

Yarra Valley Water – Outcomes – 2018–2023

In this document, the water business provides a summary report of its actual performance against each of its outcome commitments for the 2022-23 reporting year. The business has given itself a “traffic light” rating (green = met target, red = not met, yellow = close or largely met) for its performance on each measure, outcome and an overall rating. The business has provided its own comments about its performance on each outcome and overall.

Summary table

Outcome	18-19	19-20	20-21	21-22	22-23
1. Safe drinking water	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
2. Reliable water and sewerage services	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Green
3. Timely response and restoration	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
4. Fair access and assistance for all	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
5. Water availability and conservation	Red	Yellow	Yellow	Red	Red
6. Modern flexible service	Yellow	Green	Green	Green	Green
7. Care for and protect the environment	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
Overall	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green

Business comments

This was the fifth year and final year we worked towards 7 service outcomes customers told us they valued most and expected from us over the 2018-23 period. We set ambitious targets with our customers' expectations in mind, and we're pleased to report that we met 6 out of 7 outcomes this year. Overall, for the 5 years, we've achieved 27 of 35 annual outcome targets (78%).

As well as the 7 outcomes we worked towards each year, we also committed to deliver major infrastructure work to expand and upgrade our water and sewerage network to keep up with Melbourne's population growth. Since 2018, we've invested more than \$560 million to do this. We're providing services to new customers in the northern growth corridor and expect to provide drinking water, recycled water and sewerage services to more than 100,000 new properties over the next 20 years in the north.

As part of this work, we delivered 9 out of 10 major projects. 6 were associated with new infrastructure to service a growing Melbourne and 4 were all about bringing a reticulated sewerage system to communities in Monbulk, the Patch, Sassafras, Sherbrooke and Kallista. We intentionally deferred our 10th major project, a 3rd sewage tank as part of the Craigieburn sewage flow storage and distribution hub, deferred to achieve greater efficiency by building the 3rd tank at the same time as the 4th tank when it's required.

We heard from customers regularly during these 5 years and they're highly satisfied with our level of responsiveness and service interactions with us. We've improved how quickly we respond to bursts, leaks, sewage spills and blockages and customers' satisfaction with us in these areas has also increased. Customers also rated us in the top quartile of water providers in Victoria, as independently polled by the Essential Services Commission. This tracks overall customer satisfaction value for money, reputation and trust.

We're committed to keeping bills affordable and the average annual household bill was lower in these 5 years than in 2013-14. Delivering compounding efficiencies of 1.5% per annum helped contribute to this.

Our new 5-year plan for 2023-28 reflects the voices of our customers and community. We've engaged with customers, stakeholders and the community to find out what they value and what matters to them. We've evolved our 7 outcomes and annual targets into 6 outcomes with 17 annual targets. We'll continue to back our commitments through our annual community rebate and report performance publicly.

A summary of our performance of each outcome is also provided on our [website](#).

Outcome 1: Safe drinking water

Output	Unit		16-17	17-18	18-19	19-20	20-21	21-22	22-23
a Number of Safe Drinking Water Act non-compliances (water sampling and audit)	Number	Target	–	0	0	0	0	0	0
		Actual	0	1	0	0	0	0	0

Note: 16-17 and 17-18 results are reported as at 30 June. Results from 18-19 onwards are reported as at 31 March.

Overall outcome 1 performance for the regulatory period:



Business comment

Providing safe, high quality drinking water is our most important deliverable and we achieved 100% compliance with the Safe Drinking Water Regulations 2015, with zero water sampling and audit non-compliances.

We have a comprehensive water quality monitoring program that ensures the water we supply is high quality, safe and pleasant to drink. An independent laboratory collected and tested over 7,100 water samples this year and we monitored and tested the water from over 1,200 randomly selected customer taps in 34 different water quality zones – achieving 100% compliance.

