



Outcomes Report 2020–21

Performance of Victoria's water businesses against their own commitments to customers

13 October 2021



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Overview

As part of our 2018 water price review, 17 water businesses established ‘outcomes’ they would deliver to customers, over the following five years.¹

These customer outcomes are a key part of our PREMO water pricing approach. PREMO was applied for the first time in 2018.

Water businesses engaged with customers during the price review to establish their outcomes. The outcome commitments of each business are reflected in their approved prices. Progress against these commitments can indicate whether customers are getting what they pay for.

This report summarises each water business’s self-assessment of its 2020–21 performance and where relevant its overall performance since 2018 against its customer outcome commitments. Links to the full self-assessment documents are available in this report and on our website.²

Businesses continued to deliver on their commitments despite challenges caused by the pandemic

Many Victorian water businesses reported the coronavirus pandemic had affected some performance measures in 2020–21 as the pandemic continued. For example, measures requiring face-to-face customer interaction could not be met.

Despite this, performance against commitments remained mostly strong across all businesses. Most businesses (11 out of 17) reported they had, overall, delivered on their 2020–21 outcome commitments.³

The remaining six businesses considered they had *mostly* met their outcome commitments in 2020–21.

¹ Note Goulburn Murray Water is not regulated under PREMO and Melbourne Water was not part of our 2018 water price review. Melbourne Water’s price review took place in 2021 and its final set of customer outcomes is now available on our website: www.esc.vic.gov.au/water-outcomes-reporting. North East Water has committed to outcomes over an eight-year regulatory period.

² www.esc.vic.gov.au/water-outcomes-reporting.

³ On 1 July 2021, City West Water and Western Water merged to become Greater Western Water. While now operating as one business, because during 2020–21 they were separate entities, we have continued to report separately on the customer outcomes agreed to in the 2018 price review as Greater Western Water (previously City West Water area) and Greater Western Water (previously Western Water area). Greater Western Water will work to align its customer outcomes for the upcoming 2023 water price review.

No business considered it had failed overall in delivering its outcome commitments. Those that fell short of some targets are still committed to meeting them before the next price review.

Victorian water customers are, in general, getting what they pay for.

We engaged with water businesses during the pandemic to understand how they are managing challenges and supporting customers. We understand the pandemic required a major shift in focus for most businesses and the support they provide customers – to manage this as well as (generally) deliver on their 2018 commitments is a great outcome.

Our reporting on support provided by water businesses to customers during the pandemic is available on our website at www.esc.vic.gov.au/water-customer-support-during-coronavirus-pandemic.

Businesses honestly and transparently reported their performance

2020–21 represents the third year of outcomes reporting, and water businesses have displayed their growing experience with the new framework.

We are pleased to see improvements in self-assessments. Those businesses that appeared to give themselves relatively lenient self-ratings in previous years, appear to have self-assessed more in line with their peers.

Encouragingly we noticed an increase in businesses checking in with their customers for feedback on their performance before finalising their self-assessments.

We are also pleased to see significant improvements in businesses prominently self-reporting their performance results. Making a prominent announcement on the homepage of a business's website shows a business is transparent to customers and takes ownership for its performance.

Businesses have remained engaged with their customers on their outcomes through their customer committees despite barriers due to the pandemic. Some businesses such as Central Highlands Water and East Gippsland Water have used this engagement to update their set of measures and targets to better align with its customers changing priorities.

Our PREMO framework is designed to continuously evolve as revealed industry best practice resets the bar higher each cycle. We will continue to highlight better performing businesses, with these businesses setting the bar for future self-assessments and reporting.

More than a third of businesses' major projects are deferred or delayed

Businesses reported that 71 of the 201 major projects identified at the 2018 water price review are either deferred or delayed. This is more than a third of all major projects, consistent with the proportion of deferred or delayed projects reported last year. Businesses are reporting that most

projects are still expected to be completed before the next price review. Several of these projects were affected by the pandemic. Our major projects supplement includes a summary of project statuses and businesses' explanations for schedule changes.⁴

Businesses should explain delays or alterations to their project schedules to their customers. The current prices customers are facing include capital investment costs that were approved in the 2018 price review project schedule (regardless of whether the expenditure has been incurred or not). This is unless businesses lower their prices accordingly. Also, changes to project delivery schedules may materially impact the services customers receive.

We understand that circumstances and priorities have changed during the pandemic. However, we expect businesses to proactively manage the delivery of their major projects to ensure customers receive value for the prices they pay.

How businesses have managed the delivery of their major projects during this regulatory period will be a determining factor for their PREMO ratings at the next price review.

We expect businesses' major project schedules for the next regulatory period will be based on robust project forecasts and realistic timeframes (including consideration of the on-going impacts of the pandemic). In this way the risk of customers paying for services they don't receive is minimised.

⁴ Essential Services Commission 2021, Status of major projects supplement: Outcomes report 2020–21, October.

Outcomes reporting

PREMO – putting customer outcomes first

Our PREMO water pricing framework puts customers squarely at the centre of the regulatory pricing process.⁵ It pivots Victoria’s water businesses to focus on what their customers, rather than the regulator, want and expect from their water and sewerage service provider.

As part of our 2018 water price review, water businesses established a set of customer outcomes following extensive engagement with their customers to inform their price submissions. These outcomes, developed with the customers, essentially reflect what customers will receive for the prices they pay.

We worked with each business to:

- firm up its outcome commitments, consistent with our PREMO framework requirements
- ensure clear and unambiguous measures and targets that represent successful delivery of each outcome.

This culminated in each business re-affirming its commitment to the final set of outcomes and targets, which we published on our website in May 2019.

A business’s performance against these outcomes is critical in establishing its rating for the ‘Performance’ element of PREMO, and therefore its overall PREMO rating, at the next price review.

What is PREMO?

PREMO is our incentive mechanism whereby Victoria’s water businesses self-assess their pricing proposals against five main elements, which together reflect the level of ambition to deliver better value to customers:

- **Performance** – a backward look at whether the business delivered on its outcome commitments in its previous price review
- **Risk** – the extent to which the business has allocated risk to the party best positioned to manage that risk (such that customers don’t pay more than they need to)

⁵ Essential Services Commission 2016, Water Pricing Framework and Approach: Implementing PREMO from 2018, October.

- **Engagement** – the effectiveness of the customer engagement that informed the price submission, in terms of depth, breadth and timing
- **Management** – the degree of expenditure efficiency improvement and cost control (prudent and efficient expenditure), strength and quality of the price submission
- **Outcomes** – the strength of customer outcomes, as derived through the engagement process, what customers value most.

