complaints than target.

We expect to continue to deliver high quality and reliable services to all our community in 2024-25.

Overall self-rating

Weighing the above, we have rated our performance for Outcome 2 as 'green'.

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Output	Unit		16-17	17-18	18-19	19-20	20-21	21-22	22-23	23-24
g Customers email accounts registered for communications and engagement		Actual					55%	50%	46%*	88%^2
h Customer portal usage (% unique new customers registered)	Percentage	Target	0	0	0	0	≥10%	≥10%	≥10%	≥10%
		Actual					25.9%	26.2%	31.4%	N/A

Note: Grey shaded cells represent indicators and targets that no longer apply beyond 2019-20. They were part of Western Water’s customer outcomes from 2018 to 2020 and are not part of the current set of customer outcomes for 2020 to 2023.

* Data for 2022-23 is potentially understated as we changed online systems during the year. For this reason we have rated this measure as amber.

^1 Data for 2023-24 is the YTD as at May 24th due to limited access to data reports from our new billing system during the implementation phase.

^2 We no longer differentiate between customers previously serviced by City West Water or Western Water so the data provided is for Greater Western Water.

Overall outcome 3 performance for the regulatory period: 

Business comment

We pride ourselves on providing accessible and timely advice to customers and strive to communicate and engage with customers in ways that suits their needs.

We have moved existing customers to our new portal however we are unable to report the percentage of unique new customers registered to use our customer portal in 2023-24 due to limited access to data reports from our new billing system and customer portal during the implementation phase. To ensure transparency, we have opted to not report this measure for 2023-24. We expect a steady increases in online account registrations as we promote our new online customer portal.

We met the remaining three targets for our Outcome 3 commitments in 2023-24.


Overall self-rating

We have rated our performance for Outcome 3 as 'green'.

Outcome 4: Care of the environment

Output	Unit		16-17	17-18	18-19	19-20	20-21	21-22	22-23	23-24
ε Net greenhouse gas emissions (as Western Water – No longer applicable beyond 30 June 2021)	Tonnes CO ₂ e	Target	31,449	34,113	35,638	36,223	≤ 35,638	≤ 35,638	≤ 35,638	≤ 35,638
		Actual	32,226	33,282	37,798	38,257	33,146	N/A	N/A	N/A
κ Net greenhouse gas emissions (as Greater Western Water from 1 July 2021)	Tonnes CO ₂ e	Target					47,419	40,598	39,358	39,358
		Actual					44,927	39,435	34,440	33,000
c Customer satisfaction with the way that Western Water cares for the environment (via survey)	Average rating out of 10	Target	N/A	N/A	≥8	≥8	≥8	≥8	≥8	≥8
		Actual	7.9	7.8	7.6	8.4	8.3	7.9	7.2	7.7
c Number of sewer spills	Number	Target					0	0	0	0
		Actual	56	63	87	72	49	52	72	101

Note: As Greater Western Water, our annual customer satisfaction survey no longer differentiates customers previously serviced by City West Water or Western Water customers. As a result, the findings represent a whole of Greater Western Water level of satisfaction. Greater Western Water is still committed in honouring its commitments to its customers from both its City West Water and Western Water price submissions.

Overall outcome 4 performance for the regulatory period so far: 

Business comment

Our targets are based on customers' feedback during our previous price submissions. We heard that customers wanted us to demonstrate care for the environment by reducing greenhouse gas emissions and aiming to reduce sewer spills to zero. Hence, we set performance targets around greenhouse gas emissions, the number of sewer spills, and customers' satisfaction with the way we care for the environment.

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In 2023-24, two of the targets for this outcome were not met. Our performance in this area was impacted by high rainfall and unprecedented flooding over much of the western region. We are continuing to work to update and improve our processes.

Customer satisfaction on care for the environment

Research indicates that while rising concerns about cost of living are front of mind for customers, the environment remains firmly on the agenda for communities across the country.

