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# Review of Victorian water sector engagement activities and effectiveness

January 2024

## **Review of Victorian water sector engagement activities and effectiveness**

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## Abbreviations

CMA	Catchment Management Authority
CGRSWS	Central and Gippsland Region Sustainable Water Strategy
CRCWSC	Cooperative Research Centre for Water Sensitive Cities
DEECA	Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action
DELWP	Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning
ESC	Essential Services Commission
GL	gigalitres
GWMW	Grampians Wimmera Mallee Water
IWM	integrated water management
KPI	key performance indicator
NCCMA	North Central Catchment Management Authority
STEM	science, technology, engineering and mathematics
SWS	Sustainable water strategy

UWS	Urban water strategy
VAGO	Victorian Auditor-General's Office
VEWH	Victorian Environmental Water Holder
WSCA	Water Sensitive Cities Australia

# 1. Executive summary

Funded by the Department of Energy, Environment, and Climate Action (DEECA), this report focuses on engagement activities by Victorian water corporations and catchment management authorities (CMAs). It aims to understand the effectiveness of these activities and observe differences between metropolitan and urban versus regional and rural Victoria.

## General findings

- **Engagement drivers:** The report identifies various drivers for community engagement, emphasising the transition from being forced by legal and government requirements to voluntary and inherent practices, from merely conveying information to focusing on building community relationships and influencing behaviours.
- **Frameworks used:** Organisations use diverse frameworks for engagement, with many developing their own guidelines to complement state government guidance and popular frameworks like the IAP2 framework.
- **Current engagement activities:** Organisations employ a variety of methods, such as online platforms, surveys, workshops, community events and educational initiatives.
- **Changes in engagement:** Factors such as the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change and natural events prompted significant shifts in engagement practices. There is a growing emphasis on online engagement and storytelling.
- **Evaluation of engagement:** Organisations employ different methods to evaluate engagement effectiveness, including post-engagement surveys, social media monitoring and internal reviews.
- **Best practice examples:** Best practice in engagement leverages art, storytelling, and digital tools. Innovative examples include Melbourne Water's Hobsons Bay Main Sewer Upgrade and Western Water's Sunbury Integrated Water Management (IWM) community panel, showcasing creative and effective ways to engage communities on water-related issues.
- **Barriers:** Barriers include internal capacity constraints, engagement fatigue, limited resources, and digital literacy.

## Metropolitan vs regional differences

- **Activities:** Regional/rural organisations are more hands-on, direct participation in natural environmental activities, aiming to foster a deeper connection to regional water resources and environmental issues. Metro/urban organisations focus on addressing urban water supply concerns and maintaining public trust.
- **Capability:** Regional organisations such as CMAs, are facing challenges because of small teams, multitasking, while metro organisations have more time and resources.
- **Topics:** In metropolitan and urban water agencies, wastewater management, pricing, planning, governance and customer support, and recycled water are predominant concerns. Climate change, although less prominent, is gaining traction in urban areas. Similarly, the cultural water use of Traditional Owners is increasingly recognised, albeit modestly. Meanwhile, regional organisations prioritise catchment management and sustainability more than urban areas and focus more on agricultural water use. This division of focus mirrors the distinct necessities and pressures of densely populated urban areas against the environmentally and agriculturally centric regional locales.
- **Evaluation:** All organisations evaluate their engagement activities, with post-engagement surveys and social media engagement monitoring being the most common methods. Regional organisations are more active in social media engagement monitoring, whereas metro/urban organisations use more stakeholder interviews.

- **Planned engagement activities:** Both metro/urban and rural water corporations plan to increase community involvement and awareness raising. However, metro/urban organisations appear to be more information-focused, while rural organisations have a broader range of activities planned, including specific environmental and educational initiatives.

## Future directions

Interviews and surveys suggest the need for more staffing, financial resources, and research on engagement. Organisations plan to continue improving community involvement and awareness-raising.

The report underscores the importance of adapting engagement strategies to evolving community needs and technological advancements. It emphasises the need for effective communication and community involvement in water management, reflecting a shift towards more interactive and innovative engagement methods. Specific recommendations are outlined below.

### For water agency

- **Recommendation 1.** Be clear on the purpose of the engagement and what it can (and cannot) influence as a basis for genuine 2-way engagement. Incorporate a 'closing the loop' component in the engagement strategy by keeping customers and communities regularly updated on project progress and outcomes.
- **Recommendation 2.** Invest in core, regionally appropriate, water literacy programs, as well as specific project campaigns and behaviour change for target groups. For example, develop consistent resources that can be used by other organisations such as local governments, community groups, etc.

### For DEECA

#### Build capability within and between water sector organisations

- **Recommendation 3.** Continue promoting opportunities for sharing experience through state-wide forums for communications and engagement professionals, especially for regional staff. This could include co-designing and providing targeted training and engagement resources across organisational levels (from the toolbox to the boardroom). This could build engagement staff's capability and organisational alignment and focus on tailoring engagement frameworks that are already widely accepted (e.g., IAP2) to local contexts.
- **Recommendation 4.** Promote and facilitate strategic alliances among water sector (and other) organisations, especially in regional and rural areas. These alliances could be structured around common goals such as resource pooling, joint funding applications, and shared engagement initiatives, to improve efficiency and extend the reach and impact of engagement activities.

#### Improving proactive engagement and evaluation methods for different target groups

- **Recommendation 5.** Improve incident response by providing visible support for water business to invest in understanding local contexts and building profiles of different target groups *before* emergency events by spending time in the community, face-to-face and regularly to build water literacy and understand emerging priorities (e.g., exposure to natural hazards and climate-induced disasters such as bushfires, droughts, and flooding).



- **Recommendation 6.** Increase opportunities to share experience and improve the efficiency and impact of engagement evaluation by including guidance and industry knowledge exchange events on how to select an evaluation approach, integrate this with other business systems, and operationalise evaluation outputs.

## 2. Introduction

### Context

In 2016, the Victorian Government released *Water for Victoria*, which sets the long-term outlook and direction for managing Victoria's water resources. It is embedded in DEECA programs (e.g. those relating to floodplain management, integrated water management and wastewater management) and long-term water resource strategies and assessments, such as sustainable water strategies.

The 3 latest sustainable water strategies are the Central and Gippsland Region Sustainable Water Strategy (CGRSWS) (DELWP, 2022), the Northern Region Sustainable Water Strategy (DSE, 2009) and the Western Region Sustainable Water Strategy (DSE, 2011). Each strategy lays out challenges and opportunities, policies and actions to achieve water security in the next 50 years. Implementation is split into 2 scales – the region, led by DEECA, and the local level, led by water corporations. Each water corporation has developed an urban water strategy (UWS). Completed in 2022, these UWSs are updated every 5 years. They identify the best mix of actions to provide water services in Victorian towns and cities over the next 50 years. They also support policy directions outlined in actions from sustainable water strategies and statements outlined in the *Water Industry Act 1994* (under Section 4 – Customer and Community Engagement).

DEECA also works with 10 catchment management authorities (CMAs) to implement *Water for Victoria*. Each CMA develops a regional catchment strategy for their region in line with the *Victorian River Health Strategy* (DNRE, 2002).

A key element for each of these strategies is the need for community engagement in the water sector. For example:

*The water sector must understand the customers and community that it serves. Government will be looking for water corporations, catchment management authorities and the Victorian Environmental Water Holder to bring the community closer to decision making. This will be achieved by better understanding the services the community wants, what the community is willing to pay for, and where the community is willing to make trade-offs.* (DELWP, 2016, p 10)

The Victorian Government issued guidelines for developing UWSs (DELWP, 2021) that provide water corporations with rules and principles for community engagement. These ambitions require effective community engagement activities relating to water issues, including water supply and management, and broader water security issues.

### Study rationale and objectives

DEECA commissioned Water Sensitive Cities Australia (WSCA) to conduct a research study of current and planned community engagement activities in the Victorian water sector.

The study identifies current and planned practices in community engagement related to water cycle management. It presents the type and frequency of engagement practices, the topics of engagement, and the key gaps between DEECA's requirements and guidelines and the current community engagement practices in the water sector. It also seeks to understand water corporations' and CMAs' perceptions of effectiveness or best examples of their practices. The analysis also considers any differences between metropolitan and urban organisations compared to regional organisations like CMAs and rural water corporations.

