

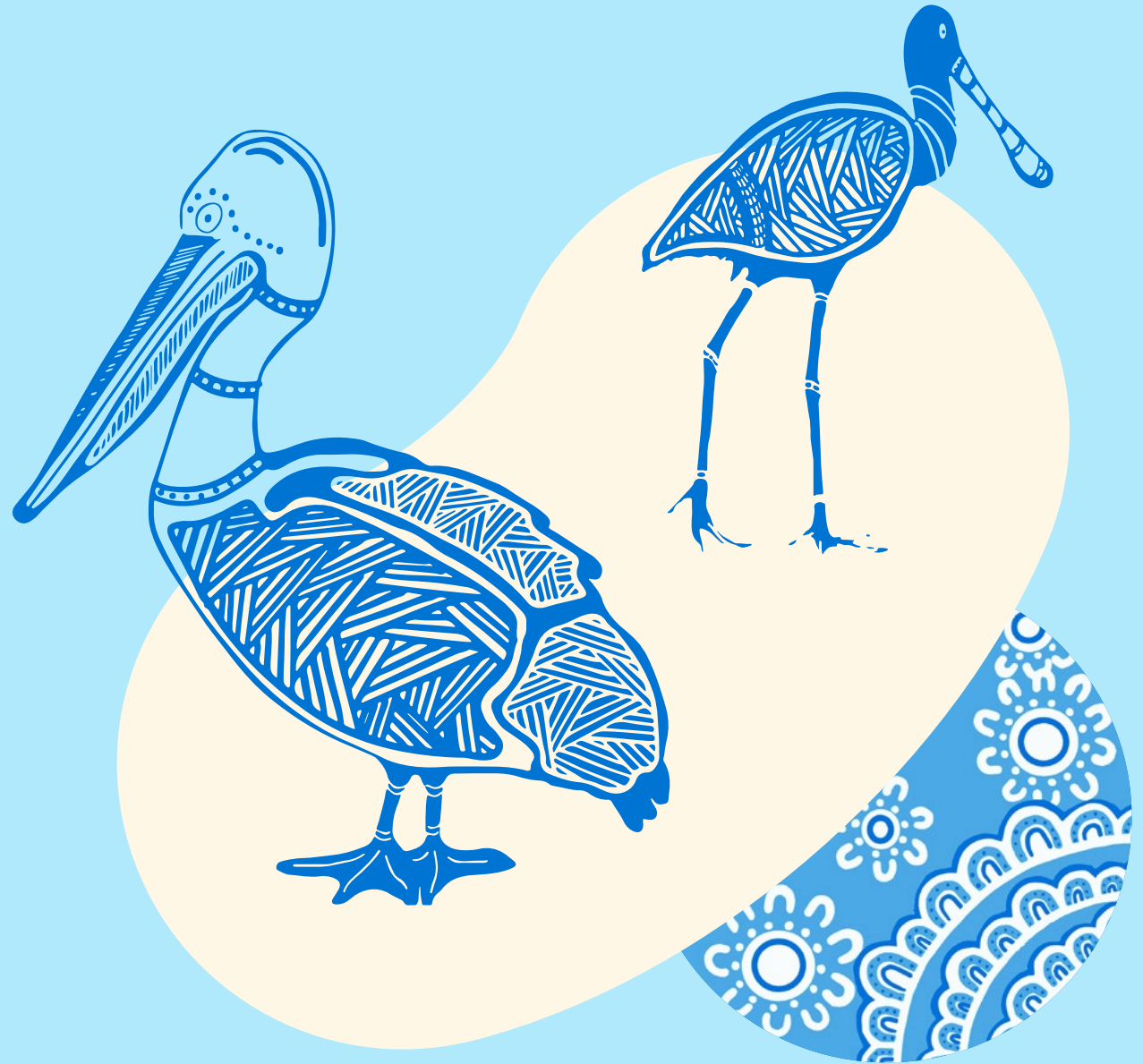
2024 Community Report



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.



A message from our Managing Director

It is a great pleasure to present the 2024 Community Report.