In 2023, Greater Western Water was issued with an Environment Protection Authority (EPA) infringement notice in relation to a discharge of stormwater containing sediment from an irrigation dam at the Romsey Recycled Water Plant (RWP) into Deep Creek. An independent ecological risk assessment confirmed there were no long-term environmental impacts to Deep Creek due to the discharge. This assessment was provided to EPA Victoria as part of their investigation. Greater Western Water is implementing measures to stabilise the irrigation dam and drainage channels to prevent sediment build up in stormwater runoff, in compliance with an EPA Victoria improvement notice at the site. Media attention around this issue has likely influenced the latest customer rating for environmental care. We are currently engaging with the Romsey and Macedon communities to better understand their expectations and needs, and how we can best care for the local environment.

Sewer spills

The number of sewer spills for the year was higher than our target of zero.

Moving forward, we are committed to sewer spill prevention and will deliver on this through initiatives like capturing data on asset performance and developing targeted programs to remove excess tree roots, clean high demand mains and address aging infrastructure and related failures.

Greenhouse gas emissions

Our outcome measures on net greenhouse gas emissions vary between the areas previously serviced by City West Water and Western Water. For the area previously serviced by Western Water, we measure delivery and commitment to reducing emissions against a target that measures emissions in tonnes. As Greater Western Water, these measures are not appropriate in capturing a whole of business view on our net greenhouse gas emissions. We remain committed to honouring our current outcomes and measures. With integration, we adopted a new consistent measure that represents our net greenhouse gas emissions as Greater Western Water. This consolidated measure is outlined in our 2024 price submission.

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Our Statement of Obligations and 2030 Strategy commits GWW to net zero emissions by 2030. For customers in our area previously serviced by City West Water, this is a continuation of our existing commitments. For customers in our area previously serviced by Western Water, this is a higher commitment previously established of carbon neutrality by 2050.

Our targets for our new measure represent the existing emission reduction targets established in our 2018 and 2020 price submission for customer serviced by City West Water and Western Water respectively. We continue to deliver on our emission target of net zero by 2030.

Measure	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
City West Water emissions target (% reduction of CO2e from 12,401 tonnes)	0%	5%	5%	60%	70%	70%
City West Water equivalent target in tonnes of emissions (tonnes of CO2e)	12,401	11,781	11,781	4,960	3,720	3,720
Western Water emissions target (tonnes of CO2e)	35,638	36,223	35,638	35,638	35,638	35,638
Combined Greater Western Water emissions target as per price submission commitments (tonnes of CO2e)	48,039	48,004	47,419	40,598	39,358	39,358

Overall self-rating:

On balance, we consider our overall Outcome 4 performance was 'yellow'.

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Outcome 5: Sustainable contribution to the community and regional liveability

Output		Unit	16-17	17-18	18-19	19-20	20-21	21-22	22-23	23-24	
a	Preschools and primary schools in its region receiving education presentations by Western Water	Percentage	Target	N/A	N/A	≥80%	≥80%	≥90%	≥90%	≥90%	≥90%
			Actual	91.9%	92.5%	93%	76%	60%	56%	67%	53%
b	Engage with over 1000 customers via Water Matters website, email, social media, and face to face events	Met/Not Met	Target	N/A	N/A	Met	Met				
			Actual	N/A	N/A	Met	Met				
c	Customers agree that Western Water is a valuable member of the community (4 or 5 out of 5, via survey)	Percentage	Target	N/A	N/A	≥70%	≥70%	≥70%	≥70%	≥70%	≥70%
			Actual	74%	81%	67%	N/A*	82%	80%	75%	68%
d	Minimise usage	Average litres per person per day	Target					≤185	≤185	≤185	≤185
			Actual					174.6	168.6	163.8	161.1*
e	Develop Sunbury IWM Plan	Met/Not Met	Target					On track	On track	Met	Met
			Actual					On track	On track	Not met	Not met
f	Reuse of recycled water produced	Percentage	Target					≥75%	≥75%	≥75%	≥75%
			Actual					47.8%	46.2%	32.8%	49.1%*


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g	Deliver Western Water Reconciliation Action Plan to plan	Met/Not Met	Target					On track	On track	Met	Met
			Actual					On track	N/A	N/A	N/A

* Data for May 2024 to June 2024 was estimated based on actual figures from preceding months due to limited access to data reports from our new billing system during the implementation phase.