The study covers all of Victoria in the context of the state aiming to secure long-term water resources to protect jobs, farms, ecosystems, communities, and Traditional Owners that rely on them. For example, the study supports Action 9-5.2 of the CGRSWS, which aims to build community knowledge and involvement in water management. (See Box 1 for information about the CGRSWS).

### Study objectives

- Obtain insights about the type and best practices of community engagement activities taking place, and their drivers.
- Evaluate the perceived effectiveness of these activities according to the water sector.
- Identify any observable differences in engagement between metro/urban areas and regional Victoria.
- Identify topics that are frequently discussed in community engagement activities and pinpoint any communication gaps.
- Include, where possible, demographic breakdowns of engagement participants, to identify cohorts that may be under- or over-engaged.

The study excludes the following scopes:

- engagement activities about price submissions and land management issues by CMAs
- research into water knowledge (i.e. water literacy) and the sector's brand awareness
- recommendations on campaign strategies or campaign materials.

#### **Box 1. The Central and Gippsland Region Sustainable Water Strategy**

The Central and Gippsland Region Sustainable Water Strategy (CGRSWS) was released in 2022 and aims to secure the region's long-term water supplies to protect the jobs, farms, ecosystems, communities and Traditional Owners that rely on them. The region faces multiple challenges:

- declining river water
- growing populations and demand for water (e.g. projected population of 10 million within the next 50 years)
- more water for all users and flow-stressed rivers
- Traditional Owners' right to water justice
- a need to increase resilience for all water users to adapt to extreme events
- escalating climate change (DELWP, 2022, p 10).

The CGRSWS identifies 111 actions and policies to meet future water needs. A key element is the transition to more manufactured water supplies (desalination, fit-for-purpose recycled water and treated stormwater). Other elements include a continued focus on water efficiency; the return of river water to Traditional Owners and the environment as supply of manufactured water increases; complementary measures to improve waterway health; and support for farmers to increase their climate resilience (DELWP, 2022, p 10).

### 3. Understanding community engagement

DEECA (DELWP, 2021, p 41) defines community engagement (for water management) as:

*the planned and unplanned ways water corporations interact and relate to their partners, stakeholders, and communities. Community engagement is undertaken across all aspects of the water corporation's business and to achieve a range of outcomes, including participation in decisions, actions, or outcomes; building and maintaining relationships; and increasing community capacity for planning, action, and learning.*

Community engagement should be perceived as “a multidimensional model of water engagement that incorporates 3 distinct, yet interrelated, elements: cognition, emotion and behaviour” (Dean et al., 2016, p.6). Engagement practice should aim to cover not only behavioural engagement (i.e. encouraging water sensitive behaviours, such as reducing water use or pollution), but also cognitive engagement (i.e. informing and building actionable knowledge of water), and emotional engagement (i.e. create positive attitudes about water and water management). The latter 2 elements often have been underrepresented in water sector engagement strategies. The definition of a water sensitive citizen (Wong and Brown, 2009) – which comprises these 3 characteristics – reflects a comprehensive approach to water engagement that is not limited to water literacy.

With these broad definitions of engagement, DEECA considers community engagement to be a long-term approach on how to use and adapt use of water resources to not just address the environmental, economic and domestic uses of water but also “deliver broader community benefits such as liveability, recreational and Aboriginal values, now and in future.” (DELWP, 2021, p 39). DEECA advised that water corporations should mirror the DEECA community charter, which was created to help communities understand what they can expect from the department. This charter includes key principles guiding interaction with the community:

- *Be available:* This involves a place-based community focus, ensuring visibility in local communities and easy accessibility, and adapting approaches to meet local needs.
- *Speak and listen:* Principles include active listening and understanding diverse views, maintaining honesty and transparency about priorities and decision-making processes, and being clear and purposeful in engagement to allow genuine influence from the public.
- *Take action:* This includes providing timely and proactive communication and consistency in decision making and informing communities about project outcomes and any changes in plans, explaining the reasons behind these changes.

In addition, the UWS guidelines also lay out core requirements that water corporations *must* follow to ensure their engagement is effective and ethical.

This report aims to unveil how water corporations and CMAs currently define, plan, and implement their engagement practices, and how and why they consider or do not consider their practices to be ‘best practice’.

## 4. Method

### Overview

This study employs a mixed method approach that combines a literature review, a survey, and interviews with representatives from Victoria's water corporations and CMAs (Figure 1). It focuses on organisations as the main unit of analysis, with their programs or engagement practice as a subunit of analysis. The survey was followed by interviews with respondents to delve deeper into certain topics including the 'why' and 'how' community engagement activities are practised and 'what' are the best practices perceived in the sector.

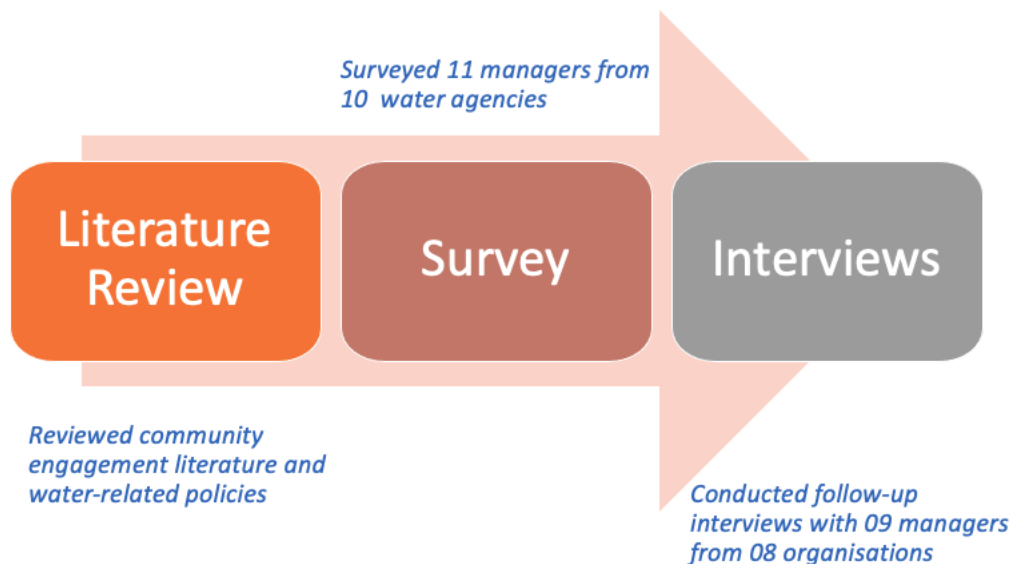


Figure 1. Research process

### Literature review

The literature review for this project was included within a concurrent, wider literature review investigating best practices in building community water literacy, being undertaken by WSCA and Monash Sustainable Development Institute. The literature review comprised 3 components.

The **first component** reviewed water literacy and community engagement concepts in published literature. It focused on urban contexts, including, or similar to, Australian cities and towns. This component helped extract information on the types of community engagement/education activities being undertaken globally and evidence about their effectiveness.

The **second component** aimed to broadly understand the authorising environment for community engagement within the Victorian water sector. We investigated current policies set out in water-related strategies developed by the Victorian Government, DEECA, water corporations and CMAs. Key review documents included sustainable water strategies (SWSs), UWSs, regional river health strategies and corporate plans. We also reviewed the most recent annual reports of a number of water entities (n=7) and CMA (n=3) to identify community engagement highlights in the past 12 months.

These documents were reviewed to:

- identify policy and regulatory drivers for community engagement, if any, i.e. where is community engagement a recommended action in each strategy and for what purpose?
- identify what this means for key organisations – who is doing what across these various strategic documents?
- identify common approaches to community engagement that are (1) recommended or (2) being undertaken.

The **third component** identified case studies of 'best practices' in community engagement in the water sector, to draw out lessons. We reviewed literature, conference proceedings and web resources held by water sector peak bodies (e.g., the Australian Water Association, Water Services Association of Australia) to identify leading examples of novel and innovative community engagement practices at a national level. Using this information, a short list of best practice case studies was compiled. Care was taken to include a diversity of Victorian and interstate examples, and to mix metropolitan and regional case studies.

## Survey

An online survey hosted on the Qualtrics platform was emailed to selected engagement/communications professionals across Victorian water corporations and CMAs. Participants were identified in collaboration with DEECA to represent a diversity of regional and organisational contexts.

