



Communications & Engagement Plan

2023-26



WESTERNPORT
WATER

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Acknowledgement

Westernport Water acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples as First Nations People and that the land, sea and water are of spiritual, cultural and economic importance. We recognise that we provide services on the traditional lands of the Bunurong Peoples of the Kulin Nation. The Bunurong Peoples have managed the resources on Millowl for thousands of years. We acknowledge them and their continued connection to this place, as we go about managing the water resources today.

Background

This Plan is designed to make sure that we communicate and engage effectively with our customers, employees, partners, and the wider community. By doing so, we aim to better understand their needs, adapt our services accordingly and ultimately improve customer satisfaction.

As a water corporation, we are responsible for the supply of drinking water, recycled water, and the removal and treatment of sewage and trade waste. Effective

communication and engagement are essential for building trust and confidence in Westernport Water and ensuring that customers have access to the information they need when they need it.

We service over 21,399 customers across an area of 300 square kilometers, including Phillip Island and mainland communities from The Gurdies to Archies Creek on the Bass Coast. Westernport Water is one of 18 water corporations that report to the

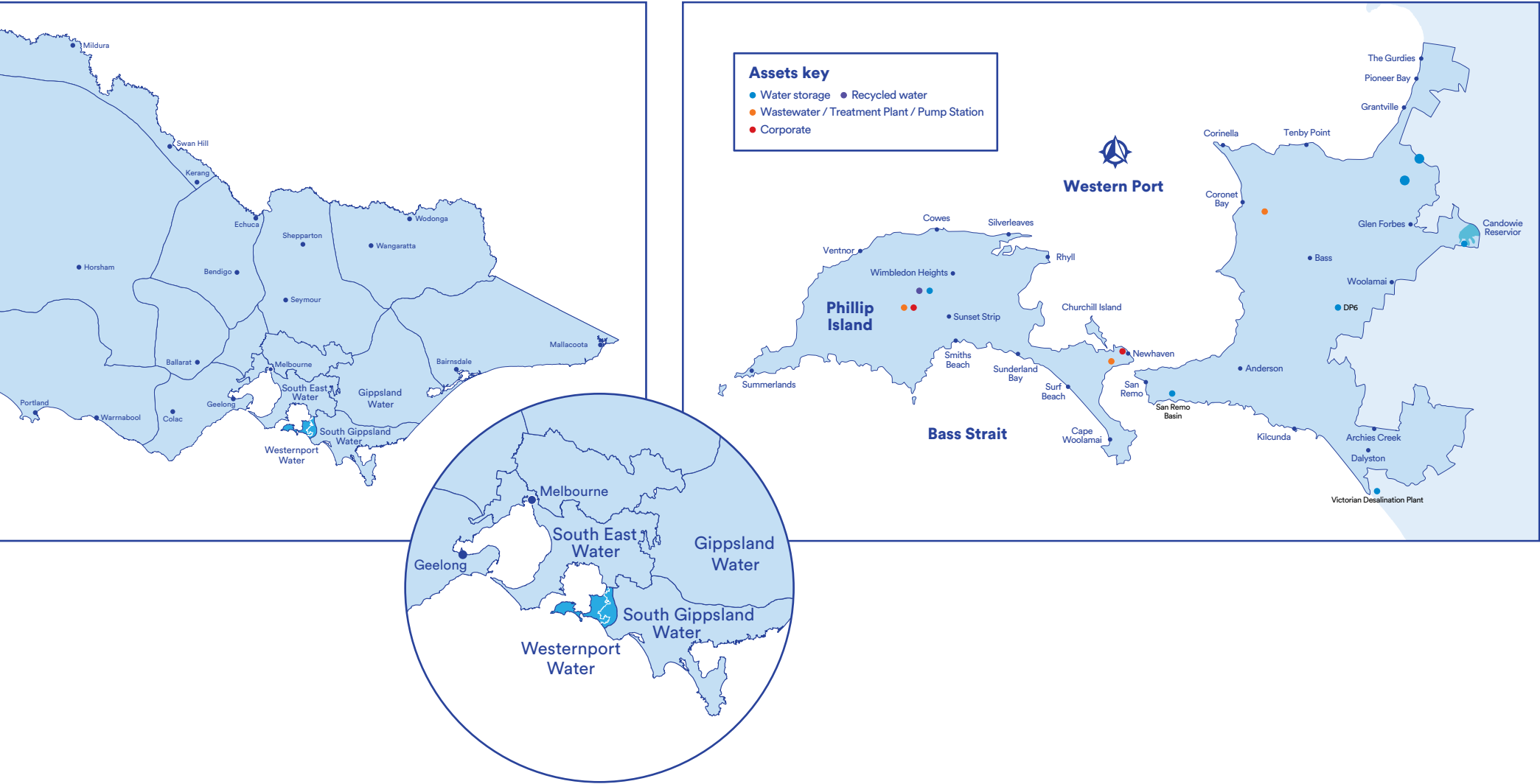
Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) and the State Government of Victoria.