Businesses rate each element as either Leading, Advanced, Standard or Basic, and provide a corresponding overall PREMO rating. The commission’s assessment process confirms each rating, or where necessary proposes a lower rating.

The return on equity earned by a water business is linked to its overall PREMO rating.

What is outcomes reporting?

Each business is required to report at least annually to its customers on:

- its performance against the specified measures and targets for each outcome
- an overall assessment of whether it has delivered on expectations for each outcome, including the business’s explanation for any performance shortfalls and how it intends to address them.

Businesses are asked to grade their performance using a simple traffic light rating system:

- Green = met – actual performance met or exceeded the target or due date
- Amber = came close, objectives mostly met
- Red = not met – actual performance fell short of the target

Each business has provided us a summary of their outcomes performance versus target commitments along with some commentary in a standard template. We have published these together with this report on our website at www.esc.vic.gov.au/outcomes-reporting.

The templates provide more detailed information than the summaries we have presented in this report. Apart from some minor clarifications, the templates are published ‘as received’, and present each water business’s own self-assessment, ratings and comments on their performance.

This outcomes report provides a summary of businesses’ self-assessments, and our high-level observations on performance against outcome commitments, self-assessments and self-reporting. This year we have also provided commentary on each business, highlighting those that had strong performances, showed accountability for shortfalls and were honest in their self-reporting.

Customers will be the final judge of their water business's performance and its self-assessment ratings. Customers' views will also help shape the outcomes and targets for the next price review.

Our outcomes report complements our other reporting streams

The outcomes reporting process complements our other water industry reporting on common key performance indicators and customer perceptions. Other reporting includes our annual performance report and customer perception reports. Outcomes reporting considers the performance of Victoria's water businesses against their own commitments, made to their customers as part of the price review process. The set of outcomes, measures and targets are unique to each business, reflecting those performance elements that matter most to its customers, as revealed through the customer engagement process.

Given this, we expect:

- businesses to prioritise outcomes reporting
- it to form the basis for the ongoing performance dialogue with customers.

Water performance report

Our annual water performance report compares the water businesses with each other across a range of common performance measures, including:

- water consumption
- typical bills
- managing payment processes
- customer service
- service reliability.

This comparative report allows businesses, customers, and other stakeholders to see how performance varies over time, and how any business measures up against the other Victorian businesses. Our performance reports are available on our website at www.esc.vic.gov.au/water-performance-reports.

Customer perception reporting

Our customer perception reporting is based on quarterly customer surveys where customers are asked to rate their water business out of ten in four key areas:

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

This reporting allows businesses to gauge customer sentiment and compare it with their own perception of their performance, a useful tool given the emphasis on the customer under PREMO. Our customer perception reporting is available on our website at www.esc.vic.gov.au/how-customers-rate-their-water-business.

What businesses reported in 2020–21

We received a summary outcomes report from each business. Each used a common template we provided to ensure consistency in presentation across all businesses.

Businesses are asked to grade their performance using a simple traffic light rating system:

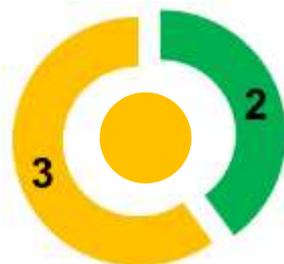
- Green = met – actual performance met or exceeded the target or due date
- Amber = came close, objectives mostly met
- Red = not met – actual performance fell short of the target

These charts summarise each water business's outcomes performance based on its own self-assessment, showing relative proportions of outcomes: achieved (green), almost achieved (amber) and not achieved (red). The middle circle shows the overall self-assessment rating. For example Barwon Water achieved four of its outcome targets, almost achieved one and considered it met its outcomes commitments to customers overall.

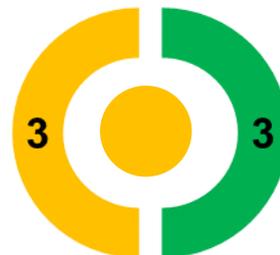
Barwon Water



Central Highlands Water



Greater Western Water (CWW)



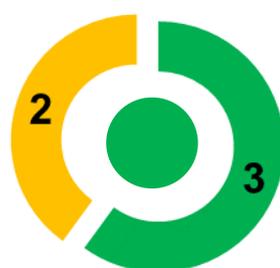
Coliban Water



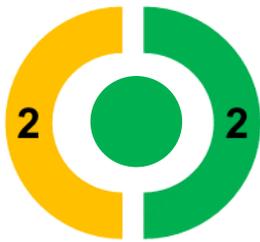
East Gippsland Water



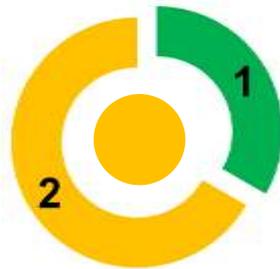
Gippsland Water



Goulburn Valley Water



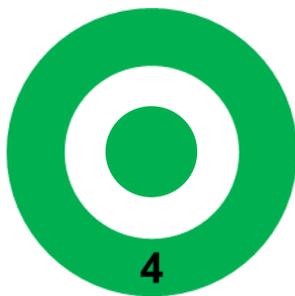
GWMWater



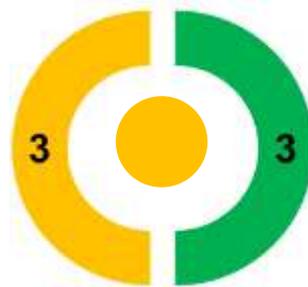
Lower Murray Water (urban)



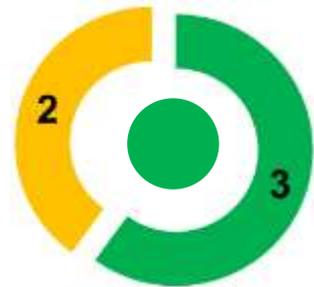
Lower Murray Water (rural)



North East Water



South East Water



South Gippsland Water



Southern Rural Water



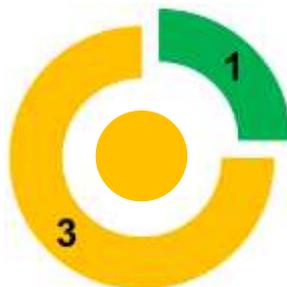
Wannon Water



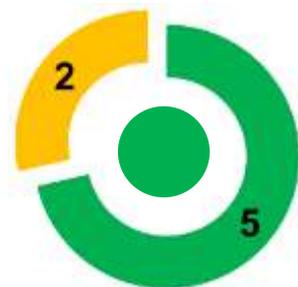
Greater Western Water (WW)



Westernport Water



Yarra Valley Water



Businesses overall 2020–21 self-rating by PREMO rating

This table shows the overall self-rating for outcomes for each business for its performance in 2020–21. It also shows its PREMO rating at the 2018 price review, apart from South Gippsland Water and Western Water (now Greater Western Water (previously Western Water area)) whose PREMO ratings are from the 2020 price review. The PREMO rating reflects the level of ambition of a business’s price submission, including the ambition of its outcomes by which it is measuring its performance.