Survey design reflected previous research on community engagement undertaken by the Cooperative Research Centre for Water Sensitive Cities (CRCWSC). This research provided a framework for community engagement and outlined recommendations to ensure future engagement would be effective.

Twelve organisations were identified for the survey and interviews, and the communications or engagement advisor/ coordinator/ manager for each organisation was invited to participate. The survey ran from 2 November to 7 December 2023.

## Interviews

Following the survey, in depth interviews were undertaken to further explore key topics. Survey participants were invited to take part in a more in-depth discussion through a follow-up interview. Interviews were 45–60 minutes conducted online in November and December 2023.

Interviews were conducted with communications and engagement staff from 8 organisations. All these interviewees except one took part in the survey. Interviewees had varying levels of experience in the industry and duration of employment at their organisation.

## Study participants

The survey and interview targeted the same groups of respondents, who were either communication advisors or managers of engagement or both from CMAs and water corporations (see Appendix 5).

Eleven respondents from 3 CMAs and 7 water corporations were surveyed (Table 1). Of the water corporations, 2 were metropolitan urban water companies, 4 were regional urban water companies, one was a rural water corporation, and one was a combined rural and urban water corporation (Lower Murray Water). Interviews included 9 participants from 3 CMAs (with 2 participants coming from one CMA) and 5 water corporations. The survey comprised 9 female participants and 2 male participants, while interviews included 6 female participants and 3 male participants.

**Table 1. Participant and organisation profile**

	Survey	Interview
<b>Total participants</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>9</b>
Female participants	9	6
Male participants	2	3
<b>Total organisations</b>	<b>10*</b>	<b>8</b>
CMAAs	3	3
Metropolitan water corporations	2	1
Non metro urban water corporations	4	2
Mixed urban and rural corporations	1	1
Rural water corporations	1	1

Note: \* Two participants came from the same CMA.

## Key evaluation topics

The survey and interviews focused on a range of topics (see Table 2 and Appendixes 2 and 3 for survey form and interview guidelines). While the survey aimed to explore what, who, when, how many and how much questions, the interviews concentrated on how and why the water sector engaged the community as they do.

**Table 2. Topics of survey and interviews**

Topics/ indicators	Survey	Interview
Research objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify the types of community engagement practised by those CMAs, water corporations and VicWater and who is doing it well.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore the meaning of best practice and reasons for those meanings.</li> <li>Explore case studies of best practice.</li> <li>Identify the recommendations for future best practice.</li> </ul>
Specific indicators/ questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What does the community engagement process look like?</li> <li>What engagement frameworks are they applying, if any?</li> <li>What is the process of identifying and involving target groups?</li> <li>What are the steps in this process? What is included in the steps of: informing, consulting, involving, collaborating, and empowering?</li> <li>How are engagements evaluated?</li> <li>Are there any constraints on achieving best practice?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What do you mean by 'best practice' in community engagement? Why do you think so?</li> <li>Please give an example of a recent best practice program/project conducted by your organisation. Give us reasons for why this is a best practice or why it did not achieve its potential (e.g. constraints)?</li> <li>What are some barriers to best practice?</li> <li>What are recommendations for community engagement in this sector?</li> </ul>

## 5. Results

Our survey and interviews included 4 types of organisations: metropolitan water corporations, urban water corporations, CMAs, and rural water corporations. For the analysis, we grouped metro and urban organisations together, and rural water corporations and CMAs together.

### Current engagement

#### Contexts of engagement

##### Unprecedented contexts

Water sector engagement activities have been affected by significant changes in the social, economic, political, technological, and environmental contexts in the past 5 or so years. These contexts are crucial in driving the way the water sector engages with clients. Below are the changes observed by interviewees.

### Climate change and disasters

- Climate change processes means water and the role of water organisations plays are more important in people's lives.
- In the aftermath of disasters like bushfires, floods and droughts, communities often face trauma and exhaustion. Government staff, frequently those providing the first point of contact, must be equipped with heightened sensitivity, and understanding to address complex situations effectively. Staff undertaking community engagement should be trained in emotional intelligence, psychological safety, handling difficult situations and basic mental health support to foster both community and staff welfare.

### COVID-19 pandemic and technological landscape

- The COVID-19 pandemic forced the use of virtual engagement methods to temporarily replace in-person communications activities, which helped maintain communication continuity.
- After the pandemic, the hybrid mode of interacting and building rapport with communities has been increasingly used since communities, especially those who are living in metropolitan areas, have been more open and receptive to online engagement. Social media has become an important source of information for communities and customers.
- Print media is still an important channel, particularly in small regional communities.

### Community's perception and capacity

- Increased access to information and more interest in water and water organisations generally means the community is more educated and better understands what the water sector and organisations do. This benefits decision making and increases expectations.
- Community engagement fatigue is a concern for water organisations. Staff must be mindful of what other organisations are doing when it comes to engagement to avoid this problem.
- While people want affordable and clean drinking water, and access to green spaces, cost of living is increasing. Water agencies need to deliver services in a way that does not affect people's cost of living.
- The style of communication has changed, moving from bureaucratic 'fact giving' to 'narrative and storytelling' approaches that aim to understand what the community values.

Interviewees understood their communication and engagement activities must adapt to the uncertainty regarding 'future water use demand' caused by climate change and upcoming health crises (DELWP, 2021).

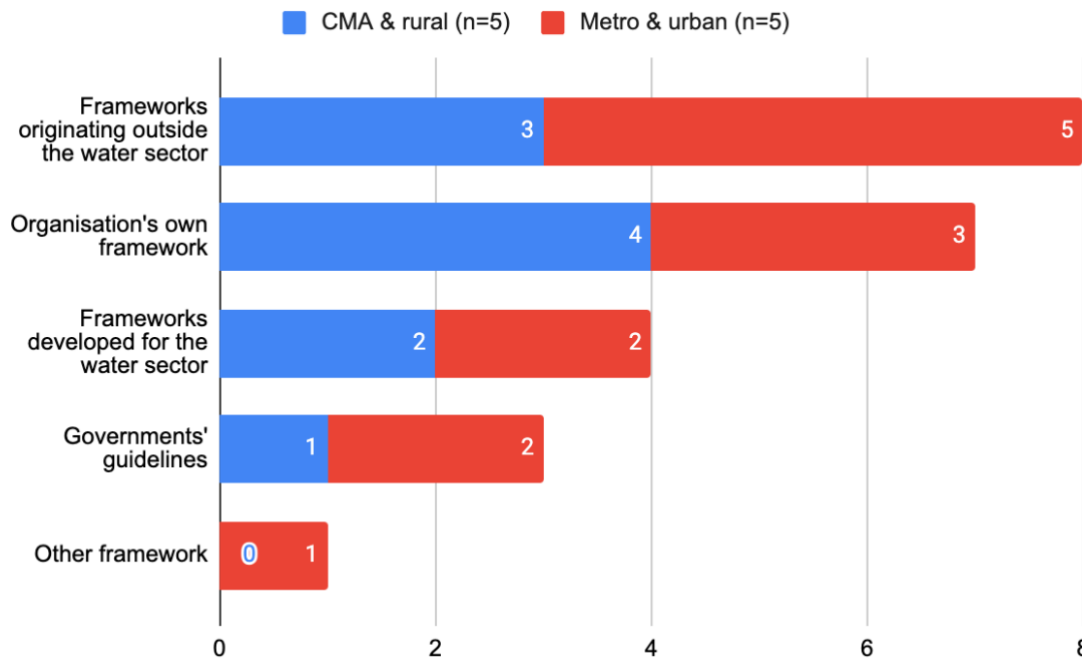
### Guiding frameworks

The UWS guidelines for water corporations recommend each corporation refers to certain guidelines or frameworks to guide their engagement activities. These guidelines or frameworks are often tested and verified by practices, research or evidence-based reviews based on high quality studies.

In the survey, respondents were asked to associate their engagement activities with broad types of frameworks or guidelines. As expected, water agencies are currently using various frameworks/guidelines to guide their engagement activities, which reflects DEECA's UWS guidelines as well as the diversity of local contexts and community needs. Frameworks developed outside the water sector were the most popular among those surveyed (n=8), followed by organisations' own frameworks (n=7) (Figure 2). Consistent with the driver analysis below, only 3 organisations considered government guidelines drove their engagement models.

