

Customer values short survey

2023 – 2028 Price Submission

Report compiled February 2022

Executive Summary

Between November 2021 and January 2022, Barwon Water issued a values check-in survey with customers as part of the process to develop the 2023-2028 Price Submission.

As part of this survey, Barwon Water received 56 responses that captured customer sentiments across 14 different postcode regions.

Customers remain environmentally focused with the top priorities for survey respondents relating to the environment, including:

1. Increase productive use of recycled water
2. Encourage and assist customers to save more water
3. Protect and enhance catchment and waterway health including rivers

Services that could be considered “business as usual” for Barwon Water were ranked lowest and included:

12. Reduce the number and/or impact of planned and unplanned water supply interruptions
13. Make it easier and quicker to deal with us, across a range of platforms

Around a third of customers (29%) said they were experiencing increased water consumption due to spending more time at home during the pandemic, while 23% said their circumstances remained relatively unchanged.

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Methodology

Theming of comments

Barwon Water has grouped comments made by respondents into broad categories or themes. The number or percentage of comments against each theme has been calculated based on the total number of comments received in relation to that specific question or activity. Some comments were grouped under multiple themes and some comments were not related to a key theme. Therefore the number of comments made in response to a question or activity may not equal the total number of comments or ideas counted against the themes identified.

Survey overview

The survey was delivered electronically and built using the Barwon Water 'Your Say' website. Hard copy surveys were also made available to those who were not comfortable using the online portal. The survey was available on the Your Say website from the 11 November 2021 until the 31 January 2022.

The survey was promoted through Barwon Water's social media accounts, a customer e-newsletter, a media release to all local papers and by attendance at two local markets (Anglesea Twilight Market and Torquay Farmers Market).

Additional markets were planned, however, due to health and safety directions to manage COVID-19, these did not proceed.

Participant profile

Some demographic information was collected from survey participants. This has been summarized below.