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Overall outcome 5 performance for the regulatory period so far: 

Business comments

Outcome 5 recognises the important role Greater Western Water has in supporting our diverse communities, regional prosperity and ensuring that we are efficiently managing water resources for the long term.

In 2023-24, we continued to see mixed results for this outcome. We achieved one of our performance commitments but did not meet five.

Customer satisfaction on our contribution to our local community

We have not met our target for customer satisfaction regarding care for the environment, falling just below the set benchmark. Lower customer sentiment across most indicators, influenced by cost of living pressures and perceptions around value for money, has played a significant role. Additionally, adverse media coverage surrounding the Romsey Environmental Protection Agency incident has negatively impacted our reputation and standing within the community.

Supporting community through events and education

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Greater Western Water delivered education presentations to schools, preschools, and community groups across all 11 local government areas this financial year. A total of 635 presentations were delivered with 16,387 students participating in the Greater Western Water community education program.

There has been an increase in the demand for presentations in growth areas including Wyndham, Melton, and Hume. Following integration, we have revised our education offering program to provide a more consistent offering across the whole service region. This has made previous Western Water targets unachievable. We have procured an education delivery partner to update and refresh the existing education program and meet the growing demand across our service region.

Development of Sunbury Integrated Water Management Plan

This work is a joint initiative with Melbourne Water, with Melbourne Water leading the project. Melbourne Water has put this project on hold while it reviews the scheme based on various challenges.

Water and recycled water use and planning

We continue to work with customers to raise awareness of how they can manage water use and control their bills. In 2023-24, in the area previously serviced by Western Water the average water usage per household remained below target at 161L per person, per day.

The lower average water usage per household in the area previously serviced by Western Water was mainly driven by above average rainfall across our service area, as customers used less drinking and recycled water to water their gardens. Similarly, we reused less recycled water than target in 2023-24. Several factors contributed this including:

- rapid population growth, which led to higher volumes of recycled water produced across our treatment plants
- very wet conditions through peak summer irrigation months, which reduced the demand for recycled water
- the closure of several large customer businesses due to economic conditions, which also reduced the demand for recycled water
- delays in the completion and commissioning of the Western Irrigation Network (WIN) due to ongoing supply chain constrictions and cultural heritage obligations.

We are looking at new ways to manage the water cycle in our region and are on track with project partners and local communities to explore new sources of water for the Sunbury region.

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Reconciliation Action Plan

Greater Western Water has a strong commitment to working towards reconciliation and recognises the important cultural and spiritual connections that First Nations peoples have with lands and waters.

In 2022, we commenced our journey to develop our first Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP). Our initial goal was to establish a Stretch RAP but after consultation with our First Nations community it was agreed that Greater Western Water was not yet mature enough for that level of RAP and instead, we commenced the development of our Innovate RAP.

We are now 12 months into our two year innovate RAP. Greater Western Water is committed to an internal goal of achieving 85 per cent of actions either commenced or completed, we are currently on track to exceed that goal. The highlights of the past year include:

- the commencements of a collaboration with Wadawurrung Traditional Owner corporation in the development of a bush tucker garden on our Werribee West Recycled Water Plant site
- supporting local Aboriginal community organisations in their National Aboriginal and Islander Day Observance Committee (NAIDOC) activities i.e., sponsoring the western NAIDOC ball and providing a water truck and water bottles for the Long Walk activation site at the Melbourne Cricket Ground
- the installation Acknowledgement of Country plaques on all Greater Western Water sites
- the attendance of Greater Western Water employees at NAIDOC march
- the inaugural Greater Western Water Reconciliation Walk to support reconciliation and acknowledge the Stolen Generations
- approximately 250 people attending cultural safety sessions
- cultural safety and Traditional Owner information session delivered to the Greater Western Water board,
- the development of a procurement dashboard to track First Nations spending

Overall self-rating

While we delivered our RAP targets, several factors outside our control affected our performance in 2023-24. This included the contracts with our education partners limiting the number of presentations we could deliver, wetter conditions reducing demand for recycled water, and external stakeholders delaying the Sunbury Integrated Water Management Plan..

Considering this, on balance, we have rated our performance as 'amber'.