

More customers seeking support in paying water bills

The number of water customers on hardship programs in metropolitan Melbourne grew by more than five per cent in September, according to the [latest data collected by the state regulator](#).

The Essential Services Commission's latest data shows the number of metropolitan water customers requiring payment assistance increased steadily throughout the month, continuing a trend that has been present throughout the coronavirus pandemic.

More regional Victorians were also on hardship programs at the end of September than four weeks earlier, but the total number fluctuated during the month.

Commission water director Marcus Crudden says that while there were more applications for government utility relief grants in September, weekly applications slowed by the end of the month.

"We saw a new weekly peak of 848 applications for state government utility relief grants reached in mid-September, and a weekly average of 775 across the month," he said.

"However, that dropped to 602 applications by the end of the month, which is fewer than the average weekly applications in August."

Mr Crudden says the state's water businesses have continued to reach out to their customers as the pandemic continues.

"We've been working closely with Victoria's water businesses and are reassured to see their proactive response and efforts in providing information and support where it's needed."

At an [industry roundtable in early October](#), water businesses reported that they had increased support available for customers, and are looking to the role they may play in the state's economic recovery.

The session was part of the commission's ongoing series of industry and community roundtables to understand the continuing impact of the pandemic on Victorian consumers.

About the data: data is reported weekly by water businesses and is not audited by the commission. We are collecting a small subset of the annual data that is included in our annual water performance report.

For further information call: Michelle Bryne, Head of Strategic Communication 0437 677 385