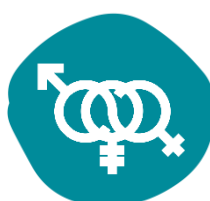


56

People
engaged

31

Women



22

Men

2

Non-binary

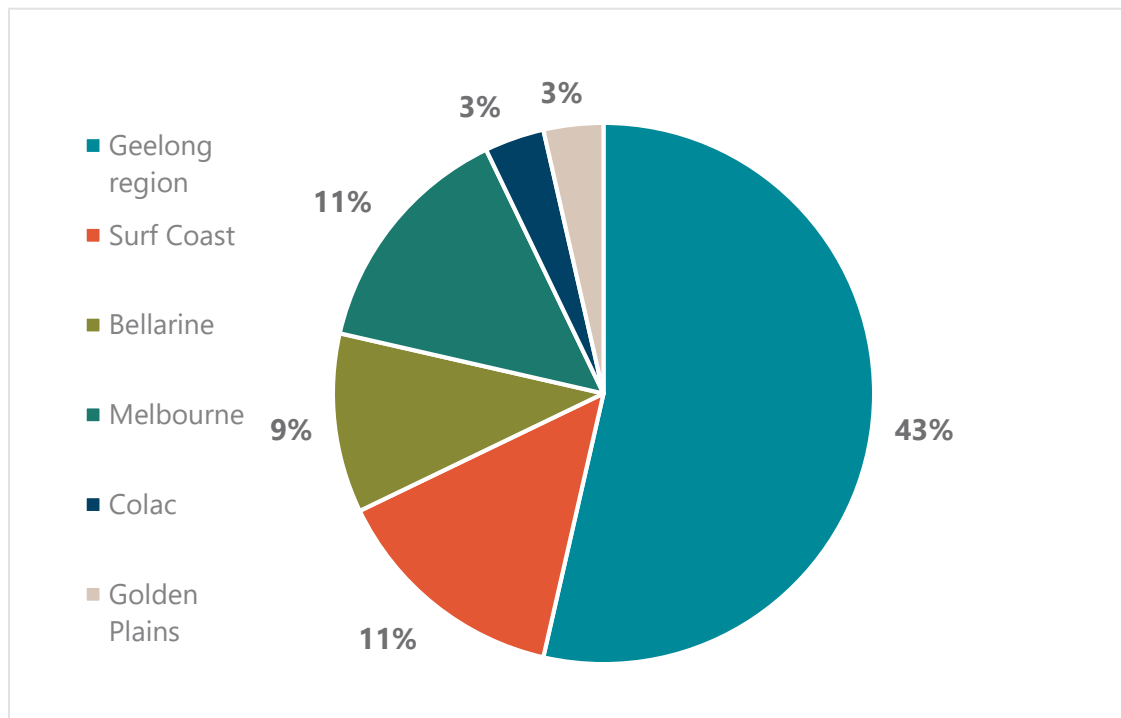


14

Across 14
postcodes

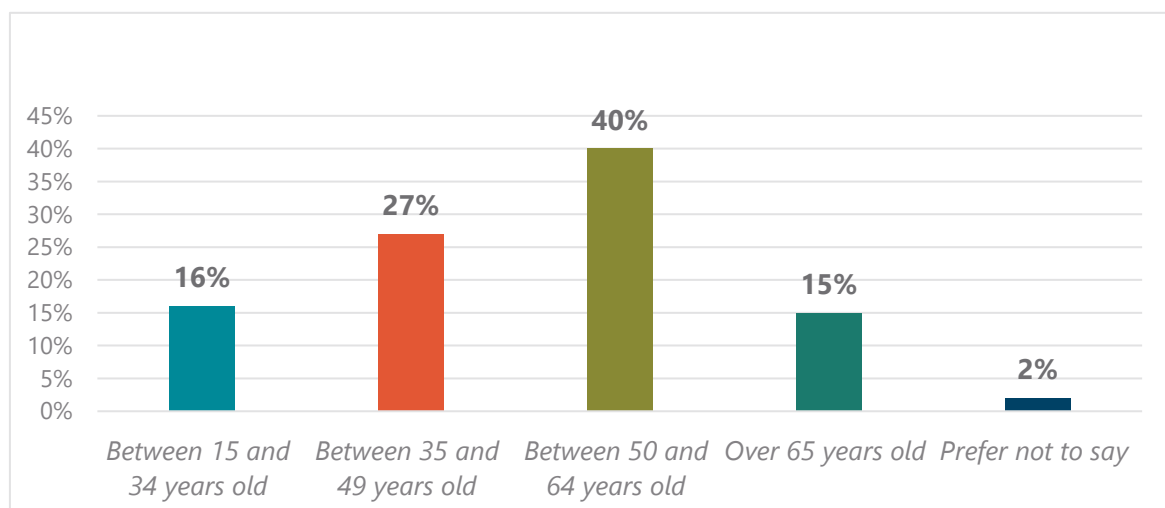
Geographic spread

Postcode information was collected from participants and this showed that the largest cohort of respondents (43%) were from the Geelong region, including Corio, East Geelong and Waurin Ponds. The survey was open to anyone living in or visiting the Barwon Water region. There were 14 unique postcodes entered which have been summarised in the following regions:



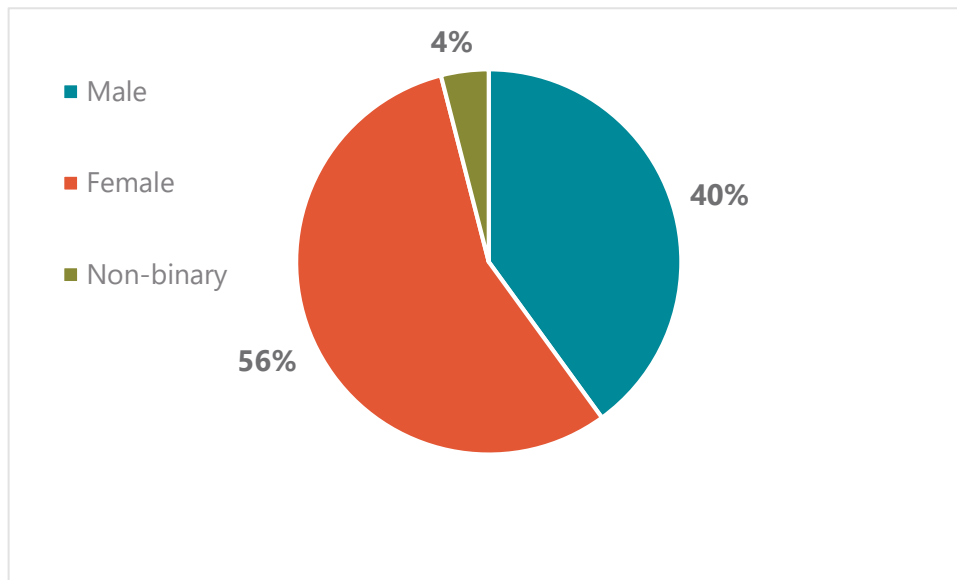
Age

Participants responding to the online survey were asked which age range (from a variety of age ranges provided) represented their age. The majority of respondents were aged between 50 and 64 years old (40%).