This plan lists Westernport Water’s key initiatives, projects, and plans for three years from 2023-26. These have been carefully planned to support the delivery of the corporate plan and foster a culture of engagement with open and transparent communications with customers and the community.



Candowie Reservoir community tour.

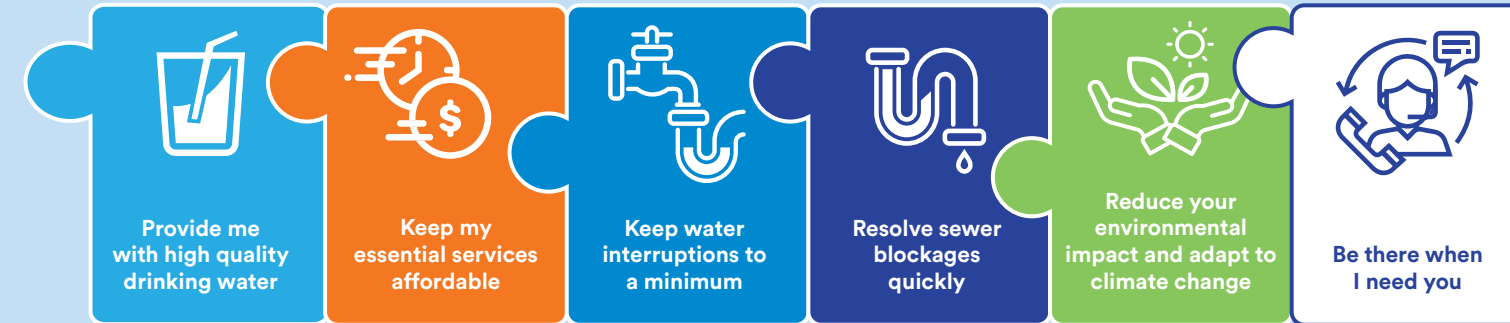
Our service area



Strategic alignment

We are committed to delivering the outcomes that customers sought as part of the 2023-28 price review engagement process.

By implementing this plan, we seek to foster positive relationships with stakeholders, increase awareness of our services, build water literacy, and enhance the overall customer experience.



Our commitment to diversity and inclusion

At Westernport Water, we are dedicated to delivering communication and engagement that is inclusive, accessible, and safe for everyone in our community, including people from diverse backgrounds such as First Nations, culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) individuals, and those who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA+). We encourage people of all ages, genders and abilities to engage with us.



Communications Engagement Education

Communications, engagement, and education are key interrelated activities that enable Westernport Water to disseminate information, create understanding, promote participation, gain insights, and educate customers and the community about our products and services.

Measuring success

Effective communication, engagement and education influences our success and enables us to meet our customer-facing objectives. Our performance is regularly measured through customer satisfaction surveys and community feedback mechanisms, such as the Customer Advisory Panel.