More regional water organisations used frameworks from outside the water sector (5/5 organisations) than metro/urban organisations (3/5), although the difference is small.





**Figure 2. Frameworks used in engagement practices by region categories**

Qualitative data revealed frameworks originating outside the water sector were crucial in engagement design and planning. All interviewees identified the IAP2 engagement framework as a best practice guide. The IAP2 framework and principles also guided some organisations’ internal engagement documents. This framework was also recommended in the UWS guidelines.

Other frameworks included the Community Engagement and Partnerships Framework for Victoria's Catchment Management (2017), the VEWH Environmental Water Communications Framework, the Victorian Government guidelines and Essential Services Commission (ESC) guidelines. One metro-based organisation used their team’s own experience to guide their engagement strategy. Metro/urban organisations also had the most diverse types of frameworks for planning and designing their activities. Other guiding documents mentioned included the Victorian Auditor-General’s Office (VAGO) public participation best practice guide, the *Water Act 1989*, the Victorian Public Sector Commission Guidelines, the 2016 Victorian CMAs communications and engagement framework toolkit (though acknowledged this is now outdated), reconciliation and self-determination principles for Traditional Owner engagement and partnerships, and social inclusion guidance.

The data also showed organisations are developing their own guidelines, a result consistent with the UWS guidelines, which encourage water agencies to tailor their community engagement approach. Several water corporations have developed their own framework to outline their “strategic intent, process steps and a set of decision-making principles”. Similarly, some CMAs have their own guidelines that “provide strategic leadership on current and emerging government initiatives in natural resource management” and to “act as a conduit between government and community to build cooperative connections between the two”.

Generally, the IAP2 framework and other Victorian Government guidance are anchor documents, while each organisation's internal engagement and communications documents are more specific and reflect the organisation and the community they work with.

Interviewees noted the following general inclusions for their internal engagement framework, plan, or policy:

- principles-based, acknowledging fundamental right of community
- what community engagement means to the organisation
- how the organisation engages with the community
- what the organisation engages in
- ways to engage different audiences and representative engagement
- how the organisation measures success.

These documents appear quite flexible and are reviewed and updated regularly to reflect evolving engagement practices and changes to the water sector and communities.

As well as these guiding documents, interviewees noted an engagement plan is developed for individual projects. These documents must be fit for purpose, identifying scope, stakeholders, risks, the reason for engaging, and negotiables and non-negotiables.

## Current engagement activities

### Types of activities

We grouped participants from 10 organisations in 2 regional categories: the metro/urban region (including metropolitan and urban water corporations, n=5) and the regional or rural region (including CMAs and rural water corporations, n=5). They nominated 30 core engagements activities in the past 5 years or so. This list is not exhaustive; it is a list of key engagement activities from the respondents' perspectives.

Table 3 summarises the types of engagement activities identified via the survey and interviews. This diversity is consistent with DEECA's community charter in that water agencies are trying to make their information *available* in various accessible forms (i.e. not only traditional materials (print materials) but also visual and creative materials (art exhibitions and photography) and digital forms (SMS updates, social media) and various channels (including both offline and online modalities)). In addition, it is important to tailor engagement activity to each target group. One CMA manager reflected on this: "We tweak the way we do it because engagement needs to evolve depending on who you're engaging with and what they need".

The current engagement also reflects 'active listening' because the engagement involves interactive and deliberative methods (deliberative panels, workshops, on-ground activities like tree planting) and localised activities (attending farmers market, door knocking). DEECA sometimes refers to these activities as developing 'water knowledge'. According to the UWS guidelines, using visual materials and various methods to make information more accessible to local members is core in effective community engagement (see for instance Core requirement of 13.2 regarding visual representation). This practice is also backed up by our literature review which confirms using multiple methods is key to success.

**Table 3. Nominated engagement activities used by Victorian water organisations**

Categories	Organisation	Nominated activities
CMAs and rural (regional)	Glenelg Hopkins CMA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In-person site at Sheepvention Rural Expo</li> <li>• Waterbug activities at Casterton Agricultural Show</li> <li>• Community tree planting and fish hotel building</li> </ul>
	East Gippsland CMA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community boat tours of East Gippsland rivers</li> <li>• Participation in the Wild Harvest Seafood Festival</li> <li>• Flood class level workshops</li> </ul>
	North Central CMA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flood town meetings</li> <li>• Stall at community markets</li> <li>• Photo exhibition</li> </ul>
	Lower Murray Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attendance at community farmer markets</li> <li>• Community meeting</li> <li>• Customer surveys</li> </ul>
	Southern Rural Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In-person customer discussion on projects</li> <li>• Project advisory groups</li> <li>• Customer drop-in sessions</li> </ul>
Metro/urban	Coliban Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pricing Submission Engagement</li> <li>• Community education</li> <li>• Flood-impacted town engagement</li> </ul>
	North East Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Customer and community advisory forum</li> <li>• North East Victoria leaders forum</li> <li>• North East developer forum</li> </ul>
	Goulburn Valley Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Water cafes at community events</li> <li>• Annual Performance Forum</li> <li>• Dunyak Moira project delivery</li> </ul>
	Yarra Valley Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Retail/in-person shop for customers</li> <li>• Door knocking</li> <li>• Shopping centre activations</li> </ul>
	Greater Western Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Macedon Ranges Future of Water</li> <li>• Romsey Recycled Water Plant Project</li> <li>• Pascoe Vale Road Watermain upgrade</li> </ul>

Table 3 shows that regional organisations' activities often relate to environmental awareness and community involvement in natural resource management. For instance, Glenelg Hopkins CMA's involvement in community tree planting and 'fish hotel' building aligns with their role in managing waterways. Similarly, East Gippsland CMA's boat tours and flood level workshops reflect their focus on rural water management and environmental education.

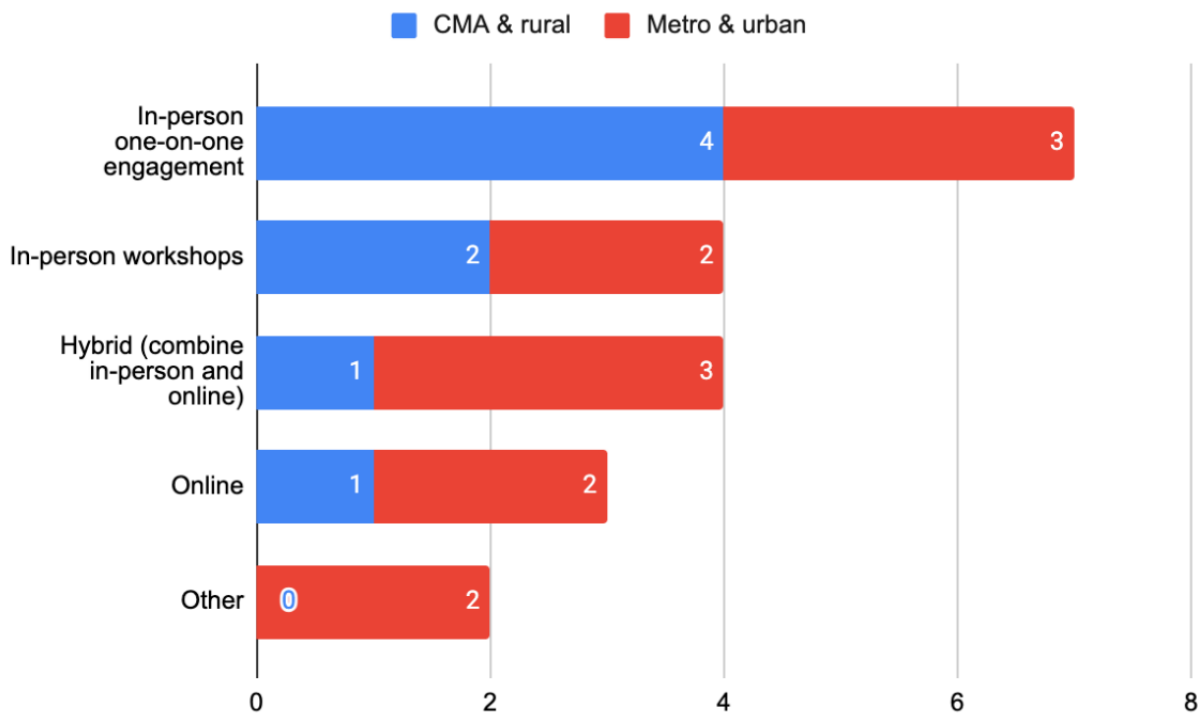
By contrast, metro/urban organisations' activities tend to centre around customer and community services related to urban water supply. For example, Coliban Water's pricing submission engagement and Greater Western Water's Romsey Recycled Water Plant project focus on urban water supply and treatment, reflecting their role in servicing houses and businesses.