Gender

Respondent were asked what gender they most identify with. More women (56%) completed the survey, compared to 40% men, and 4% non-binary respondents.



Engagement findings

The past 12 months

Respondents were asked to indicate how life has changed for them in the past year and whether that changed their water use or the way they paid their bills.

The most common themes were people spending more time at home and therefore using more water (29%) or people's circumstances had not changed much at all (23%).

Theme	Description	% of comments	Examples
More time at home	Increased time person or family is at home due to COVID-19 or other factors led to perception of increased water consumption.	29%	<i>"Yes because my whole family were home all day every day we definitely used a lot more water"</i> <i>"Had a baby and water use has gone up."</i>
Circumstances unchanged	Water use or circumstances have not changed in the past 12 months	23%	<i>"I am retired and my water use is unchanged"</i> <i>"Has not changed really, haven't needed to water my plants as much because of our good rain fall"</i>
Changed living arrangements	Transitioned from renting to homeownership or vice versa. Also includes changes to number of housemates.	11%	<i>"Moved to an apartment where the rent includes water and sewer usage charges"</i> <i>"Three children moved out"</i>
Mindful of water use	More mindful of water use for environment, efficiency and at home awareness	9%	<i>"Mindful of use"</i> <i>"I've tried to be more conscious of water use to reduce my bills"</i>
More water for garden	Spending more time in the garden and increasing gardening water use	5%	<i>"Trying to establish a new lawn and garden has been challenging. Our water usage is high at the moment as we establish new plants and keep them alive."</i>
Less water for garden	Using less water on the garden due to wetter months.	5%	<i>"Using less water in the garden"</i> <i>"Concentrating on rebuilding my garden ... still"</i>

Theme	Description	% of comments	Examples
			<i>use my tanks for much of the watering."</i>
New home ownership	Purchased a new property which led to increases in number of bills	5%	<i>"More bills to pay as have purchased another property"</i> <i>"We moved into our first home. It is a shock having to pay all these additional expenses and seeing how much water we use."</i>
Reduced finances	Impact of COVID-19 reduced work hours so less financial freedom	4%	<i>"Covid reduced work hours tight budget."</i>
Other	Comments were made that did not fit into the above themes. Some of these are outlined in the examples.	10%	<i>"The increased rainfall of the past year has resulted in a greater flow of water in the Barwon River"</i> <i>"Have changed over to all bills now being emailed and paid on line"</i>

Ranking focus areas

Following the question around how life has changed in the past 12 months, respondents were invited to rank 13 focus areas from 1 to 13, where 1 was considered most important, and 13 least important.

The table below ranks the initiatives based on the average ranking provided by the 56 respondents. The average ranking takes into consideration what place the focus area was ranked by all respondents. 'Increase productive use of recycled water' was ranked the most important with an average ranking of 3.80 from customers. This means out of the 56 respondents, this focus area was on average ranked in the top four.

Focus area	AVG. RANK	Importance
Increase productive use of recycled water	3.80	1
Encourage and assist customers to save more water	4.74	2
Protect and enhance catchment and waterway health including rivers	5.34	3
Increase use of renewable energy and reduce our carbon emissions	6.30	4
Provide more support for financially vulnerable customers	6.44	5
Turn our wastes into productive resources	6.69	6

Focus area	AVG. RANK	Importance
Work with Traditional Owners to Care for Country	7.06	7
Provide essential water and sewerage services to towns in our region that are currently unserved (e.g. not connected to our water or sewerage services)	7.32	8
Reduce the likelihood of water restrictions in all but severe drought	7.88	8
Reduce the number and/or impact of sewer spills to property and the environment	8.10	9
Provide digital meters so customers can better understand and manage their water use	8.32	10
Reduce the number and/or impact of planned and unplanned water supply interruptions	8.61	11
Make it easier and quicker to deal with us, across a range of platforms	8.72	12

Other feedback

Finally, customers were invited to share any other insights or feedback they had for Barwon Water.

