



# East Gippsland Water

Community Engagement  
Strategy

&

Action Plan

2017/18

## Background

The Board is committed to maintaining effective connections with the community and other key stakeholders as a primary consideration in delivering exceptional water, wastewater and related services.

Engagement provides an opportunity for us to assess the needs, expectations, preferences and priorities of our stakeholders and to build water literacy throughout the community.

Community engagement is also actively promoted by the Victorian Government in the decision making process of its agencies.

An effective community engagement strategy is therefore an essential contributor to business success.

We have statutory obligations under the Water Act 1989 and related instruments such as the Statement of Obligations; as well as economic, environmental and water quality legislative frameworks that mandate actively engaging with the community.

In developing strategies for future service provision we need to have a clear understanding of customer and community preferences, the external environment and changing policy framework.

This Community Engagement Strategy & Action Plan aims to develop and nurture collaborative relationships with key stakeholders and actively engage with customers. It enables us to build community literacy to encourage informed feedback and to better understand customer preferences and willingness to pay for the full range of our services.

The aim is also to foster within our stakeholders a greater understanding of East Gippsland Water's roles, responsibilities and commitments. This will help ensure that we operate effectively at all times, particularly during emergencies, with the support and cooperation of the broader community.

## Glossary of terms/tools covered in this strategy

- **IAP2** - International Association for Public Participation – encompasses principles for community engagement and effective participation, which are actively promoted by the Victorian Government for use by government departments and agencies like us.
- **Media releases** – provide East Gippsland Water with 'free' third party credibility for achievements/actions.
- **On Tap** – an A4 news sheet sent to all account holders with their water bill.
- **In the Flow** – a full page, monthly advertorial in the East Gippsland News, published in response to customer requests for more information (as highlighted in the 2011 annual customer satisfaction survey and the Victorian Water Industry "the Victorian Water Customer – Water Services Needs and

Values” survey). The East Gippsland News circulates to the entire district as opposed to other media which circulates to selected towns.

- **Drip Feed** - branding used on the Intranet to publicise important news and staff announcements.
- **Stakeholder Map** – used to identify and engage with different classes and levels of stakeholders, including customers and non-customers.

## **Objectives of engagement**

This strategy is designed to address our priority objectives for engagement, reflecting:

- our vision, mission and objectives
- key priorities identified in the Water Plan 2013-2018
- key priorities identified for the Price Submission 2018-2023
- Corporate Plan objectives
- key targets identified for public information and community engagement
- key priorities identified by staff during consultation
- Victorian Government priorities, commitments and public policies for the delivery of water and wastewater services.

The overall aim remains to further raise our positive profile and reputation, ensuring we meet our ‘Mission’ and ‘Objectives’ and achieve our ‘Vision’.

### **Vision**

East Gippsland Water is a leading and respected water corporation.

### **Mission**

We provide valued water and wastewater services in a responsive, cost effective, safe and environmentally sensitive manner.

### **Objectives**

- To meet the needs of our customers and stakeholders
- To enhance the liveability, development and resilience of our region
- To innovate and achieve whole of business sustainability
- To optimise the efficiency and affordability of our services
- To maximise the potential of our people.

In particular, the Community Engagement Strategy & Action Plan aims to:

- raise our profile and enhance our reputation as a responsible, responsive, cost-effective organisation providing quality and value-for-money water and wastewater services
- foster within our stakeholders a greater understanding of East Gippsland Water's roles, responsibilities and commitments and to educate on water management and the efficient use of water
- ensure our identity remains strong, clearly differentiated from East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority and other water corporations, particularly the neighbouring Gippsland Water
- reinforce our position as a key community member that is a leader in the efficient use of water as a finite resource, sanitation and related environmental outcomes and engages with the broader community
- proactively engage with customers in order to understand preferences and willingness to pay for the range of our services
- develop and nurture collaborative relationships with key stakeholders to facilitate efficient and effective business operations and the timely, cost effective provision of services
- provide advice to Government and, where appropriate, influence policy for the benefit of our community and the wider water industry policy frameworks
- engage with the wider East Gippsland community to foster improved community outcomes that are indirectly beneficial to our customers
- employ appropriate engagement channels, ensuring a wide reach to the community and communications to stakeholders are consistent.

## **Stakeholders**

East Gippsland Water serves a diverse region geographically and demographically, with some 26,200 water customers and 22,300 wastewater customers within a service area spanning 21,000 square kilometres. It is notable that more 'sea-changers' and 'tree-changers' are taking up residence in the area and that East Gippsland's population is ageing.