Businesses are asked to grade their performance using a simple traffic light rating system:

- Green = met – actual performance met or exceeded the target or due date
- Amber = came close, objectives mostly met
- Red = not met – actual performance fell short of the target

Leading	Advanced	Standard	Basic/not rated*
Goulburn Valley Water	Barwon Water	East Gippsland Water	Wannon Water
	Central Highlands Water	Gippsland Water	Greater Western Water (previously Western Water area)*
	Greater Western Water (previously City West Water area)	Lower Murray Water (urban)	
	Coliban Water	Lower Murray Water (rural)	
	GWMWater	South Gippsland Water	
	North East Water	Westernport Water	

Leading	Advanced	Standard	Basic/not rated*
	South East Water		
	Southern Rural Water		
	Yarra Valley Water		

* At its 2020 price review we did not consider Western Water's (now Greater Western Water (previously Western Water area)) price submission met the requirements for a standard rating, accordingly we did not assign a PREMO rating.

What we found

In this chapter, we set out our:

- high-level observations on performance according to the businesses' self-reporting
- general views on how the self-assessment and self-reporting processes has fared so far
- observations for each business, highlighting those that had strong performance, showed accountability for shortfalls and honest and open self-reporting.

Performance

Our PREMO framework seeks to establish a much stronger direct relationship between water businesses and their customers.

The purpose of self-reporting annual performance is to drive honest and transparent feedback to customers on what commitments the business has met that year, and progressively across the whole pricing period as it unfolds. It is about what value the customers received for the prices they pay, and what the business has done, or proposes to do, to address any shortfall or change in plan.

Most businesses (11 out of 17) reported they had met their 2020–21 outcome commitments overall. The remaining six businesses gave themselves an amber overall rating indicating they mostly met their outcome commitments.

Five of the six businesses that had given themselves amber overall ratings have advanced PREMO ratings. We found this generally reflects these businesses' high level of ambition, where in many instances they had set stretch targets for their measures and often had just fallen short of meeting them.

No business considered it had failed to deliver its promises by rating itself red overall.

Most businesses reported the pandemic had affected their performance this year as the pandemic continues to unfold. Despite this, in many instances businesses were able to overcome challenges to still meet their customer commitments and performance was generally strong.

For example:

- Barwon Water's performance was strong meeting 29 out of 33 of its measures and 4 out of 5 of its overall outcomes. In some instances, it far exceeded the targets it had set. Supporting customers facing financial difficulties is one of its priorities. This year it committed to an extra \$5 million across the pricing period to support customers in hardship and provide water efficiency initiatives including a program to identify and fix leaks at customer properties.
- East Gippsland Water rated itself green overall, meeting four out of five outcomes and improving on last year's performance where it rated itself amber overall. Its performance against

its outcome for 'supporting environmental sustainability' improved significantly which it attributed to renewable energy initiatives, reducing infiltration in its sewer network therefore requiring less intensive treatment and pumping, and issuing more grants under its Native Vegetation Fund.

- Lower Murray Water admitted it was a challenging year due to the pandemic and adverse weather conditions. Despite this its performance was strong both on the rural and urban sides of the business. It showed improvements on the previous year for many of its measures and in some instances exceeded its set targets.
- Yarra Valley Water met five out of seven of its outcomes and for all measures it either maintained or improved its performance compared to previous years. For being just shy of meeting two outcomes, it commits to returning \$3 million to customers through a customer rebate next year. This level of accountability Yarra Valley Water shows by compensating customers for outcomes not met, stands out among all businesses. It also shows Yarra Valley Water is serious about providing customers value for money.

Overall there were a similar number of targets assessed as 'met', 'almost met' and 'not met', both at the individual measure level and at the aggregate outcome level compared to last year.

The number of outcome commitments rated as 'almost met' and 'not met' increased by one to 33, while the number of individual measures rated as 'almost met' and 'not met' increased by nine to 94.

While the overall number of measures rated amber or red slightly increased this year, a green set of ratings does not necessarily mean a strong performance and great customer value. It might merely reflect an easily achieved set of targets and should be viewed in comparison with historical performance to gauge whether customers are receiving better outcomes.

Generally, we saw clear accountability in the summary outcome report templates we received. Most businesses explained the cause for a shortfall in performance against their commitment, and set out how this would be addressed, or why they were anticipating a better result in future years.

We expect businesses will continue to follow-up on these identified shortfalls in subsequent years, effectively closing the reporting loop with their customers.

Our views on business self-assessments

Businesses are required to rate their actual performance:

- against targets for each individual measure
- at the aggregate outcome level
- overall for the year.

A simple traffic light grading system allows easy recognition of achievement: green = met, amber = close or largely met, red = fell short.

What we found

We did not provide strict guidance on this, instead allowing businesses to use their own discretion and ratings processes. This also reveals a little about each business, and its willingness – or unwillingness – to acknowledge and address performance shortfalls.

The traffic light gradings alone do not reflect the strength of a water business's performance relative to other businesses, merely how it went against the commitment it made to customers.

A green traffic light simply means the business met the target – it reveals nothing about the target itself, whether it represented a high or low bar, or an improvement in customer service levels. This was a matter to be established between the water business and its customers as part of:

- the price review process, when the outcomes, measures and targets were agreed and set
- through businesses' engagement processes throughout this regulatory period where they can discuss and adjust these commitments in accordance with customers' changing priorities.

We are pleased to see improvements in self-assessments. Those businesses that appeared to give themselves relatively lenient self-ratings in previous years, appear to have self-assessed more in line with their peers this year.

Variation remains in assessment approach, however, this is expected given we have not provided strict guidance. For example, Westernport Water grades its outcomes according to the rating of the lowest measure (e.g. one amber measure with all other measures green meant the outcome rating was amber), while South East Water established a measurement framework which includes tolerance bands for grading individual measures and a score system for grading outcomes.

