

Customers feel supported and more satisfied with water businesses

A new report shows Victoria's water businesses responded to the needs of their customers in a year that saw more needing help because of bushfires and the coronavirus pandemic.

The Essential Services Commission's [annual water report](#) shows more customers received hardship grants from water businesses than ever before, and the value of grants more than doubled.

The commission's pricing director Marcus Crudden says appropriate action was taken to ensure customers who had difficulty paying bills were supported through a difficult year.

"Water businesses increased access to financial support, and paused debt recovery action, meaning fewer customers faced supply restrictions or legal action for an overdue bill," he said.

The report also shows Victorians used less water on average this year, and bills remained steady overall.

Wetter than average autumn months across most of the state contributed to a drop in annual water use of seven kilolitres for the average household. Water use fell by 13 kilolitres (six per cent) in regional areas and four kilolitres (three per cent) in metropolitan Melbourne. Metropolitan water consumption remained lower than regional areas.

Due to the lower average water use, household water bills were generally slightly lower than 2019 as well. The typical bill in regional Victoria decreased by \$24 to \$1,118, though metropolitan bills rose by \$3 to \$1,003 with the reduction in usage offset by inflation.

Mr Crudden says customer satisfaction with water businesses has also improved.

"Our ongoing survey shows the businesses generally are getting higher marks on trust and value for money.

"They are seen to be providing reliable water services and good customer service, and complaints to the Energy and Water Ombudsman have fallen this year," he said.

During the pandemic the commission has also been reporting monthly on indicators of hardship among Victoria's water customers – see our [latest report on this data](#) on our website.

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