In terms of engagement methods, regional organisations often use hands-on approaches that involve direct participation in environmental activities, like tree planting or educational tours, which likely aim to foster a deeper connection and understanding of regional water resources and environmental issues. Activities like community

meetings and advisory groups suggest an effort to involve the community in decision making processes about regional water management.

The metro/urban organisations’ methods seem more focused on advisory forums and customer feedback mechanisms, like customer and community advisory forums (e.g., North East Victoria leaders forum and Yarra Valley Water’s retail/in-person shop for customers). These activities are more tailored to address urban water supply concerns and customer interactions, which is crucial for maintaining public trust and ensuring the adequacy of water services in densely populated areas.

In-person one-on-one engagements are still the most common methods, making up 7 out of 10 organisations’ methods. Water agencies also use in-person workshops to facilitate their relationship with communities or customers. This result suggests that in-person interaction remains important even after the COVID-19 pandemic. Yet, 40% of surveyed organisations are using a hybrid mode and 30% an online mode for their delivery, confirming the shift in communication style as suggested in the contextual analysis of this report. This result also confirms that metro/urban organisations used more online delivery methods than rural organisations.



**Figure 3. Methods of engagement by region categories**

Regional organisations often organised their activities yearly (3/5 organisations reporting this frequency), while no metro/urban organisations followed this routine. The metro/urban water agencies coordinated their community engagement with activities, including continuously (2/5), weekly, monthly, and quarterly. One regional organisation cited they would organise activities as required.

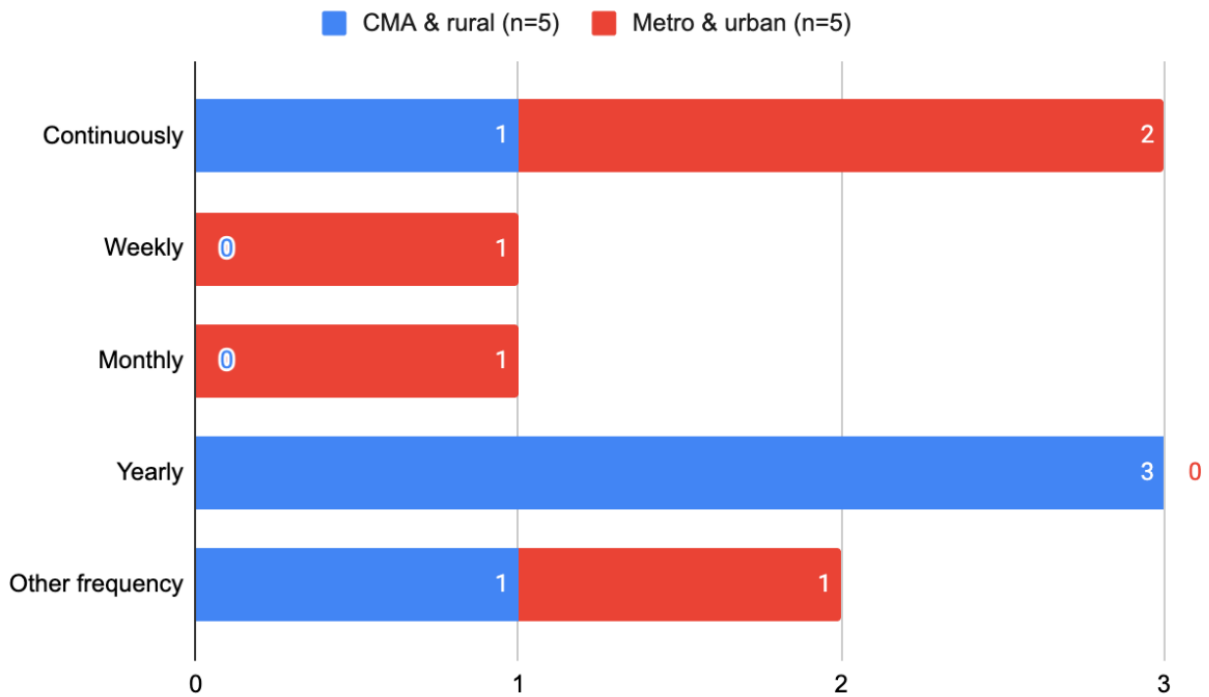


Figure 4. Frequency of engagement activities by region categories

**Rationales for community engagement**

Water corporations and CMAs were asked to nominate 3 core engagement activities their organisations have been doing and specify their reasons, based on the list we provided. Table 4 categorises reasons across 3 core activities. Each column (Core activity 1, 2 and 3) represents the reasons for the first, second and third nominated activities respectively. It shows each engagement activity was motivated by multiple reasons, ranging from legal and policy requirements to the need to understand stakeholders. Reasons like 'Build relationships with community; marketing; build trust' and 'Build awareness, for education' are consistently high across all 3 core activities, indicating their importance. Conversely, reasons like 'Public service announcements' were less frequently cited, suggesting they are not the primary drivers of engagement activities (while also noting that there may not have been any incidents (etc.) in recent periods warranting a public service announcement).

**Table 4. Reasons to conduct core engagement activities**

Reasons	Core activity 1	Core activity 2	Core activity 3
Reduce project delivery risk	7	7	6
It's a requirement (e.g., required by law, regulation, etc.)	4	4	1
Meet community/stakeholder expectations	7	6	8
Build awareness, for education	8	9	9
Influence behaviours	8	7	7
Public service announcements	3	1	2
Build relationships with community; marketing; build trust	9	9	9
Reputation management; public relations	8	7	8
Collaborate; improve project outcomes	7	8	8
Other reasons	2	4	2

Note: Colour codes: Red: 4 or fewer of the 10 organisations chose this reason for their 1st/2nd/3rd core activity; Blue: 5–7 organisations chose this reason; Yellow: 8 or above organisations chose this reason.

Water corporations and CMAs have legal commitments under the *Water Industry Act 1994* to make their community engagement processes available and transparent to customers:

*We have a clear commitment to engagement within our organisation. Some of the goals we commit to include: being clear about why we are engaging and codesigning our engagement.* (Engagement Manager, urban water corporation)

Yet, it seems government requirements drove only 30% of the engagement activities (mean across all 3 activities=3), while a significant majority (about 90%) were more influenced by the aim of building healthy relationships with the community (mean=9).

Moreover, the nature of community engagement has evolved from basic communication, such as public service announcements (mean=2), to more complex initiatives. Examples include raising awareness and educating people about water literacy and the science behind water infrastructure and technologies (mean=8.7) (as exemplified in Case 1: Hobsons Bay Main Sewer Upgrade). One urban water manager said community engagement “increased water literacy to help do things like design education programs to influence water use”.

These results imply community engagement has become an inherent and voluntary part of these organisations' water planning rather than being viewed as an obligation. One manager from a CMA confirmed this observation:

*Undertaking community engagement activities and establishing and managing partnerships are essential elements of any organisation.*

This internal transformation explains why there has been a shift in the communication style and focus in the Victorian water sector. The 'traditional' approach, characterised by straightforward fact dissemination and a top-down adherence, is being replaced by a focus on building 'water knowledge (i.e. 2-way engagement),' educating the public and influencing behavioural changes.

Figure 5 illustrates the similarities between metro/urban organisations and regional organisations. For example, organisations from both categories draw on drivers such as building relationship, building awareness, influencing behaviours, improving project outcomes, reducing project delivery risk or meeting community expectation. There were some minor differences, such as metro/urban organisations cited reasons like community licence/approval for activities (5/5 organisations), requirement by laws/ regulations (3/5) or public service accountments (2/5). Conversely, regional organisations were more driven by reputation management (5/5), compared with only 3 of 5 metro/urban organisations citing that reason.