Barwon Water, Central Highlands Water, Coliban Water, East Gippsland Water and Goulburn Valley Water sought the views of their customer committees before finalising their traffic light ratings. We commend this approach, where a business considers its customers' views on the value they received, as truly reflecting PREMO's customer-centric focus. It also provides an opportunity for businesses to check-in with their customers to ensure they still value the outcome commitments set in the 2018 price review and make adjustments where priorities have changed.

Self-reporting to customers

The self-reporting aspect of PREMO required the water businesses to report directly to their customers, and to provide us with a summary on the templates we provided.

Businesses that promptly and prominently self-report their performance show they are taking ownership over their performance results and delivery of their outcome commitments.

We emphasised this in our Water Pricing Framework and Approach Paper and our 2018 Water Price Review Guidance Paper. We have also iterated this multiple times as we work with businesses to review and finalise their outcome commitments for the pricing period, and as we

reflected on lessons from the first outcomes report in the workshops we ran with water businesses before the previous reporting cycle.

Given our emphasis on self-reporting, we are pleased that all businesses have published their performance on their websites, and that most did this promptly without any encouragement from us. Most businesses also have prominent announcements on their homepage linking to their performance results, an improvement compared to last year where only the minority did this.

Central Highlands Water, Coliban Water, East Gippsland Water, Gippsland Water, GWMWater, Lower Murray Water, South Gippsland Water, Wannon Water, Westernport Water and Yarra Valley Water all have prominent announcements on their homepage, demonstrating transparency to customers and that they are proud of their performance this year.

As well as making a prominent announcement on its homepage, Westernport Water also sent out its performance results to every one of its customers along with its October water bill in a brochure. Greater Western Water (previously City West Water area) provided customers with a mid-year as well as an annual update on its performance. These examples show where businesses have gone beyond our requirements and display dedication to keeping customers informed about the outcomes that matter most to them.

There were some businesses that had posted their outcomes performance under 2018 price review sections or in general publications sections, with no announcements or direct links on the website homepage. Without a prominent announcement on a business's homepage, it is difficult for customers to know where to find information on their water business's performance results. If a water business is truly focused on delivering outcomes for its customers, it should be keen to engage its customers and keep them informed on its progress through prompt and prominent self-reporting.

We will continue to emphasise transparent self-reporting with these water businesses and expect to see more prominent announcements for future outcomes reporting.

Businesses' major projects

Each year, water businesses provide an update on the status of major project commitments made in their price submission, indicating if projects have been completed as scheduled, are delayed, or if priorities have changed over time.

Major project delivery is a key cost component for water businesses and is reflected in the approved price path, with most delivering material service benefits to customers. Significant changes to the major project schedule essentially change what customers get for their prices, and should be explained to customers by the water business. For example, will customers be impacted by the change or delay, has a higher priority project emerged, or will prices be lowered to reflect the revenue is not needed?

What we found

This section tracks the businesses' reported progress against their original project schedule as reflected in their price submissions and our pricing determinations.

The major project status categories are:

- on-schedule — no significant changes to the project start and end dates
- delayed — either the project start was delayed, or completion will be later than scheduled
- deferred — the business rescheduled the entire project, either within the current pricing period or into a future period
- cancelled — the project will not proceed in the foreseeable future
- completed on time — the project was completed in accordance with the original scheduled completion date (includes early completion)
- completed late — the project was completed within the period, but later than the original scheduled completion date.

The 16 urban water businesses, Southern Rural Water and Lower Murray Water Rural nominated major projects for completion in the five-year pricing period from 2018–23. Melbourne Water also nominated major projects for completion in its five-year pricing period from 2016–21, this year being the fifth and final year of its regulatory period. In total, 201 major capital projects were identified, including one new GWMWater project added this year.

Water businesses are required to report how these 201 projects are tracking against the scheduled start and completion dates they committed to in their price submissions. Businesses have provided their comments to convey how the projects are progressing and why actual completion dates may differ from those initially expected.

Table 1 provides a summary of the status of the scheduled major projects for each water business at the end of 2020–21.

Overall 62 major projects are running to schedule, and 66 were completed by the end of 2020–21

Thirty projects were completed this year, including 16 which were completed late. This is an 83 per cent increase on the number of total projects completed compared to the previous two years combined. Goulburn Valley Water, Greater Western Water (previously City West Water area), Southern Rural Water and Westernport Water completed most of these projects with Westernport Water completing five and the rest each completing four.

Lower Murray Water cancelled two of its projects after expanding the scope of another project making the works of these two projects redundant.

A total of 71 projects are either delayed or have been deferred. This is more than a third of all projects, although remains steady overall compared to last year.

Barwon Water, Gippsland Water, Wannon Water and Greater Western Water (previously Western Water area) have all reported more than half of their major projects as either deferred or delayed.

Common explanations for delays were:

- further planning and design work required before projects could commence
- complications due to the pandemic
- planning, heritage, or environmental approvals taking longer than anticipated
- tender processes taking longer than anticipated.

The most common reason for project deferral was due to better or new information indicating that the project was not needed at the time originally scheduled.

Altogether there were 9 projects that businesses reported as delayed, completed late or deferred due to the pandemic (6 delayed, 2 completed late, and 1 deferred).

The high number of projects that are deferred or delayed is concerning. Although, we note businesses are reporting that most of these projects are still expected to be completed before the next price review.

We also understand circumstances and priorities change, especially in this current environment with ongoing lockdowns due to the pandemic. However, we still expect water businesses to proactively manage the delivery of their major projects.

Significant changes to major projects schedules change what customers get for the prices they pay. Therefore, we also expect businesses to communicate and address significant changes to their initial commitment directly with their customers. This allows customers to test these changes with the water business.

GMMWater acknowledged that its project to deliver improved water quality to Ultima and Kaniva townships had taken longer than anticipated and in recognition of this lowered its fully treated tariffs to below the approved rate for 2020–21 in these areas. We consider GMMWater has shown accountability for this delay. By adjusting its value proposition where customers are not yet receiving what was originally promised, it has ensured its customers continue to receive good value for money.

We expect businesses to demonstrate clear accountability to their customers and we will continue to closely observe how water businesses deliver their capital program and communicate changes to customers throughout the pricing period. How businesses have managed the delivery of their major projects in this regulatory period will be a determining factor for their PREMO ratings in the next price review.

What we found

Want more information?

Further commentary on the estimated schedule and actual status for each water business's individual projects can be found in the supplementary paper 'Status of major projects supplement: outcomes report 2020–21'.

This supplement can be found at <https://www.esc.vic.gov.au/water/water-sector-performance-and-reporting>.

