

Water Performance Report 2024-25

Performance of Victorian Urban Water and Sewerage Businesses

18 December 2025



Acknowledgement

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the lands and waterways on which we work and live.

We acknowledge all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, and pay our respects to Elders past and present.

As the First Peoples of this land, belonging to the world's oldest living cultures, we recognise and value their knowledge, and ongoing role in shaping and enriching the story of Victoria.

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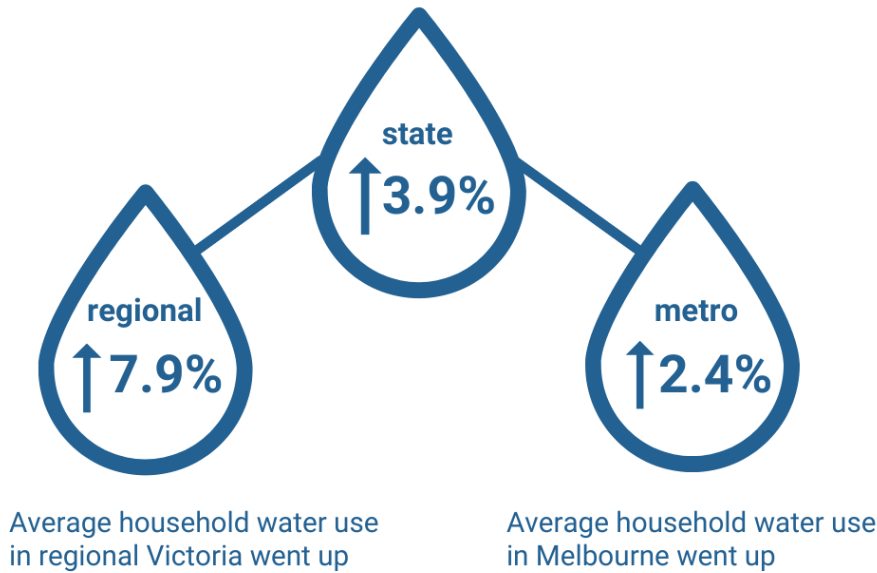
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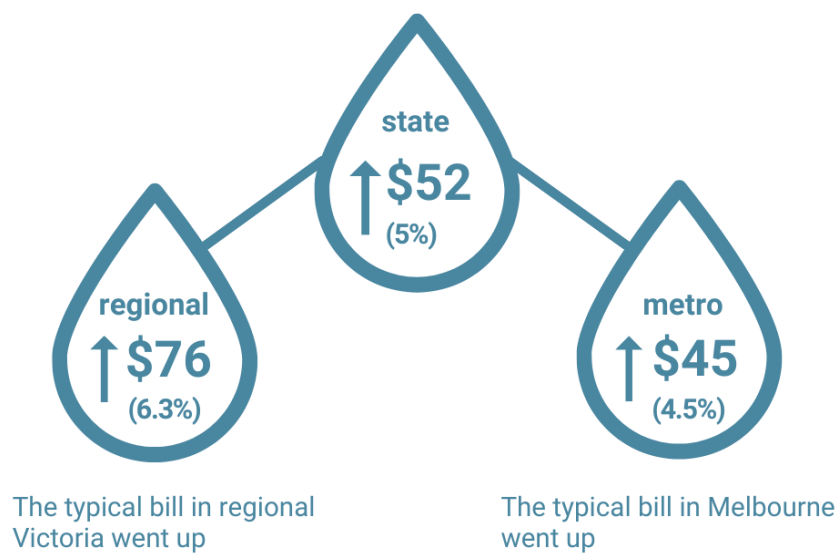
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Key changes from 2023-24 to 2024-25

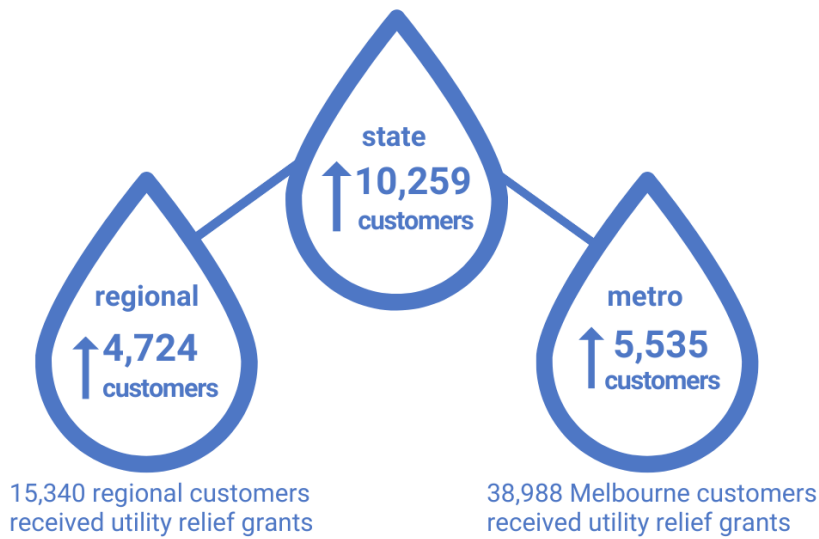
Victorians used more water



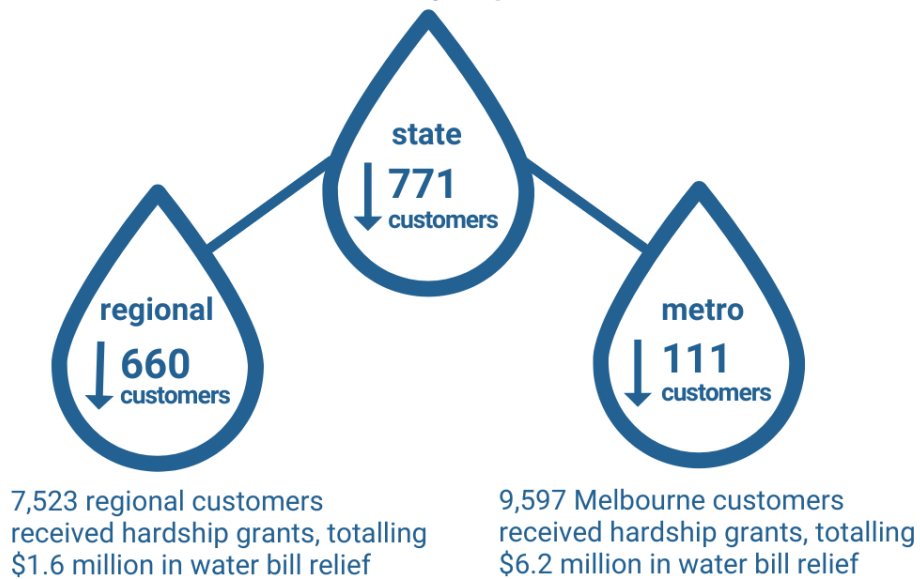
The typical annual water bill increased



More customers received utility relief grants from the state government to help pay their water bills



Fewer customers received hardship grants from their water business, but the total value of these support payments increased by 23 per cent



Two businesses initiated legal action for unpaid water bills, while seven businesses have utilised water supply restrictions

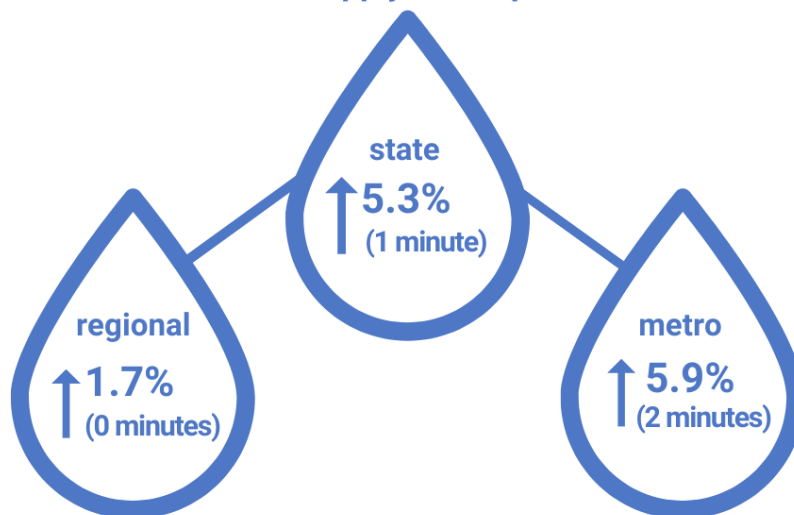


In 2024-25, 787 residential customers had their water supply restricted, compared to 168 customers in 2023-24.



In 2024-25, legal action was initiated against 87 residential customers, compared to 72 customers in 2023-24.

Melbourne customers had slightly longer water supply interruptions



Average customer minutes off supply remained relatively steady for regional customers at 17 minutes

Average customer minutes off supply increased by 2 minutes to 30 minutes for Melbourne customers

Monitoring performance

Victoria's 15 urban water businesses operate across a range of geographic, environmental and social conditions. The Essential Services Commission reports on the Victorian urban water sector's performance, both as a whole and as individual businesses.

We compare each water business in the areas of customer bills, household water use, and other key service measures such as customer experience.

The *Water Performance Report 2024-25* is just one of the ways we report on the sector. This report should be read in conjunction with our:

- [water business outcomes reports](#)
- [quarterly customer survey reporting](#)
- [water performance report dashboard](#).

Water business outcomes reports

Our outcomes reporting provides an overview of the self-assessments undertaken by Victorian water businesses of their performance against their outcome commitments made to customers at their last price review.

Quarterly customer survey reporting

Our quarterly customer survey reporting measures customer satisfaction in four areas:

- value for money
- reputation in the community
- level of trust
- overall satisfaction.

Water performance report dashboard

Our interactive dashboard supports the publication of our annual water performance report by providing a concise and high-level overview on a range of data indicators related to the performance of Victorian water businesses. It allows users to explore information related to household water use, typical bills, payment assistance, customer service, network reliability, and environmental impact. Performance data is presented as aggregates or weighted averages at three levels: statewide, regional versus metropolitan businesses, and by individual water business.

What we found in 2024-25

Water usage and bills increased, alongside increased financial support

Victorian water customers continued to be impacted by cost-of-living pressures in 2024-25, while facing drier conditions across much of the state. Water bills have increased, mainly driven by:

- higher household water usage (during a drier year)
- annual inflation of 3.6 per cent
- approved annual price movements consistent with our 2023 and 2024 water price determinations.

Meanwhile, support for customers experiencing financial hardship increased significantly in 2024-25. State Government funded Utility Relief Grants were awarded to 23 per cent more customers than last year, with total support payments under this scheme rising by 32 per cent. This continues a steady upward trend in support through Utility Relief Grants since 2020-21. A small 4 per cent reduction in the number of customers receiving hardship grants from their water businesses was more than offset by a 23 per cent increase in the total value of support payments. The average value of a Utility Relief Grant (\$273 per grant) and a hardship grant (\$455 per grant) have both increased compared to 2023-24.

Some businesses have also increased or resumed debt collection and restrictions on customer's water services in response to non-payment of water bills. Seven businesses implemented 787 water supply restrictions on residential customers, and two businesses took a total of 87 legal actions against residential customers in 2024-25. However, all businesses confirmed that restrictions were measures of last resort and that no restrictions were implemented for customers receiving any form of assistance for payment difficulties.

Customer complaints increased

The total number of complaints made to water businesses increased by 30 per cent compared to 2023-24, which is significantly above average fluctuations observed across recent years. For the most part, this increase is attributed to the large increase in complaints Greater Western Water received following ongoing issues it is facing with the rollout of its new billing system. Accordingly, the proportion of complaints relating to payment issues increased by 7 percentage points, accounting for 31 per cent of all complaints. However, water quality remained the primary cause of complaints, accounting for 32 per cent of all complaints.

Drier conditions impacted water and sewer reliability

Water network and sewer services were slightly less reliable compared to 2023-24, reflecting relatively small increases to the rate of sewer spills (up 5.6 per cent) and sewer blockages (up

What we found in 2024-25

3.7 per cent) per 100 km of sewer main, and the average customer minutes off water supply (up 5.3 per cent). However, all three of these measures were within 5 per cent of the five-year averages, and reflect typical movements associated with a drier year.¹

The typical Victorian residential water customer

In 2024-25, a typical Victorian residential water customer:

- **Used more water**

Average statewide household water use increased by 6 kilolitres (4 per cent) to 157 kilolitres. This reflects a year with below average annual rainfall across most of the state.² (See section 1.2.)

- **Received a higher bill**

The typical annual bill increased by \$45 to \$1,031 for Melbourne owner occupiers and by \$24 to \$514 for Melbourne tenants. The typical annual bill for owner occupiers in regional Victoria increased by \$76 to \$1,293 and by \$47 to \$396 for tenants in regional Victoria. A 3.6 per cent increase in inflation, higher household water use, and new price paths for 14 businesses contributed to the increase in the typical annual bill across the state.

- **Received more financial support for payment difficulties**

The total value of financial support provided through the state-government funded Utility Relief Grant Scheme increased by 32 per cent, providing \$14.8 million in water bill relief for Victorian customers facing financial difficulties. The total value of hardship grants provided by the water businesses also increased by 23 per cent this year, providing \$7.8 million in bill relief, despite a 4 per cent reduction in the number of grants awarded. The number of residential customers on flexible payment plans increased by 7 per cent. (See section 1.7)

- **Experienced more water supply interruptions and sewer network interruptions**

Water and sewer networks were adversely impacted by drier weather and drought conditions across much of regional Victoria. Water networks were less reliable for customers in both metropolitan and regional Victoria with an increase in average customer 'minutes off supply'. The average time off supply increased by 5.9 per cent for metropolitan customers and 1.7 per cent for regional customers. Sewer network reliability declined, with an average statewide increase in sewer blockages and spills. (See Chapter 3.)

- **Expressed less satisfaction with the service they received**

Water businesses reported a 30 per cent increase in the total number of customer complaints

¹ Weather can impact water businesses in several different ways. For example, dry weather causes soil to shrink, which places extra stress on pipes and can lead to breaks. Tree roots can also penetrate sewer pipes as they seek moisture in the dry soil, leading to sewer blockages or spills. We also usually observe increases in customer water usage and recycled water demand in response to dry weather.

² 'Victoria in 2024', Bureau of Meteorology, accessed 10 November 2025, <https://www.bom.gov.au/climate/current/annual/vic/summary.shtml>.

compared to 2023-24, with most complaints related to water quality or payment issues. This was primarily driven by an increase in complaints to Greater Western Water regarding payment issues and South East Water regarding both water quality and payment issues. Customer perception surveys from August 2024 to November 2025 also saw a slight decline in satisfaction with water businesses, with average customer ratings decreasing across all survey areas. However, water businesses had the same overall average as the previous year in the call centre customer service benchmarking study.³ (See Chapter 2.)

Greater Western Water billing system issues

In May 2024, Greater Western Water launched a new billing system, replacing its two previous systems as part of the business merger between City West Water and Western Water. However, problems with data migration into the new system have resulted in numerous billing issues, including the failure to issue many customers with quarterly bills.

Impact on audited performance data

Prior to undertaking the audit of its 2024-25 performance data, Greater Western Water advised us that some of its reported data had been derived through estimates based on historic values, as it could not extract complete data sets from its new billing system.⁴ To address this, we required its auditor to verify the estimation techniques as a proxy for an audited value.

Impact on performance and customers

The billing system problems have impacted Greater Western Water's performance results, evident in several areas in this report and our published data. Most notably:

- Increased customer complaints about payments issues
- Lower customer ratings for the business
- Reduced call centre customer service levels
- Much longer call connect wait times with the increased volume of calls
- Reduced number of customers receiving some financial support initiatives.

But these measures alone do not capture the full extent of the impact on customers. Greater Western Water has acknowledged that failures with its new billing system have caused significant billing disruptions and multiple breaches of the commission's Water Industry Standard for customer service.

³ Mystery shoppers, posing as genuine customers with general enquiries, contact the water businesses' call centre agents via the account line and score each interaction across several different criteria.

⁴ The impacted indicators are: the number of trade waste customers; volume of sewage collected – own treatment plants, volume of influent sewage treated – secondary; volume of trade waste collected; and real water losses.

Enforceable undertaking

In November 2025, we accepted a court-enforceable undertaking requiring Greater Western Water to provide a \$130 million customer redress package to its impacted customers in response to its billing system failures.

The undertaking requires Greater Western Water to undertake specific remediation for residential and small business customers. Greater Western Water must also implement measures to improve compliance and follow rules about how it communicates with and bills its customers.

More information on the enforceable undertaking and remediation action for impacted customers is available on [our website](#).