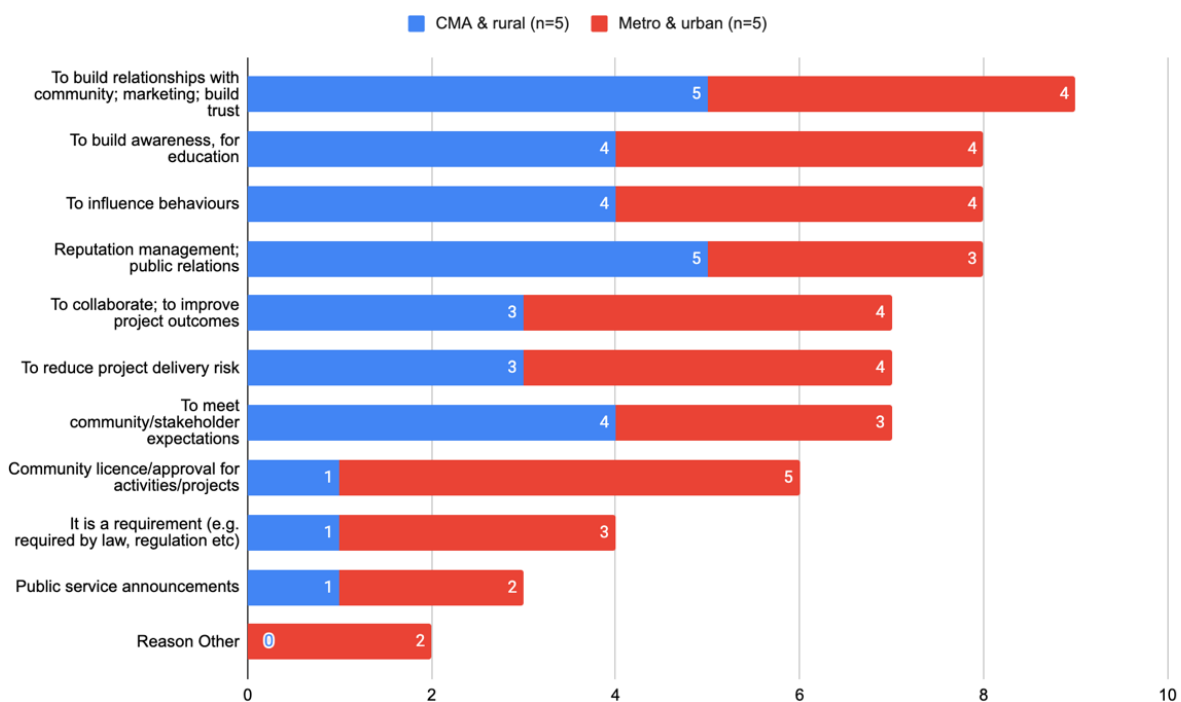


Figure 5. Reasons for community engagement in the water sector by region categories

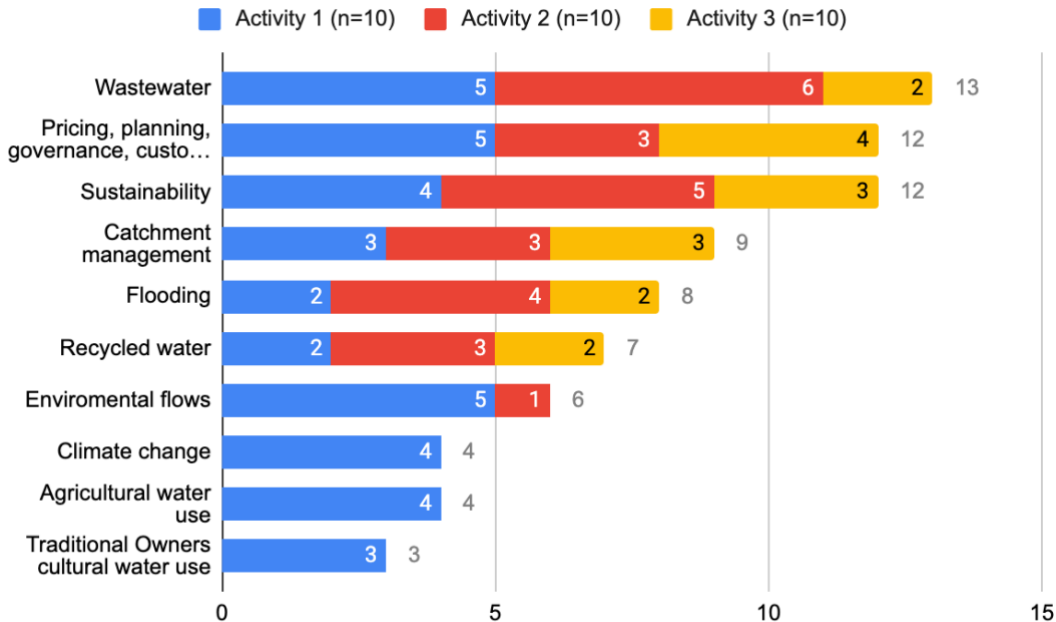
**Topics**

Our survey asked water managers to identify topics of engagement for their core activities listed above. The results depicted in Figure 6 should be interpreted as a list of topics of recent important engagement activities, rather than an exhaustive list.

Three topics feature most strongly: wastewater (13/30 activities); pricing, planning, governance, and customer support (including price submission) (12/30); and sustainability (12/30). In 30 activities nominated, only one activity was devoted specifically to price submissions (i.e. ‘Price Submission Engagement’ organised by Coliban Water). The next most frequently mentioned group of topics included catchment management (9/30), flooding (8/30), recycled water (7/30) and environmental flows (6/30).

Climate change (4/30), agricultural water use (4/30) and Traditional Owners’ cultural water use (3/30) were the least frequently mentioned topics.

Given DEECA’s recent policies, key topics such as wastewater, price submissions and sustainability are already top priorities among surveyed water organisations. Yet, *the increasingly important topics such as climate change, net zero, stormwater management /WSUD, liveability and Traditional Owners’ cultural water use were not mentioned.* Only one CMA and 2 metropolitan water organisations reported including Traditional Owners’ cultural water use in their engagement. As one manager from a CMA stated, “The way that our Traditional Owners want to be engaged with is evolving down here”.



**Figure 6. Topics of 30 nominated core engagement activities**

Figure 7 shows the differences between metro/urban water corporations (n=5) and CMAs and rural water corporations (n=5). The topics of flooding and environmental flows appeared equally in both groups.



Metro/urban organisations dominated wastewater (10/15 activities related to this topic), followed by pricing, planning, governance, and customer support (including price submission) (10/15) and recycled water (6/15). Lower Murray Water was the only regional organisation that included recycled water in their engagement activity, but it also provides water supply to urban areas. By contrast, regional organisations dominated catchment management (9/15 activities organised by CMAs or rural water corporations related to this topic) and sustainability (7/15 compared with 5/15 for metro/urban organisations). The following topics rated low for organisations in both categories: agricultural water use (3/15 for regional organisations and 1/15 for metro/urban organisations), climate change (1/15 for regional organisations and 3/15 for metro/urban organisations, and Traditional Owners (1/15 for regional organisations and 2/15 for metro/urban organisations).

Engagements related to wastewater (4/5 metro/urban organisations), pricing, planning, governance, and customer support (including price submission) (4/5), climate change (3/5) and Traditional Owners' cultural water use (2/5) were practised more in the metropolitan region, although they are also included in some rural organisations' engagement agendas. Environmental flows and agricultural water use were mentioned by regional organisations (3/5). Sustainability (2/5) and flooding (1/5) were featured in both regions.