Table 1: Businesses' major projects status at June 30 2021

	No. major projects	Completed on time	Completed late	On-schedule	Cancelled	Deferred	Delayed
Barwon	10	2	1	1	0	3	3
Central Highlands	10	2	2	3	0	0	3
Coliban	11	3	0	6	0	0	2
East Gippsland	10	2	0	5	0	2	1
Gippsland	10	1	1	2	0	2	4
Goulburn Valley	10	3	1	2	0	3	1
Greater Western Water (CWW)	10	3	3	2	0	1	1
Greater Western (WW)*	11	2	0	3	0	1	5
GMMWater	14	0	3	5	0	0	6
Lower Murray – Urban	5	1	2	0	0	0	2
Lower Murray – Rural	9	2	1	1	2	1	2
Melbourne Water	15	7	2	1	0	1	4
North East	10	0	0	6	0	2	2
South East	10	0	2	3	0	1	4
South Gippsland	16	4	0	9	0	1	2
Southern Rural	10	4	1	3	0	2	0
Wannon	10	1	2	1	0	1	5
Westernport	10	4	1	4	0	0	1
Yarra Valley	10	1	2	5	0	0	2
Total	201	42	24	62	2	21	50

Looking ahead

In the upcoming price review we will introduce the ‘performance’ element of the PREMO framework. How businesses have performed against their outcome commitments will be a major component in our assessment of this element.

For each business we will review its own self-assessment and self-reporting of its performance to check it is reasonable, that it is taking accountability for shortfalls, and that it is taking ownership over its outcome commitments.

The PREMO framework puts customers at the centre of businesses’ pricing decisions so it is appropriate that we will also consider customers’ views on water businesses’ performance. Each quarter we survey 1,450 water customers across Victoria, 5,800 customers annually, and ask them to rate their water business out of ten on:

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

We will take into account businesses’ customer satisfaction ratings and the customer feedback we get through our own customer engagement when assessing performance. Many businesses also have their own customer satisfaction surveys which may also support their price submission at the next price review.

In Table 2 below we have provided a comparison of each water business’s overall self-assessment against the views of its customers and our own observations. For each business the table includes:

- its overall self-assessment for its performance against its outcome commitments in 2020–21, using the traffic light ratings:
 - green (achieving outcome commitments)
 - amber (mostly achieving outcome commitments)
 - red (not achieving outcome commitments)
- its latest customer perception survey rating for overall satisfaction⁶
- our observations on its performance, self-assessment and self-reporting.

At this stage we are not concerned that any business is falling behind on delivering its outcomes. Businesses have continued to meet most of their commitments, despite the impacts of the pandemic. That said, the relatively high number of major projects that are deferred and delayed is

⁶ Customer satisfaction ratings are the 4-quarterly rolling average ratings to July 2021.

concerning, and businesses may need to carefully manage their value proposition to ensure customers continue to receive good value for money in the coming years. However, overall we consider customers are continuing to get what they pay for.

Table 2: Summary of businesses' self-assessments, customer satisfaction and our observations

Water business	Businesses' self-assessments	Customer satisfaction rating	Our observations on the businesses' self-assessments
Barwon Water	Overall green rating	7.3 out of 10	Barwon Water's performance this year was strong, far exceeding some of its targets. Its self-assessment is reasonable and its customers also agreed when it tested it them. Its outcomes reporting shows a strong focus on supporting customers in hardship. It also continues to have one of the highest customer satisfaction ratings in the state.
Central Highlands Water	Overall amber rating	6.4 out of 10	Central Highlands Water's self-assessment is reasonable. Although it has fallen just short on a few of its outcome commitments this year, it has one of the most ambitious target sets which it has continued to refine with its customers to ensure it aligns with changing priorities. It shows ownership over its outcome commitments by featuring its performance front and centre on the homepage of its website.
Coliban Water	Overall green rating	6.4 out of 10	Coliban Water's self-assessment is reasonable. It seeks out its customers' views on its performance through its continued customer engagement and includes a candid summary of the customer feedback it receives in its outcomes reporting.
East Gippsland Water	Overall green rating	7.4 out of 10	East Gippsland Water's self-assessment is reasonable. It tests its self-assessment rating with its customers through continued customer engagement. Its report on this year's performance against its outcome commitments is featured on the homepage of its website, showing ownership of its

Water business	Businesses' self-assessments	Customer satisfaction rating	Our observations on the businesses' self-assessments
			outcomes performance. It also has one of the highest customer satisfaction ratings in the state.
Gippsland Water	Overall green rating	6.6 out of 10	Gippsland Water's self-assessment is reasonable and its performance this year remained strong. Gippsland Water also reported this year's performance of its outcome commitments to customers through its 2021 community report, which is featured prominently on the homepage of its website.
Goulburn Valley Water	Overall green rating	6.9 out of 10	Goulburn Valley Water's self-assessment is reasonable and has improved on previous years. We are pleased to see that this year it checked-in with its customers before finalising its self-ratings. It just fell short on two of its four outcomes, however we consider Goulburn Valley Water is still on track to meet these outcomes in the remaining years of the regulatory period.
Greater Western Water (previously City West Water area)	Overall amber rating	7.0 out of 10	Greater Western Water (previously City West Water area) is one of the businesses that is more critical in its self-assessment. Its performance was still strong (meeting 30 out of 41 targets) despite its overall amber rating. It showed accountability for shortfalls, openly acknowledging its underperformances and clearly explaining how it would address them in the coming years.
Greater Western Water (previously Western Water area)	Overall green rating	6.9 out of 10	<p>After the 2020 water price review, Greater Western Water (previously Western Water) amended its set of customer outcomes following consultation with its customers.</p> <p>Its self-assessment for this year is reasonable and effectively explains its performance over the 2020–21 period.</p>

Water business	Businesses' self-assessments	Customer satisfaction rating	Our observations on the businesses' self-assessments
GWMWater	Overall amber rating	6.4 out of 10	GWMWater's self-assessment is reasonable. It demonstrated accountability for not meeting one of its outcome measures this year by lowering its tariffs below the approved rate for affected customers. It also demonstrated ownership over its performance results by promptly and prominently self-reporting them on its website homepage.
Lower Murray Water – Rural	Overall green rating	NA	Lower Murray Water – Rural had a strong performance this year and its self-assessment is reasonable. It showed ownership over its performance results, promptly and prominently sharing them with customers on its website. As a rural water business, Lower Murray Water – Rural is not a participant in our quarterly survey.
Lower Murray Water – Urban	Overall green rating	6.7 out of 10	Lower Murray Water – Urban had a strong performance this year and its self-assessment is reasonable. It showed ownership over its performance results, promptly and prominently sharing them with customers on its website.
North East Water	Overall amber rating	7.0 out of 10	North East Water's self-assessment is reasonable. Despite falling just short on three of its six outcomes, it showed accountability by honestly discussing underperformances and explained how it would address them in the remaining years of its eight-year pricing period.
South East Water	Overall green rating	7.2 out of 10	South East Water's self-assessment is reasonable and it has also provided clear explanations where it has underperformed against a measure. It continues to have one of the highest customer satisfaction ratings in the state based on our quarterly survey.