Why we report on performance

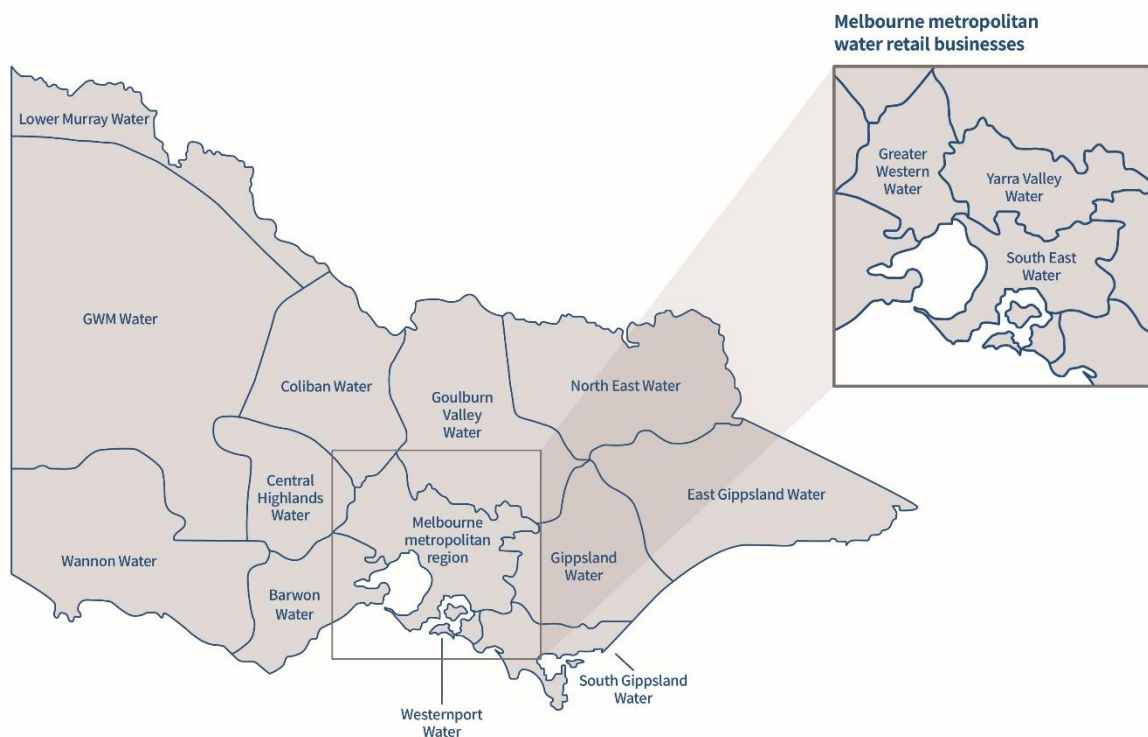
The Water Industry Regulatory Order 2014 (WIRO) requires the Essential Services Commission to monitor and report publicly on water sector performance. This report covers specific performance indicators of the 15 Victorian urban water businesses over a five-year period with attention given to their performance in 2024-25.⁵

For each business we compare these indicators against:

- other businesses
- its own performance over time.

Figure A shows the 15 urban water business boundaries and the Melbourne metropolitan region.

Figure A: Victorian urban water businesses in 2024-25



⁵ Clause 18 of the Water Industry Regulatory Order 2014.

Rural water businesses are excluded from this report, as well as the rural activities of GWMWater and Lower Murray Water, which provide both urban and rural services.

Water business performance reporting:

- helps guide discussions between water businesses and their customers about service priorities and performance targets
- allows comparison between water businesses on service standards
- informs the decision-making processes of water businesses, regulatory agencies and the Victorian Government.

Water business customers

Table A shows the number of urban water and sewerage customers that each of the water businesses serviced in 2024-25, as well as the total numbers of customers in metropolitan Melbourne, regional Victoria and statewide.

In addition to a 1.8 per cent population increase in Victoria in 2024-25, there were 54,427 more water customer connections.⁶ This is a 1.8 per cent increase compared to the previous year.

⁶ 'National, state and territory population: Statistics about the population and components of change (birth, deaths, migration) for Australia and its states and territories', Australian Bureau of Statistics, accessed 7 November 2025, <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/population/national-state-and-territory-population/latest-release#states-and-territories>.

Table A **Urban water and sewerage customers in 2024-25**

| | All water customers | Residential water customers | Non-residential water customers | Sewerage customers |
|------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------|
| Greater Western | 653,843 | 599,313 | 54,530 | 634,042 |
| South East | 846,822 | 783,591 | 63,231 | 823,766 |
| Yarra Valley | 906,803 | 844,538 | 62,265 | 847,601 |
| Barwon | 184,752 | 171,111 | 13,641 | 168,807 |
| Central Highlands | 80,502 | 74,287 | 6,215 | 70,732 |
| Coliban | 82,530 | 75,289 | 7,241 | 75,277 |
| East Gippsland | 26,216 | 23,291 | 2,925 | 21,932 |
| Gippsland | 77,415 | 71,119 | 6,296 | 69,975 |
| Goulburn Valley | 64,679 | 58,094 | 6,585 | 57,268 |
| GWMWater | 32,804 | 28,103 | 4,701 | 26,627 |
| Lower Murray | 35,589 | 31,642 | 3,947 | 31,098 |
| North East | 56,925 | 52,015 | 4,910 | 52,321 |
| South Gippsland | 22,533 | 19,373 | 3,160 | 20,041 |
| Wannon | 45,680 | 39,116 | 6,564 | 39,277 |
| Westernport | 18,744 | 17,579 | 1,165 | 17,285 |
| Metro total | 2,407,468 | 2,227,442 | 180,026 | 2,305,409 |
| Regional total | 728,369 | 661,019 | 67,350 | 650,640 |
| Statewide total | 3,135,837 | 2,888,461 | 247,376 | 2,956,049 |

Our pricing framework

The PREMO framework – Performance, Risk, Engagement, Management and Outcomes – provides incentives for water businesses to deliver better value to customers and holds them accountable for delivering on their commitments. Our outcomes reporting tracks how each business has assessed its performance against its outcome commitments made to customers at its last price review. All outcome reports can be accessed on our [website](#).

Our regulatory functions

We are the economic regulator of the Victorian water sector. One of our regulatory functions is to monitor and report publicly on the performance of the Victorian Government-owned water businesses.

We are also responsible for regulating service standards and conditions of supply. However, we do not regulate or drive performance in the areas of water conservation, the environment and water quality, although some of these areas are covered in our report.

Other bodies with a role in the state's water services are the:

- Environment Protection Authority Victoria: responsible for regulating environmental standards
- Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action: responsible for water conservation measures
- Department of Health: responsible for drinking water quality standards.

The data used in this report

This report is based on:






- performance data reported by the businesses against key performance indicators specified by us, and comments from the businesses explaining their performance
- findings from independent regulatory audits on the reliability of the performance data reported by the businesses. Where data has not passed the audit requirements, it has been excluded from this report or qualified in our discussion.

Data snapshots

We use snapshots alongside some indicators to highlight changes that have occurred at the metropolitan, regional and statewide levels. The averages presented in this report are weighted on the number of customers each business services. Accordingly, the state average is weighted towards the metropolitan average since there are more customers in metropolitan Melbourne than in regional Victoria. The arrows in the snapshot show the percentage change compared to the previous year with the exception of the change arrows in the recycled water usage snapshot which

shows the percentage point change. Depending on the indicator, an increase could be an improvement or a deterioration in performance.

Snapshot symbol definitions

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|--|---|
|  |  |  |  |  |
| 5%+ increase | 0–5% increase | Steady | 0–5% decrease | 5%+ decrease |

Access our 2024-25 water performance resources

Find our 2024-25 performance information at <https://www.esc.vic.gov.au/water-performance-reports>, including:

- this report comparing the performance of the 15 urban water businesses
- a data dashboard that provides a granular view of data used in this report
- a summary of the data behind our tables and charts in this report.

1. Household water use, typical bills, and payment assistance

This chapter looks at the average water use of households and typical bills at the average water usage level across Victoria.

The bill estimates in this chapter reflect prices charged by water businesses in the year from 1 July 2024 to 30 June 2025.

We also discuss how some customers are paying their bills. Government support and water business assistance programs are available where customers are experiencing payment difficulties. If bills remain unpaid, customers may face water supply restrictions or legal action.

1.1. 2024-25 at a glance

Annual average household water use increased by 6 kilolitres to 157 kilolitres, a 4 per cent increase from the previous year.

The statewide typical annual bill for both owner occupiers and tenants increased compared to the previous year. The statewide typical bill increased by \$52 to \$1,091 for owner occupiers and increased by \$29 to \$487 for tenants.

Compared to the previous year, more customers received grant assistance from the Victorian Government to help with one-off bill payments.

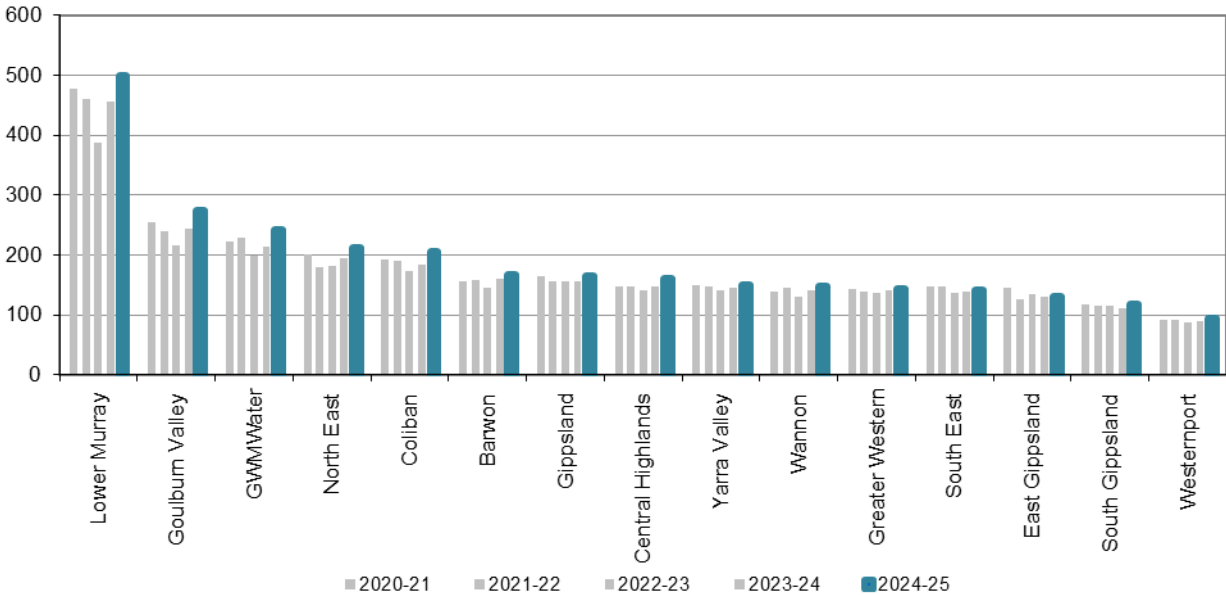
Compared to the previous year, water businesses awarded fewer hardship grants to customers. However the average value of grants increased from \$354 to \$455.

Seven water business applied water supply restrictions for non-payment. Two water businesses initiated legal action against residential customers for non-payment of bills.




1.2. Average household water use

Water use varies around the state due to different climates, household demographics, property sizes, and any water restrictions that may be in place. Figure 1.1 shows the average annual household water use across the last five years, measured in kilolitres.

Figure 1.1 Average household use (kilolitres per household)



Snapshot – average household water use, kilolitres

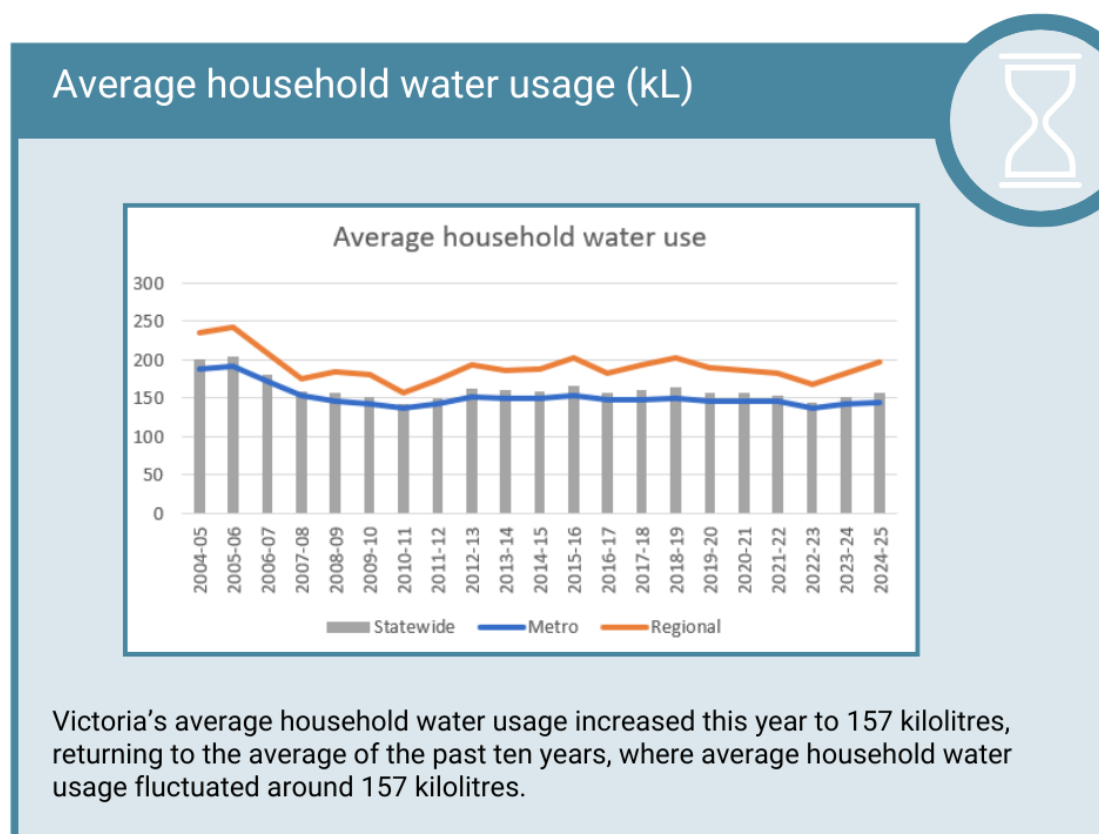
| Statewide average | | | 3.9% | | |
|-------------------|-----|---|---------|-----|---|
| 2024-25 | 157 |  | 2024-25 | 145 |  |
| 2023-24 | 151 | | 2023-24 | 142 | |
| Metro average | | | 2.4% | | |
| 2024-25 | 196 |  | 2024-25 | 182 | |
| 2023-24 | 182 | | 2023-24 | 196 | |
| Regional average | | | 7.9% | | |

Key observations

- Across Victoria, average annual household water use in 2024-25 increased by 6 kilolitres to 157 kilolitres, a 3.9 per cent increase after a 4.2 per cent increase the year before. All water businesses except for East Gippsland Water reported an increase in usage, with ten businesses reporting an increase of 5 per cent or more. This coincides with below-average rainfall for most of the state in winter, summer and autumn.⁷

⁷ 'Australian climate history – Climate summaries', Bureau of Meteorology, accessed 5 November 2025, available at: [Climate summaries archive](#).

- In metropolitan Melbourne, average annual household water use increased by 2.4 per cent. Of the three metropolitan water businesses, Yarra Valley Water recorded the largest increase in water use at 4.3 per cent.
- In regional Victoria, average annual household water use increased by 7.9 per cent. Goulburn Valley Water, Coliban Water and GWMWater recorded the largest usage increases of 12 per cent or above. East Gippsland Water recorded the only decrease in usage, which was 1 per cent lower than the year before.



1.3. Typical household bills

Household bills across Victoria vary due to:

- the cost to service different regions
- sources of water
- historical decisions about tariff structures
- the average volume of water used.

Bills are a combination of how much water is used, prices for fixed and variable rate charges, and other charges. Owner occupier households pay both fixed and variable charges for their bills. Landlords pay the fixed charges for their property and the tenants only pay the variable charges.

How much households use and pay for water

Note that although metropolitan businesses include waterways and drainage or parks charges in their bills on behalf of Melbourne Water, we do not include these charges in our calculations of the typical bills.

Figure 1.2 shows typical bills for owner occupiers across five years, and Figure 1.3 shows typical bills for tenants across five years.

How typical bills are calculated

Typical household bills shown for each year are in that year's dollars. We use each business's average household usage (see section 1.2) to calculate an indicative household bill for water and sewerage services. This includes both the fixed and variable water and sewerage charges, and any applicable rebate.⁸

For regional businesses with multiple pricing zones, we used the prices in the largest town to calculate that business's typical household bill.