In the first year of our 2023 Price Submission we continued to engage with our customers to deliver projects and initiatives that were important to them.

We're continually striving to remain a customer-centric organisation and this report will showcase what we've achieved over the last year.

Members of our Customer Reference Group and input from our Customer Sounding Board helped us stay accountable and prioritise what mattered to our customers.

We heard from customers that affordability and cost-of-living pressures continue to be a concern. In response, we brought forward our customer care campaign to create greater awareness about how we can tailor support for our customers to manage their bills.

We launched our 2050 Vision, which looks forward almost 30 years to envision what water management will be like then and the impact to our region.

Planning for the future has been another key priority for our organisation, ensuring our

infrastructure provides for a growing and changing region.

We also took practical action with the approval of a 3.3 gigalitre bulk water entitlement from the Tarago Reservoir. This proactive solution ensures water security for the growing communities of Warragul and Drouin.

We deepened our understanding of the opportunities and challenges that climate change presents to our work. This is reflected in our updated Climate Change Strategy, outlining our plans to combat challenges and improve our overall resilience.

We're very proud of our partnership with GLaWAC and together we delivered drinking water to Knob Reserve in Stratford, a culturally significant site for the Traditional Owners.

We commissioned artwork from local Aboriginal artists, Gunnai artist Alice Pepper and Mutti Mutti Bunurong woman Lakeisha Clayton. Their art has been applied across our business to acknowledge the Traditional Owners and show our respect for the Country we work on.

Our customers told us they expect us to be involved in the community and we have made a real effort to have a presence and make a positive impact. We've been there during times of emergency, such as the February 2024

storms and also educating the community at local events.

Through initiatives such as Drink Gippy Tap and our education program, we're teaching the community about the value of water and what we do to look after Country.

Thank you to all our customers who've engaged with us over the past year and provided valuable insight. Your ongoing input helps us stay in touch with what is important to the community, so that we can deliver the services you want now and into the future.

Sarah Cumming,
Managing Director



A message from the Chair of our Customer Reference Group

As a member of the Customer Reference Group (CRG), I've had the benefit of witnessing how Gippsland Water places its customers at the centre of their work.

The CRG was established as the organisation began to develop their 2023-28 Price Submission to the Essential Services Commission, which outlines the plan for Gippsland Water's services and prices for that five-year period.

Our role was to ensure that customer needs, interests and expectations were central to the decision making throughout the process of developing the Price Submission. We were there to confirm that the community engagement was genuine, robust and transparent, and attest that what customers said was effectively reflected in Gippsland Water's plans for the future.

We were pleased to see that customer focus did not waver during this time. One year on, customer-focus continues to be a focal point and the organisation is delivering on the promises it has made to the community along the way.

Gippsland Water continues to seek our advice on how to engage customers on the issues that affect and interest them, and we're committed to representing you, the customer, at the table.

In the past year in my role as Chair of the CRG, I've seen Gippsland Water establish ambitious performance targets, plan for a sustainable future, develop a customer experience strategy and respond swiftly and diligently to emergencies.

Our CRG now has an ongoing role, ensuring the community continues to be represented in Gippsland Water's planning and decision-making. Last year we farewelled three group members as their individual circumstances changed and we welcomed four new members. We are a diverse group of people, which we believe helps us to effectively represent the broader community base.

I would like to thank all members, past and current. Your contributions helped make the group productive, collaborative and a pleasure to be part of.

The Customer Reference Group is not the only way the community can have input into Gippsland Water. Customers can sign up to the Customer Sounding Board to receive opportunities to be involved in research. Or you can respond to the consultation on this report to have your say on how Gippsland Water is responding to customer priorities.

Together, we can make sure that our water and wastewater provider is delivering the services we want.

Diane Wilkinson,
Chair Customer Reference Group



About the Community Report

Our annual Community Report provides a snapshot of our performance over the last 12 months against the key promises and commitments we made in our 2023-28 Price Submission.