What we found

Water business	Businesses' self-assessments	Customer satisfaction rating	Our observations on the businesses' self-assessments
South Gippsland Water	Overall green rating	7.3 out of 10	After the 2020 water price review, South Gippsland Water amended its set of customer outcomes following consultation with its customers. South Gippsland Water's self-assessment of its performance over 2020–21 is reasonable, and it has provided explanations where it has not met a target. It has also featured its outcomes report prominently on the homepage of its website, showing ownership of its performance. South Gippsland Water also has one of the highest customer satisfaction ratings in the state.
Southern Rural Water	Overall amber rating	NA	<p>Southern Rural Water was one of the businesses that is more critical in its self-assessment. It has clearly explained its performance to its customers and reported its performance back to its customers promptly and prominently on its website, showing ownership of its outcomes performance.</p> <p>As a rural water business, Southern Rural Water is not a participant in our quarterly survey.</p>
Wannon Water	Overall green rating	6.6 out of 10	Wannon Water's performance this year was strong, and its self-assessment is reasonable. It showed ownership for its outcome commitments by publishing this year's performance results promptly and prominently on its website.
Westernport Water	Overall amber rating	7.0 out of 10	Westernport Water's self-assessment leans towards the more self-critical, with its overall rating based on its lowest rated outcome and each outcome based on its lowest rated measure. Its self-reporting is commendable, sending out its performance results to each of its customers as a bill insert as well as prominently

Water business	Businesses' self-assessments	Customer satisfaction rating	Our observations on the businesses' self-assessments
Yarra Valley Water	Overall green rating	7.2 out of 10	<p data-bbox="991 259 1385 331">publishing them on its website homepage.</p> <p data-bbox="991 349 1445 824">Yarra Valley Water's self-assessment was reasonable and its performance was strong. For falling just short on two of its outcome commitments it will compensate customers \$3 million through rebates next year. This level of accountability for underperformance stands out compared to the other businesses. It also showed ownership for its performance results by sharing them promptly and prominently on its website homepage.</p>

Water business summaries

The following business summaries provide a simple one-page snapshot for each water business's 2020–21 performance, including:

- the business's PREMO rating from the 2018 price review or 2020 price review for South Gippsland Water and Western Water (now Greater Western Water (previously Western Water area))
- the business's traffic light self-rating for each of its outcomes
- the business's traffic light self-rating for its overall achievement against its outcomes commitments
- a summary of the reported status of its major capital projects.

Further information on each business's performance, including a breakdown of the rating for each outcome and how the business will address shortfalls in performance, is available from:

- the summary outcome reporting templates published on our website
- the water business itself.

Further details on all the major projects are also available through the supplement document provided on our website: www.esc.vic.gov.au/water-outcomes-reporting.

Sample business page

PREMO rating of the water business's price submission at the 2018 or 2020 water price review

PREMO rating: Standard

Traffic light of performance for each outcome for 2020–21, self-assessed by the water business

Sample Business's self-assessment

Outcome	18-19	19-20	20-21	21-22	22-23
1. Customer service	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow		
2. Drinking water quality	Green	Green	Green		
3. Environmental sustainability	Green	Yellow	Yellow		
4. Assisting vulnerable customers	Green	Green	Green		
Overall	Green	Green	Yellow		

Sample Business's major projects status summary

Traffic light of overall outcomes performance for 2020–21, self-assessed by the water business

No. major projects	Completed on time	Completed late	On-schedule	Cancelled	Deferred	Delayed
10	1	0	7	0	0	2

This shows the water business's total number of major projects for this pricing period, as set out in its price submission.

This shows the status of these major projects at the end of 2020–21, as reported by the water business.

Barwon Water

PREMO rating: Advanced

Barwon Water's self-assessment

Outcome	18-19	19-20	20-21	21-22	22-23
1. A reliable, secure water future for our region	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Grey	Grey
2. Timely, innovative services for our customers	Green	Green	Green	Grey	Grey
3. A healthier environment for all	Green	Yellow	Green	Grey	Grey
4. Deeper knowledge and partnerships with our community	Green	Green	Green	Grey	Grey
5. Affordability for all of our customers	Green	Green	Green	Grey	Grey
Overall	Green	Green	Green	Grey	Grey

Barwon Water's major projects status summary

No. major projects	Completed on time	Completed late	On-schedule	Cancelled	Deferred	Delayed
10	2	1	1	0	2	4

Central Highlands Water

PREMO rating: Advanced

Central Highlands Water’s self-assessment

Outcome	18-19	19-20	20-21	21-22	22-23
1. Better customer experience	Yellow	Red	Yellow	Grey	Grey
2. Safe clean drinking water that tastes great	Green	Green	Green	Grey	Grey
3. Reliable and sustainable water and sewer systems	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Grey	Grey
4. More efficient water use	Green	Green	Yellow	Grey	Grey
5. Increased value for money	Green	Green	Green	Grey	Grey
Overall	Green	Green	Yellow	Grey	Grey

Central Highlands Water’s major projects status summary

No. major projects	Completed on time	Completed late	On-schedule	Cancelled	Deferred	Delayed
10	2	2	3	0	0	3

Coliban Water

PREMO rating: Advanced

Coliban Water's self-assessment

Outcome	18-19	19-20	20-21	21-22	22-23
1. We will supply high quality water you can trust	Green	Yellow	Green	Grey	Grey
2. We will provide infrastructure and services to meet the needs of our customers now and into the future	Green	Green	Green	Grey	Grey
3. We will reduce our environmental footprint and achieve a socially responsible, sustainable business for future generations	Green	Green	Green	Grey	Grey
4. We will be open and transparent with customers about affordable pricing, service disruptions and repairs	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Grey	Grey
5. We will support the liveability in the region	Green	Green	Yellow	Grey	Grey
Overall	Green	Green	Green	Grey	Grey

Coliban Water's major projects status summary

No. major projects	Completed on time	Completed late	On-schedule	Cancelled	Deferred	Delayed
11	3	0	6	0	0	2