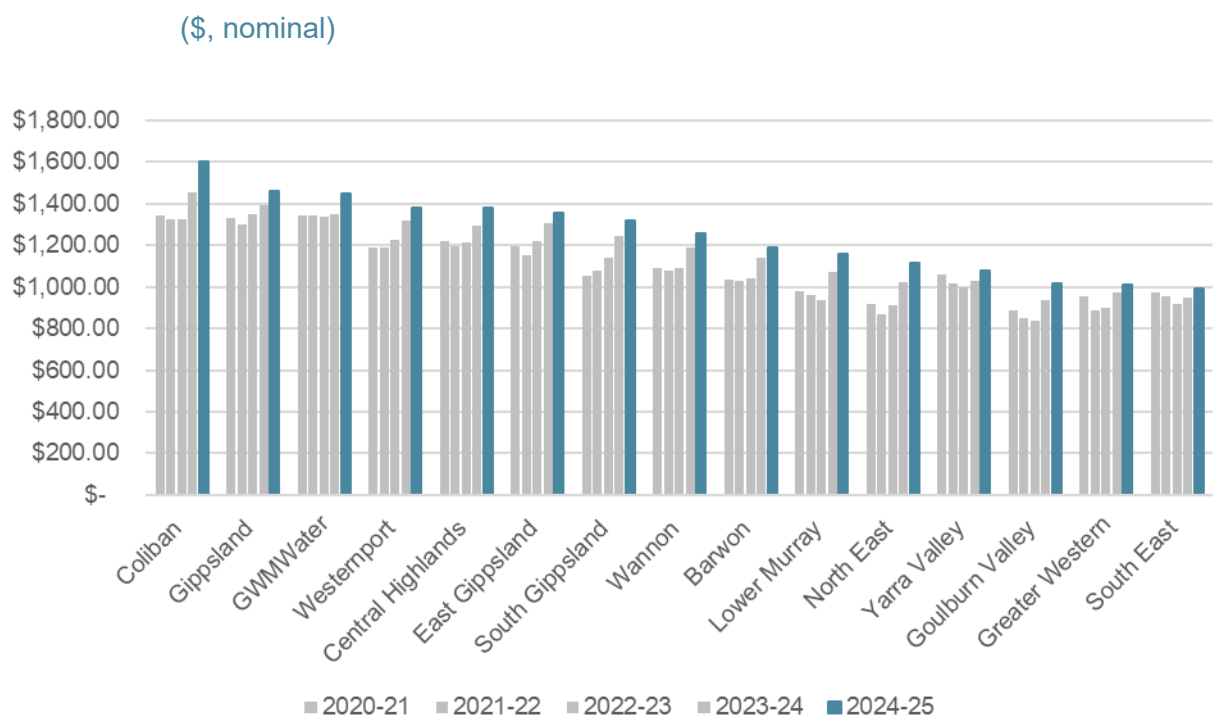
Want more information?

The interactive bill estimator, available at www.esc.vic.gov.au/water/information-water-consumers, calculates an indicative bill for annual water usage, and compares the bill across all water businesses.

Our website also explains some key terms for understanding bills, and describes how we regulate prices: www.esc.vic.gov.au/water/water-prices-tariffs-and-special-drainage/

⁸ For consistency in comparison, we have excluded the metropolitan drainage charges for Melbourne Water and the metropolitan parks charges set by the Minister for Water, collected on their behalf by the metropolitan water businesses via water bills. These charges are not directly levied by these water businesses and are not part of their revenue stream.

Figure 1.2 Typical household bills including inflation, owner occupiers



Greater Western Water bills are based on its Central (former City West Water) area
Typical annual bills have been rounded to the nearest dollar.

Snapshot – typical owner occupier water bill, nominal dollars

| Statewide average | | | Metro average | | | Regional average | | |
|-------------------|---------|---|---------------|---------|---|------------------|---------|---|
| 5.0% | | | 4.5% | | | 6.3% | | |
| 2024-25 | \$1,091 | ↑ | 2024-25 | \$1,031 | ↑ | 2024-25 | \$1,293 | ↑ |
| 2023-24 | \$1,039 | | 2023-24 | \$986 | | 2023-24 | \$1,217 | |

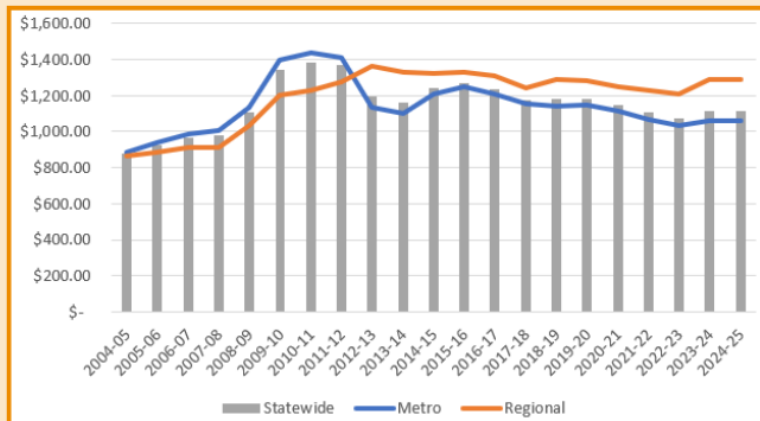
Key observations

- In 2024-25, the statewide annual typical bill for owner occupiers increased by \$52 (5 per cent) to \$1,091. Higher household water consumption in 2024-25 and higher prices contributed to this bill increase which coincided with a 3.6 per cent increase in inflation that came into effect at the start of 2024-25.
- In metropolitan Melbourne, the annual typical owner occupier bill increased by \$45 to \$1,031 in 2024-25.
- In regional Victoria, the typical owner occupier bill increased by \$76, from \$1,217 in 2023-24 to \$1,293 in 2024-25. This was mainly driven by a 7.9 per cent increase in annual household consumption in regional areas and a 3.6 per cent increase in inflation in 2024-25.
- Coliban Water customers saw the largest increase in their bill, which increased by \$147 from \$1,455 in 2023-24 to \$1,602 in 2024-25. The increase was due to inflation, an increase in

usage, and its annual price increase established in its 2023 price determination. Coliban Water customers continue to receive the highest typical bill in the state.

- South East Water customers received the lowest typical bill statewide at \$994.

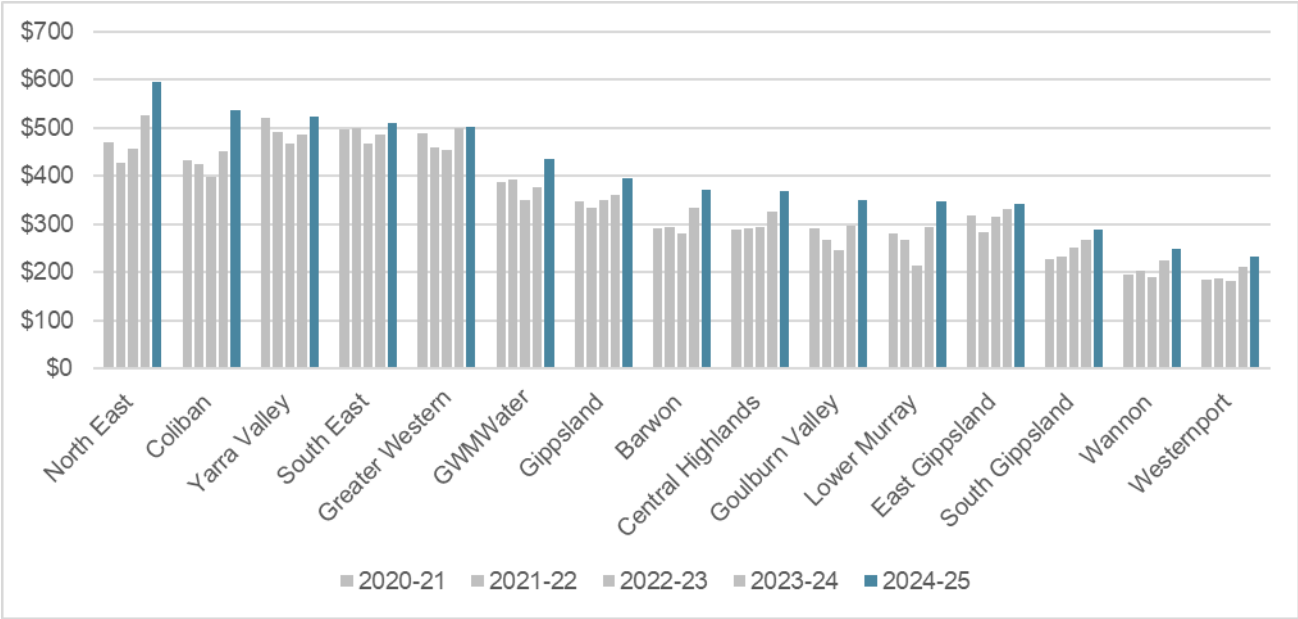
Owner occupier typical bills (real \$2024-25)



This chart shows the trend in typical household bills excluding inflation and holding consumption constant for each business. It provides a long-term view of price changes on customer bills. Typical bills for both metropolitan and regional customers increased during the height of the millennium drought in 2009 and 2010 to allow businesses to recover costs of expansion of water supply infrastructure. Since then, bills slowly trended downward until 2022-23, where businesses' water prices saw increases above inflation reflecting higher costs post-pandemic, and to recover the costs of asset renewals and capacity expansion to accommodate population growth.

Figure 1.3 Typical household bill including inflation, tenants

(\$, nominal)



Typical annual bills have been rounded to the nearest dollar

Snapshot – typical tenant water bill, nominal dollars

| Statewide average | | 6.3% | Metro average | | 4.8% | Regional average | | 13.3% |
|-------------------|-------|------|---------------|-------|------|------------------|-------|-------|
| 2024-25 | \$487 | ↑ | 2024-25 | \$514 | ↑ | 2024-25 | \$396 | ↑ |
| 2023-24 | \$458 | | 2023-24 | \$490 | | 2023-24 | \$349 | |

Key observations

- The statewide annual typical bill for tenants increased by \$29 (6.3 per cent), from \$458 in 2023-24 to \$487 in 2024-25. An increase in average annual household water consumption in 2024-25, along with inflation and relatively higher prices, has contributed to the increase in the statewide typical tenant bill.
- In regional Victoria, tenants’ typical bills increased by \$47 (13.3 per cent), from \$349 in 2023-24 to \$396 in 2024-25. This was largely driven by inflation and a 7.9 per cent increase in average household water consumption outside Melbourne.
- In Melbourne, the typical bill for tenants increased by \$24 (4.8 per cent), from \$490 in 2023-24 to \$514 in 2024-25.
- North East Water customers’ typical tenant bill was the highest in the state in 2024-25 at \$597, a 13.6 per cent increase from the previous year.

- Coliban Water customers saw the largest percentage increase in their typical bill, rising 19 per cent from \$452 in 2023-24 to \$538 in 2024-25.
- Each metropolitan water business recorded an increase in typical tenant bills, with Yarra Valley Water customers receiving the largest increase at 7.5 per cent. This reflects increasing inflation and water use.
- Greater Western Water customers received the smallest increase in their typical bill at 0.9 per cent.
- Westernport Water customers continue to receive the lowest typical tenant bill statewide of \$232 (reflecting a relatively high share of fixed charges in this business's bills, which are paid by the landlord) but still saw an increase of 9.8 per cent compared to 2023-24.

1.4. Concession customers

Based on data from the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, 23 per cent of residential customers had a State Government concession applied to their water bill in 2024-25, amounting to \$185.7 million in water bill contributions.⁹ The number of concession households increased by 1,167 from 673,487 in 2023-24 to 674,654 in 2024-25.

The Victorian Government, through the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, provides concessions to assist low-income households with water and sewerage bills at their principal place of residence.

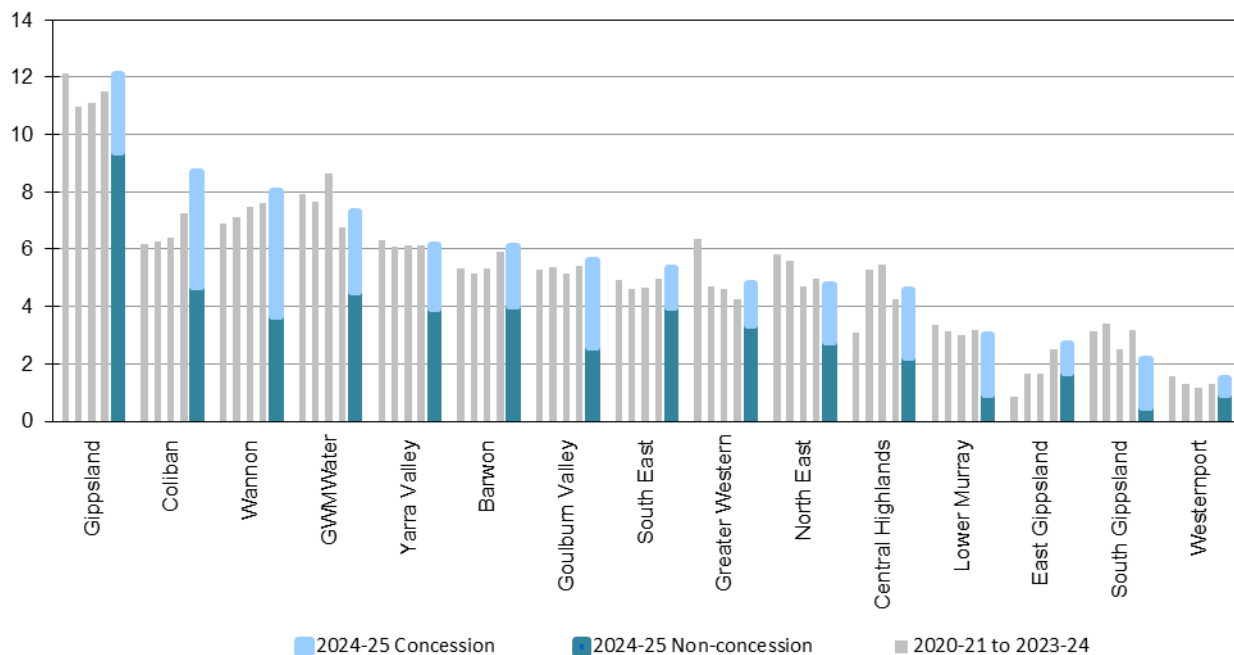
Customers holding a concession card can contact their water business to apply for a concession. Concessions may be applied retrospectively.

1.5. Customers on flexible payment plans

Instalment plans are alternative payment arrangements offered by water businesses to provide flexibility for customers in managing their bill payments and may assist those experiencing payment difficulties. Payment arrangements may include giving customers the ability to pay off their bill in monthly instalments. Figure 1.4 shows the number of customers on instalment plans per 100 customers as recorded on 30 June 2025 and split between the proportion of concession customers (light blue) and non-concession customers (dark blue).

⁹ Concession data sourced from the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing. The department's 2024-25 concession data for Greater Western Water reflects an estimate based on historical invoiced amounts, using a method in line with Australian Accounting Standards Board guidelines.

Figure 1.4 Residential customers with instalment plans per 100 customers
(at 30 June 2025)



Snapshot – residential instalment plans per 100 customers

| Statewide average | | | 5.2% |
|-------------------|-----|---|------|
| 2024-25 | 5.7 | ↑ | |
| 2023-24 | 5.4 | | |
| Metro average | | | 5.1% |
| 2024-25 | 5.5 | ↑ | |
| 2023-24 | 5.2 | | |
| Regional average | | | 5.4% |
| 2024-25 | 6.4 | ↑ | |
| 2023-24 | 6.0 | | |

Key observations

- The total number of residential customers on instalment plans increased from 153,760 at the end of 2023-24, to 164,398 at the end of 2024-25, a 7 per cent increase. The number of residential instalment plans per 100 customers increased from 5.4 in 2023-24 to 5.7 in 2024-25.
- Eleven businesses reported an increase in the number of customers on instalment plans per 100 customers.
- The rate of residential customers with instalment plans ranged from 1.5 per 100 customers for Westernport Water to 12.1 per 100 customers for Gippsland Water. This variation is due to factors such as the different socioeconomic characteristics of each business's customer base, the structure of the payment plans and how different businesses promote the plans.

- Coliban Water reported a 20 per cent increase in the number of customers on instalment plans per 100 customers (7.2 to 8.7), which was the largest increase of all the businesses. Coliban Water advised it has increased its resourcing for its various customer support programs, including its instalment plan program, to better support customers experiencing financial hardship. This was informed through its customer engagement for its 2023 price review.
- South Gippsland Water reported a 33 per cent decrease in customers on instalment plans per 100 customers, the largest decrease in the state. It now has 413 residential customers with instalment plans. South Gippsland Water reported that this decrease was due to a change in its reporting categorisation, which now omits customers with extensions or holds applied to their account.

1.6. Utility Relief Grants

The Utility Relief Grant scheme is a Victorian Government grant scheme for eligible households that provides up to \$650 for each utility within a two-year period. This is different to a hardship grant, which is provided by a water business and is tailored to each customer's circumstances. Hardship grants are discussed in section 1.7.

Water businesses must assist customers experiencing payment difficulties on a case-by-case basis by appropriately referring customers to government funded assistance programs or to an independent financial counsellor. This includes helping eligible customers apply to the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing for a Utility Relief Grant.

The Utility Relief Grant Scheme significantly benefits customers experiencing financial difficulties by lowering their water bill debt and reduces the bill debt carried by water businesses. The grant payment is generally used to assist with a temporary financial crisis.

Table 1.1 provides information relating to the number of customers who have received a Utility Relief Grant in 2024-25. The wide spread in number and rate of customers receiving grants across the water businesses suggests some businesses are doing more than others to assist their customers to access these grants. Businesses with lower application and approval rates should consider how they can better help their customers to benefit from this available support.

Table 1.1 Utility Relief Grant Scheme in 2024-25 (residential customers)

(\$, nominal)

| | Number of grants initiated | Number of grants approved | Percentage of grants initiated that are approved | Average value of grant paid | Grants approved per 100 customers |
|-------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|--|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Greater Western | 6,800 | 4,539 | 67% | \$385 | 0.76 |
| South East | 11,406 | 10,934 | 96% | \$296 | 1.40 |
| Yarra Valley | 23,150 | 23,515 | 102% | \$215 | 2.78 |
| Barwon | 2,910 | 2,980 | 102% | \$282 | 1.74 |
| Central Highlands | 1,965 | 2,010 | 102% | \$298 | 2.71 |
| Coliban | 1,829 | 1,860 | 102% | \$378 | 2.47 |
| East Gippsland | 470 | 485 | 103% | \$299 | 2.08 |
| Gippsland | 2,241 | 2,221 | 99% | \$346 | 3.12 |
| Goulburn Valley | 1,009 | 1022 | 101% | \$336 | 1.76 |
| GWMWater | 260 | 270 | 104% | \$404 | 0.96 |
| Lower Murray | 547 | 426 | 78% | \$393 | 1.35 |
| North East | 2,555 | 2,581 | 101% | \$247 | 4.96 |
| South Gippsland | 609 | 627 | 103% | \$296 | 3.24 |
| Wannon | 454 | 426 | 94% | \$376 | 1.09 |
| Westernport | 448 | 432 | 96% | \$278 | 2.46 |
| Statewide | 56,653 | 54,328 | 96% | \$273 | 1.88 |

Source: Department of Families, Fairness and Housing

Grants approved per 100 customers refers to the number of grants approved per the relevant water business's own residential customer base.

