

## Water price review 2024

### Submission received through Engage Victoria

Date submitted: 6 May 2024

Water business: Greater Western Water

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In March 2024, we began accepting submissions on our draft decision on Greater Western Water's 2024 price submission via Engage Victoria ([www.engage.vic.gov.au/ESC-water-price-review-2024](http://www.engage.vic.gov.au/ESC-water-price-review-2024)). On this website, people were given the option to send us general feedback or respond to questions we provided.

#### 1. What do you think of our draft decision on the prices proposed by your water business?

The Essential Services Commission price review 2024 draft decision has removed full expenditure for the Greater Western Water Stormwater Harvesting Partnership Fund (\$12.8 million). This is not consistent with the current strategy direction for Macedon Ranges Shire Council, in support of investment in stormwater harvesting and water reuse for irrigation. Macedon Ranges Shire Council recognises the increasing risk that climate change poses within the region and looks to the Stormwater Harvesting Partnership as a key program that enables tangible outcomes for mitigating these varying risks. Decreased annual rainfall and increased extreme weather (i.e. intense storm events) present great challenges to the continuity of Council services and operations, as such, the organisation continues to seek innovative water management process and collaborative partners to overcome these increasing challenges. Council views its parks and gardens as important green infrastructure, as places to connect with nature and to act as a 'place of refuge' from the increasing temperatures that climate change is presenting. The Stormwater Harvesting Partnership Fund would play a vital role in ensuring Council are able to continue to provide these spaces throughout a changing climate, as well as, create the essential infrastructure needed to

respond to extreme weather events. The Council strategic framework that supports further investment in blue – green infrastructure includes;

- Macedon Ranges Open Space Strategy Draft June 2023
- Climate Emergency Plan 2023 – 2030
- Counting down to ZERO Our plan to reach ZERO net emissions by 2030 Stage 1 – December 2022
- Environment Strategy Refreshed 2021
- Gisborne Futures Urban Design Framework July 2020
- Water Sensitive Urban Design Masterplan for the Gisborne Township 2015

2. What do you think of our draft decision on the business performance and their future service commitments?

Macedon Ranges Shire Council is currently progressing investment in stormwater harvesting and water delivery infrastructure. With new sports precincts under development and a predicted expansion of public open space alongside residential growth areas, Council predicts larger uptake of sports turf irrigation. New partnership opportunities, particularly for the Gisborne precinct are highlighted within the Southern Macedon Ranges Integrated Water Management Plan attached. Gisborne is Macedon Ranges Shire Council's fastest growing locality with increasing demand for open space for passive and active recreation, located just 54 kilometres north-west of Melbourne. In addition, a water sensitive urban design plan is currently proposed for Jacksons Creek with emphasis on controlling stormwater impacts, as highlighted for implementation within the Macedon Ranges Open Space Strategy Draft June 2023. Along with these current opportunities, Council will continue to work with Greater Western Water and Coliban Water to source additional stormwater harvesting projects into the future. Council water performance highlights for the last 12 months; Commenced implementation of the Southern Macedon Ranges Integrated Water Management Plan. Commenced development of the Northern Macedon Ranges Integrated Water Management Plan. Completed and commenced implementation the Woodend Five Mile Creek Master Plan in partnership with Woodend Landcare. Restoration works on Bunjil Creek in Gisborne commenced resulting in some 13,000 wild flowers, grasses, sedges and shrubs planted in partnership with Regional Roads Victoria. Revegetation along waterways included 7243 native plants along Smokers Creek in Hanging Rock Reserve and 2358 across five Council managed waterway reserves. Recycled water irrigation system installed at the Gisborne Botanic Gardens and Barkly Square in Kyneton contributed to a reduced demand for water. Partnered with Melbourne Water to create a new Water Sensitive Urban Design position in Council. The role will review Council's current practices and storm water assets and develop a Storm Water Management Strategy.

3. Is there anything else we should consider before we make a final price review decision?

Stormwater harvesting for open space irrigation presents a real opportunity for partnered projects as detailed within the Southern Macedon Ranges Integrated Water Management Plan attached. Further partnership opportunities will be developed as the Northern Macedon Ranges Integrated Water Management Plan is progressed over the next twelve months. Macedon Ranges Shire Council see such partnerships and funds as vital to supporting and strengthening its legislative responsibility (i.e Local Government Act 2020) to mitigate climate risks to the community and its operations.