East Gippsland Water

PREMO rating: Standard

East Gippsland Water's self-assessment

Outcome	18-19	19-20	20-21	21-22	22-23
1. Current levels of water and sewerage services maintained	Green	Yellow	Green	Grey	Grey
2. Safe, high quality drinking water supplies delivered	Green	Green	Yellow	Grey	Grey
3. No increase in the average customer bill	Green	Green	Green	Grey	Grey
4. Supporting environmental sustainability	Yellow	Red	Green	Grey	Grey
5. Enhanced liveability and resilience in our region	Green	Green	Green	Grey	Grey
Overall	Green	Yellow	Green	Grey	Grey

East Gippsland Water's major projects status summary

No. major projects	Completed on time	Completed late	On-schedule	Cancelled	Deferred	Delayed
10	2	0	5	0	2	1

Gippsland Water

PREMO rating: Standard

Gippsland Water's self-assessment

Outcome	18-19	19-20	20-21	21-22	22-23
1. Gippsland Water value: Do your job well	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Grey	Grey
2. Gippsland Water value: Be easy to deal with	Green	Green	Green	Grey	Grey
3. Gippsland Water value: Be affordable and fair	Green	Green	Green	Grey	Grey
4. Gippsland Water value: Prepare and protect	Green	Green	Yellow	Grey	Grey
5. Gippsland Water value: Be involved	Green	Green	Green	Grey	Grey
Overall	Green	Green	Green	Grey	Grey

Gippsland Water's major projects status summary

No. major projects	Completed on time	Completed late	On-schedule	Cancelled	Deferred	Delayed
10	1	1	2	0	2	4

Goulburn Valley Water

PREMO rating: Leading

Goulburn Valley Water's self-assessment

Outcome	18-19	19-20	20-21	21-22	22-23
1. The best price outcomes for customers	Green	Green	Green	Grey	Grey
2. Renewed focus on water quality and supply	Green	Green	Yellow	Grey	Grey
3. Modern and thoughtful customer service	Green	Green	Green	Grey	Grey
4. Meaningful environmental and recreational outcomes	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Grey	Grey
Overall	Green	Green	Green	Grey	Grey

Goulburn Valley Water's major projects status summary

No. major projects	Completed on time	Completed late	On-schedule	Cancelled	Deferred	Delayed
10	3	1	2	0	3	1

Greater Western Water (previously City West Water area)⁷

PREMO rating: Advanced

Greater Western Water's (previously City West Water area) self-assessment

Outcome	18-19	19-20	20-21	21-22	22-23
1. Services to my home and business are safe, reliable and efficiently managed	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Grey	Grey
2. Customer service is accessible and my enquiries are resolved promptly	Green	Green	Green	Grey	Grey
3. Billing and payment options are efficient and convenient	Green	Green	Yellow	Grey	Grey
4. Customers in hardship are supported	Green	Yellow	Green	Grey	Grey
5. The whole of the water cycle is managed in an environmentally sustainable way	Green	Green	Green	Grey	Grey
6. CWW is a valued partner in servicing a growing Melbourne	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Grey	Grey
Overall	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Grey	Grey

Greater Western Water's (previously City West Water area) major projects status summary

No. major projects	Completed on time	Completed late	On-schedule	Cancelled	Deferred	Delayed
10	3	3	2	0	1	1

⁷ City West Water merged with Western Water on 1 July 2021 to become Greater Western Water. This report still covers City West Water's outcomes performance as Greater Western Water (previously City West Water area).

Greater Western Water (previously Western Water area)⁸

PREMO rating: Not rated

Greater Western Water’s (previously Western Water area) self-assessment

Outcome	18-19	19-20	20-21	21-22	22-23
1. Fair and affordable charges for all customers	Green	Green	Green	Grey	Grey
2. Reliable, safe services to existing and new customers	Green	Green	Green	Grey	Grey
3. Innovative approaches to addressing customer needs	Green	Green	Green	Grey	Grey
4. Care of the environment	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Grey	Grey
5. Sustainable contribution to the community and regional liveability	Green	Yellow	Green	Grey	Grey
Overall	Green	Green	Green	Grey	Grey

Greater Western Water’s (previously Western Water area) major projects status summary

No. major projects	Completed on time	Completed late	On-schedule	Cancelled	Deferred	Delayed
11	2	0	3	0	1	5

⁸ Western Water merged with City West Water on 1 July 2021 to become Greater Western Water. This report still covers Western Water’s outcomes performance as Greater Western Water (previously Western Water area).

PREMO rating: Advanced

GWMWater's self-assessment

Outcome	18-19	19-20	20-21	21-22	22-23
1. Safe and clean water	Green	Green	Yellow	Grey	Grey
2. Reliable and affordable services	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Grey	Grey
3. Healthy and liveable region	Yellow	Green	Green	Grey	Grey
Overall	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Grey	Grey

GWMWater's major projects status summary

No. major projects	Completed on time	Completed late	On-schedule	Cancelled	Deferred	Delayed
14	0	3	5	0	0	6

Lower Murray Water (rural)

PREMO rating: Not Applicable⁹

Lower Murray Water (rural)'s self-assessment

Outcome	18-19	19-20	20-21	21-22	22-23
1. Supply me with water when I need it	Green	Green	Green	Grey	Grey
2. Keep my costs to a minimum	Green	Green	Green	Grey	Grey
3. Be easy to contact and quick to respond	Yellow	Green	Green	Grey	Grey
4. Comply with other government obligations	Green	Green	Green	Grey	Grey
Overall	Green	Green	Green	Grey	Grey

Lower Murray Water (rural)'s major projects status summary

No. major projects	Completed on time	Completed late	On-schedule	Cancelled	Deferred	Delayed
5	1	2	0	0	0	2

⁹ Lower Murray Water's rural business was not assessed under our PREMO framework, as it falls under the Commonwealth Government's Water Charge (Infrastructure) Rules assessment framework. However, Lower Murray Water elected to establish a set of rural customer outcomes and to report on these consistent with its urban water business.