We will provide customers and the community with consistent, reliable and quality information about our programs, products and services. We will create and execute communications strategies to engage and inform our audiences (internal and external) using various communications channels and platforms to make sure that information is accessible to all. Communications will be considered successful if:

- information provided is clear and easy to grasp, with no complex terms, ambiguity or confusion
- the audience can find what they need, understand what they find, and use that information
- communications are tailored for the intended audience, taking into account their level of interest, expertise and knowledge
- information is provided through the most appropriate communications channel at the best possible time.



Customer and community engagement. We will foster a culture of community engagement by creating dialog with our customers and community, to work with, listen to, and understand their needs, expectations and aspirations, so that we may develop customer-shaped priorities and make better decisions that value community knowledge and wisdom. Engagement will be considered successful if people:

- understand what it is we do, and the impacts and cost of delivering essential services
- affected by a project or decision are actively involved and engaged
- can influence outcomes by being informed and engaged in the project
- share their thoughts, and opinions and have confidence that their concerns are acknowledged and addressed
- trust us to be transparent and accessible in our approach.



We will educate the local community and visitors to our region about our products and services to improve water and wastewater literacy. Education involves the transfer of knowledge and skills, and it is necessary for promoting understanding and awareness. All our education campaigns and programs sit within two streams – Water Literacy and School Education. Community and school education will be considered successful if:

- awareness of local water and wastewater products and services are improved
- awareness of flexible payment and other support options available to customers requiring financial support
- people can access resources and programs to support water literacy
- we are considered a trusted source of information about water and wastewater
- relationships with schools are maintained or strengthened and we achieve a minimum of 20 educational engagements

Our communication and engagement channels

We’ve developed a range of communication and engagement channels that are designed to connect with our target audiences and foster meaningful conversations. We’re committed to open and transparent communication and engagement and invite everyone to explore our range of communications channels.

Channel	Our promise to customers, we will:
Bill inserts	provide practical information about our products and services to existing customers
Community outreach	attend community events to engage in conversations with both customers and the local community, discussing our services and projects with the goal of enhancing customer experiences. Active community involvement is a way to foster connections, gain insights into customer needs and expectations, and share information
Customer forums	provide a platform for customer engagement to gather valuable customer insights, both in person and online
Customer panel	establish a customer panel to review our performance annually and report back to customers via the Annual Watermark
Customer Service Centre	provide the personal touch, and welcome customers to visit in person for advice, information, applications, or bill support
Customer Surveys	undertake an annual survey to gather feedback and opinions and measure performance to provide a better customer experience
Electronic mail (push)	increase email communication with customers to better inform them of our products and services
Email (2-way)	support two-way communications with customers through email
Incursions/Excursions	our experienced educators can come to your school or community group, or you can visit one of our treatment facilities
Local print media	improve public communications and demonstrate our commitment to the local community by advertising in the local paper
Message on hold	provide customers bite-size messages when on hold to keep them engaged and informed
Online resources	provide online resources in an easy and convenient online format
Publications	inform our customers of our performance by publishing strategies, policies and reports on our website
SMS	use SMS notifications to provide timely and relevant information to our customers, particularly for outages and interruptions
Social media	create and share accurate and informative content on our social media channels
Website	maintain our website with accurate and up-to-date information that is easily accessible from any device



Photo by: Tommy Williams – San Remo Channel Challenge.

Customer and Community Engagement

We believe that transparent and honest customer and community engagement will help enhance decision-making to better reflect what customers, need, want, and value.

Meaningful customer and community engagement helps to improve customer satisfaction, build trust and credibility, mitigate risks, and enhance customer outcomes. By engaging with customers about our products, services, and projects, we can build stronger relationships and improve our overall performance by ensuring services reflect the needs of our customers and community.

All engagement activities will be tailored according to the IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum to determine the level of participation and the public’s role in any community engagement program. Our projects are likely to interest or impact the community and stakeholders in some way. As the level of impact from, or interest in our work increases, so will the level to which we engage those affected. Annually we will review and align activities to key projects and initiatives in key corporate strategies.