In April 2023, we successfully passed the regulatory audit of our Drinking Water Risk Management Plan required under the Safe Drinking Water Act (2003) and carried out by a Department of Health approved auditor. Our Drinking Water Risk Management Plan provides the framework for how we manage risks to water quality and is based on implementing preventative measures, proactive controls and multiple barriers. This year we also:

- Commissioned an additional 6 secondary chlorinators with real time monitoring equipment in our network. These chlorinators provide an additional disinfection barrier at our water storage tank sites to ensure we continue to maintain a multi-barrier approach to water quality.
- Conducted routine inspections and maintenance of 13 drinking water storage tanks and carried out improvement works at a further 3 tanks.
- Conducted approximately 10,600 water audits at customer properties, enabling greater use of recycled water in gardens, laundries and toilets.
- Cleaned around 530 kilometres of water mains, removing natural sediment that can cause complaints.
- Continued our trial to assess the performance of five different types of online water quality monitoring equipment. We'll consider installing suitable equipment identified from this trial at strategic locations across our network in the next regulatory period (2023-24 to 2028-29).
- Launched an interactive online advanced water quality training module for fault call takers and staff who manage water quality complaints. This is part of a long-term project to enhance the accessibility of the water quality training we provide across our business and partners.

We regularly report on water quality and more information can be found [here](#).

Outcome 2: Reliable water and sewerage services

Output	Unit		16-17	17-18	18-19	19-20	20-21	21-22	22-23
a Customers who experience 3 or more unplanned water interruptions or 3 or more sewerage service interruptions in 12 months (5 year rolling average)	Percentage	Target	–		<0.96%	<0.96%	<0.96%	<0.96%	<0.96%
		Actual	0.96%	0.91%	0.94%	0.98%	0.98%	0.84%	0.78%

Note: 16-17 and 17-18 5-year average results as at 30 June. Results from 18-19 onwards will be reported as at 31 March.

Overall outcome 2 performance for the regulatory period:



Business comment

Our intention is to reduce service failures for customers who receive inconsistent levels of service. This year we achieved the target, with a similar number of customers experiencing three or more unexpected interruptions compared to last year. Our actions included:


- Renewing 30.6km of aging and poor performing water mains.
- Renewing 40.4km of aging and poor performing sewerage pipes.
- Inspecting 196km of sewerage pipes to assess their condition and identify potential blockages.
- Inspecting 1467 property connection sewer branches to check the integrity of the pipes.
- Renewing more than 924 property connection sewer branches that impacted customers.
- Installing over 61 water valves to reduce the potential number of customers having their water interrupted.
- Rectifying over 286 valves and 914 hydrants to reduce the potential number of customers having their water interrupted.
- Proving the location of over 329 valves and 1,528 hydrants that had been buried or moved, to reduce the potential number of customers having their water interrupted.
- Identifying areas with a single source of water supply, suitable for introducing a backup source of water supply to reduce customer impacts.
- Implementing our failure prediction model into our water main renewals program, using machine learning techniques to increase the likelihood of identifying assets to replace before they fail.

This target is measured on a rolling five-year average basis, to minimise the impact of annual weather variations. This year, due to the actions we took and favourable weather conditions, 0.58% of customers experienced three or more water and sewerage interruptions. This equates to 0.78% of our customers experiencing three or more unexpected service interruptions on a rolling five-year average basis and meets our target of less than 0.96% customers impacted, as promised in our Price Submission.

Outcome 3: Timely response and restoration

Output	Unit		16-17	17-18	18-19	19-20	20-21	21-22	22-23
a Customers whose interrupted service (water and sewerage) has been restored within four hours	Percentage	Target	–		91.1%	91.1%	91.1%	91.1%	91.1%
		Actual	90.9%	93.0%	93.9%	95.1%	96.7%	96.1%	94.6%

Note: 16-17 and 17-18 results as at 30 June. Results from 18-19 onwards will be reported as at 31 March.

Overall outcome 3 performance for the regulatory period: 

Business comment

Our customers expect a fast response and effective restoration of their water and sewerage services if they're interrupted. Our goal is to turn water and sewerage services back on for customers as quickly as possible, and our benchmark is to do this within four hours.

The seasonal challenge of fixing emergency bursts and leaks quickly is ongoing as Melbourne experiences greater climate variability. We continued to focus on improving services including proactive and accessible communications and adjusting processes and procedures during peak summer periods.

To meet this target, we also:

- Continued to optimise our seasonal escalation processes, by improving our resourcing strategies and managing expectations during peak periods about attendance and rectification timeframes of smaller faults.
- Continued to work closely with our emergency maintenance contractors and other delivery partners, to review field processes and practices and find innovative ways to restore water or sewerage services sooner.