Lower Murray Water (urban)

PREMO rating: Standard

Lower Murray Water (urban)'s self-assessment

Outcome	18-19	19-20	20-21	21-22	22-23
1. Keep my costs to a minimum	Yellow	Red	Yellow	Grey	Grey
2. Be easy to contact and quick to respond	Green	Green	Green	Grey	Grey
3. Provide me with consistent, safe, clean drinking water	Green	Yellow	Green	Grey	Grey
4. Provide me with reliable sewerage services	Green	Green	Green	Grey	Grey
5. Be present and active in the community	Green	Green	Green	Grey	Grey
6. Be mindful of our environment	Red	Yellow	Yellow	Grey	Grey
7. Comply with other government obligations	Green	Green	Green	Grey	Grey
Overall	Green	Yellow	Green	Grey	Grey

Lower Murray Water (urban)'s major projects status summary

No. major projects	Completed on time	Completed late	On-schedule	Cancelled	Deferred	Delayed
9	2	1	1	2	1	2

North East Water

PREMO rating: Advanced

North East Water's self-assessment

Outcome	18-19	19-20	20-21	21-22	22-23	23-24	24-25	25-26
1. Affordable Prices	Green	Green	Green	Grey	Grey	Grey	Grey	Grey
2. Reliable Services	Green	Yellow	Green	Grey	Grey	Grey	Grey	Grey
3. Responsive Services	Green	Green	Green	Grey	Grey	Grey	Grey	Grey
4. Efficient Systems	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Grey	Grey	Grey	Grey	Grey
5. Local Focus	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Grey	Grey	Grey	Grey	Grey
6. Sustainable Region	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Grey	Grey	Grey	Grey	Grey
Overall	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Grey	Grey	Grey	Grey	Grey

North East Water's major projects status summary

No. major projects	Completed on time	Completed late	On-schedule	Cancelled	Deferred	Delayed
10	0	0	6	0	2	2

South East Water

PREMO rating: Advanced

South East Water's self-assessment

Outcome	18-19	19-20	20-21	21-22	22-23
1. Get the basics right, always	Green	Green	Green	Grey	Grey
2. Warn me, inform me	Green	Green	Green	Grey	Grey
3. Fair and affordable for all	Green	Yellow	Green	Grey	Grey
4. Make my experience better	Green	Green	Yellow	Grey	Grey
5. Support my community, protect my environment	Green	Green	Yellow	Grey	Grey
Overall	Green	Green	Green	Grey	Grey

South East Water's major projects status summary

No. major projects	Completed on time	Completed late	On-schedule	Cancelled	Deferred	Delayed
10	0	2	3	0	1	4

South Gippsland Water

PREMO rating: Standard

South Gippsland Water's self-assessment

Outcome	18-19	19-20	20-21	21-22	22-23
1. We will partner with community, local government and business to plan for future years ¹⁰	Green	Green	Not applicable – see footnote		
2. We will plan for the future, be reliable and minimise unplanned interruptions to services	Yellow	Green	Green	Grey	Grey
3. Provide safe, clean drinking water for the benefit of our customers and communities	Yellow	Green	Green	Grey	Grey
4. Provide a safe wastewater service that contributes to the health and liveability of our communities and environment	Green	Red	Red	Grey	Grey
5. Be environmentally responsible, sustainable and adapt to a future impacted by climate variability	Green	Green	Yellow	Grey	Grey
6. Treat all customers, community with honesty, respect and strive to balance affordability, value for money and fairness	Green	Green	Green	Grey	Grey
Overall	Green	Green	Green	Grey	Grey

South Gippsland Water's major projects status summary

No. major projects	Completed on time	Completed late	On-schedule	Cancelled	Deferred	Delayed
16	4	0	9	0	1	2

¹⁰ South Gippsland Water revised its outcomes at its 2020 price review and Outcome 1 was merged with Outcome 2.

Southern Rural Water

PREMO rating: Advanced

Southern Rural Water's self-assessment

Outcome	18-19	19-20	20-21	21-22	22-23
1. Southern Rural Water provides great customer service	Yellow	Green	Green	Grey	Grey
2. Southern Rural Water's water supply system enables good practice irrigation	Green	Green	Green	Grey	Grey
3. Southern Rural Water manages water resources well, maintaining a good balance between my needs as a water user and the sustainability of the resource	Green	Green	Green	Grey	Grey
4. Southern Rural Water works with me to manage my needs and entitlements	Green	Red	Red	Grey	Grey
Overall	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Grey	Grey

Southern Rural Water's major projects status summary

No. major projects	Completed on time	Completed late	On-schedule	Cancelled	Deferred	Delayed
10	4	1	3	0	2	0

Wannon Water

PREMO rating: Basic

Wannon Water's self-assessment

Outcome	18-19	19-20	20-21	21-22	22-23
1. Provide safe and reliable water supplies	Green	Green	Yellow	Grey	Grey
2. Provide sewerage services that protect public health and the environment	Green	Green	Green	Grey	Grey
3. Ensure the long-term resilience of our services	Green	Green	Green	Grey	Grey
4. Be responsive and willing to adapt as customers' needs change	Green	Green	Green	Grey	Grey
5. Protect and enhance the environment in line with community expectations	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Grey	Grey
6. Partner with customer communities and helping our region flourish	Green	Green	Green	Grey	Grey
7. Ensure we provide great value	Red	Red	Red	Grey	Grey
Overall	Green	Green	Green	Grey	Grey

Wannon Water's major projects status summary

No. major projects	Completed on time	Completed late	On-schedule	Cancelled	Deferred	Delayed
10	1	2	1	0	1	5

Westernport Water

PREMO rating: Standard

Westernport Water's self-assessment

Outcome	18-19	19-20	20-21	21-22	22-23
1. Reliable water and wastewater services	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Grey	Grey
2. Better tasting water	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Grey	Grey
3. Affordable and responsive services	Yellow	Green	Green	Grey	Grey
4. A more sustainable community	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Grey	Grey
Overall	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Grey	Grey

Westernport Water's major projects status summary

No. major projects	Completed on time	Completed late	On-schedule	Cancelled	Deferred	Delayed
10	5	0	4	0	0	1

Yarra Valley Water

PREMO rating: Advanced

Yarra Valley Water's self-assessment

Outcome	18-19	19-20	20-21	21-22	22-23
1. Safe drinking water	Green	Green	Green	Grey	Grey
2. Reliable water and sewerage services	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Grey	Grey
3. Timely response and restoration	Green	Green	Green	Grey	Grey
4. Fair access and assistance for all	Green	Green	Green	Grey	Grey
5. Water availability and conservation	Red	Yellow	Yellow	Grey	Grey
6. Modern flexible service	Yellow	Green	Green	Grey	Grey
7. Care for and protect the environment	Green	Green	Green	Grey	Grey
Overall	Green	Green	Green	Grey	Grey

Yarra Valley Water's major projects status summary

No. major projects	Completed on time	Completed late	On-schedule	Cancelled	Deferred	Delayed
10	1	2	5	0	0	2

