

## Macedon Water Think Tank response to GWW's Pricing Submission

**The Macedon Water Think Tank** is an alliance of community groups investigating all aspects of management of water in the Deep Creek and Jacksons Creek catchments, at the top end of the Maribyrnong. More people and less water mean business-as-usual is not going to cut it. We want to give informed opinion on the policies, investment and services needed, and that means understanding how services are delivered and priorities set. Through 2023, in partnership with GWW, we have looked at who is responsible for what in the water world, wastewater treatment, waterways health and groundwater-dependent ecosystems.

We have the following comments on Greater Western Water's [pricing submission](#):

1. Our direct experience of GWW's performance in the upper Maribyrnong confirms the frank assessment in the Pricing Submission of the service delivery difficulties faced by GWW:

*'... additional growth, along with higher rainfall, resulted in higher operating expenditure to maintain existing compliance at wastewater treatment plants. .... the capital program was reprioritised to deliver works for new connections and additional operating expenditure was required to manage treatment plants that needed upgrades to remain compliant.... The additional costs associated with maintaining EPA compliance will not be eased until the treatment plants have been upgraded.'* (p 229)

We reaffirm the opinion arrived at in the recent community consultation conducted by GWW on Macedon Ranges' water future<sup>1</sup> which identified the number one value of the Macedon Ranges in respect of future water management as "Maintaining healthy waterways and habitat" (p13).

2. We are pleased to see projected investment in up-grades to treatment and supply infrastructure:
  - Woodend Recycled Water Plant upgrade (p 207) to a Membrane Bioreactor (MBR) based treatment system;
  - Macedon Ranges Transfer Augmentation (p 208), to deliver water more readily into and out of Rosslynne Reservoir;
  - Gisborne Recycled Water Plant Upgrade (p 211). Design and construction of a new 3.65 megalitre per day recycled water plant based on Membrane Bioreactor (MBR) technology;
  - Romsey Water Filtration Plant (p 214), Stage 1 plant upgrade of Romsey RWP (p 216) to improve plant reliability and capacity.
3. GWW proposes a balance between costs and income that keeps service charges for customers similar to past charges. However, there has been under-investment in water infrastructure for many years, and the pace of residential development is now much faster than projected even a decade ago.

With growing population and reducing rainfall, GWW supply and treatment will be central to the ecological integrity of the waterways in our region, and some in our communities doubt that GWW has can deliver on this, despite its good intentions. Our deep concern is that infrastructure improvements will roll out too slowly. GWW and local communities will be caught reacting to crises and failures. Incidents like emergency releases of water from the Romsey treatment plant reduce trust in GWW and confidence in government.

If the ESC supports the service charges proposed, it should ensure that other sources are found for investment in infrastructure. Can State Government provide a separate funding stream? Can GWW increase developers' contributions to water infrastructure, or borrow against likely future development? Can State Government increase developer contributions, or ensure an adequate proportion goes to water infrastructure?

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<sup>1</sup> [https://hdp-au-prod-app-gww-yoursay-files.s3.ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/8616/8577/0049/YourSay\\_GWW\\_-\\_Macedon\\_Ranges\\_Water\\_Future\\_-\\_Engagement\\_report.pdf](https://hdp-au-prod-app-gww-yoursay-files.s3.ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/8616/8577/0049/YourSay_GWW_-_Macedon_Ranges_Water_Future_-_Engagement_report.pdf)

4. We appreciate the collaboration of GWW and other water agencies with the Macedon Water Think Tank. As environmentally-minded people in our local communities, we want to be water literate, and we want more people in each of our communities to join us. We want management of water to become part of how people think about their settlements and the landscapes they inhabit. We are finding agency staff (GWW and MW so far), to be dedicated and competent, willing to share how their programs operate and the challenges they face.

Water literacy will require resourcing and long-term collaboration that goes deeper than typical agency consultation. With the Think Tank, GWW and MW have made a move towards that collaboration.

Macedon Water Think Tank  
13/12/23

Deep Creek Landcare Group



Macedon and Mount Macedon Landcare Group



Newham and District Landcare Group



Riddells Creek Landcare



Friends of Mt Gisborne

Clarkefield and District Landcare

Greening Of Riddell



Friends of Steele Creek



Maribyrnong River and Waterways Association