We also operate within a complex external environment with a number of key local partners, such as the East Gippsland Shire Council and East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority and more broadly, at State and Federal level, governments, agencies, industry and professional associations and other water corporations.

It is essential that we identify and engage at an appropriate level with all of these stakeholders.

## **Tools for engagement**

IAP2 seeks to help identify appropriate levels of involvement for stakeholder groups in a given decision, taking into account the nature of the decision and likely level of

impact on them. As part of our community engagement strategy, we are committed to implementing IAP2 methodology to underpin our engagement processes.

The IAP2 framework provides tools and guidance to identify and gauge stakeholder interest and influence, tailor engagement strategies and select appropriate engagement methods. These could range from general media releases to face-to-face engagement and innovative “simulation games” and encompassing a range of survey methods and consensus building techniques.

### **Customer Committee**

The Customer Committee has representation from different sections of the East Gippsland Water service region. The committee provides a primary engagement link between us and our customers, particularly in the development and renewal of strategies that collectively will underpin future price submissions and corporate plans.

Membership is restricted to our customers and the charter (Policy 061) is reviewed by the Committee and subsequently the Board annually.

### **Non-residential engagement**

Non-residential customer engagement by its nature needs to be tailored differently to residential customer engagement. In relation to the wider non-residential customer base, a number of broader engagement themes need to be employed, such as:

- engaging through industry associations as required; for example, working with the Food Cluster on opportunities to convert solid waste to energy
- actively engaging with Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) partners; namely, Gippsland Water, South Gippsland Water, Westernport Water, Southern Rural Water, East Gippsland Shire Council and Bairnsdale Racecourse
- engaging with individuals on specific issues.

### **Opportunistic engagement**

From time to time exciting, one-off, community-focused, partnership projects arise that represent an invaluable, opportunistic means of engaging with the local community. We will continue to consider such opportunities on their merits and progress those with the best engagement potential.

### **Large scale communication**

We recognise our responsibility to communicate key messages to all segments of the community, appreciating that customers are spread across a vast geographic area with a relatively high non-resident population.

Tools to utilise include:

- media releases, advertisements and articles published in local newspapers, on our website, linked to social media (see below) and broadcast on local TV and radio - often inviting public feedback
- the On Tap news sheet
- the ‘In the Flow’ advertorial in the East Gippsland News

- information brochures covering a wide range of topics
- facility tours and presentations with a focus on education
- community support through financial, merchandise and in-kind assistance to local organisations community groups and events – this includes provision of the water trailer
- customer follow up calls.

### **Social Media**

We are committed to implementing a range of social media initiatives and to evaluating the take up by stakeholders over time. We continue to:

- maintain a twitter presence – primarily for urgent/emergency messaging
- maintain a Facebook presence – for quirky, fun, general interest and emergency messaging
- maintain a LinkedIn company page
- utilise Instagram as appropriate
- regularly update our website and use this where appropriate to target stakeholders and to provide customers with easy to access information about the corporation and its services.

Each of these channels target different segments of the community and require tailored messages.

### **Resources**

Current resources to implement the strategy and action plan amount to two full time staff, comprising:

- a Communications & Community Engagement Manager
- a Community Engagement Co-Ordinator

These resources are also supplemented through collaborative initiatives with other local agencies and their engagement teams.

### **Measures of performance**

The main indicators of how well the strategy and action plan perform include:

- quarterly updates in a Stakeholder Map by Executive Managers', which tracks our interaction with key external stakeholders
- additional stakeholder feedback, such as from community events, customer follow-up calls and engagement activities
- the results of our annual customer satisfaction and other surveys
- identified trends in relation to customer contact with the corporation, including billing and service enquiries and complaints (as identified by customer follow-up calls)

- quality and level of stakeholder/customer input to shape our 2018-2023 price submission
- the quality and quantity of media coverage
- the popularity of social media tools (indicated through likes, follows, shares, etc)
- the effectiveness and feedback of the Customer Committee (reported to the Board quarterly).

## **Review**

This strategy will be reviewed annually.

The action plan will be reported to the Board every six months.