It's an opportunity for us to tell our story. Unlike our formal annual reporting obligations, it contains case studies and commentary of where we think we have - or haven't - achieved what we set out to deliver.

This is our honest assessment. More importantly, we'd like to know what you think.

Head to www.gippswater.com.au/our-performance to share your views.





Be affordable and fair

We promised to provide affordable and fair water and wastewater services for all our customers, industry and community, and to make more customers aware of the support we offer.

Be affordable and fair

Our performance

\$8.11

reduction in
cost to serve
each customer

0

customers in our
Customer Care
program had their
water restricted

68%

of customers
believe we
provide value
for money

68%

of customers
aware of the
customer support
we offer

99.9%

of customers
notified within
five business days
of a detection of
significantly high
water use in a
billing period

Offering customers support paying bills

We know some of our customers are really feeling the pinch from the rising cost of living. We want them to know we're here to help.

We've taken a proactive approach to supporting our customers experiencing difficulties paying their bills, reaching out to offer assistance and launching an awareness campaign that encourages them to contact us for help.

We helped 1,589 customers apply for assistance through the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing's Utility Relief Grant program. In total, \$522,817.56 of funding was approved to help customers pay their water bills through this program.





Do your job well

We promised to provide safe, reliable water and wastewater services and keep customers informed when their services were affected.

Do your job well

Our performance

97%

of planned interruptions restored within advised times

69%

of customers believe we keep them informed when their services are interrupted

74min

average time to rectify a sewer blockage

100%

sewer spills inside a house contained within one hour

0

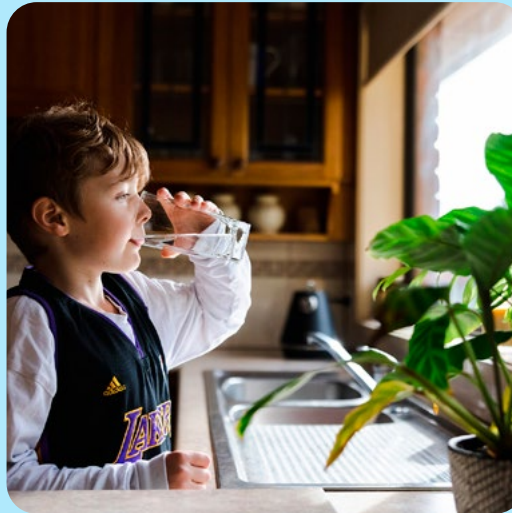
drinking water samples not compliant with E.coli standards

Safe and reliable services

All of the water we supplied met the standards of the Safe Drinking Water Act.

This was confirmed by our weekly water testing and independent sample testing.

We narrowly missed our target to complete 98% of planned interruptions within advised times. Two jobs completed by the contractors of external developers took longer than planned, and one job was delayed due to being more complex than originally expected.



Speedy responses

At 4am on a rather cold Saturday morning, our team was called out about a suspected burst water main in Traralgon.

Sam, Jake and Matt arrived with their excavator to find a very impressive 15m waterspout.

The guys worked quickly to do all necessary safety checks, stop the flow of water, excavate down to the break and get it fixed in less than two hours.

The 20 affected customers had their water back on before 6.30am so they could enjoy their warm shower and a cuppa without impact.



Do your job well

Keeping the water on in wild weather

We're proud of our team's dedication to restoring customers normal water use in the wake of damaging storms in February.