Theme	Description	% of comments	Examples
More environmentally focused	Encouraging Barwon Water to seek environmentally friendly solutions including low carbon energy sources and other initiatives to protect the natural environment.	19%	<i>"Focus on Environmental Sustainability and mitigating against climate change"</i> <i>"More tree planting to shade areas to minimise evaporation."</i>
Barwon Water is doing a good job	Comments provide praise to the work that Barwon Water is doing.	6%	<i>"I think Barwon Water is doing a terrific job to help people"</i> <i>"Keep doing job we're doing at Barwon downs"</i>
River management	More management of private pumping from rivers and environmental flows for river ways	6%	<i>"The need to restrict/manage the use of river water through private pumping from the river"</i> <i>"Work with partners to improve river health"</i>
Affordability is a priority	Affordability should be a main driver and focus for planning	6%	<i>"Affordability of the service. Needs to be a priority"</i>
Billing improvements	Provide improved information on the bills, including notifications	6%	<i>"Improve your billing layout"</i>

Theme	Description	% of comments	Examples
Water quality	Safe, secure water and the water taste is very important	6%	<p><i>"Water taste is different vs Melbourne. Taste is very important."</i></p> <p><i>"Providing clean, safe water. That should be number one. Always."</i></p>
No comment	No comment or 'no' was provided	23%	---
Other	Comments were made that did not fit into the above themes. Some of these are outlined in the examples.	26%	<p><i>"The number of new houses and establishing of these homes will stretch availability."</i></p> <p><i>"Most people are unaware of how severe the water supply issue is"</i></p> <p><i>"It would be great to understand more about what the water bills actually pay for and why water usage is so cheap compared to other utility bills"</i></p>

Appendix A: Survey questions

Online wider engagement hosted on www.yoursay.barwonwater.vic.gov.au

Help shape our five year promise to customers

Q1: How has life changed for you in the last year? Has that changed your water use at all, or the way you pay your bills?

Q2: We're proposing to update our outcomes (customer promise) to:

1. Secure, sustainable water
2. Innovative and reliable services
3. Healthier environment
4. Affordability, trust and value

On a scale of 1 – 5, how comfortable are you with the proposed outcome updates?

1. Very uncomfortable
2. Uncomfortable
3. Neither comfortable or uncomfortable
4. Comfortable
5. Very comfortable

Q3: Focus areas for 2023 to 2028

Barwon Water is committed to regional prosperity and our vision not only encompasses economic, social, and environmental elements, but also recreational and cultural elements, including enhancing Aboriginal cultural values.

Help us understand what **focus areas** are most important to you for our services in 2023 and beyond.

Please rank the below from most important (1) to least important (13).

- ☐ Increase productive use of recycled water
- ☐ Encourage and assist customers to save more water
- ☐ Provide more support for financially vulnerable customers
- ☐ Make it easier and quicker to deal with us, across a range of platforms
- ☐ Work with Traditional Owners to Care for Country
- ☐ Provide essential water and sewerage services to towns in our region that are currently unserviced
- ☐ Reduce the number and/or impact of planned or unplanned water supply interruptions
- ☐ Reduce the likelihood of water restrictions in all but severe drought
- ☐ Reduce the number and/or impact of sewer spills to property and the environment
- ☐ Provide digital meters so that customers can better understand and manage their water use
- ☐ Get to our target of zero net emissions quicker than 2030
- ☐ Undertake projects that deliver healthier environment
- ☐ Facilitate production of our own renewable energy from organic waste to help us achieve our target of zero net emissions

Q4: Is there anything missing, or any other feedback you would like to share?

Q5: What is your postcode?

A little about you

Q6: How old are you?

- ☐ Between 15 and 34 years old
- ☐ Between 35 and 49 years old
- ☐ Between 50 and 64 years old
- ☐ Over 65 years old
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Q7: How do you describe your gender?

- ☐ Female
- ☐ Male
- ☐ Non-binary
- ☐ I use a different term (please specify) _____
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Q8: In the past 12 months, how often have you or your family ever struggled to pay any of your bills?

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Occasionally - once or twice
- ☐ Sometimes – every couple of months
- ☐ Often – most months
- ☐ All the time

Thanks for taking the time to tell us what you value. If you would like to go in the draw to win \$50 off your next water bill, or stay up to date with future engagement opportunities, please fill in your contact details below.

Full Name

Preferred contact number

Preferred email address

- ☐ Please enter me in the draw to win \$50 off my next water bill
- ☐ Please register me for future engagement opportunities