## Community Engagement Action Plan 2017/18

Tool	Comments	2017/18 Action	Deadline	Outcome
Price Submission engagement	Community/stakeholder engagement will form a key component of the Price Submission process.	<p>Implement extensive community engagement based around IAP2 principles to capture and shape the 2018-23 price submission.</p> <p>Continue to <u>collaborate</u> and utilise existing forums to assist in understanding customer expectations including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Institute of Water Administration (IWA) Special Interest Groups</li> <li>• Our Gippsland MoU partners</li> <li>• Utilising wider industry networks</li> <li>• Meetings with industry/non-industry experts</li> <li>• Maintaining involvement and presence for the Water for Victoria</li> <li>• Maintaining connections and relationship with the Essential Services Commission</li> </ul>	Final to ESC Sep 2017	<p>Complete.</p> <p>6 rounds of engagement completed.</p> <p>Submission fast tracked.</p> <p>Links to ESC on website to assist with ESC engagement.</p>
Stakeholder Map	The focus of the stakeholder map is on customers and non-customers and East Gippsland Water's interaction with them.	<p>Managers carry out quarterly updates ensuring appropriate targeted engagement is undertaken.</p> <p>Regarding: Chair/MD engagement with key stakeholders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to maintain connections with government</li> <li>• Continue fostering relationships with MoU partners</li> <li>• Annual MoU dinner with Shire</li> <li>• Meetings with large customers/stakeholders</li> </ul>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>On target</p> <p>On target</p>



Tool	Comments	2017/18 Action	Deadline	Outcome
Media releases	Careful timing and placement of releases has helped to maximise appropriate broadcast/print media coverage.	Aim for at least two media releases/month.  Need to increase customer awareness of wastewater services, liveability, environmental sustainability, the financial hardship program and publicity surrounding the Price Submission.	Jun 2018	Total media release issued during 2017/18 – <b>16</b> This is due to other business priorities focus was on using In the Flow.
News sheets/ Advertorials	<b>On Tap</b> news sheet <b>In the Flow</b> advertorial  (both are particularly useful for publicising Target Your Water use water efficiency measures and Water for Victoria)	Aim for four issues/year.  Aim for 12 advertorials/year	Jun 2018	Complete – four issues produced between July 2017 and June 2018. Focus on Prices kept to a minimum, Stormwater and sewerage don't mix, Your water supply in a bushfire, Choose Tap and Trade waste.  Complete – feedback on Price Submission engagement and projects and roll out, updates on projects, National Water Week, pump station painting projects, Choose Tap, being smart with water, dry spells and water leaks, Industrial private property fire protection.
Mail outs/Email	Mail outs and emails have been used regularly – eg. to target local schools in relation to water education initiatives such as the National Water Week poster competition.	Continue to use as appropriate  Investigate and implement emailing On Tap news sheet to customers with their bill.	Ongoing  Jun 2018	Ongoing – letter to schools outline options for programs sent Jan 2018. National Water Week pack sent to school – May 2018.  Ongoing communication with schools throughout the year around education program.

Tool	Comments	2017/18 Action	Deadline	Outcome
				Aquarate update has been installed and html emails are now an option. Due to competing priorities this function will be rolled out during bill cycle 2 2018/19.
Brochures / information sheets	There is a brochure range covering customer service and environmental information, and information about the corporation's infrastructure. These assist with tours/presentations.	Continue to review/update the material as appropriate.	Ongoing	Ongoing program. New leaflets have been published for operational sites. A new tradewaste leaflet has been created and published.  Working with Customer Team to update other leaflets as requested.
Website/social media	The current East Gippsland Water website was revamped in 2015/16 and continues to develop as a major information source for the local community and as a recruitment tool.  Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn are being increasingly utilised to promote East Gippsland Water and our services.	Maintain, regularly monitor and update as appropriate.  Regularly monitor and update as appropriate. Aim to increase the number of page likes.	Ongoing  Ongoing	Website regularly updated. Recent updates of information leaflets, National Water Week 2018 poster competition.  <b>10-7-2018</b> Likes / follows - Facebook 556 / 561 Followers Twitter - 1,014 <b>8-1-2018</b> Likes / follows Facebook 505 / 211 Followers Twitter - 918