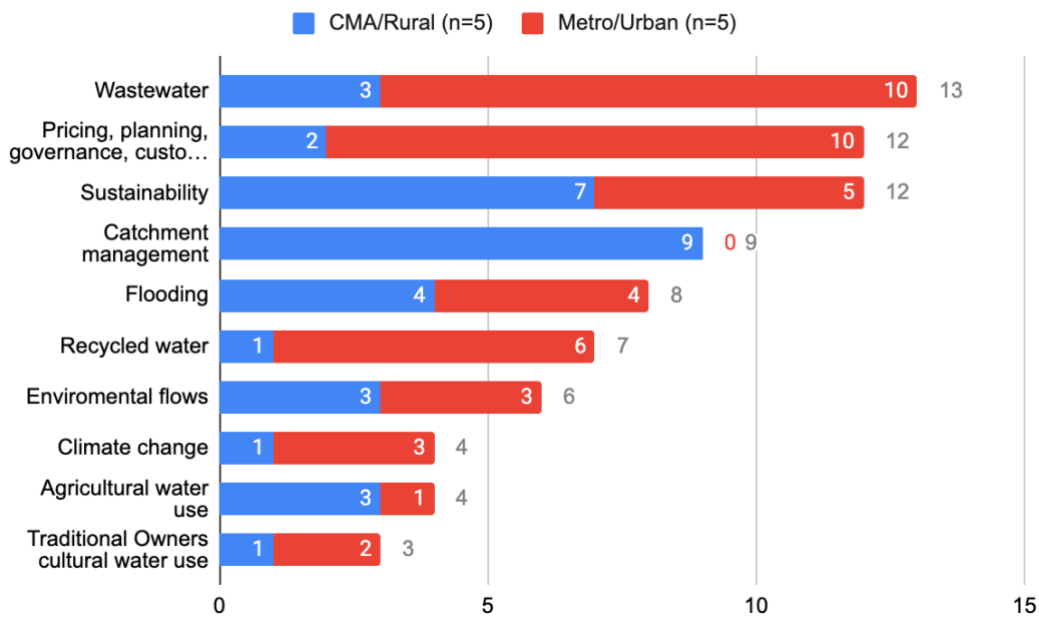


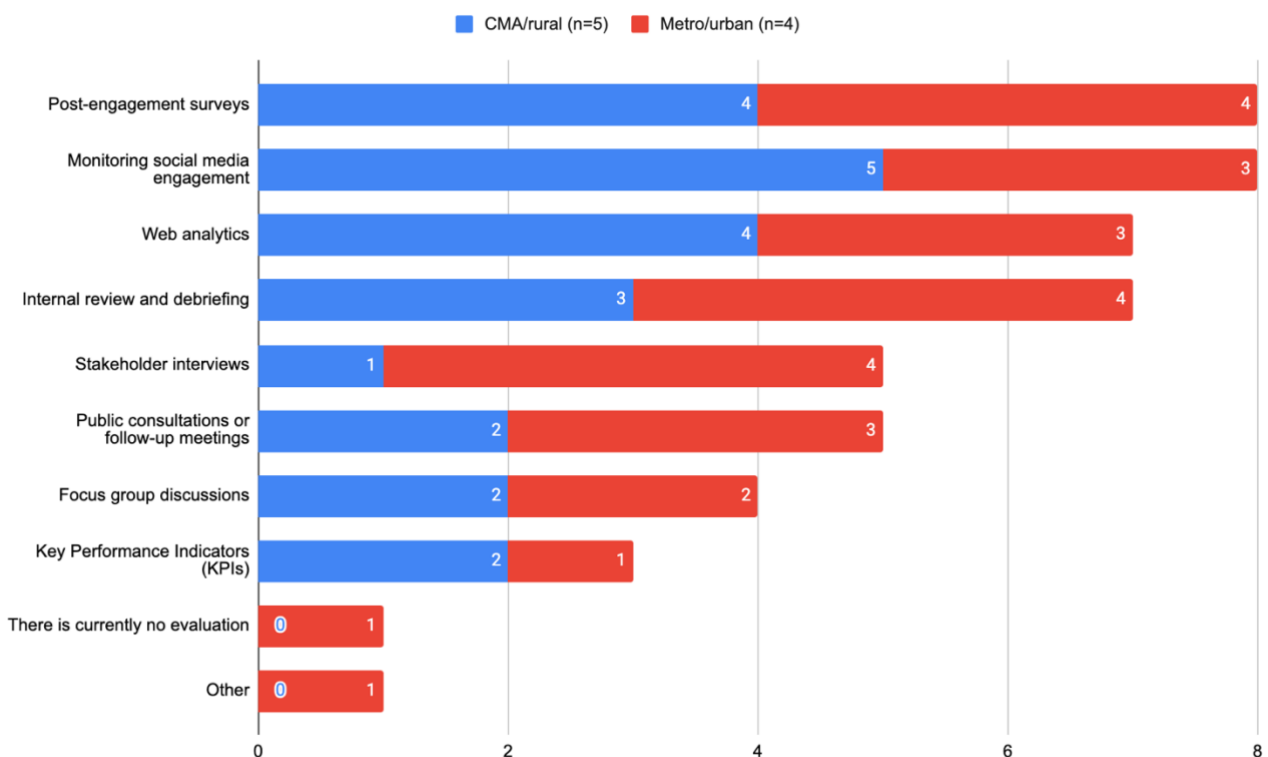
Figure 7. Topics of 30 nominated activities by region categories

## Evaluation

DEECA requires all water organisations to evaluate their engagement activities. In our survey, 90% of surveyed organisations (n=9) reported that they conducted evaluation, although their methods vary (Figure 8). Post-engagement surveys and monitoring social media engagement were the most common methods, identified by 80% of all surveyed organisations. These methods were followed up by internal review and debriefing and website analytics (70%), and public consultations or follow-up meetings and stakeholder interviews (50%). Focus group

discussions and key performance indicators (KPIs) were the least common methods, being used by only around one-third of surveyed organisations.

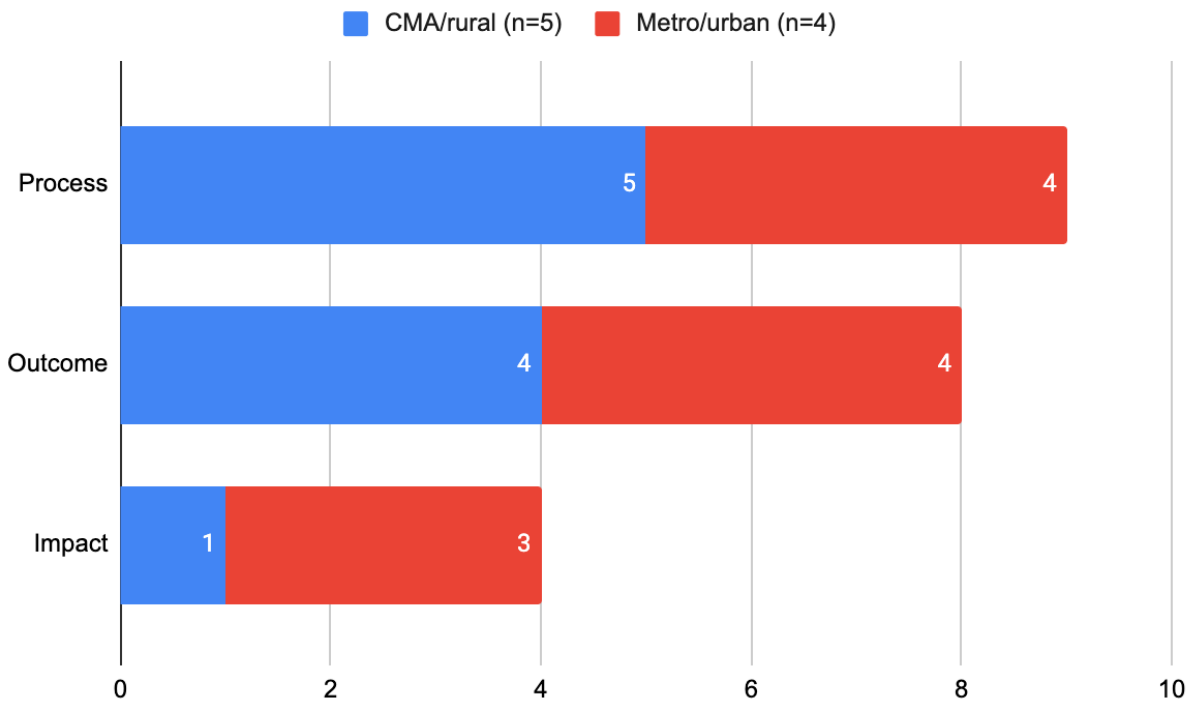
Looking at the differences between regions, CMAs and rural water corporations more actively used social media engagement monitoring (5/5) and KPIs (2/5, compared with just one metropolitan organisation). By contrast, metro/urban organisations used more stakeholder interviews (4/5, compared with only one regional organisation). Post-engagement surveys, website analysis and internal review and debriefing, and follow-up public consultation were evenly used in both regions. One metro/urban organisation did not use any evaluation.