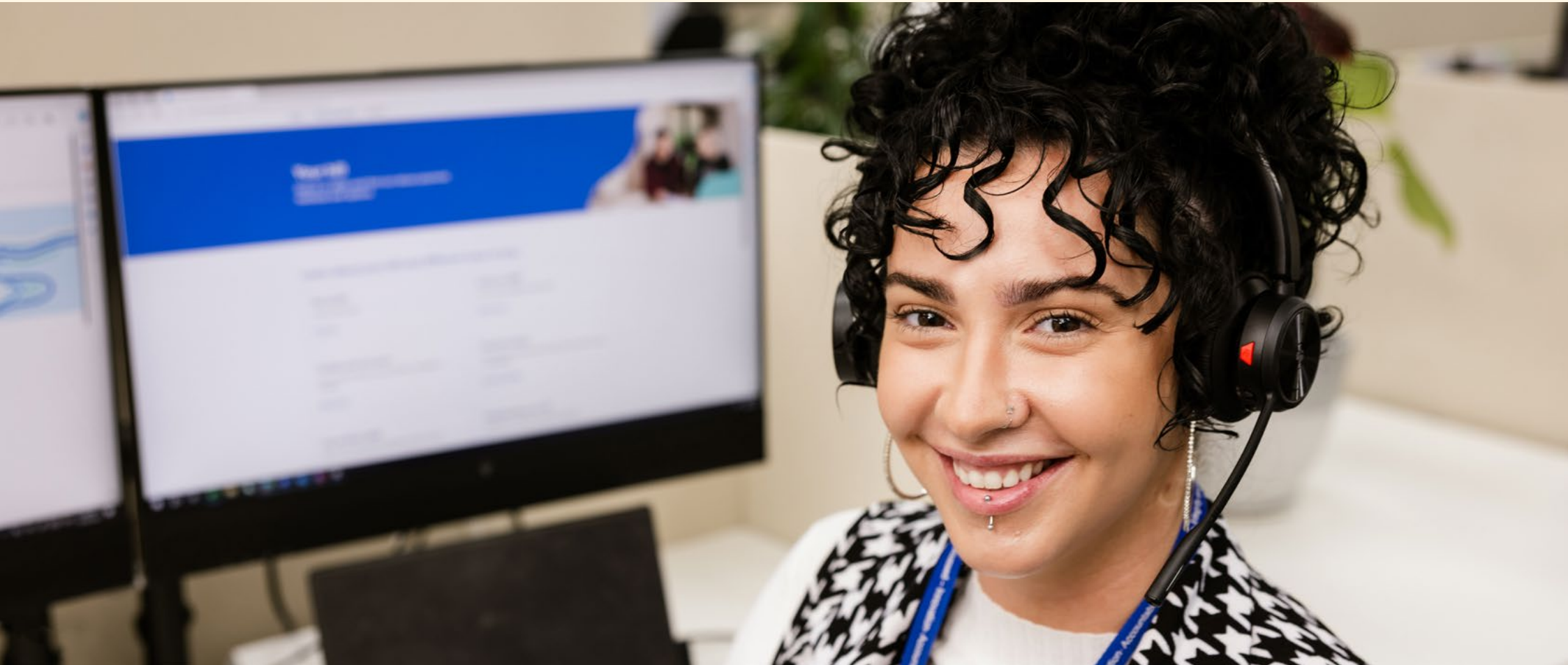
While communities in Morwell, Thorpdale, Jeeralang and Jumbuk were all impacted, our hardest hit customers were in Mirboo North.

Our crews worked tirelessly to keep water and wastewater services running despite challenges from widespread power outages, fallen trees, debris and prolonged communication network outages.

We also made bottled water available for those Mirboo North residents who were left without power at home for days.

We're so grateful to customers who helped us out by reducing their water use while damaged pipes were repaired and our treatment plants were reliant on generators.





Be easy to deal with

We promised to provide great customer service that resolves customers' issues and keeps them informed. We also promised to do more community education we provide on things that matter, like water conservation and environmental sustainability.

Be easy to deal with

Our performance

98%

customers received five days notice prior to a planned interruption taking place

95%

customers with their mobile number registered notified by SMS of an unplanned interruption

95%

customers who had contact with us in the past 12 months said we were easy to deal with.

92.5%

account enquiries resolved at first point of contact

Strategy drives customer experience

We've developed a customer experience strategy to help us deliver exceptional customer experiences.

It sets out five principles to meet current and future customer needs:

- Care
- Ease
- Responsive
- Involved
- Responsible

The strategy outlines 22 actions that we'll deliver over the next twelve months. We're confident these steps will drive ongoing improvements to meet evolving customer and organisational needs.



