

MEDIA RELEASE

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Keeping water bills down

East Gippsland Water is reinforcing its commitment to provide affordable water and sewerage services by ensuring no increase to the average customer bill over the next 12 months, and through to at least the end of June 2023, save for inflation.

Current, high levels of service will also be maintained.

East Gippsland Water's Managing Director, Steve McKenzie, said, "As a state government-owned enterprise, and provider of essential services, we have to make sure that our customers receive reliable and high quality water and sewerage services now and well into the future. We also have to ensure that these services are provided efficiently and represent good value for money.

"Taking inflation into account, it means the average residential customer, using 146kL (146,000 litres) of water a year, will see their combined bills for water and sewerage increase by \$7.71 overall for the 2019/20 financial year - from \$1,184.27 to \$1,191.98. The actual cost will be lower for those consuming less water and higher for those consuming more."

Over the same period, East Gippsland Water is looking to invest around \$16 million in a major capital works program. This will include replacing or upgrading ageing infrastructure to maintain high quality, reliable services to customers, and takes into account regulatory requirements, long-term projections for population growth and climate change. Key projects include:

- commencing construction of a new 36 million litre water storage tank at the water storage facility in Wy Yung
- completing construction of a new six-million-litre drinking water storage tank in Sarsfield and the upgrade of around six kilometres of water supply pipeline in the Sarsfield area
- upgrade work to the Food Waste to Energy process at Bairnsdale wastewater Treatment Plant. This project includes a \$210,000 funding grant from Sustainability Victoria.

The organisation will also be spending around \$20 million for the day-to-day operation and maintenance of existing water and sewerage infrastructure.

Other specific customer priorities and preferences covered by East Gippsland Water's five year business plan are being maintained. These include: providing grants to local schools and community groups for environmental projects; bill rebates for outdoor community-run, not-for-profit recreation groups; and, maintaining current levels of financial assistance to customers experiencing genuine financial difficulty paying their water bills.

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