Approval rates greater than 100 per cent may arise where grants are approved after the end of the financial year in which they were lodged.

Key observations

- In total, the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing approved 54,328 Utility Relief Grants in 2024-25, 23 per cent more than in 2023-24. This equates to \$14.8 million in utility relief for Victorian water customers and is a 32 per cent increase on the total value of grants approved in 2023-24. This reflects the level of financial need in the community given persistent cost-of-living pressures, and continued expectations on water businesses to support customers during difficult financial times.
- The average grant value for the state was \$273, which is \$19 more than the average of \$254 in 2023-24. Across businesses, average grant values ranged from \$215 for Yarra Valley Water customers to \$404 for GWMWater customers.
- The proportion of Victorian customers receiving grants also increased, from 1.55 per 100 customers in 2023-24 to 1.88 per 100 customers in 2024-25.
- North East Water had the highest number of approved grants per 100 customers, significantly outperforming all other businesses with 4.96 out of every 100 customers receiving a grant. North East Water stated its staff across its contact centre, customer care team and debt recovery team collaborate to identify customers who may be experiencing hardship and proactively reach out to them to ensure all available support options are offered, with a particular emphasis on the Utility Relief Grant.
- Greater Western Water had the lowest approved grant rate, with 0.76 out of every 100 customers receiving a grant. It also had the lowest grant approval rate, with only 67 per cent of initiated grants approved. While this may be partially due to the ongoing impacts of its billing system rollout, these figures suggest Greater Western Water could do more to assist its customers to complete their grant applications.
- The proportion of Yarra Valley Water customers receiving the Utility Relief Grant remained high (2.78 per 100 customers). This is about double South East Water's rate and more than triple Greater Western Water's, suggesting Yarra Valley Water is doing more than its metropolitan counterparts to support its customers to access government assistance.
- Statewide, 96 per cent of applications initiated by customers were ultimately approved by the State Government. This is an increase from 2023-24, where 93 per cent of applications initiated were approved.

1.7. Customer hardship grants from water businesses




Hardship grants are another approach used by water businesses to assist customers experiencing payment difficulties. These often take the form of co-payment schemes, where the water business will waive a periodic payment if the customer meets a set number of scheduled payments, with the waived payment counted as a hardship grant. Table 1.2 provides information about the number and value of hardship grants received by customers from each water business in 2024-25. As with the Utility Relief Grants, there is a wide spread in the rate of customers receiving hardship grants across the water businesses. Because the form of hardship support varies from business to business, we do not focus on the type of hardship support provided by businesses. Instead, we focus on the level of support provided by businesses.

Table 1.2 **Hardship grants (residential customers)**

(\$, nominal)

| | Average value of a customer grant, 2024-25 | Average value of a customer grant, 2023-24 | Per 100 customers, 2024-25 | Per 100 customers, 2023-24 |
|-------------------|--|--|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Greater Western | \$309 | \$253 | 0.04 | 0.11 |
| South East | \$650 | \$409 | 0.41 | 0.43 |
| Yarra Valley | \$655 | \$586 | 0.73 | 0.69 |
| Barwon | \$121 | \$120 | 2.79 | 2.32 |
| Central Highlands | \$796 | \$533 | 0.25 | 0.15 |
| Coliban | \$464 | \$198 | 1.47 | 3.83 |
| East Gippsland | \$330 | \$225 | 0.97 | 1.25 |
| Gippsland | \$192 | \$218 | 0.50 | 0.28 |
| Goulburn Valley | \$554 | \$294 | 0.07 | 0.18 |
| GWMWater | \$189 | \$236 | 0.65 | 0.77 |
| Lower Murray | \$0 | \$0 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| North East | \$489 | \$598 | 0.39 | 0.33 |
| South Gippsland | \$155 | \$1,457 | 0.12 | 0.01 |
| Wannon | \$272 | \$232 | 0.44 | 0.37 |
| Westernport | \$91 | \$79 | 1.43 | 1.12 |
| Statewide | \$455 | \$354 | 0.59 | 0.63 |

Snapshot – hardship grants approved per 100 customers

| Statewide average | | -5.9% | Metro average | | -2.8% | Regional average | | -9.2% |
|-------------------|------|---|---------------|------|---|------------------|------|---|
| 2024-25 | 0.59 |  | 2024-25 | 0.43 |  | 2024-25 | 1.14 |  |
| 2023-24 | 0.63 | | 2023-24 | 0.44 | | 2023-24 | 1.25 | |

Snapshot – total value of hardship grant payments, nominal dollars

| Statewide total | | 23.1% | Metro total | | 26.3% | Regional total | | 12.4% |
|-----------------|-------------|---|-------------|-------------|---|----------------|-------------|---|
| 2024-25 | \$7,788,608 |  | 2024-25 | \$6,179,047 |  | 2024-25 | \$1,609,561 |  |
| 2023-24 | \$6,324,977 | | 2023-24 | \$4,893,246 | | 2023-24 | \$1,431,730 | |

Key observations

- Across the state, water businesses awarded hardship grants to a total of 17,120 customers in 2024-25, a rate of 0.59 per 100 customers. This is slightly lower than the total of 17,891 customers awarded hardship grants in 2023-24, at a rate of 0.63 per 100 customers. Despite this reduction in number of grants awarded, this rate is close to the average for the last five years, which is above the average for the five years prior. The total value of grants increased by 23 per cent, contributing to the average value of a grant increasing by 29 per cent, from \$354 in 2023-24 to \$455 in 2024-25.
- Regional businesses' hardship grant rate decreased from 1.25 customers awarded grants per 100 customers in 2023-24 to 1.14 in 2024-25. For metropolitan businesses, the rate decreased slightly from 0.44 customers awarded grants per 100 customers in 2023-24 to 0.43 in 2024-25.
- Coliban Water recorded a decrease of 1,744 (61 per cent) in the total number of hardship grants awarded in 2024-25 when compared to 2023-24. Coliban Water reported that this decrease was due to the end of a one-off flood support initiative undertaken in 2023-24 following floods in Northern Victoria in late-2022.
- Greater Western Water reported it awarded 270 customers hardship grants, despite receiving 6,478 applications. This is a decrease of 363 (58 per cent) customer grants compared to 2023-24.
- The average grant value for each business ranged from \$0 (Lower Murray Water, with no hardship grants awarded again this year) to \$796 (Central Highlands Water). South Gippsland Water recorded a large drop from a single grant of \$1467 last year, to an average of \$155 for 23 grants this year.
- Barwon Water reported the highest rate of hardship grants awarded with 2.79 grants awarded per 100 customers. This was followed by Coliban Water with 1.47 per 100 customers and Westernport Water with 1.43 per 100 customers.
Lower Murray Water has not awarded a customer hardship grant since 2020-21.

1.8. Actions for non-payment of bills

Water legislation allows water businesses to limit the water flowrate to non-paying customers by inserting a restriction device in the customer's water supply line. Water businesses may also take legal action against customers to recover unpaid debt.

Water businesses must assist customers who are experiencing payment difficulties by:

- observing minimum periods of notice before applying supply restrictions or pursuing legal action to recover outstanding debts
- not restricting a customer's water supply or pursuing legal action before first taking additional steps to secure payment, including making a reasonable attempt to contact the customer, offering a payment arrangement and resolving any dispute over the outstanding amount
- not restricting the water supply to a customer who is receiving any form of assistance for payment difficulties under the Water Industry Standards
- not restricting the water supply to a customer who is eligible for and has lodged an application for an eligible concession card and the application is outstanding or a customer who has made an application under the Utility Relief Grant Scheme and the application is outstanding.

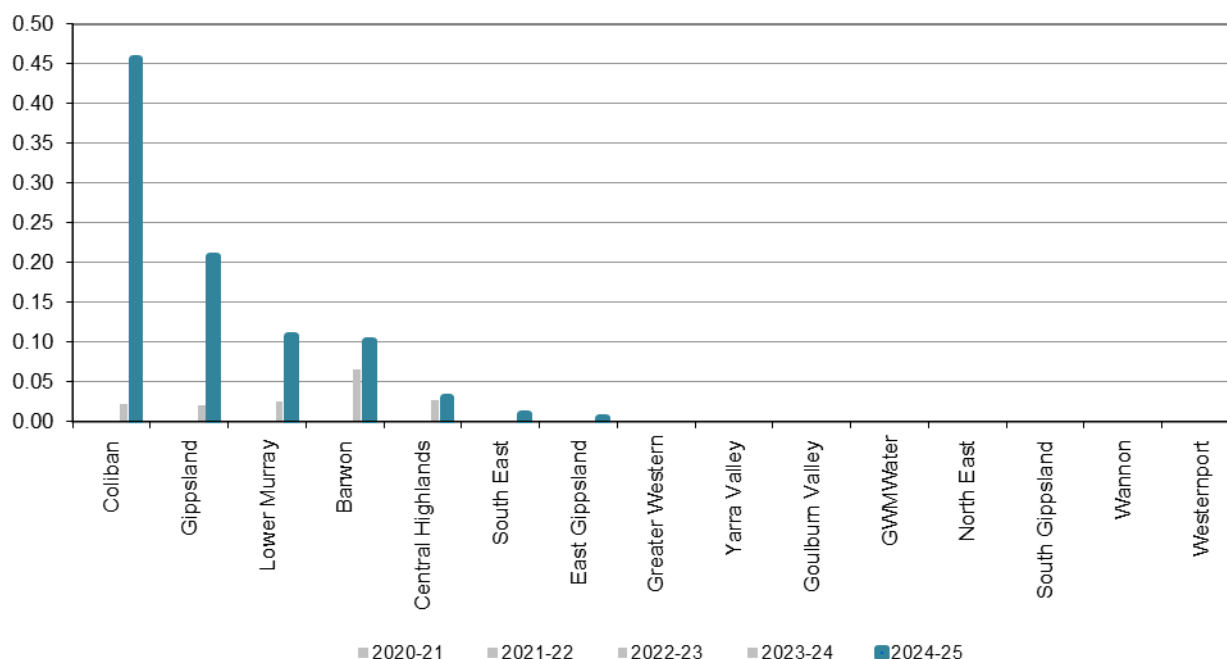
Our Water Industry Standards set out the procedures water businesses are required to follow before restricting a customer's water supply or taking legal action.

Debt recovery actions

During the pandemic and its associated lockdowns, water businesses suspended debt recovery actions against water customers, in line with the guidelines provided by our Water Industry Standards. In 2023-24, Barwon Water, Central Highlands Water, Coliban Water, Lower Murray Water and Gippsland Water were the only water businesses to have resumed water supply restrictions for non-payment of bills. In 2024-25, South East Water and East Gippsland Water also resumed water supply restrictions for non-payment of bills.

Figure 1.5 shows the number of customers who had their water supply restricted per 100 customers for each water business across the last five years. Figure 1.6 shows the number of customers that faced legal action per 100 customers across the last five years.

Figure 1.5 Water supply restrictions for non-payment of bills (per 100 residential customers)



Snapshot – residential water supply restrictions per 100 customers

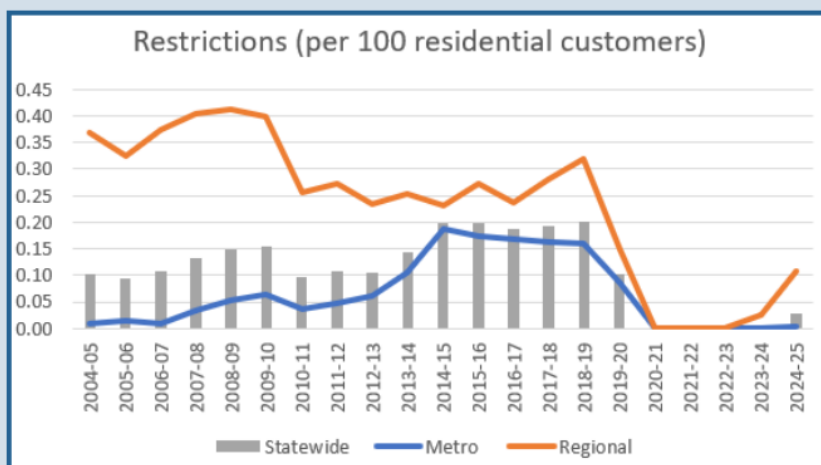
| Statewide average | | | Metro average | | | Regional average | | |
|-------------------|------|---|---------------|-------|---|------------------|------|---|
| 2024-25 | 0.03 | ↑ | 2024-25 | 0.003 | ↔ | 2024-25 | 0.11 | ↑ |
| 2023-24 | 0.01 | | 2023-24 | 0.000 | | 2023-24 | 0.03 | |

Key observations

- There were 795 water supply restrictions for non-payment of bills in 2024-25, a large increase from the 169 reported in 2023-24. 787 of these restrictions were placed on residential customer properties, with the remaining eight placed on non-residential customer properties.
- Coliban Water reported the highest rate of residential water supply restrictions with 0.46 restrictions per 100 customers, followed by Gippsland Water with 0.19 restrictions per 100 customers.
- The number of residential water supply restrictions for each business ranged from zero (8 businesses) to 344 (Coliban Water).
- 2024-25 was the first year that a metropolitan business pursued any residential water supply restrictions since suspending restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic. South East Water applied 66 restrictions in 2024-25.

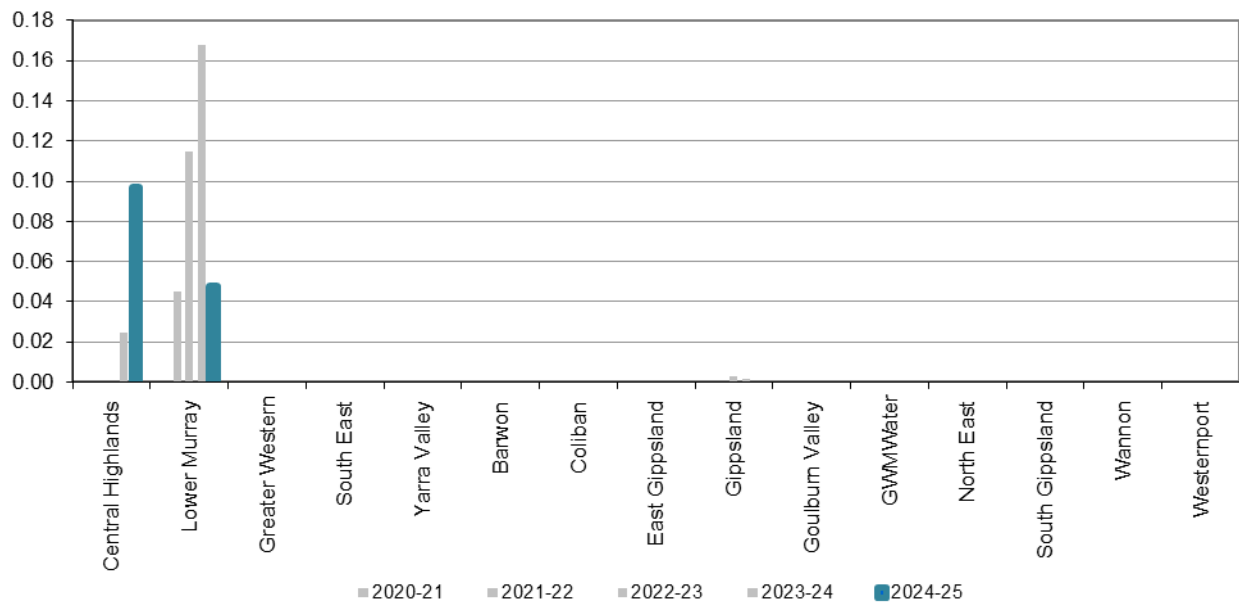
- Six of the seven businesses that applied water restrictions this year applied restrictions to residential concession customers. The businesses all confirmed that they were measures of last resort and that no restrictions were applied to customers receiving any form of assistance for payment difficulties, in accordance with the Water Industry Standards.

Water supply restrictions for non-payment of bills



The restriction rate for non-payment of water bills fell to zero in 2020-21 due to a moratorium on water supply restrictions during the pandemic. In the past two years, the rate of customers facing water supply restrictions has increased due to seven businesses recommencing restrictions. Similar to pre-pandemic, the majority of restrictions have been placed on customers by regional water businesses.