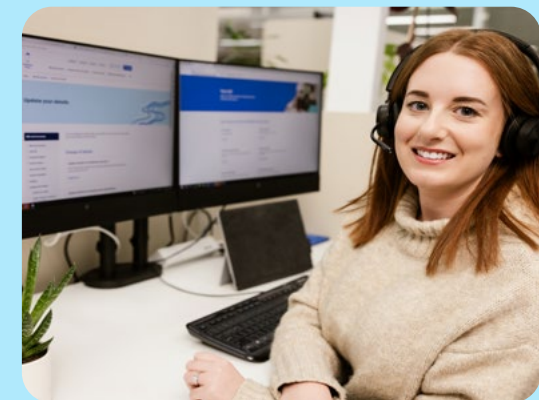
A fresh, easy-to-use website

We launched our new and improved website in October.

Not only does it look better than our previous website, but it's easier to use and designed with help from our customers.

Throughout the design process customers tested the website for functionality, accessibility, and navigation to ensure it was user friendly.

The new homepage features quick links to the information customers seek most, like bill payments, an outage tracker and our financial assistance page.





Be involved in the community

We promised to be a present, visible community partner and support our community in times of need.

Be involved in the community

>\$100,000

invested in programs that support the wellbeing of our communities including education campaigns, drinking fountains and sponsorship.

80%

of customers agree we make a positive contribution to our community. 62% of customers see us a valued member of the community.



We launched our awareness campaign Drink Gippy Tap, which promotes the benefits of drinking tap water for your health, your wallet and the environment.

More drinking fountains donated

Each year we partner with the community and local councils to install drinking fountains to increase access to tap water in Gippsland. This year, we donated five drinking water fountains to be located at:

- Heyfield Wetlands
- Rawson-Erica walking trail
- Stratford Memorial Park
- Maffra Skate Park
- Warragul Aquatic Centre



Sponsoring Gippsland United Football Club

We sponsored the Gippsland United Football Club to encourage local families to drink tap water and stay active.

Through this sponsorship deal, we'll provide more than \$25,000 over three years to support the club's seven junior community teams.

The sponsorship is part of our commitment to invest at least \$100,000 per year in initiatives that support the wellbeing of the community.



Be involved in the community

Supporting local charity with drink bottle sales

We launched our Drink Gippy Tap community water bottle initiative to raise funds for local charities.

The initiative donates 100 per cent of funds raised through the sale of premium reusable water bottles at community events.

This year, we're supporting the Gippsland Emergency Relief Fund (GERF) which supports Gippslanders impacted by a natural disaster.

In the two months since its launch, we've raised an impressive \$3,100.

The Drink Gippy Tap charity water bottle initiative is running as pilot this year.

If successful, local charities will be able to apply to be a recipient of the funds in the future.





Be environmentally responsible

We promised to provide our services to the community with minimal environmental impact and where possible, make our natural assets available for the community to enjoy.

Be environmentally responsible

Our performance

100% biosolids reused

31% emissions reduction compared to baseline of 42,021 tonnes CO2 emissions

33% total electricity from renewable sources



Progress towards net-zero

We're aiming to be powered by 100 per cent renewable energy by 2025 and produce net-zero greenhouse emissions by 2030.

Our new Climate Change Strategy sets out how we'll get there, and what we're doing to manage the impacts of climate change.

This year we didn't reach our renewable energy target due to operational changes at a major customer resulting in a reduction in hydro and biogas generation.

We're revisiting our plan as we are committed to ensuring we meet our obligations as of 1 July 2025.

Given the operational change impacting this target, we'll engage with our customers to determine if any changes need to be made to our plans.

We continue to invest in renewables like the new 350 kWp floating solar system at our Drouin wastewater treatment plant.

Protecting the Wellington Mint-bush

We have an important responsibility to care for endangered and vulnerable species of plants and animals that live at our various sites.

One threatened species we're actively working to protect is the Wellington Mint-bush. It's found in only two Victorian locations, including the land we manage at Dutson Downs.

