

Public engagement summary: Water price review 2023

We released our final decision and price determination for the maximum charges customers from 14 water businesses across the state will pay for their services from 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2028.

Project background

We reviewed the prices that the 14 water businesses propose to charge customers for prescribed services from 1 July 2023.¹ The prescribed services include retail water and sewerage services, and bulk water and sewerage services delivered by the water businesses.

We assessed the water businesses price submissions using the legal framework established by the Victorian Government and set out in the [Water Industry Regulatory Order \(PDF\)](#), and the commission's [PREMO pricing framework](#) which includes incentives for each water business to put forward its best offer to customers and deliver the outcomes its customers value most and make a price determination. We introduced the 'Performance' element of PREMO, which holds businesses accountable for their price and service commitments from the previous price review.

As part of the review, we ran a public engagement process to ensure the views of interested stakeholders were considered. We have sought feedback from customers and stakeholders of the water businesses at multiple points to inform our decision-making process. The feedback we received at each stage was critical to informing our review. Activities we undertook included:

- Engage Victoria webpage to promote feedback
- inviting submissions on water businesses submissions and our draft decision
- public forums on our draft decision.

We made a price determination after issuing a draft decision and considering feedback from interested parties, including any response to the draft decision from the water businesses.

¹ The review excludes Melbourne Water, Goulburn-Murray Water, North East Water and Greater Western Water. In 2021 we approved prices for Melbourne Water to 30 June 2026 and in 2020 we approved prices for Goulburn-Murray Water to 30 June 2024. In 2018, we approved prices for North East Water to 30 June 2026. We have approved an extension to the regulatory period for Greater Western Water to 30 June 2024.

How we engaged



Key dates

- Open communication lines to hear any issue from the public from October 2022 to June 2023
- Over 8 weeks of consultation on the water businesses submission
- At least 5 weeks of consultation on our draft decision
- Requirements of our pricing framework required business to consult with customer and community before lodging the submission to us.



Methodology

- Water businesses had the opportunity to present their proposals directly to ESC's commissioners.
- We sought feedback and submissions via Engage Victoria for the duration of the two consultation periods.
- Commissioners chaired public forums to provide opportunities to participate and provide feedback on our draft decision.
- We publicly advertised to encourage people to attend public forums and submit their feedback during the consultation process.
- We ran a dedicated social media campaign to promote feedback and communicate milestones.



Number of participants

- 2,737 visitors collectively viewed our Engage Victoria consultation page 8,107 times between 3 October 2022 to 12 May 2023.
- 172 attendees to our 14 public forums including customers, customer representative groups, community groups, interested stakeholders, Victorian government representatives, water business staff and ESC staff.



Number of submissions received (written, verbal)

72 public submissions throughout the overall process

- Public submissions on water businesses price submissions
 - 43 written submissions on specific water business price submissions
 - 3 submissions intended for all 14 water businesses
 - 1 submission intended for all urban water businesses
- Public submissions on our draft decisions
 - 24 submissions on our draft decisions for specific businesses
 - 1 submission intended for all 14 water businesses on our draft decision.


Our public forums

Online and in hybrid public forums

Commissioners chaired 14 public forums between February and May 2023. 10 Forums were held online and four were hybrid (allowing for in-person and online simultaneously). All public forums for the water price review 2023 were recorded and made available on our website and Engage Victoria gaining over 800 views as of 30 May 2023.




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Lower Murray Water Price Review 2023 public forum - 20 April 2023

Essential Services Commission • 31 views • 3 weeks ago
- 42




South East Water Price Review 2023 public forum - 2 May 2023

Essential Services Commission • 56 views • 3 weeks ago
- 43




South Gippsland Water Price Review 2023 public forum - 28 April 2023

Essential Services Commission • 29 views • 3 weeks ago
- 44




Wannon Water Price Review 2023 public forum - 27 April 2023

Essential Services Commission • 26 views • 3 weeks ago
- 45



Goulburn Valley Water Price Review 2023 public forum - 2 May 2023

Essential Services Commission • 28 views • 3 weeks ago
- 46



Southern Rural Water Price Review 2023 public forum - 1 May 2023

Essential Services Commission • 39 views • 3 weeks ago

Social media

We regularly posted on the water price review 2023 on our social media platforms including LinkedIn, Twitter and Facebook. The contents of the social media posts were on the following:

- Invitation for stakeholders to submit feedback on water price review 2023 during consultation periods
- Invitation for stakeholders to register to in-person and online public forums
- Key facts for each water business' 2023-2028 proposed pricing plan
- Final reminders to attend register for public forums and submit feedback on water price review 2023
- Public forum recordings being made available online post-event

Examples of the various tweets and posts we posted:

Essential Services Commission @EssentialVic · May 8
 Help us finalise our decision on your relevant water business' pricing and key outcomes for the next 5 years.