Figure 1.6 Legal actions for non-payment of bills (per 100 residential customers)



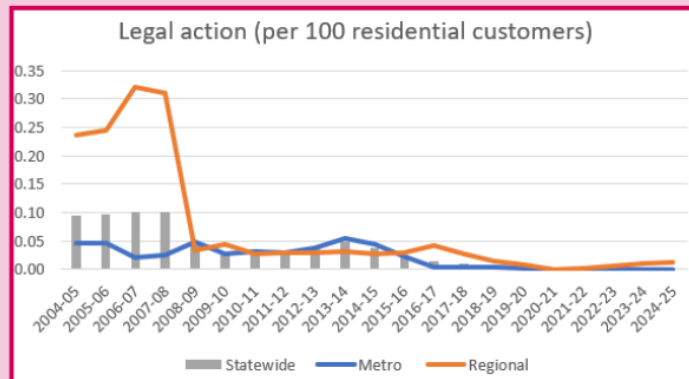
Snapshot – legal actions per 100 residential customers

| Statewide average | | | Metro average | | | Regional average | | |
|-------------------|------|---|---------------|------|---|------------------|------|---|
| 2024-25 | 0.00 | ↔ | 2024-25 | 0.00 | ↔ | 2024-25 | 0.01 | ↔ |
| 2023-24 | 0.00 | | 2023-24 | 0.00 | | 2023-24 | 0.01 | |

Key observations

- Central Highlands Water and Lower Murray Water were the only water businesses to pursue legal action for non-payment of bills against residential customers in 2024-25, totalling 87 legal actions.
- Both businesses confirmed they took no action against customers identified as experiencing financial difficulty.
- Central Highlands Water’s activities this year included legal action against two residential concession customers.
- Central Highlands Water, East Gippsland Water and Lower Murray Water in total pursued legal action against four non-residential customers.

Legal actions for non-payment of bills



In 2020-21 the rate of legal action for non-payment of water bills fell to zero due to a moratorium on legal action during the pandemic. In the past three years the rate of customers facing legal action has increased slightly due to some businesses recommencing legal activities, with two taking legal action against residential customers in 2024-25. Only three businesses have taken legal action against customers since the end of the pandemic. All other businesses have continued to voluntarily cease all legal activities against residential customers, even after the moratorium was lifted. Before the pandemic, the rate of legal action was trending towards zero.

2. How water businesses respond to their customers

This chapter explores how water businesses manage enquiries to their call centres. We also examine the most common areas for complaints made to water businesses and when customers take their complaints to the ombudsman.

Our Water Industry Standards place obligations on businesses for responding to enquiries or complaints and providing appropriate service. These obligations include:

- having policies, practices and procedures for handling customers' complaints and disputes
- providing certain information to customers on request.

Specific details can be found in each water business's customer charter, which are available on their websites.

2.1. 2024-25 at a glance

Our customer perception survey results for 2024-25 have fallen slightly compared to 2023-24, indicating customers are slightly less satisfied with their water business.

Our customer service benchmarking study indicates customers received a slight decrease in customer service compared to previous years.

Across the state, the number of complaints made to water businesses increased, with the largest proportion of complaints relating to water quality.

Complaints about payment issues increased significantly compared to the previous year, mainly driven by Greater Western Water's billing system issues.

2.2. How customers rate their water business

We survey 1,300 water customers every quarter (5,200 customers a year) across the 15 urban and regional water businesses on how they think their water business rates across four key areas:

- Value for money
- Reputation in the community
- Level of trust
- Overall satisfaction.

Our customer perception survey results for 2024-25 show that average customer ratings of their water business have fallen in all four areas when compared to the previous year's results. For more information about our customer surveys and to view the trend over a longer period, see <https://www.esc.vic.gov.au/how-customers-rate-their-water-business>.

Figure 2.1 compares the state average scores in 2024-25 for each of the four areas surveyed with the survey scores in 2023-24. Figures 2.2 to 2.5 show the scores out of 10 that customers gave their water business for each of these four areas for each quarterly survey in 2024-25 and the overall average for 2024-25. Businesses are ranked according to the average score for the year, as shown by the blue bar.

Figure 2.1 State average scores for each area surveyed

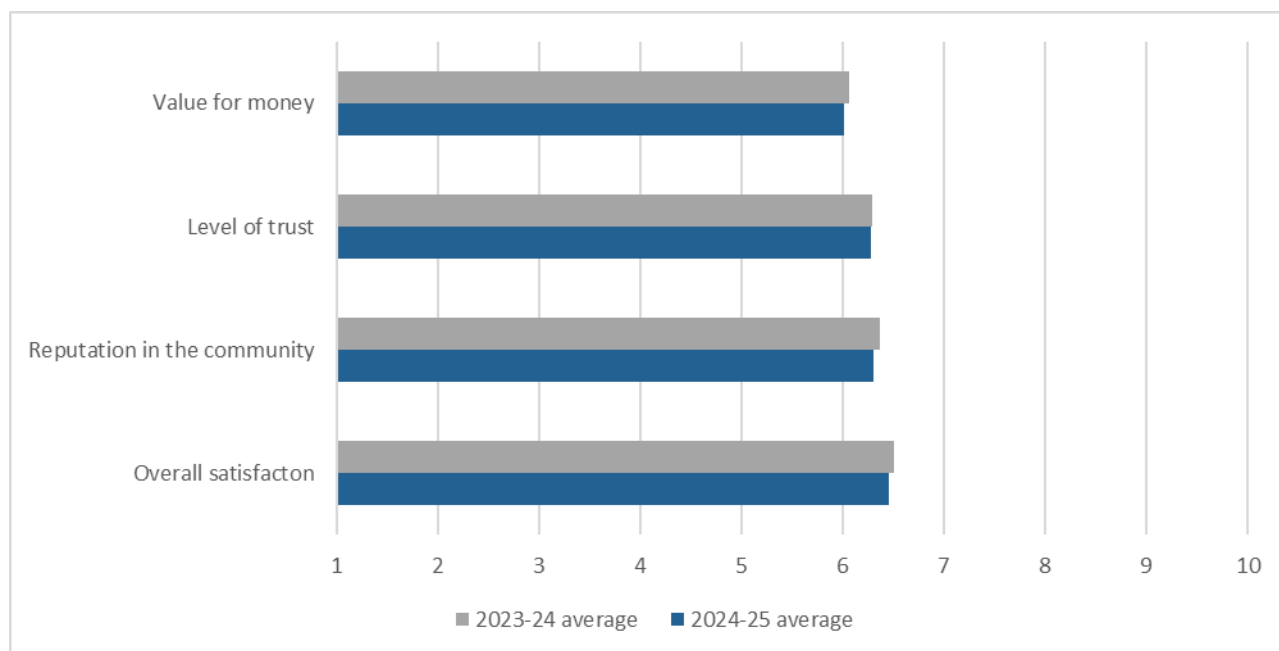


Figure 2.2 How customers rated their business for value for money

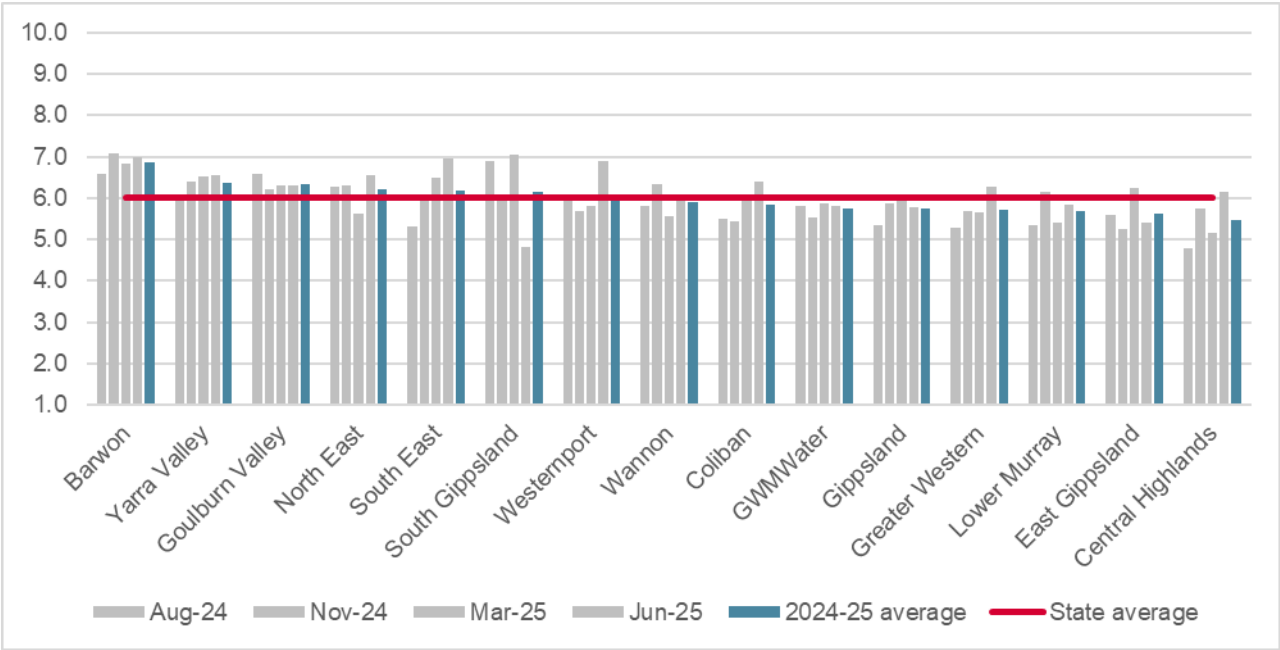


Figure 2.3 How customers rated their water business for level of trust

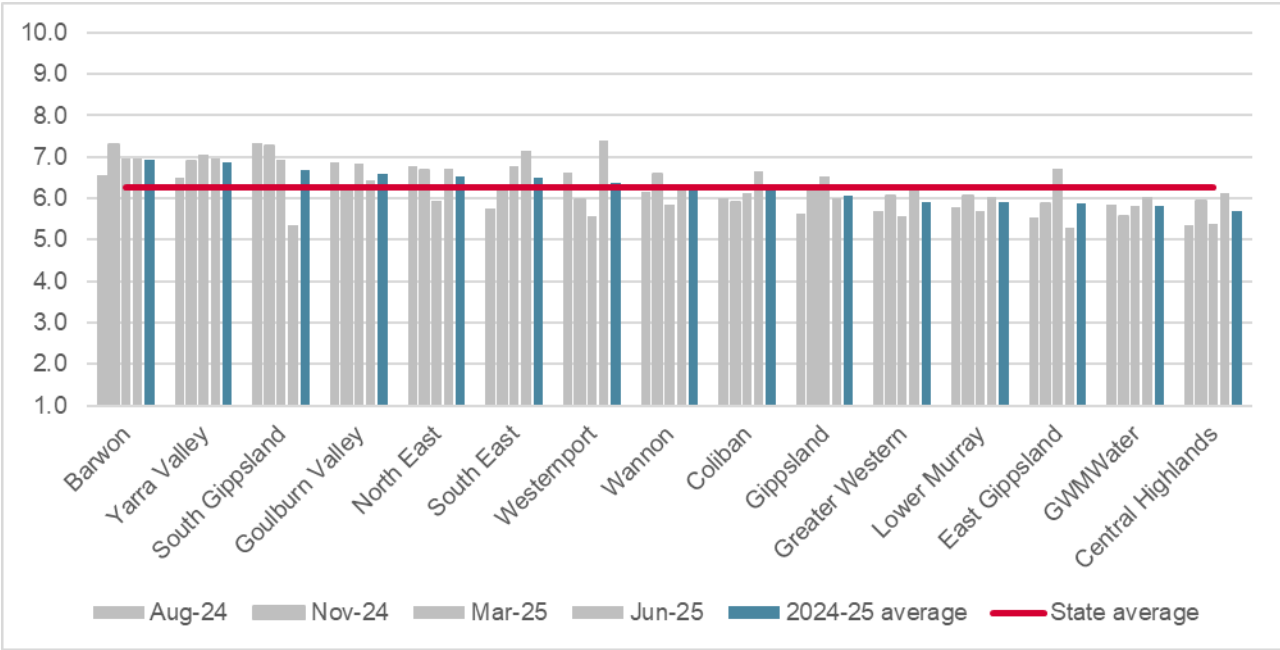


Figure 2.4 How customers rated their water business on reputation in the community

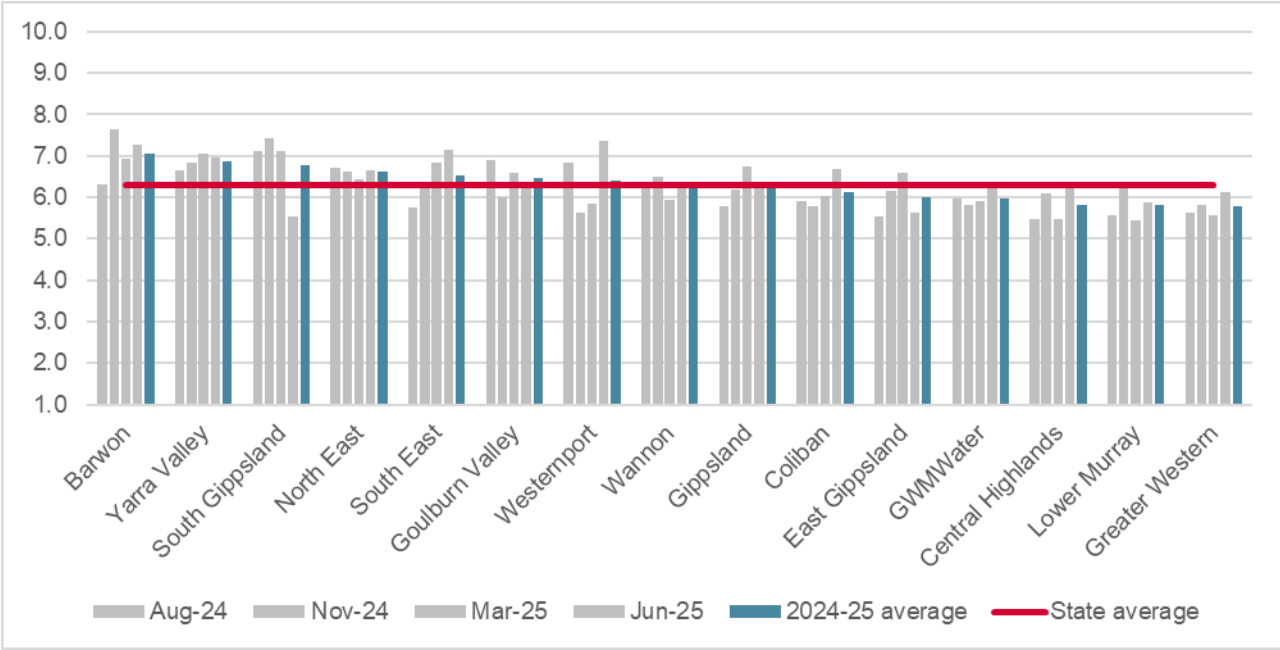
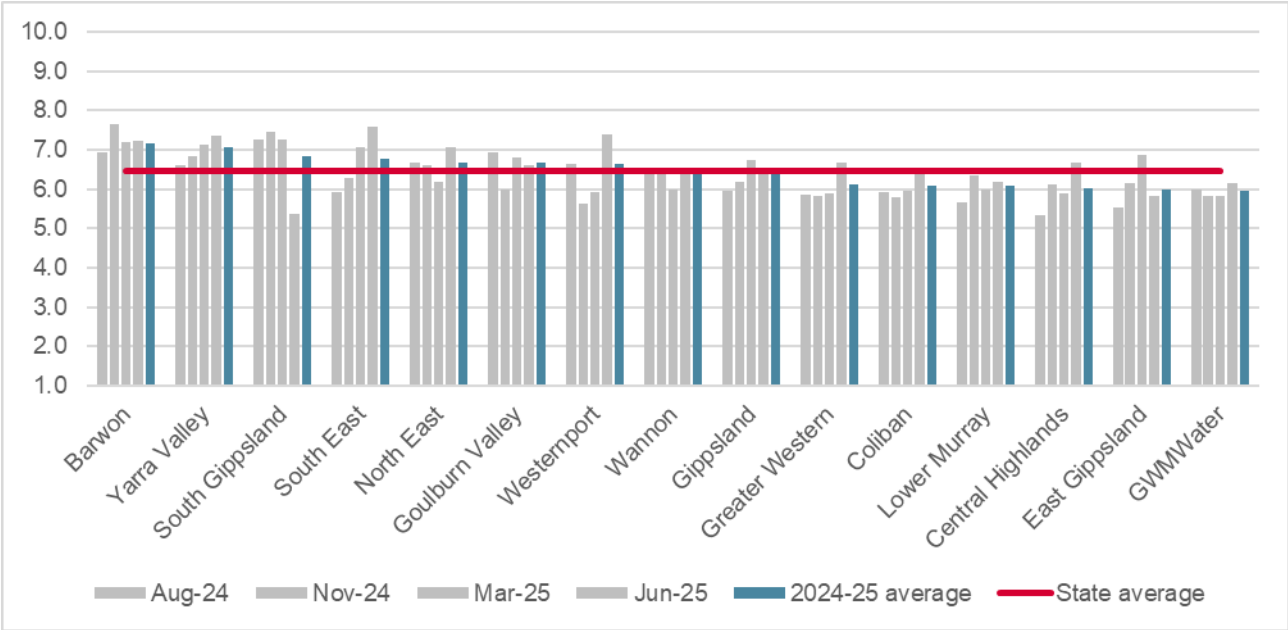


Figure 2.5 How customers rated their water business for overall satisfaction



Key observations

- The state average scores across all areas surveyed were down slightly in 2024-25 compared to the previous year. Reputation in the community experienced the largest decrease, from 6.37 in 2023-24 to 6.31 in 2024-25.
- Scores varied more from business to business than in previous years. In 2024-25 the highest rated business and lowest rated business in each of the areas surveyed differed by anywhere from 1.2 to 1.4 points.
- Customers rated Barwon Water and Yarra Valley Water as the two highest performers in the state, ranking in the top two in all four areas surveyed. No other businesses managed to achieve average annual scores of 7 or higher in any of the four survey areas.
- Customers rated Central Highlands Water in the bottom three in all four categories, and East Gippsland Water in the bottom three in three out of the four categories (Value for money, Level of trust, and Overall satisfaction). However, their scores in all areas vary only slightly from other similar performers.