Key engagement activities and initiatives. We will:

Engagement activity	Why	What	Who	When
Establish a customer panel	We committed to establishing a customer panel to review our performance and provide commentary on our performance annually against a new set of outcome commitments.	Customers will be empowered to review performance and judge if targets are met or missed over consecutive years. Where targets are missed, Westernport Water will provide a corrective action plan to explain how their performance will improve. Additionally, we will return funds to the community if targets are not met.	6-8 customers	Engaged annually
Undertake annual customer satisfaction survey	To gather customer insights and information on how well we are meeting customers’ needs and expectations. The survey is designed to measure customer satisfaction with the quality of water and wastewater products, services and support available.	Conduct an annual survey in collaboration with other Victorian water corporations to gather feedback from customers about their experience with their water corporation to measure performance and compare against other similar water corporations.	400 customers	Annually
Produce Annual Reports	To communicate our financial and operational performance and other important information to customers and stakeholders, providing transparency and accountability.	This involves the preparation of information about Westernport Water’s activities and performance for the previous year and other relevant information. This may include water quality reports, environmental performance, Annual Watermark and Annual Report	Customers, stakeholders, government	Annually
Phillip Island Community Orchard – demonstration site	The community orchard is a great example of a community-led initiative that promotes sustainable food production using recycled water, and provides learning opportunities, community engagement, and healthy living.	Support the community group to deliver their agreed annual plan which provides fresh, healthy produce to the local community and promotes sustainable food production practices and learning opportunities.	Members, gardeners, and community	Annually

Customer and Community Engagement (continued)

Engagement activity	Why	What	Who	When
Implement a social media strategy	In 2023, we reviewed our approach to social media and created a new strategy that outlines how we will use social media platforms to achieve specific goals and better communicate and engage our audiences.	The new social media strategy provides recommendations to build brand awareness, engage with customers, develop social content and drive improved customer outcomes using helpful tools and guidelines.	Customers and community online	Ongoing
Attend community events and annual days of significance	Being present, visible and accessible in the community provides opportunities for customers to engage with us and enables us to share important information to improve awareness of products and services.	Westernport Water supports many social and cultural days of significance through events and public promotion.	General public and customers	Ongoing
Water Cafés	To proactively gather customer feedback and insights to inform projects, strategies and enhance the overall customer experience.	Attend local community events to talk with customers, support community events and be present in the community to build trust and brand awareness.	Customers and community	Ongoing
Create online video resource	To tell our wastewater story to improve water literacy, raise awareness, and influence customer behaviours to reduce incidents associated with ragging and sewer blockages.	Produce a short engaging video suitable for sharing across social media informing residents of what should and should not be flushed into the sewer system. (subject to budget)	Customers and community online	2024-25

Key reconciliation activities and initiatives. We will:

Develop and implement an Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy	To help create and strengthen lasting mutually beneficial relationships and partnerships with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples, community leaders and organisations and create a more equitable and inclusive community.	An Aboriginal empowerment strategy is a plan or approach designed to empower and support Indigenous communities and individuals in their pursuit of self-determination. It will include initiatives to increase participation, employment, as well as improved economic, social, cultural and environmental outcomes.	Westernport Water, BCRN and the RAP Working Group	2023-24
Maintain a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) Working Group	The Working Group provides a platform to enable two-way communication and engagement between the Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people and Westernport Water.	The RAP working group is a team of individuals who are responsible for developing and implementing Westernport Water's RAP. We will maintain a Working Group inclusive of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, staff and customers to ensure good governance of the group that oversees progress against commitments.	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people	2023-25
Maintain active membership of the Bass Coast Reconciliation Network (BCRN)	Through the BCRN we will champion reconciliation and recognition within our sphere of influence and support one another to achieve the actions and initiatives detailed within member’s respective Reconciliation Action Plans.	The BCRN is a group of organisations that work with the community to promote reconciliation between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous Australians in the Bass Coast region.	Traditional Owners and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community	Ongoing

Our programs and plans

We are committed to supporting the local community through a range of community programs and plans designed to improve water literacy, support the health and well-being of the local community, promote environmental sustainability, and encourage water conservation.