Our senior environment and sustainability lead Shannon Dwyer is conducting new genetic research on the Wellington Mint-bush. It aims to aid translocation programs, where plants are germinated and transferred between locations to bolster genetic diversity and increase numbers.



Be environmentally responsible

Bringing water to Country at Knob Reserve

Stratford locals and visitors can stay hydrated while at Knob reserve thanks to a joint project with Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation (GLaWAC).

In January we celebrated the delivery of drinking water to the reserve, with the installation of four drinking fountains and a new water main.

The project has been made possible through a \$70,000 grant as part of the Victorian Government's Integrated Water Management (IWM) Program and a \$160,000 investment from our organisation and GLaWAC.

The fountains feature artworks by local artist Robbie Farnham, titled 'Big Dreaming' and 'Tidilick', celebrating the culture of Gunaikurnai people and their intrinsic connection to water.



Be environmentally responsible

Artwork celebrates Aboriginal culture

We're delivering on our commitment to working collaboratively with Traditional Owners to raise awareness and a sense of pride in local First Nations culture.

We commissioned artworks from local First Nations artists to represent the Country we operate on and reflect the nature of the work we do as caretakers of our precious environment.

By demonstrating our deep respect for Aboriginal culture and highlighting the historical significance and ongoing connection Gunaikurnai and Bunurong people have to Country, we hope to create a culturally safe and respectful environment for First Nations employees, customers and visitors.

Art is being rolled out on site signage, water fountains, uniforms and documents. It'll also feature on a major art installation on the Stratford water tower.





Plan for the future

We promised to provide a secure and reliable water supply today, and resilient water and wastewater services for the future.

Plan for the future

Caretakers for tomorrow

Planning for the future is part of everything we do, but this important work is not always visible to our community.

61% of customers don't know if we plan for the future and 36% of customers believe we plan for the future.

We'll be working hard to improve this in our educational campaigns.

Our 'Caretakers for tomorrow' campaign highlights the important role we play in caring for the environment and ensuring water for the future.

The campaign, which launched in March, shares how we're taking action on climate change, using renewable energy, protecting biodiversity and working with Traditional Owners to manage Country.



Securing Warragul and Drouin's water

We delivered on our promise to secure a new entitlement from the Tarago Reservoir to assure Warragul and Drouin's water supply for the medium-term future.

The 3.33 gegalitre entitlement gives much-needed certainty for the two rapidly growing towns, particularly with warmer and drier conditions expected.

Both Warragul and Drouin were facing a short-term water availability shortfall and this means we can continue to provide safe and reliable reticulated water for decades to come.

The new water entitlement is also critical for supporting growth and investment in the local economy.



Planning for the future with our 2050 vision

We're looking far into the future with the release of our 2050 Vision, which explores future pathways for our organisation.

Our 2050 Vision describes a future state where responsible water management is harmoniously integrated to support the wellbeing of people, Country and economy.

We've considered the impacts of climate change, increased debt, water insecurity and an enhanced digital future.

It's a living document we'll continue to review and update as our future becomes clearer.



Plan for the future

Major projects we're tackling over the next four years

We're strengthening our network for the future with a series of upgrades, renewals and new asset infrastructure projects.

Some of the major projects we've started progressing this year include:

- Increasing the capacity of our Yarragon sewerage network by upgrading the sewage pump station and building a new 8.5km section of sewer main.
- Futureproofing the water supply networks and facilities for Morwell, Traralgon and surrounding towns with three big projects that involve:
 - Building a new 50ML water storage basin at Clarkes Road.
 - Building a new major water pipeline between Traralgon and Glengarry.
 - Building a new major water pipeline on the western side of Traralgon as stage one of a future connection between the Traralgon and Morwell water networks.
- Upgrading the Warragul wastewater treatment plant to cater for the growing town's needs and increased volumes of wastewater.
- Replacing a section of old sewer main in the north-east of Warragul with a new larger main with more capacity.
- Building a new major water main in the north-west of Drouin to make sure there's ample water supply well into the future.
- Replacing our Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) system – our key interface between our physical assets and team members.





Gippsland Water

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