2.3. Water business customer service

We asked Customer Service Benchmarking Australia (CSBA) to independently benchmark the call centre performance of Victorian water businesses. Posing as genuine customers with general enquiries, trained CSBA mystery shoppers contacted each of the water businesses' call centre agents on 60 occasions via the account line (as opposed to the fault line) and scored each interaction.

Customer Service Benchmarking Australia uses a proprietary approach called SenseCX for scoring the key aspects of the customer experience during a telephone call.

The key aspects are described as: **engage**, **introduce**, **clarify**, **resolve** and **close**. The scoring approach measures performance in these key aspects across the following three areas:

- **Ease** – the effort the customer must expend to accomplish their goals. The interaction must be easy. The agent should actively guide the customer through a clear process towards resolution.
- **Sentiment** – how the experience and interaction make the customer feel. Customers want to be treated as an individual, not just another transaction in the agent's day.
- **Success** – the degree to which the customer is able to accomplish their goals. Customers want to get what they came for and move on. They need to be understood and provided with a no-fuss resolution.

The SenseCX approach provides a benchmark comparative score and helps businesses identify specific areas where they can improve the customer experience. Points are allocated for meeting specific criteria across the three areas. The score is simply the percentage of total points achieved out of the total points available for each area.

Overall, the Victorian water sector performed the same or better than the other Australian sectors measured by CSBA. Despite still performing above other sectors, it saw no change in performance in 2024-25, with a score of 54 per cent, the same as in 2023-24.¹⁰

CSBA also provides aggregate SenseCX scores from other industry sectors for comparison with the water sector. Table 2.1 outlines the median scores for each of the sectors in 2024-25, which all fall within a seven-percentage point range.

Table 2.2 provides the overall average score for each water business, along with average scores for each of the three areas to measure customer service performance: Ease, Sentiment and Success.

¹⁰ In 2022-23, Customer Service Benchmarking Australia updated specific measures within the framework to address changing customer expectations, resulting in a decline in scores across the sector. While other sectors have caught up to their previous scores, the water sector is still lagging in its recovery compared to others.

Table 2.1 Victorian metropolitan and regional water sectors compared to other Australian sectors in 2024-25 (median score under SenseCX)

| Sector | Median score (per cent) |
|--|-------------------------|
| Education | 54 |
| Australian Water Sector | 54 |
| Victorian Regional Water Sector | 54 |
| Victorian Metropolitan Water Sector | 52 |
| All Utilities | 51 |
| Government | 50 |
| Financial Services | 49 |
| Automotive | 48 |
| Commercial | 48 |

Source: Customer Service Benchmarking Australia

Table 2.2 Water businesses' overall benchmark scores and scores for each area under SenseCX (per cent)

| Water business | Score | Ease | Sentiment | Success |
|---|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Barwon Water | 68 | 59 | 74 | 70 |
| Coliban Water | 55 | 38 | 66 | 60 |
| GWMWater | 55 | 38 | 66 | 59 |
| South Gippsland Water | 55 | 36 | 64 | 63 |
| Westernport Water | 54 | 36 | 65 | 61 |
| Yarra Valley Water | 54 | 36 | 63 | 61 |
| Central Highlands Water | 53 | 37 | 63 | 57 |
| East Gippsland Water | 53 | 36 | 64 | 59 |
| Wannon Water | 53 | 35 | 63 | 61 |
| South East Water | 52 | 36 | 63 | 58 |
| Gippsland Water | 51 | 33 | 62 | 57 |
| Goulburn Valley Water | 51 | 31 | 61 | 59 |
| North East Water | 51 | 31 | 63 | 59 |
| Lower Murray Water | 50 | 32 | 62 | 56 |
| Greater Western Water | 49 | 33 | 61 | 52 |
| Victorian Water Sector (average) | 54 | 37 | 64 | 60 |

Source: Customer Service Benchmarking Australia

Key observations

- The Victorian water sector averaged 54 per cent for overall score in 2024-25, the same as 2023-24.
- The Victorian water sector's score on Sentiment dropped one percentage point compared to 2023-24 and increased one percentage point for Success. The sector score for Ease did not change.
- The average Success score increasing by one percentage point to 60 per cent suggests more customers had their problems resolved, at least at the first point of contact. The decline in the Sentiment score suggests customers' experience of the service was slightly less personable.

- Ease continues to be the lowest scoring area for all water businesses with a sector average score of 37 per cent, well below the sector average scores for Sentiment (64 per cent) and Success (60 per cent). This indicates most businesses could improve how they keep customers informed and how they guide customers to a resolution.
- Barwon Water has been the highest performing business for seven years in a row, and in 2024-25 scored at least 13 per cent higher than all other businesses. It also had the largest increase in overall score in 2024-25 compared to 2023-24, with a 3 percentage point increase. Barwon Water advised this has been achieved through a deliberate investment in targeted training and coaching of its call centre team. This includes tailored workshops, peer support, and one-on-one coaching.
- Greater Western Water's overall score decreased by 4 percentage points, the largest decrease in overall score. In 2024-25, it had the lowest overall score of any Victorian water business.
- Greater Western Water's Success score decreased by 8 percentage points, the largest decrease across any category. This was likely due to the impacts of its billing system rollout on the volume and nature of calls fielded by its customer call centre.
- Barwon Water, East Gippsland Water, Westernport Water and Yarra Valley Water were the only businesses whose scores across all areas either improved or stayed flat in 2024-25.
- Not all mystery shopper calls get connected to an operator and only calls that get connected contribute to the business's score.¹¹ For every business in 2024-25 there was at least one call that did not reach an operator. However, of the 60 mystery shopper calls that CSBA made to each business, only 18 to South East Water's call centre and 20 to Greater Western Water's connected to an operator and contributed to their scores. This is consistent with South East Water and Greater Western Water customers experiencing significantly longer call wait times this year (discussed in the next section).

Want more information?

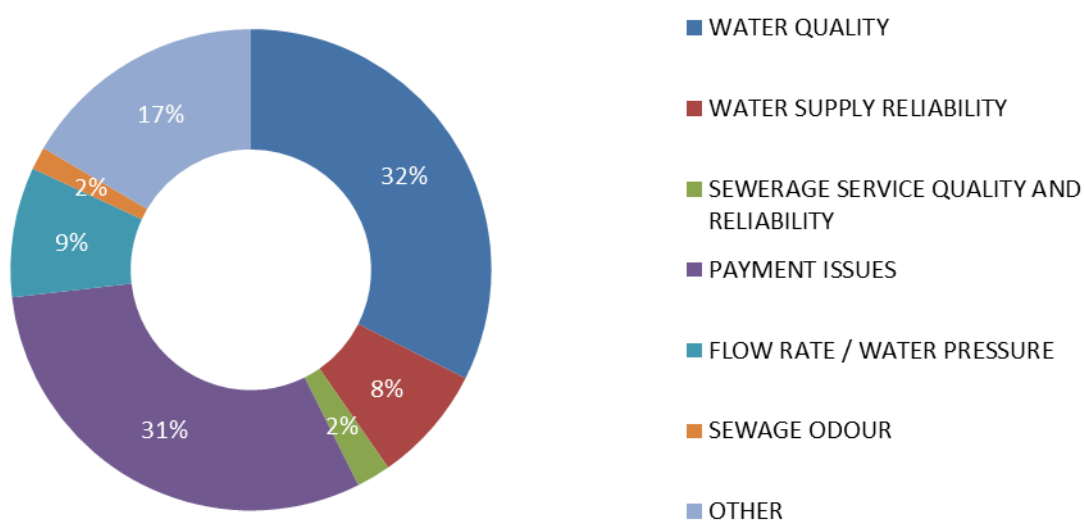
See our [data summary](#) which contains the data that forms the basis for our tables and charts.

¹¹ CSBA's mystery shopper calls are terminated by the caller if not connected within 10 minutes.

2.4. Complaints made to water businesses

Customer complaints can indicate dissatisfaction with the services provided by water businesses.¹² If a business cannot resolve a complaint directly with the customer, the customer may refer the matter to the Energy and Water Ombudsman (Victoria) for further investigation. Figure 2.6 shows the breakdown of total complaints made to water businesses in 2024-25 according to several categories, and sizes each category according to its relative share of complaints.

Figure 2.6 Complaints by category in 2024-25 (total complaints made to water businesses)



Water businesses reported a total of 31,210 customer complaints across Victoria in 2024-25, a 30 per cent increase from 24,050 total complaints reported in 2023-24. This increase is far above the average variation observed across the last five years and is largely attributed to increases in the number of complaints to two businesses, Greater Western Water (up 4,280) and South East Water (up 2,126).

Water quality complaints continue to represent the largest proportion of complaints at 32 per cent of the total statewide complaints. However, this is closely followed by payment issue complaints

¹² A complaint is recorded if a customer registers dissatisfaction in a complaint category. Australian Standards define a complaint as an 'expression of dissatisfaction made to or about an organisation, related to its products, services, staff or handling of a complaint where a response is implicitly expected or legally required.' (AS/NZS 10002:2014) Under our reporting definitions, any customer query related to water quality must be recorded as a water quality complaint.

which increased significantly this year, from 24 per cent of total statewide complaints in 2023-24 to 31 per cent in 2024-25. This reflects 9,535 complaints in 2024-25, 3,850 more than the year before. Again, this increase reflects increases in the number of payment issue complaints fielded by Greater Western Water (3,115 more than the year before) and South East Water (589 more).

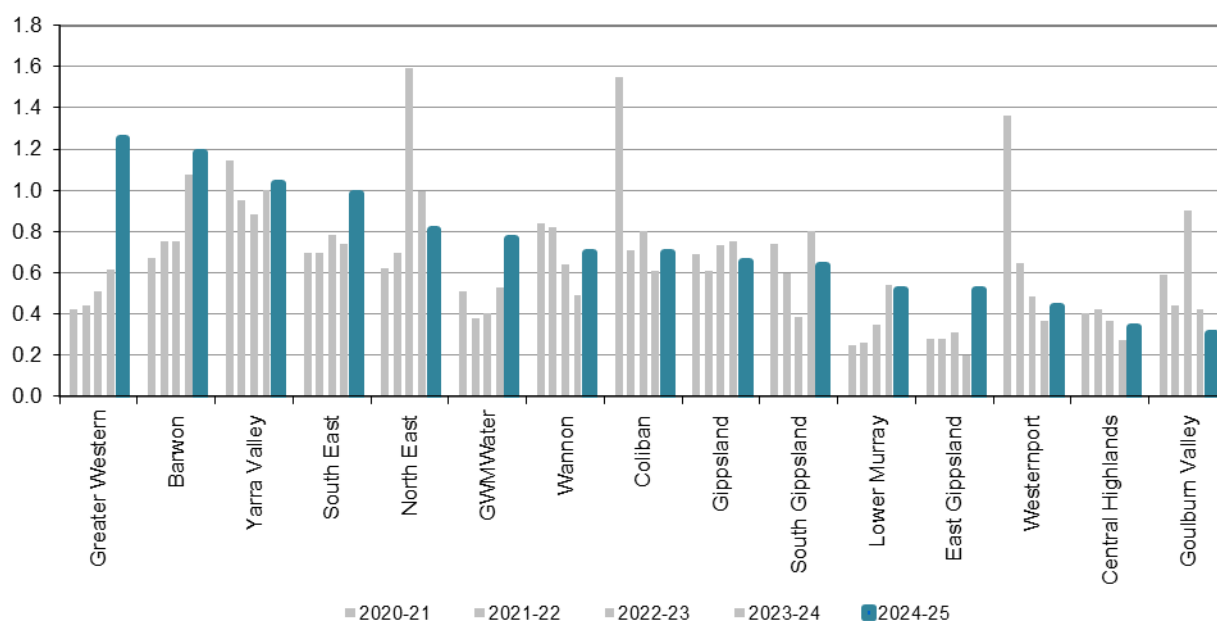
These two businesses also reported significant increases in the average time it takes a customer to connect to a call centre operator via their account lines, compared to 2023-24 – the average 2024-25 call connect times were 21 minutes for Greater Western Water and 29 minutes for South East Water, compared to a sector average of 11 minutes.¹³

In contrast, the proportion of complaints related to water supply reliability decreased by 2 percentage points from 10 per cent in 2023-24 to 8 per cent in 2024-25.

Water quality complaints remain the most common complaint for all water businesses except Barwon Water, Central Highlands Water and Greater Western Water. Barwon Water received more complaints about issues classified as 'other' and Central Highlands Water received more complaints about water pressure/flow rate issues. As noted above, Greater Western Water received more complaints about payment issues this year, reflecting the impact of its new billing system roll-out failures (discussed below in section 2.6). Figure 2.7 shows the complaint rate for each water business per 100 customers.

¹³ Average call connect times reported by businesses do not include calls abandoned by the customer before connection.

Figure 2.7 Complaints made to water businesses (per 100 customers)



Snapshot – total complaints per 100 customers

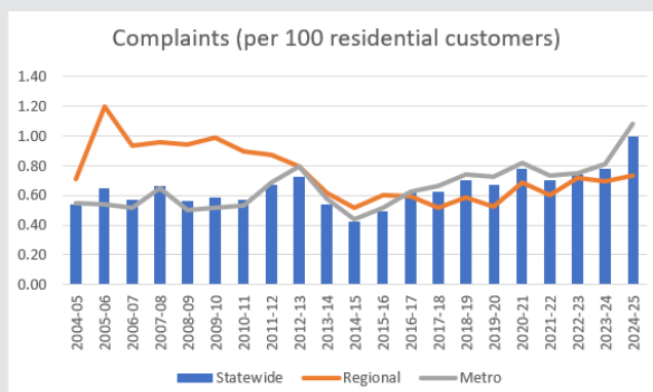
| Statewide average | | 27.5% | Metro average | | 33.1% | Regional average | | 5.6% |
|-------------------|------|-------|---------------|------|-------|------------------|------|------|
| 2024-25 | 1.00 | ↑ | 2024-25 | 1.08 | ↑ | 2024-25 | 0.73 | ↑ |
| 2023-24 | 0.78 | | 2023-24 | 0.81 | | 2023-24 | 0.69 | |

Key observations

- The average customer complaint rate increased in 2024-25 to 1 complaint per 100 customers, compared to 0.78 complaints per 100 customers in 2023-24.
- The increase in the statewide complaint rate is driven by a large increase for metropolitan water businesses alongside a smaller increase for regional water businesses. The metropolitan complaint rate increased to 1.08 from 0.81 complaints per 100 customers while the regional complaint rate increased to 0.73 from 0.69 complaints per 100 customers.
- The increase in metropolitan Melbourne was largely driven by increases in complaints to Greater Western Water and South East Water.
- Greater Western Water reported the highest complaint rate with 1.25 complaints made per 100 customers, and the largest increase in its complaint rate, doubling its rate reported in 2023-24. This increase was primarily driven by complaints regarding billing and payment issues, reflecting the number of issues customers have faced following the rollout of Greater Western Water's new billing system.

- Goulburn Valley Water reported both the lowest complaint rate and the largest decrease in its complaint rate, decreasing from 0.43 in 2023-24 to 0.31 in 2024-25. This is the second consecutive year it has reported the largest decrease in complaint rate.

Complaints made to water businesses

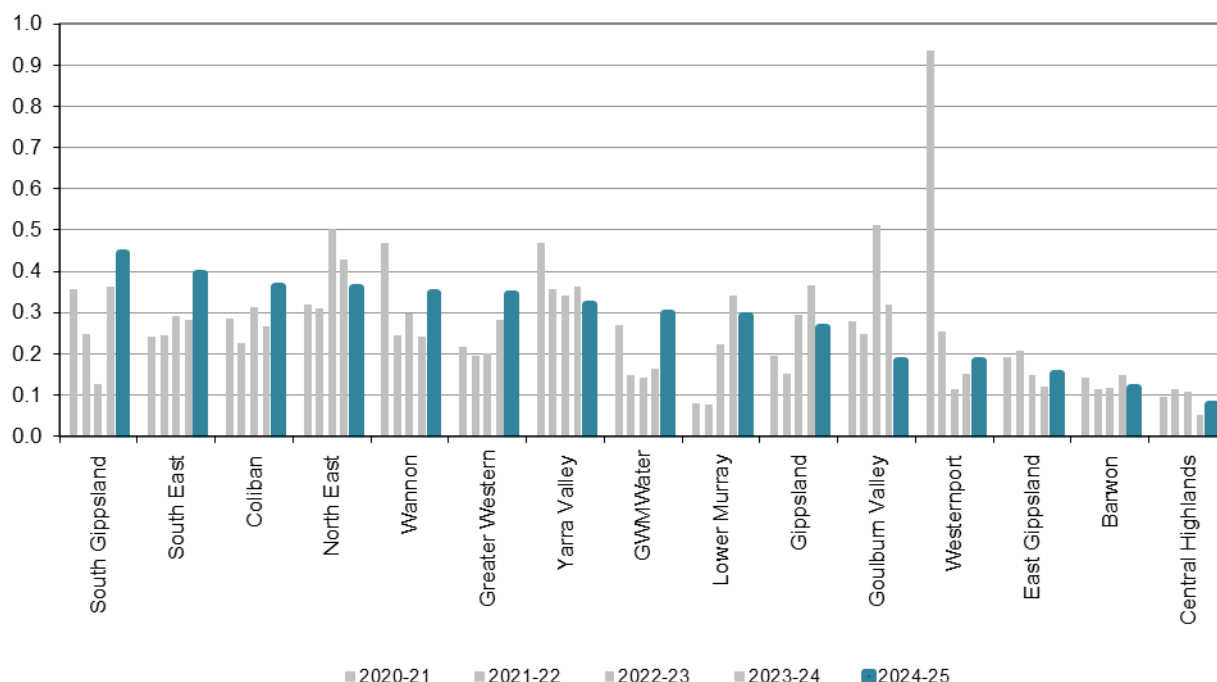


The rate of complaints made to water businesses has varied year on year in Victoria. The rate of complaints rose sharply in 2024-25, mostly driven by a significant increase in the metropolitan complaints rate. In recent years the rate of complaints in both the metropolitan and regional service areas have trended up. The regional complaint rate has come down from a peak in 2005-06 to below the metropolitan rate.