Our programs and plans include the following:

1



Community Support Program: this is a key initiative that provides funding for a range of community initiatives, including environmental sustainability, water conservation, water literacy, access to drinking water, education and training, health and wellbeing, and community events. Each year we will work with community groups and not-for-profit organisations to identify areas of need and invest \$50,000 towards community-based causes.

2



Education Program

Stream A – Improving Water Literacy in the community: is essential for promoting sustainable water use, protecting water resources, and responding to water-related challenges. Helping customers to understand the investment that goes into locally producing quality drinking water as well as the effort required to collect, treat and dispose of wastewater is key to getting people to value our products and services. Customers with higher water literacy, and who value and trust the products and services we provide, are more likely to have a higher perception of value for money, and support decisions around water security, alternative water sources, performance improvement and project investment.



Stream B – School's program: we will partner with local schools and educators to deliver educational programs and initiatives that improve water literacy. These include classroom sessions (incursions), educational tours and hands-on learning activities. We will develop resources and activities around the importance of water conservation and sustainability, our local water supply, the water cycle, water quality, the wastewater process and recycled water.

3



Permanent Water Refill Station Program: is a partnership initiative providing the public with convenient access to free tap water, which helps to reduce the environmental impact of single-use plastic water bottles. The water stations encourage positive behaviour, sustainable living and help to promote the benefits of tap water. Between 2023-26, we will install a further seven water refill stations at conveniently located public places, making it easy for people to refill their water bottles.

Our programs and plans (continued)

4



Community Rebate Program: provides financial assistance for water efficiency audits and essential plumbing work. The Community Rebate Program is designed to support customers in adopting water-saving practices and technologies, while also helping to promote sustainability and reduce water bills. By providing financial assistance to eligible customers, Westernport Water is helping to improve water efficiency and reduce the environmental impact of its operations.

5



The Choose Tap Program: is a sustainability initiative that encourages people to choose tap water as a sustainable and cost-effective alternative to bottled water and sugary drinks. The Choose Tap program includes initiatives to promote the consumption of tap water as a sustainable and healthy alternative to bottled water. This includes public education campaigns, the prep water bottle initiative, portable water fountains, the installation of public refill stations, partnerships with local businesses and events to provide and promote tap water and reduce the use of single-use plastic water bottles.

6



Reconciliation Action Plan:

Westernport Water's commitment to reconciliation is reflected in everything it does and is highlighted in our second Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP). Through the Innovate RAP 2.0, we will advance reconciliation within our sphere of influence and focus on strengthening relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Internally, we will drive reconciliation through business activities, services and programs, embedding processes and systems at all levels of the business. Westernport Water is committed to reconciliation with Australia's First Nations people and is committed to building respectful and collaborative relationships with the Traditional Owners of the land, the Bunurong people, and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in the region.



Walk for Reconciliation, Bridge Walk 2022.

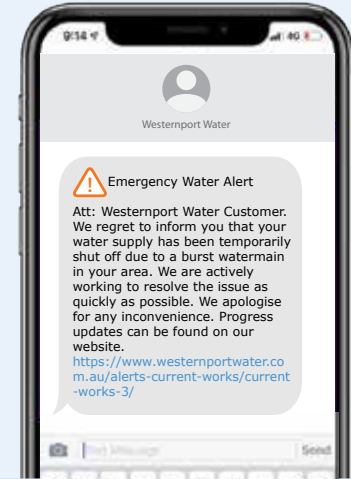
Our programs and plans (continued)

7



Rollout of Smart Water advice accommodation kits: these are packages that contain water-saving collateral and educational resources for guests staying at hotels and other accommodations. These kits are designed to promote water conservation and reduce water usage in the hospitality industry.

8



SMS recruitment program: is being undertaken over three years to 2026 to improve mobile data integrity so that we may provide streamlined customer communication. Through the program, we will encourage customers to update their mobile numbers so that targeted messaging about their water and wastewater services is more effective and customers can receive important information, notifications and messages about outages and service interruptions in real-time. This program comes in response to customer feedback that we could streamline communications and improve engagement with customers.