Visit Engage Victoria to have your say with consultation closing tomorrow for 7 Victorian water businesses: engage.vic.gov.au/water-price-re...



1 2 146

Essential Services Commission @EssentialVic · Apr 20
 We're almost ready for tonight's public forum on @LowMurWater's price review 2023 at Mildura Grand Hotel.

Can't make it in-person? There's still time to register & attend online: bit.ly/3N3MWZP

For more info, visit Engage Victoria: go.vic.gov.au/3ENJMEJ



1 2 180

Essential Services Commission
 5,415 followers
 1mo •

Consultation is closing tomorrow for our draft decisions on the price submissions of **Central Highlands Water, Goulburn Valley Water and Coliban Water.** ...see more

Have your say

Consultation closing soon for:

- Central Highlands Water
- Goulburn Valley Water
- Coliban Water

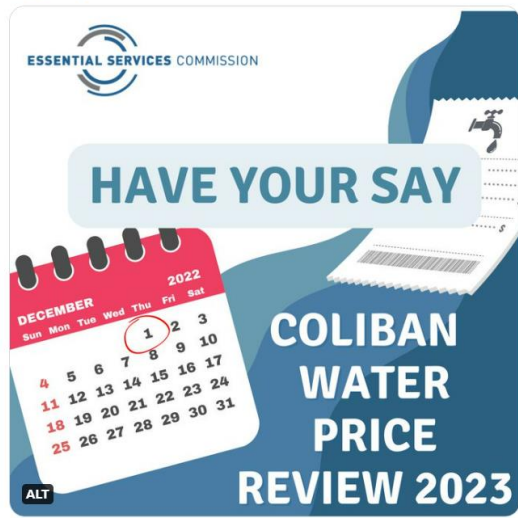
with Central Highlands Water and 2 others

Essential Services Commission
 5,415 followers
 1mo •

Today we wrapped up our final two public forums for **Goulburn Valley Water's** and **South East Water's** price reviews. ...see more

with Dean Wickenton and 3 others

Essential Services Commission @EssentialVic · Nov 30, 2022
 Do you have thoughts to share on @ColibanWater's proposed pricing and service priorities for 2023-2028?
 It's important to have your say! Get in touch with us by tomorrow 1 December 2022:
go.vic.gov.au/3OmiYhY



Coliban Water

Essential Services Commission @EssentialVic · Apr 13
 Join our public forum to learn more about our draft decision on @CHWaterVic's new prices to apply from 1 July 2023.
 2pm Fri 28 April 2023
 Register for free at bit.ly/3KVIZG9
 More info: go.vic.gov.au/3g1noOR



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Media

We released 16 media releases on the water price review 2023 from October 2022 to April 2023. One media release for each of the 14 water businesses and two general media releases reaching 1,750 views combined. Example of media releases on our website:



Media releases

12 April 2023

Regulator releases draft decision on Central Highlands Water’s proposed five-year pricing plan – customers to have their say ahead of final decision

The Essential Services Commission has released its draft decision on Central Highlands Water’s proposed five-year pricing plan for consultation, ahead of a final decision to be issued in June.



Media releases

12 April 2023

Regulator releases draft decision on Goulburn Valley Water’s proposed five-year pricing plan – customers to have their say ahead of final decision

The Essential Services Commission has released its draft decision on Goulburn Valley Water’s proposed five-year pricing plan for consultation, ahead of a final decision to be issued in June.

Engage Victoria

We used Engage Victoria throughout the course of this project to keep stakeholders informed and to seek feedback. Below is a snapshot of our Engage Victoria consultation page after consultation on the draft decision closed.

The screenshot shows the Engage Victoria website interface for the 'Water price review 2023' consultation. The page features a green header with navigation links for 'Consultations', 'About us', 'Contact us', 'Login', and 'Register'. A breadcrumb trail indicates the current location: 'Consultations > Essential Services Commission'. The main content area is titled 'Water price review 2023' and includes a sub-header 'The Essential Services Commission is reviewing 14 Water businesses proposed pricing and key outcomes for 2023-28 and we want to hear what you think.' Below this, there is a 'REVIEWING FEEDBACK' button and a status indicator 'CLOSED 12 MAY 2023'. A navigation bar offers 'Overview', 'Participate', and 'Timeline' options. The 'Overview' section provides background information on the Essential Services Commission's role and the consultation process. A 'Follow' button and a 'Share' button are also present. A 'Timeline' section highlights the event 'Consultation closes - Central Highlands Water, Coliban Water and Goulburn Valley Water'. The 'Your water business' section displays six individual consultation cards for Barwon Water, Central Highlands Water, Coliban Water, East Gippsland Water, Gippsland Water, and Goulburn Valley Water. Each card includes a representative image and a brief description of the review. A 'Contact Us' section provides contact details for the Essential Services Commission, including an address in Melbourne, Victoria, and contact numbers and email.