Outcome 4: Fair access and assistance for all

Output	Unit		16-17	17-18	18-19	19-20	20-21	21-22	22-23
a Customers who, having accessed its support programs, believe Yarra Valley Water helps customers experiencing difficulty paying for their water and sewerage services (via survey)	Percentage	Target	–		89%	89%	89%	89%	89%
		Actual	New	New	89%	90%	93%	93%	94%

Note: Results from 18-19 onwards will be reported as at 31 March.

Overall outcome 4 performance for the regulatory period:



Business comment

Customers have told us they value extra support for customers who struggle to pay for their water and sewerage services. Customers also expect us to improve awareness of, and access to, the support options available to customers experiencing financial difficulty. Building on the improvements from 2021-22, we continued focussing on appropriate resourcing so that we’re there for customers when they need us, for short or long-term support. This ensured we continued to maintain our high level of service and exceed our target, despite growing numbers of customers accessing support. In 2022-23, we worked with 6,621 new customers in our WaterCare Support program and helped transition 5,615 customers back to mainstream payments after a period experiencing hardship.

During 2022-23 we were able to return to a broader mix of engagement, after the constraints of the pandemic. We maintained our presence on key community networks, such as with colleagues in emergency relief, to share information, stay in touch and keep abreast of the emerging issues facing the community. As well as this we were able to return to face-to-face engagement. To raise awareness of the support available, and to improve access to this support, we:

- Ran a WaterCare awareness marketing campaign to reach customers who may need access to our support programs. Using a data-driven approach, we were able to effectively target people who may benefit from hearing messages about Watercare in a timely and relevant way. We used multiple touchpoints and adapted the program for different languages, First Nations audiences and the deaf and hard of hearing community.
- Built our in-person presence across different community settings across the year.
- Introduced home visits as a means of re-engaging with WaterCare Support Team customers we have lost contact with and who have stopped paying. Since late 2022, we’ve visited over 980 customers and have been able to re-engage with 40% of those customers who are now accessing support through our Arrange & Save payment arrangements, Utility Relief Grants and referrals into external support services.

Outcome 5: Water availability and conservation

Output	Unit		16-17	17-18	18-19	19-20	20-21	21-22	22-23
a Total water usage	Litres per person per day	Target	–		221	217	213	211	210
		Actual	220	231	233	221	214	219	225

Note: 16-17 and 17-18 results as at 30 June. Results from 18-19 onwards will be reported as at 31 March.

Overall outcome 5 performance for the regulatory period:



Business comment

This target reflects our customers’ expectations that we achieve ongoing efficiencies to help save water now for the future. Our ambitious annual target is a holistic measure comprising the water we buy from Melbourne Water, the water customers use, non-revenue water used for firefighting and water lost due to system leakage, bursts and leaking pipes. The target is challenging as consumption is significantly impacted by weather. However, overall water use has decreased in recent years - from 233 L/person/per day in 2018-19 to 221 L/person/per day in 2019-20, to 225 litres L/person/per day in 2022-23. We undertook the following programs and initiatives to meet this target:

- Analysed the summer Make Every Drop Count campaign, a collaborative water conservation campaign with the metropolitan Melbourne water corporations. The analysis found 30% surveyed recalled the campaign – with 80% deliberately taking some form of action as a result.
- Delivered the Shower Shorter campaign targeting those with low levels of water efficiency (aged under 35) and the part of the house which uses the most water (showers). For those who recalled the campaign, 60% claimed to have taken shorter showers because of the campaign.
- Continued delivering the water conservation education program in primary schools across our service area. Despite two terms being impacted by coronavirus (COVID-19) restrictions, the program has delivered 393 incursions across 58 schools.
- Continued to pilot a showerhead exchange program, with over 550 water-efficient showerheads provided to customers.
- Inducted 20 new schools into the School Water Efficiency Program, bringing the total number of participating schools to over 355.
- Extended our recycled water main network to over 740 kilometres - providing recycled water to over 44,000 properties, with significant investment across the recycled water network and treatment plants to increase reliability and production of recycled water.
- Produced 358 million litres of recycled water for councils to use on public gardens and sporting ovals, and for non-drinking purposes.
- Conducted about 10,600 recycled water audits, enabling greater use of recycled water in gardens, laundries and toilets.
- Saved 1,948 million litres of water through proactive leak detection across 2,326 kilometres of water mains and pipes.
- Saved 909 million litres of water by proactively monitoring our network for leaks that aren’t visible at ground level.
- Installed an additional 86 network flow and pressure monitoring devices in our water supply network to identify leaks that aren’t visible from the surface. This means 36% of our water supply network is now monitored in real-time so we can investigate and repair leaks faster.