9



Water Smart Program will support non-residential customers to become more water efficient by facilitating the monitoring of water services at participating sites. Supporting businesses and councils to promptly address incidents that arise. This proactive approach will contribute to improved water security and affordability.

10



Crisis and emergency management communications plan update: will be complete for Westernport Water to prepare for and respond to unexpected events that could potentially disrupt essential services or impact our reputation. An updated plan is necessary to protect people's safety, respond quickly and effectively, and comply with legal and regulatory requirements.



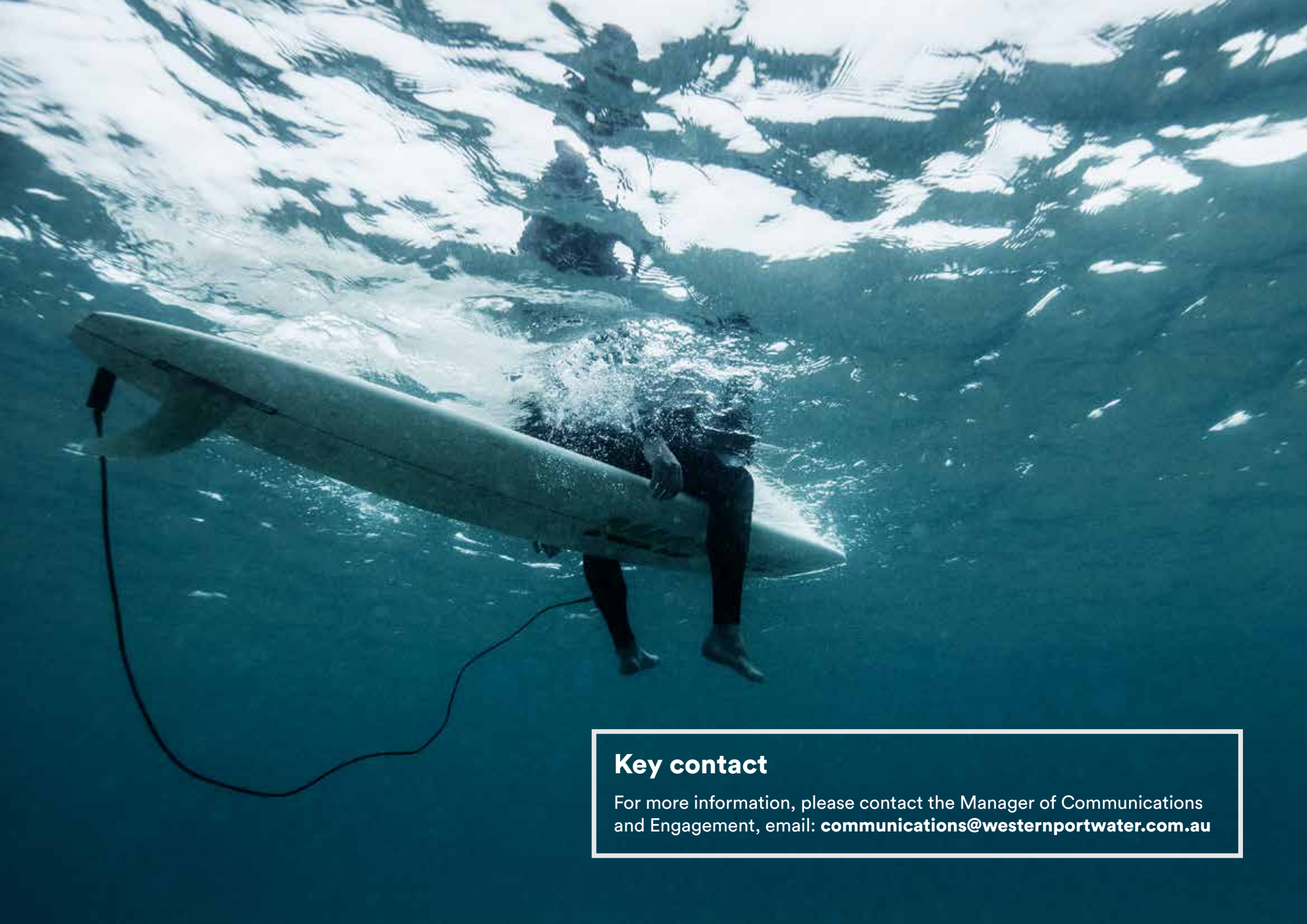
Walk for Reconciliation, Bridge Walk 2022.

