

07/05/2024

Marcus Crudden
Executive Director
Price Monitoring and Regulation
Essential Services Commission
Level 8, 570 Bourke St
Melbourne VIC 3000

Dear Marcus

RE: Support for Greater Western Water's Stormwater Harvesting Partnership Fund Business Case

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the Essential Services Commission's Draft Decision on Greater Western Water's (GWW) 2024 Price Submission.

We noticed that the draft decision excludes the \$12.8 million allocated for the Stormwater Harvesting Partnership Fund. I am writing to express Melbourne Water's support for the continuation of this program, which has delivered benefits of potable water substitution, greening the urban water environment, improving liveability, and contributing to improved waterway health in the region since 2018. Melbourne Water has been a partner in most of the successful projects delivered in this program.

While the program provides direct benefits to GWW's customers, we encourage GWW to provide additional information to assist the Commission's evaluation. The program also aligns with the feedback we received during our 2021 price submission engagement and our customer outcomes for 2021-26.

During our 2021 price submission engagement, the community expressed that they want to see positive environmental and community outcomes from the services we provide and support. They also expect services to be sustainable, developed in partnership with the community, and believed the water sector should directly address climate change.

Our endorsement for the Stormwater Harvesting Partnership Fund is based on the collaborative work undertaken with GWW and other stakeholders in developing water management strategies for the Greater Melbourne area, as well as our shared commitment to addressing the challenges posed by population growth, climate change and variability, through sustainable urban water management, diversifying water sources and increasing resilience.

The Partnership Fund supports delivery of objectives listed in Melbourne Water's Healthy Waterways Strategy, Central and Gippsland Region Sustainable Water Strategy (Actions 3-8) and Greater Melbourne Urban Water System Strategy (Actions 5.2 and 6.6). According to the Greater Melbourne Urban Water & System Strategy, to effectively use all sources of water, we need a range of actions at varying scales, including centralised and decentralised approaches, as well as structural and non-structural solutions.

Since its inception, the initiative has garnered strong support, as evidenced by the positive reception from local government authorities and the public's demand for sustainable water management practices that improve local environments and community well-being. This partnership approach is contributing to effective and sustainable water management across the GWW region, while also promoting healthier waterways by reducing pollutants and managing stormwater flows. The initiative was recognised with a Premier's Sustainability Award in 2020.

Melbourne Water is supportive of water sensitive urban design and stormwater management at all scales including the GWW Partnership Fund, where projects demonstrate cultural, economic, environmental, or social benefits.

If you have any further queries, please contact Aaron Zanatta - aaron.zanatta@melbournewater.com.au.

Yours sincerely

Aaron Zanatta

Manager Flood Strategy and Stormwater Policy