2.5. Water quality complaints made to water businesses

The number of water quality complaints is a measure of customer satisfaction with the colour, taste and odour of water supplied. Figure 2.8 shows the number of water quality complaints received by each water business per 100 customers across five years.

Figure 2.8 Water quality complaints made to water businesses (per 100 customers)



Snapshot – water quality complaints per 100 customers

| Statewide average | | 10.0% | Metro average | | 12.9% | Regional average | | -3.1% |
|-------------------|------|-------|---------------|------|-------|------------------|------|-------|
| 2024-25 | 0.32 | ↑ | 2024-25 | 0.35 | ↑ | 2024-25 | 0.22 | ↓ |
| 2023-24 | 0.29 | | 2023-24 | 0.31 | | 2023-24 | 0.23 | |

Key observations

- A total of 10,126 water quality complaints were made to water businesses across the state in 2024-25, an increase of 1,082 (12 per cent) from 2023-24. This equates to 0.32 complaints per 100 customers, an increase on the previous year's complaint rate of 0.29.
- In metropolitan Melbourne, water quality complaints per 100 customers increased from 0.31 in 2023-24 to 0.35 in 2024-25, driven by an increase in complaints to South East Water and Greater Western Water. Greater Western Water explained its increase was driven by several factors including mains cleaning, increased bursts and leaks, and the need to switch between different reservoirs (with different water taste) to manage dry weather conditions. South East

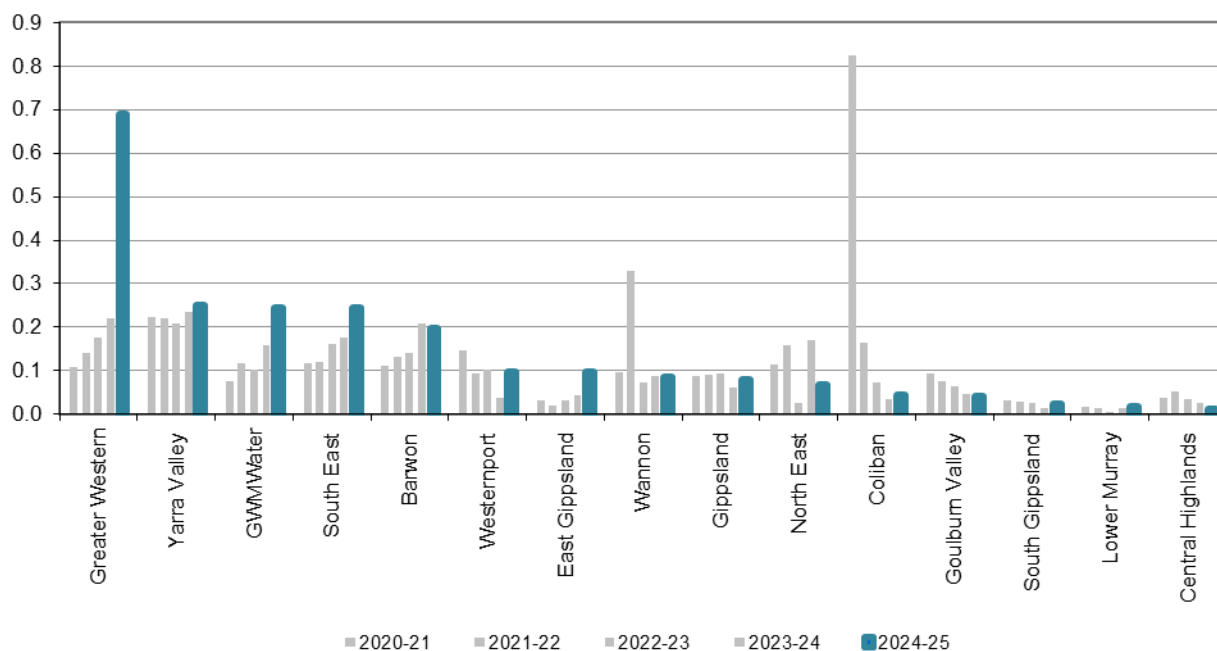
Water attributed its increase to three incidents, with two related to valve repairs and one related to elevated manganese levels.

- Yarra Valley Water was the only metropolitan business to report a decrease in its water quality complaint rate, decreasing from 0.36 per 100 customers in 2023-24 to 0.32 per 100 customers in 2024-25. It attributes this decrease to its ongoing education campaign and customer research programs.
- The water quality complaint rate in regional Victoria decreased slightly from 0.23 per 100 customers in 2023-24 to 0.22 per 100 customers in 2024-25.
- South Gippsland Water reported the highest water quality complaint rate with 0.44 complaints per 100 customers. This is despite recording a slight increase in customers who are satisfied with the quality of its tap water via its annual customer satisfaction survey.
- Barwon Water and Central Highlands Water reported the lowest water quality complaint rates, with 0.12 and 0.08 complaints per 100 customers respectively.

2.6. Payment issues complaints made to water businesses

The number of payment issues complaints is a measure of complaints that relate to water bill payment, including account payment issues, financial loss or overcharging, billing errors or affordability. Figure 2.9 shows the number of payment issues complaints received by each water business per 100 customers across five years.

Figure 2.9 Payment complaints made to water businesses (per 100 customers)



Snapshot – payment issues complaints, per 100 customers

| Statewide average | | 64.8% | Metro average | | 74.4% | Regional average | | -2.6% |
|-------------------|------|-------|---------------|------|-------|------------------|------|-------|
| 2024-25 | 0.30 | ↑ | 2024-25 | 0.37 | ↑ | 2024-25 | 0.10 | ↓ |
| 2023-24 | 0.18 | | 2023-24 | 0.21 | | 2023-24 | 0.10 | |

Key observations

- A total of 9,535 payment issue complaints were made to water businesses across the state in 2024-25, an increase of 3,850 (68 per cent) compared to 2023-24. This equates to 0.30 payment issue complaints per 100 customers and is a significant increase on the previous year's rate of 0.18.
- In metropolitan Melbourne, payment issue complaints per 100 customers increased from 0.21 in 2023-24 to 0.37 in 2024-25.
- In regional Victoria, payment issue complaints were approximately the same at 0.10 per 100 customers in both 2023-24 and 2024-25.

- Greater Western Water reported the highest number (4,511) of payment complaints and highest rate (0.69 complaints per 100 customers) of payment complaints. These were increases of 223 per cent and 212 per cent respectively from 2023-24. This significant increase reflects the number of issues customers have faced following the rollout of Greater Western Water's new billing system in May 2024. No other business recorded a rate higher than 0.25 complaints per 100 customers (Yarra Valley Water). Failures in Greater Western Water's billing system roll-out resulted in a material proportion of its customers receiving delayed or incorrect bills or no bill issued at all, and these issues have continued throughout 2025.
- South East Water reported an increase of 589 complaints (or 40 per cent) relating to payment issues in 2024-25, reflecting a rate of 0.24 complaints per 100 customers. South East Water told us that increased customer interactions during the year led to customers facing longer call wait and response times. Some customers lodged payment issue complaints hoping to reach the business quicker to resolve their enquiry. South East Water advised it observed a reduction in payment complaints once pressures on its contact centre eased.
- Central Highlands Water reported the lowest rate of payment issues complaints, with 0.01 complaints per 100 customers. Lower Murray Water and South Gippsland both recorded payment issues complaint rates of 0.02 per 100 customers.

3. Water and sewer network reliability

This chapter looks at reliability of the water and sewer networks. It explores how often customers are without a water supply and how often sewer blockages and spills impact customers. Our measures only consider the pipe network and pumps under the control of the water businesses and exclude the private property connections managed by customers.

3.1. 2024-25 at a glance

Water networks were slightly less reliable, as shown by the increase in average customer minutes off supply for metropolitan Melbourne.

Sewer service reliability decreased across the state, with increases in sewer blockages and spills.

3.2. Water service – minutes off supply

‘Minutes off supply’ is a measure of how many minutes on average a customer for each water business was without their water supply during a year. This measure only looks at interruptions to water mains and excludes smaller ancillary pipelines or private connections.

Various factors affect average minutes off supply, including the:

- number of interruptions
- duration of each interruption
- number of customers affected by each interruption.

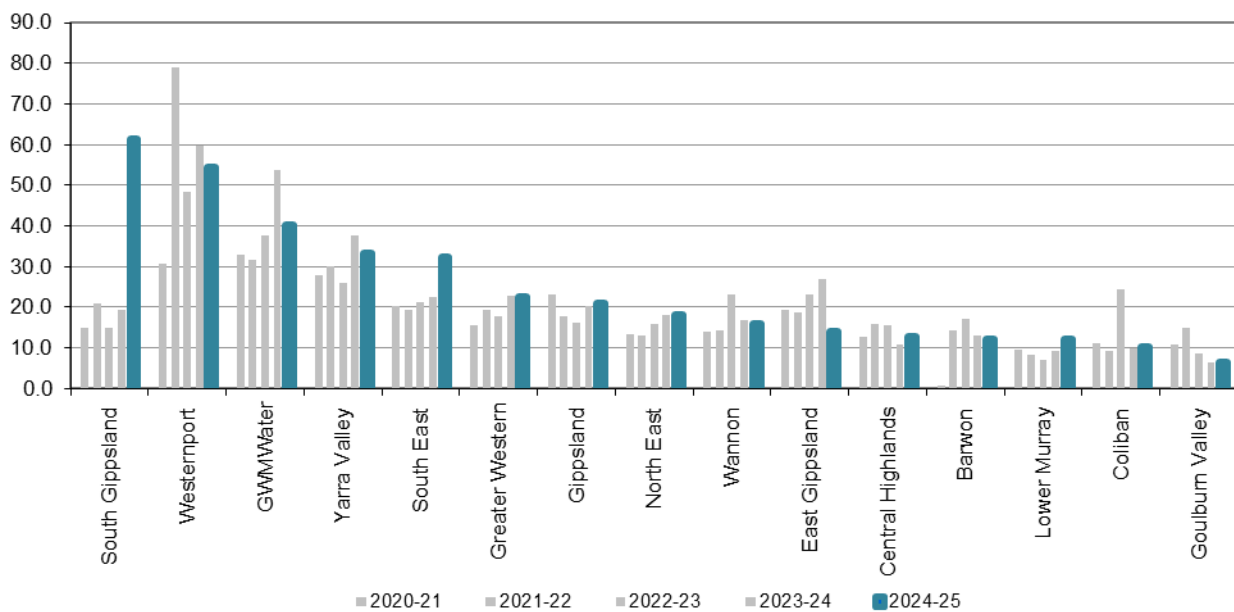
Whether interruptions are planned or unplanned also gives insight into the stability and reliability of the network. Figure 3.1 shows the average time in minutes a customer had their water supply interrupted for each water business across the last five years.

Types of interruptions – planned and unplanned

A planned interruption occurs when a customer has received at least two days’ notice of an interruption to their water service. An unplanned interruption occurs when this notice was not given, or the duration of a planned interruption exceeded the time estimated.

The duration of supply interruptions can be greatly affected by factors including the size and location of the pipeline, access to the worksite, the availability of work crews to attend, and the nature of the repair required.

Figure 3.1 Average minutes off water supply per customer



Snapshot – average customer minutes off supply

| Statewide average | | 5.3% | Metro average | | 5.9% | Regional average | | 1.7% |
|-------------------|----|------|---------------|----|------|------------------|----|------|
| 2024-25 | 27 | ↑ | 2024-25 | 30 | ↑ | 2024-25 | 17 | ↑ |
| 2023-24 | 26 | | 2023-24 | 28 | | 2023-24 | 17 | |

Key observations

- Across Victoria, the average customer minutes off supply increased by 5.3 per cent from 26 minutes to 27 minutes in 2024-25, after increasing by 20 per cent (4 minutes) in the year prior.
- In Melbourne, the average customer minutes off supply increased by 5.9 per cent from 28 minutes to 30 minutes. This was largely driven by a 43 per cent increase in South East Water's minutes off supply from 23 minutes to 32 minutes and slightly offset by Yarra Valley Water recording a decrease of 12 per cent, from 38 minutes to 33 minutes. South East Water attributed its increase to multiple interruptions caused by a small number of ageing assets that service high density housing.
- Regional Victoria saw a 1.7 per cent increase in customer minutes off supply, holding relatively steady at just above 17 minutes.

- South Gippsland Water reported the highest average customer minutes off supply at 61 minutes, more than tripling its 2023-24 value of 19 minutes. South Gippsland Water attributed its increase to dry conditions impacting its water assets, including its water mains.
- Goulburn Valley Water had the lowest average customer minutes off supply for the second straight year, at 7 minutes.
- East Gippsland Water decreased its average customer minutes off supply by 13 minutes down to 14 minutes, a 48 per cent fall. It attributed this fall to a reduction in the number and complexity of works that require customers to be off supply, following asset renewal works.

3.3. Sewerage service – sewer blockages

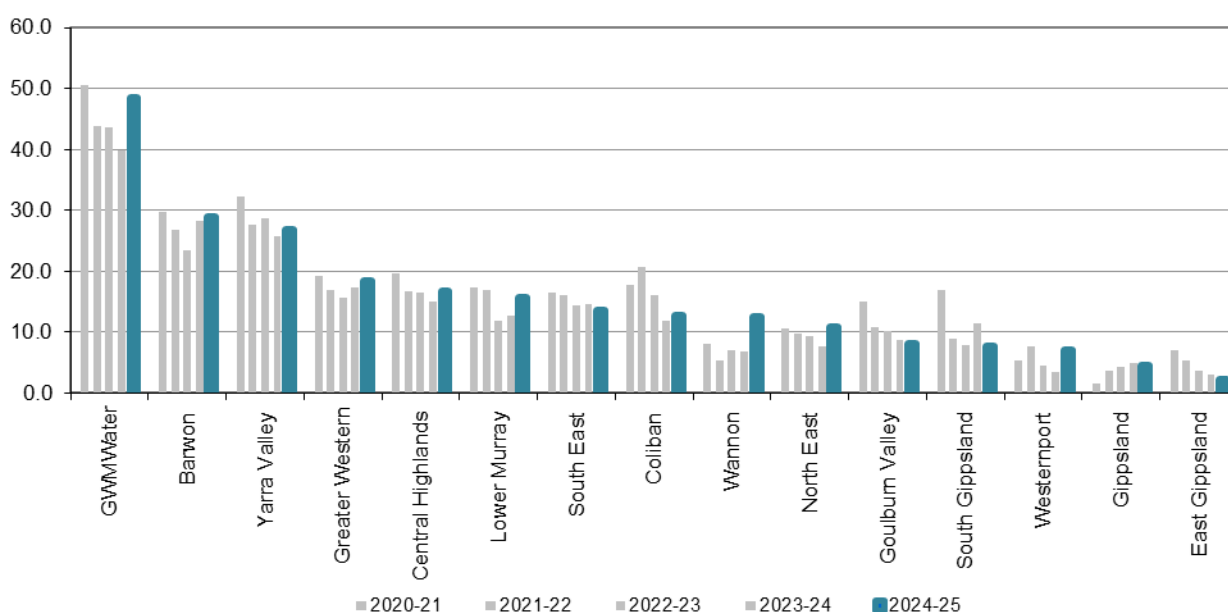
Sewer networks consist of:

- trunk and reticulation mains (core infrastructure involving large pipes and pumps to transfer sewage to treatment facilities)
- house connection branches and property drains (ancillary smaller infrastructure that transfers sewage from customers to the sewer mains)
- private connections from customers to connection branches or property drains (faults in these are the responsibility of customers).




Figure 3.2 shows the number of sewer blockages reported per 100 kilometres of sewer main for each water business across the last five years.

A sewer blockage is a partial or total obstruction of a sewer main that impedes sewage flow. It does not include blockages in the ancillary infrastructure or private connections.