Capital improvement projects

Our \$42.28M capital improvements program for the next pricing period will address customer priorities for water quality improvements, environmentally responsible operations, and sustainable services.

Projects that require extensive communication and engagement include:

Engagement activity	What	Why	Who	When
Climate Change Strategy	Sets out a plan of action, and detail projects and activities required to get to Net Zero by 2035.	To meet customer expectations and the requirements of the Victorian Government's Climate Change Policy and Emissions Reduction Pledge targets.	Engage customers and community on Climate Change initiatives	2023-26
Water Quality Continuous Improvement Program	Develop and deliver a series of projects to plan for and deliver water quality improvements, including research into emerging treatment technology.	To meet customer expectations and improve customer satisfaction with drinking water quality.	Customers and community	2023-26
Floating Wetlands Pilot Project	Install a floating wetland to assess the performance of a nature-based system in improving water quality and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.	Water quality improvements will directly benefit recycled water customers and receiving environments. Findings to be used to inform future wetland projects.	Engage Traditional Owners, project stakeholders, and the community	2023-25
Renew San Remo to Newhaven Bridge Pipeline and Fittings	Undertake critical maintenance work on the main water and sewerage pipeline and fittings that run underneath the Phillip Island Bridge.	To extend the life of the pipelines and fittings for an additional thirty years and ensure the ongoing supply of reliable water and wastewater services to our customers.	The general public, road and marine users	2023-24
Renew Permanent Water Saving Rules signs	Upgrade, replair and replace signs to remind people that permanent water saving rules are in place on a permanent and ongoing basis.	Renewing signs aims to raise awareness and promote the efficient and sensible use of water without significantly restricting customer choice and flexibility.	Community, customers and visitors to the region.	2023-24
Treatment Plant Energy Efficiency Project	Investigate emissions abatement technology, to optimise pump and aeration systems at treatment plants reducing energy consumption, costs and greenhouse gas.	Reducing greenhouse gas emissions from our highest emitting sites will help us to achieve our target of Net Zero emissions by 2035.	Report back to customers and stakeholders	2023-24
Sustainable Reuse and Afforestation	Expand recycled water reuse at Cowes and King Road Wastewater Treatment Plants and investigate options for increased irrigation and afforestation for carbon offsets. The project will also explore the Class-B market for agricultural and industrial use.	To deliver benefits of enhanced biodiversity, habitat for threatened and endangered species, and carbon offsets. This project will also support our Recycled Water Strategy and targets.	Customers, community, agricultural and industrial property owners.	2024-25
Recycled Water Improvement program	Expansion of Class A recycled water though the Class A Recycled Water Futures project and network extension through the Class A Recycled Water Extension at Seagrove Estate.	To meet increased customer demand for recycled water, to reach our recycled water commitment and contribute to reduction in ocean outflow.	Customers and community, including new and existing recycled water customers	2024-28
Replace corporate website	Develop a custom website that will provide access to new technologies, support future upgrades, improve user experience and enable e-service provisions.	A modern website will improve the user experience, provide mobile optimization, faster load times and enable integration.	Customers and community online	2025-26
Bio-gas waste to energy	Explore options and begin the design and construction of a biogas plant at the Cowes Wastewater Treatment Plant.	To reduce the impact of greenhouses gases on the environment and help meet our emissions targets.	Customers and community	2025-26
Recycled Water Wetland Storage	Design and construction of a 60ML wetland system at King Road Wastewater Treatment Plant	To improve wastewater quality, sequester carbon, enhance biodiversity, and allow for potential future recreational access	Customers and community, including Traditional Owners	2025-27



Key contact

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