

MEDIA RELEASE

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East Gippsland Water looks to freeze bills for the next five years

East Gippsland Water is going back out to customers with proposals to maintain current levels of service for the next five years (2018-23) and ensure no increase to the average customer bill, except for inflation.

The proposals, which allow for a major program of investment to continue in water and sewerage services, take on board the outcomes of some 12 months of community engagement involving more than 1,400 customers across the region, to gauge their values and priorities.

They will form the backbone of East Gippsland Water's 2018-23 Price Submission (business plan), subject to final customer feedback received over the coming weeks.

In addition to maintaining current levels of water and wastewater services, other specific customer priorities and preferences include: providing grants to local schools and community groups for environmental projects; bill rebates for outdoor community groups; and, maintaining current levels of financial assistance to customers experiencing genuine financial difficulty paying their water bills.

There are six Guaranteed Service Levels, chosen by East Gippsland Water's independent Customer Committee to help ensure customers continue to receive high standards of service.

Mindful of regulatory requirements, long-term projections for population growth and climate change, and customer feedback, the corporation is proposing to invest around \$62 million in a major capital works program between 2018 and 2023. This will include replacing or upgrading ageing infrastructure to maintain high quality, reliable water and sewerage services to customers.

Complementing this, East Gippsland Water is looking to spend about \$19 million a year for the day-to-day operation and maintenance of existing water and sewerage infrastructure.

East Gippsland Water's Managing Director, Bruce Hammond said, "Over the past year we have actively engaged with customers to help us set our priorities for the 2018-23 period. All the time we have been mindful that we need to provide water and sewerage services that are as affordable as possible. This is why we are looking to absorb external business costs outside our control as much as we can, with no increase to the average customer bill over the five years, except for inflation.

"Our Price Submission takes into account the challenges presented by climate change and a growing population, and customer preferences and priorities, including in the areas of environmental sustainability and liveability. This also reflects the priorities in the State Government's Water for Victoria plan for managing precious water resources.

"Now we want customers to tell us what they think before we submit our draft Price Submission to the Essential Services Commission, the water industry regulator, for review, prior to its implementation from July onwards next year. As an added incentive we will plant a native tree or shrub for every comment submitted by the closing date of 10 September."

More follows.../

To view East Gippsland Water's proposals and submit a comment simply visit the Price Submission section of the corporation's website egwater.vic.gov.au, or pop along to one of the water cafes being hosted by East Gippsland Water at the following community events:

Sat 19 Aug (9am-1pm)	Bruthen Market
Sun 27 Aug (8.30am-1pm)	Bairnsdale's Howitt Park Market
Sat 2 Sep (9am-1pm)	Mallacoota Market
Sun 3 Sep (8am-1pm)	Lakes Entrance Market
Sat 9 Sep (8.30am-12.30pm)	Metung Market
Sun 10 Sep (8.30am-1pm)	Paynesville Community Market

Alternatively, visit your local neighbourhood or community house in Bairnsdale, East Bairnsdale, Bemm River, Buchan, Cann River, Lakes Entrance, Mallacoota, Orbost, Paynesville or Swifts Creek.

The closing date for East Gippsland Water to receive comments is 10 September 2017.

Ends