Tool	Comments	2017/18 Action	Deadline	Outcome
Annual Report	A useful tool for stakeholders, particularly Government and opinion leaders, it is also a regulatory requirement.	Sign -off and table 2016/17 in Parliament  Start preparations for the 2017/18 Annual Report to meet regulatory requirements. This will be completed and tabled in parliament in the first half of 201/19.	Sep 2017  Oct 2017	Completed – tabled in parliament September 2017 as per gov. req.  Ongoing
Tours / presentations / events	These are organised at the request of customers, including community groups and schools. They enable us to highlight our achievements and initiatives, whilst also increasing community awareness of the corporation's challenges and responsibilities. Events include field days, careers fairs and National Water Week.	Aim for at least 30 tours/presentations per year.  Seek out opportunistic initiatives such as open days, where appropriate, and the official opening of new infrastructure.	Jun 2018  Jun 2018	<b>Total 2017/18 – 47</b> January – June 2018 <b>Total - 20</b> Tours – 14 Presentations – 5 Careers Expo – 1  July – Dec 2017 <b>Total - 27</b> Tours – 11 Presentations – 10 Activity session – 1 NWW presentations – 5  Over 300 posters received as part of NWW poster Competition
Community support	Financial, merchandise and in-kind support is provided to a number of local organisations, community groups and schools. Requests are considered against strict criteria.	Continue to actively promote the Choose Tap initiative, including through the roll out of water refill stations at suitable community locations around East Gippsland.	Ongoing	Fountain request received from Omeo Lions group – waiting on installation at end of financial year.  Funding support has been provided to various community groups and organisations, activities and events throughout

Tool	Comments	2017/18 Action	Deadline	Outcome
	The water trailer and Meet Pat portable water refill stations create a highly visible and positive image for the corporation at community events across the region.	<p>Collaborate through the Gippsland Regional Water Alliance to implement regional water education and messaging programs where appropriate.</p> <p>Implement an engagement campaign to market and educate about our hardship program</p> <p>Aim for at least 30 community bookings per year which help to promote Choose Tap.</p>	<p>Jun 2018</p> <p>Dec 2017</p> <p>Jun 2018</p>	<p>the year including The East Gippsland Business Awards and Authur Grassby Kokoda Scholarship.</p> <p>Sharing and liking of posts on Facebook and Twitter</p> <p>Program will be rolled out with implementation of the Price Submission.</p> <p><b>Total bookings – 40</b>  Jan – June 2018 <b>Total - 22</b>  Water Trailer – 20  Meet Pat – 2</p> <p>July – Dec 2017 <b>Total - 18</b>  Water Trailer – 13  Meet Pat – 5</p>
Customer Committee	This provides a primary engagement link between us and our customers, particularly in the development and renewal of strategies that will form the building blocks of future corporate and plans price submissions.	<p>Actively involve the committee in discussions surrounding current levels of services and where East Gippsland Water should be heading in the future, particularly with regard to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the 2018-2023 Price Submission, and</li> <li>• preferences in relation to liveable communities, recreation and integrated water management</li> </ul>	<p>Draft to ESC Sep 2017</p> <p>June 2018</p>	Customer Committee empowered to develop the GSLs for the Price Sub. Also involved in reviewing all 6 stages of engagement with the community. Helped formulate questions and reviewed results for acceptance into the Price Sub. Assisted with the developed the Native Vegetation and Habitat Creation grants program and will

Tool	Comments	2017/18 Action	Deadline	Outcome
				be involved with grant application assessments going forward.
IAP2 Framework	We are committed to implementing IAP2 methodology to underpin our engagement processes.	Ensure implementation of IAP2 engagement processes as part of project management plans.  Assist development of EGW engagement plans with the aboriginal community.	Ongoing  Ongoing	Ongoing  Ongoing
Internal communications	<b>Drip Feed</b> – The <i>Drip Feed</i> branding has been used to publicise important news and staff announcements.	Commence review of <i>Drip Feed</i> and the intranet in collaboration with HR, with a view to enhancing internal communications.	Ongoing	<b>'What's Happening'</b> – MD's Blog, has replaced <i>Drip Feed</i> . Updating staff monthly.
Annual customer satisfaction survey	Used to gauge how well the corporation is performing with services/engagement and assists planning for the future.	Undertake a comparative annual survey in collaboration with water corporation MoU partners to help gauge levels of customer satisfaction.	Dec 2017	Completed
Customer follow up calls	Used to gauge how well the corporation is performing in addressing water and wastewater incidents reported by customers.	Undertake follow up calls with at least 10% of customers who have contacted us each month, to determine if they are satisfied or not with the service, we are providing.	Ongoing	Completed. New methodology developed and fully implemented – Feb 2018. Jan – June – 51 follow up calls completed