Figure 3.2 Sewer blockages per 100 kilometres of sewer main



Snapshot – sewer blockages per 100 kilometres of sewer main

| Statewide average | | | 3.7% | Metro average | | | 1.0% | Regional average | | | 10.1% |
|-------------------|------|--|---|---------------|------|--|---|------------------|------|--|---|
| 2024-25 | 18.3 | |  | 2024-25 | 19.8 | |  | 2024-25 | 15.5 | |  |
| 2023-24 | 17.6 | | | 2023-24 | 19.6 | | | 2023-24 | 14.1 | | |

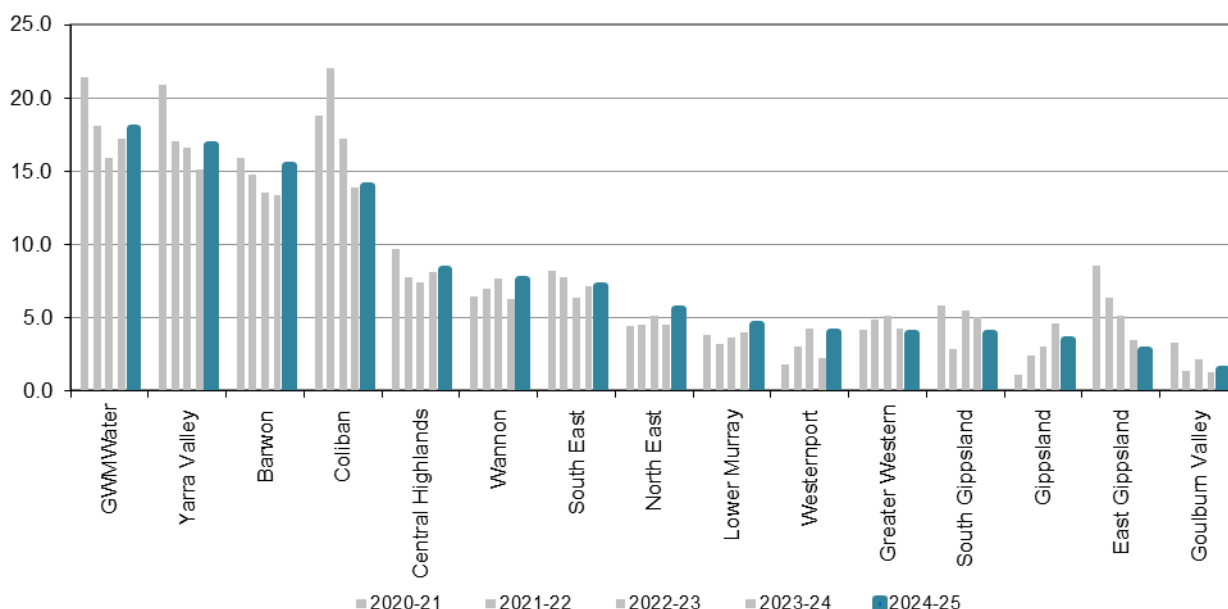
Key observations

- The rate of sewer blockages has increased by 3.7 per cent, from 17.6 in 2023-24 to 18.3 in 2024-25. This is the first increase in four years driven primarily by lower rainfall and drought conditions in some regional locations, leading to soil movements and tree roots penetrating pipes to seek water.
- Metropolitan Melbourne saw a 1 per cent increase, with just under 20 blockages on average per 100 kilometres of sewer main. Of the three metropolitan businesses, only South East Water reported a lower sewer blockage rate in 2024-25. Greater Western Water and Yarra Valley Water reported increases of 5 per cent and 4 per cent respectively.
- In regional Victoria, the blockage rate increased from 14.1 sewer blockages per 100 kilometres of sewer main in 2023-24 to 15.5 in 2024-25.
- GWMWater continues to report the highest rate of sewer blockages across the state with 48.4 blockages per 100 kilometres of sewer main, reporting a 22 per cent increase this year. It has reported the highest rate each year since 2016-17.
- Wannon Water reported the largest percentage increase in the state, almost doubling its sewer blockage rate of 6.7 reported in 2023-24 to 12.5 in 2024-25. Wannon Water reported it was affected by drier conditions this year, leading to an increase in blockages due to tree roots infiltrating its sewers.
- East Gippsland Water and Gippsland Water reported the lowest sewer blockage rates with 2.2 and 4.4 blockages per 100 kilometres of sewer main respectively in 2024-25.

3.4. Sewerage service – containment of sewer spills

Spills are a failure to contain sewage within the core sewer infrastructure. Figure 3.3 shows the number of sewer spills reported per 100 kilometres of sewer main for each water business across the last five years.

Figure 3.3 Sewer spills per 100 kilometres of sewer main



Snapshot – sewer spills per 100 kilometres of sewer main

| Statewide average | | 5.6% | Metro average | | 5.5% | Regional average | | 5.9% |
|-------------------|-----|------|---------------|------|------|------------------|-----|------|
| 2024-25 | 9.5 | ↑ | 2024-25 | 10.0 | ↑ | 2024-25 | 8.6 | ↑ |
| 2023-24 | 9.0 | | 2023-24 | 9.5 | | 2023-24 | 8.2 | |

Key observations

- The statewide average sewer spill rate increased by 5.6 per cent. There were 9.5 sewer spills per 100 kilometres of sewer main in 2024-25, compared to 9 spills per 100 kilometres in 2023-24.
- Of the fifteen water businesses across the state, ten businesses reported an increase in sewer spill rates this year, after ten businesses recorded a decrease in 2023-24.
- Barwon Water, Coliban Water, GWMWater and Yarra Valley Water, are the only four businesses to report more than 10 sewer spills per 100 kilometres of sewer main.
- Westernport Water reported the largest percentage increase (77 per cent) in sewer spill rates, from 2.2 spills per 100 kilometres of sewer main in 2023-24 to 4 spills in 2024-25.

- Goulburn Valley Water continues to report the lowest sewer spill rate, with 1.4 sewer spills per 100 kilometres of sewer main in 2024-25 and an average of 1.9 over the last five years.

Containing spills within five hours

- Seven businesses contained 100 per cent of sewer spills within five hours in 2024-25. These businesses were East Gippsland Water, Gippsland Water, Goulburn Valley Water, GWMWater, Lower Murray Water, South Gippsland Water and Westernport Water, two businesses more than the previous year.
- Two businesses (Yarra Valley Water and Coliban Water) contained close to 100 per cent of spills within five hours, containing 99.6 and 99.3 per cent within five hours, respectively.
- Greater Western Water reported a significant decrease in the number of sewer spills it contained within five hours, falling from 99.6 per cent in 2023-24, to just 32.2 per cent in 2024-25. Greater Western Water attributed this decrease to a rise in the number and complexity of sewer spills encountered this year, including spills caused by foreign materials and tree root intrusions, leading to competing priorities for its field services teams.
- The percentage of spills contained within five hours for the remaining five businesses were:
 - Barwon Water: 98.9 per cent, down from 100 per cent in 2023-24
 - Central Highlands Water: 96.3 per cent, down from 100 per cent in 2023-24
 - North East Water: 94.6 per cent, up from 79.7 per cent in 2023-24
 - South East Water: 98.8 per cent, up from 98.4 per cent in 2023-24
 - Wannon Water: 96.1 per cent, up from 90.5 per cent in 2023-24.

4. How much water is recycled

4.1. Recycled water – effluent treatment and reuse

Wastewater is:

- residential and non-residential sewage
- trade waste from commercial and industrial customers
- stormwater that reaches the sewer network.

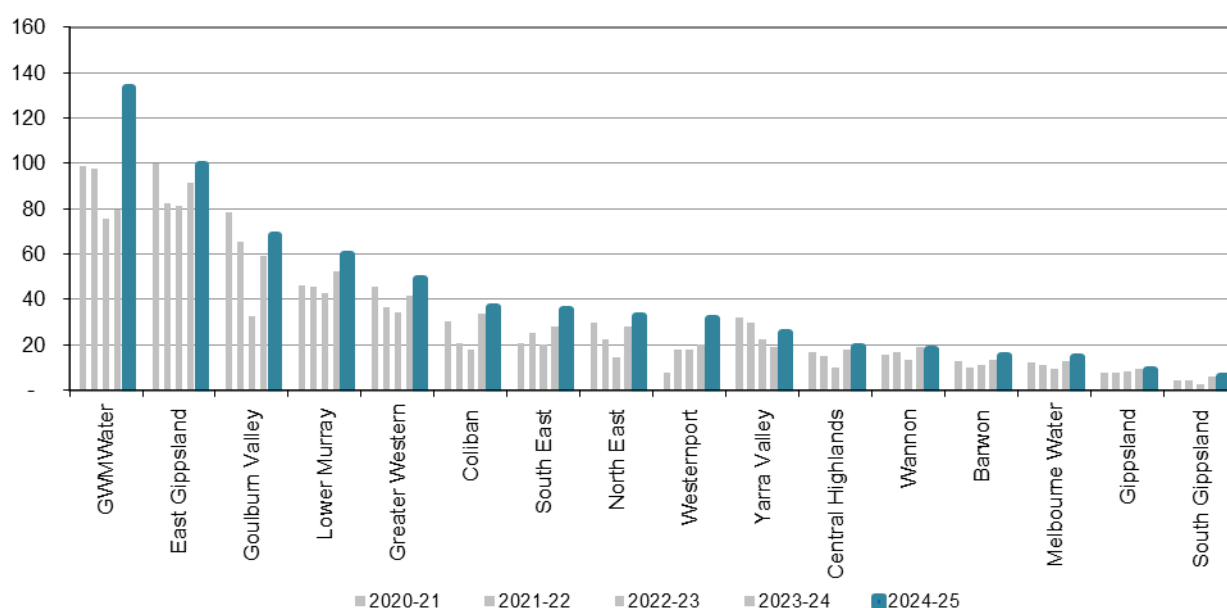
The wastewater treatment plants produce an effluent stream. This stream is normally discharged to the environment if it is unused or not recycled.

Recycled water is generally used on turf farms, dairy farms and recreational lands (such as parks and golf courses). It is also used in some industrial processes and for irrigation. Some businesses operate 'third pipe' recycled water supply systems to their customers, for non-potable uses such as watering the garden and flushing the toilet. Recycled water can also be used for beneficial environmental outcomes, such as maintaining wetlands.

Optimising recycled water reuse is consistent with the Victorian Government's commitment to making better use of alternative water sources to improve the resilience and efficiency of the water system.

Figure 4.1 shows the proportion of water recycled as a percentage of the volume of effluent produced by each water business across the last five years.

Figure 4.1 Recycled water used as a percentage of effluent volume produced



Snapshot – proportion of effluent reused: per cent and change from previous year:
percentage point

| State average | | 2.2 | Metro average | | 2.1 | Regional average | | 3.1 |
|---------------|----|-----|---------------|----|-----|------------------|----|-----|
| 2024-25 | 20 | ↑ | 2024-25 | 17 | ↑ | 2024-25 | 29 | ↑ |
| 2023-24 | 18 | | 2023-24 | 15 | | 2023-24 | 26 | |

Key observations

- Statewide effluent production decreased by 1.8 per cent in 2024-25, from 535,187 megalitres in 2023-24 to 525,305 megalitres in 2024-25, consistent with reduced sewer flows during drier weather.
- Twenty per cent (103,666 megalitres) of the effluent produced was reused as recycled water. This is an increase from 2023-24, where 18 per cent (93,744 megalitres) of the effluent produced was reused as recycled water. Again, this is consistent with trends seen in drier years, where recycled water demand increases.
- Most businesses continue to reuse significantly less than 50 per cent of the effluent they produce. Only four businesses reused more than 50 per cent of the effluent produced in 2024-25 – East Gippsland Water, GWMWater, Goulburn Valley Water and Lower Murray Water, the same four businesses as the previous year.
- GWMWater recorded reusing 133 per cent of the effluent it produced in 2024-25. GWMWater explained this figure is due to the reuse of some recycled water it had produced and stored in 2023-24. East Gippsland Water reused 100 per cent of the effluent it produced in 2024-25.

How much water is recycled

- Gippsland Water and Wannon Water were the only businesses to report a reduction in the proportion of effluent reused in 2024-25 (6 per cent and 5 per cent, respectively).
- South Gippsland Water continues to report the lowest proportion of recycled water usage. In 2024-25 it reused 6 per cent of the effluent it produced, the same proportion as 2023-24.

5. Water Industry Standards – Audit results

5.1. Audit scope

Under clause 19 of the Water Industry Regulatory Order 2014 (WIRO), the commission has the function of carrying out audits of regulated water businesses. This includes deciding the scope of the audit.

In determining the scope of this year's audit, we have had regard to the risk assessment process set out in the audit guideline, and the commission's objectives under the *Essential Services Commission Act 2001* and the *Water Industry Act 1994*.

Our audit scope for 2024-25 included the usual verification of annual performance data provided by businesses to the commission. We also required businesses to demonstrate their compliance with some key clauses of our [Water Industry Standards](#) relating to the publication of charges, support for customers experiencing family violence, the provision of information to customers, and the obligation to report non-compliances with the standard to us.

Our audit considered whether water businesses have the policies and procedures in place that are required to meet the audited clauses of the industry standards – it did not necessarily test the businesses' compliance in practice.

Table 5.1 below lists the relevant clauses of the Water Industry Standards that were included in our audit scope for both urban and rural water businesses for 2024-25.

Table 5.1 Water Industry Standards clauses subject to audit in 2024-25 (Urban and Rural)

| Audited clauses that apply to all urban water businesses | Audited clauses that apply to all rural water businesses |
|--|--|
| Schedule of charges (clause 2.2) | Schedule of charges (clause 5.2) |
| Family violence assistance (clause 11.1) | Family violence assistance (clause 10.1) |
| Family violence policy (clause 11.2) | Family violence policy (clause 10.2) |
| Communication assistance (clause 13.6) | Communication assistance (clause 11.8) |
| Unplanned interruptions (clause 18.3) | Provision of charter or summary (clause 17.3) |
| Planned interruptions (clause 18.4) | Obligation to report non-compliance to the Essential Services Commission (clause 18) |
| Provision of charter or summary (clause 24.3) | |
| Obligation to report non-compliance to the Essential Services Commission (clause 25) | |

5.2. Audit results

| Clause | Businesses found to be compliant | Businesses found to be non-compliant |
|--|--|--------------------------------------|
| Charges | All businesses | |
| Family violence | All businesses | |
| Communication assistance | All businesses | |
| Unplanned interruptions | All businesses | |
| Planned interruptions | All businesses | |
| Publication of charter | All businesses | |
| Obligation to report non-compliance to the Essential Services Commission | Barwon Water Central Highlands Water East Gippsland Water Gippsland Water Goulburn Valley Water Goulburn-Murray Water Greater Western Water GWMWater Lower Murray Water North East Water South Gippsland Water South East Water Southern Rural Water Yarra Valley Water Wannon Water | Coliban Water Westernport Water |

5.3. Non-compliance

Under clause 25 of the Water Industry Standards for Urban Customer Service, and clause 18 of the Water Industry Standards for Rural Customer Service, water businesses must have procedures, policies and practices in place to identify non-compliance with the Water Industry Standards in a timely and efficient manner. When a water business identifies potential or actual non-compliance with the Water Industry Standards that may have a material adverse impact, the water business must report that identification to the commission. The auditors found that Coliban Water and Westernport Water did not comply with these requirements.

The auditor's recommendations to Coliban Water included:

- map existing documented policies, practices and procedures to the corresponding Water Industry Standards' obligations to demonstrate how each obligation is complied with in a systematic manner
- identify and document clear roles throughout the organisation for monitoring compliance with the Water Industry Standards
- concisely document the business's approach to identifying, and assessing the impact of, potential or actual non-compliances with the Water Industry Standards.

Coliban Water has accepted its auditor's findings and has committed to address the non-compliance by the end of June 2026.

The auditor's recommendations to Westernport Water included:

- develop a dedicated procedure for recording and reporting non-compliances
- develop a centralised register for Water Industry Standard's compliance obligations, and existing policies and procedures that are required to meet those obligations which would identify gaps in the ability to identify non-compliances
- include language in the reporting procedure to facilitate a timely report culture.

Westernport Water has accepted its auditor's findings and has committed to address the non-compliance by the end of December 2025.

5.4. Recommendations to businesses

The auditors can identify areas of improvement for businesses, even where they find businesses' policies and procedures are compliant with the Water Industry Standards. We note that while only two businesses had areas of non-compliance identified through our audit, auditors identified areas of improvement for almost all water businesses.

The most common area for improvement identified by auditors was businesses' requirements under their obligation to report non-compliance under clause 25 of the Water Industry Standard. This standard came into effect on 1 April 2024. Auditors found 8 of the 17 audited businesses were compliant but could improve their processes, procedures and practices in this area.

We expect businesses will respond to their auditors' recommendations to ensure they are complying with the Water Industry Standards. We will verify businesses have effectively addressed auditors' recommendations as part of the next performance audit in 2026.

5.5. Greater Western Water

While its auditor found Greater Western Water to be compliant with the relevant clauses of the Water Industry Standards, we note that the audited clauses did not relate to billing, the issuing or content of bills, or payments.

Greater Western Water has acknowledged that failures with its new billing system have caused significant billing disruptions and multiple breaches of the Water Industry Standards.¹⁴ Failures included:

- suspending quarterly billing for some customers
- issuing incomplete or incorrect bills
- failing to include required information on bills
- suspending direct debit arrangements without notice.

¹⁴ On page ix of this report, we refer to Greater Western Water's billing system failures, the impacts this had on its reported data and performance, and our recent acceptance of a court-enforceable undertaking which requires Greater Western Water to provide a \$130 million customer redress package to its impacted customers.



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