Outcome 6: Modern flexible service

Output	Unit		16-17	17-18	18-19	19-20	20-21	21-22	22-23
a Customers who are satisfied with their most recent interaction (via survey)	Percentage of customers surveyed	Target	–		86%	86%	86%	86%	86%
		Actual	85%	83.8%	82%	87%	87%	88%	86%

Note: 16-17 and 17-18 results as at 30 June. Results from 18-19 onwards will be reported as at 31 March.

Overall outcome 6 performance for the regulatory period:



Business comment

We're committed to providing the best service possible to our customers, creating great experiences, and ensuring customers are satisfied with each interaction they have with us.

Throughout the 2022-23 period, we were able to reduce our costs to serve customers while simultaneously improving the customer experience by investing in digitisation and automation across the customer experience lifecycle.

The customer experience-led improvements we made include:

- Developed a Future Customer Experience program and plan to define a unified view on the future customer experience and inform the future technology roadmap.
- Continuing work on re-designing and improving our online self-service portals for customers and land developers.
- Launched new self-serve user forms in our website, improved usability and findability of digital tools to allow customers to easily execute some one-off transactions anywhere / anytime.
- Delivered improvements in Interactive Voice Response services to allow customers to self-serve and reduce waiting times on the phone.
- Developed and launched our WaterCare campaign to reach, and offer, tailored financial support services to customers experiencing hardship.
- Executed accessibility experience audits across new self-serve website forms (e.g. pay with credit card, move in/out). The learnings have been also used during the development of the new self-serve platforms, like My Account and Land Development Services, to incorporate compliance with the Victorian Government Web Content Accessibility Guidelines. The guidelines establish the requirements and best usability practice approaches across the design and delivery of all digital services. This work is also informing Yarra Valley Water's approach to inclusion policy, practices and standards across all customer digital experiences.

Outcome 7: Care for and protect the environment

Output	Unit		16-17	17-18	18-19	19-20	20-21	21-22	22-23
a Reduction in carbon emissions (cumulative) Baseline is 34,083 Tonnes CO ₂ e in 2016-17	Percentage	Target	–		4.0%	14.5%	31.5%	46.1%	52.5%
		Actual	NA	NA	4.1%	14.7%	31.7%	46.3%	54.0%

Overall outcome 7 performance for the regulatory period:



Business comment

We've pledged to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) by 64% by 1 July 2025. This Emissions Reduction Pledge is our response to lessening the impact of our energy intensive core services, which have significant environmental implications.

To reach this year's goal and work towards our Emissions Reduction Pledge, we:

- Consolidated our transition away from carbon intensive fuels by increasing our renewable electricity use to 68%.
- Further improved energy productivity to reduce energy consumption so we get the most out of every unit of energy we consume.
- Committed to the Growing Carbon project in collaboration with Melbourne Water and Greater Western Water to enable small-scale biodiverse carbon plantings in the Port Phillip and Western Port Region.

To reach our future goals and work towards our Emissions Reduction Pledge, we will:

- Install more electric vehicle charging infrastructure to accelerate our transition towards a zero-emission fleet by 2030.
- Expand renewable electricity generation at our first waste to energy facility - the additional energy is around 15% of our energy requirements.
- Build a second, larger food waste to energy facility to process food waste and create electricity, which will transform up to 150 tonnes of waste per day into 33,000 kWh of renewable energy – around 33% of our energy requirements.
- Continue to source 20% of our energy requirements from a large-scale solar farm in north-west Victoria that is facilitated by Zero Emissions Water Ltd (ZEW).
- Construct a 1,296kW floating solar system at our Wallan sewage treatment plant that will also improve the quality of feedstock water for our recycled water treatment plant.
- Continue with plans to install non-invasive large market ground-mounted solar systems at 5 sites.