**Figure 8. Community engagement evaluation methods**

Post-engagement surveys and monitoring social engagement were most popular among all 3 CMAs surveyed, while key performance indicators (KPIs), public consultations or follow-up meetings, stakeholder interviews, focus group discussions only appeared once. Metropolitan urban water corporations often used internal review and debriefing (2/2); regional urban water corporations used post-engagement surveys and stakeholder interviews (3/3); and rural water corporations monitored social media engagement (2/2).

Of the 9 organisations that responded, all reported their evaluation focused on process (9/9), while 8 reported focusing on engagement outcomes (Figure 9). This result is quite balanced between the metro/urban and regional organisations. By contrast, only 4 organisations (44%) carried out impact evaluation, 3 of which were in the metropolitan region.



**Figure 9. The focus of evaluation by region categories**

Interviewees noted several mechanisms for gauging the effectiveness of community engagement:

- annual survey (done by an external provider) to understand customer sentiment and satisfaction.
- stakeholder relationship management system used to track engagement (ensures continuity and central repository if staff turnover) and use this to report on engagement to community, board and stakeholders.
- post-event/project surveys or short response (e.g. one sentence to describe what you thought of today)
- check-in with community reference groups or other established groups
- internal review and evaluation after events and projects (ask ourselves was the content okay?, did engagement hit the mark?, what comments or questions came up?)
- social media and print media monitoring to get a sense of how we are going through comments and track sentiment. Also applies to calls we are receiving and the types of questions we get at events.

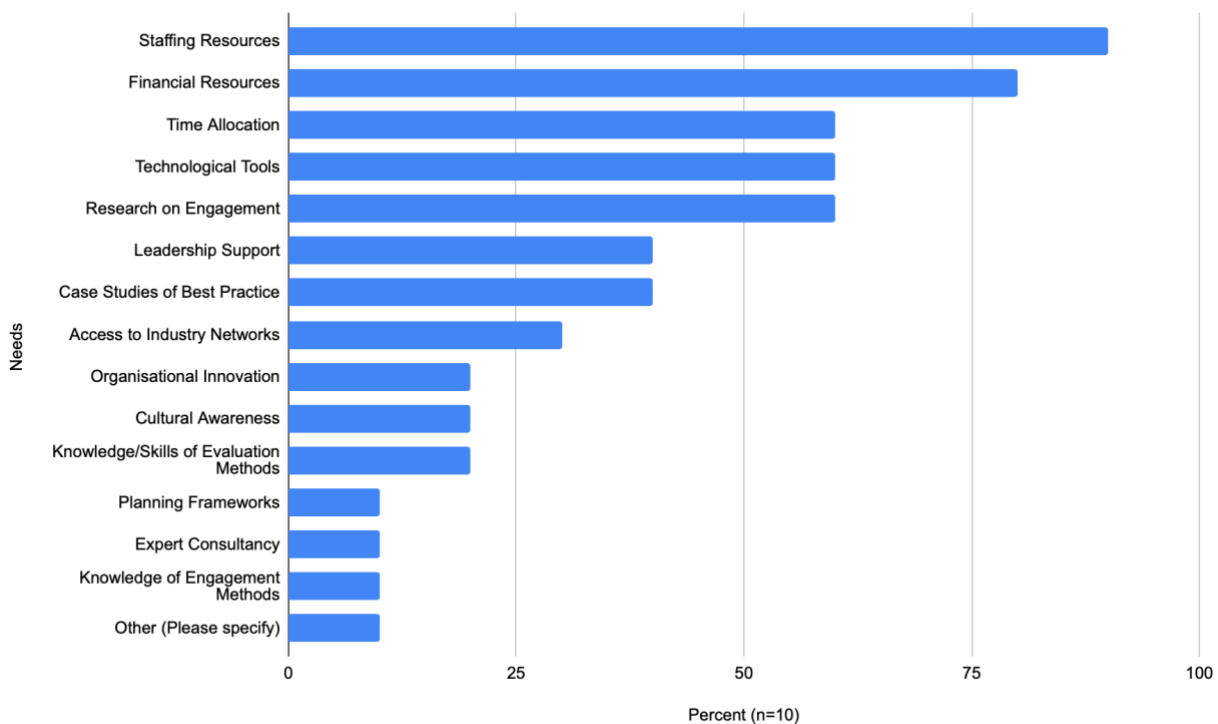
Interviewees also noted post-engagement feedback was commonly used for big engagement activities (e.g. government grants which have reporting requirements), however for smaller activities communication managers must weigh up effort for return.

## Planned engagement

### What do water managers need to be more effective?

All water corporations and CMAs surveyed planned to improve their community engagement activities. Among their identified resource needs, staffing and finance were the greatest needs, cited by 90% and 80% of respondents respectively (n=10) (Figure 10). Time allocation, technological tools and research on engagement were identified by 60% of organisations (n=6). Some organisations also reported needing leadership support (40%), case studies of best practice (40%) and access to networks (30%). Organisations reported being confident in their organisation’s innovation, cultural awareness, and knowledge/skills of evaluation methods, especially planning frameworks, expert consultancy and knowledge of engagement methods; only one or 2 organisations cited these needs. The one respondent from the metropolitan region who selected ‘other’ stated:

*We've had a hard time hiring in the community engagement space this year, plus internal support is sporadic at best. We're working on it.*



**Figure 10. Resources needed to be more effective in community engagement**

Looking at organisation categories (rather than regional categories), there are some differences between most and least needed resources for future engagement (Table 5). For example, staffing resources were the greatest need for all water corporations and CMAs, however, they also identified needing other resources. For instance, urban water corporations wanted to conduct research on engagement, while CMAs wanted to upgrade their financial resources and time allocation. Rural water corporations most need financial resources, knowledge of engagement methods (50%), research on engagement (50%), technological tools (50%) and time allocation (50%).

Except for urban water corporations, organisations reported they did not need expert consultancy, suggesting internal capabilities are strengthening. Cultural awareness was reported as being at an appropriate level in the surveyed non-metropolitan urban water corporations, rural water corporations and CMAs, while this expertise was raised in one of the metropolitan urban water corporations.

**Table 5. Most and least needed resources by organisation categories**

Organisation category	Most needed resource	Least needed resource
Metropolitan water corporations (n=2)	Staffing resources (100%) Other resources except the least needed ones (50%)	Expert consultancy (0%) Knowledge of engagement methods (0%) Planning framework (0%)
Non-metropolitan urban water corporations (n=3)	Staffing resources (100%) Research on engagement (100%)	Cultural awareness (0%) Organisation innovation (0%)
Rural water corporations (n=2)	Financial resources (50%) Knowledge of engagement methods (50%) Research on engagement (50%) Staffing resources (50%) Technological tools (50%) Time allocation (50%)	Cultural awareness (0%) Expert consultancy (0%)
Catchment management authorities (n=3)	Financial resources (100%) Staffing resources (100%) Time allocation (100%)	Access to industry networks (0%) Case studies of best practice (0%) Cultural awareness (0%) Expert consultancy (0%) Knowledge of engagement methods (0%) Planning framework (0%)

**Future engagement activities**

All organisations (except one metropolitan water corporation) described future engagement plans (Table 6). Common themes were increasing both community involvement and awareness-raising. Activities like market stalls, community workshops and social media were prevalent across all organisation types, indicating a shared focus on direct community engagement and outreach. In addition, most organisations planned to use multiple channels and platforms to engage better with communities.

CMAAs appeared to have a more diverse and extensive range of activities planned, including specific environmental and educational initiatives such as biodiversity campaigns and activities with Traditional Owners. Urban water corporations planned a mix of digital and traditional engagement methods, emphasising technological adoption and strategic planning projects. Both urban water corporations and rural water corporations showed a strong intent to involve communities earlier in projects, indicating a shift towards more proactive engagement. Interviews also indicated water agencies plan to further develop their engagement framework. One metropolitan water corporation’s manager said:

*We collected some baseline data when we did our framework our first one. Obviously, the big focus sort of next year will be how do we go with our first framework.*

**Table 6. Future planned activities by organisation categories**

Organisation categories	Future planned activities
Metropolitan water corporations (n=1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information sessions for environmental groups</li> <li>• Pop-ups</li> <li>• Market stalls</li> <li>• Written communications</li> </ul>
Non-metropolitan urban water corporations (n=3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Price submission</li> <li>• Specific capital works projects</li> <li>• Regional master planning project</li> <li>• Community education</li> <li>• Major customers and stakeholder engagement</li> <li>• Adoption of digital engagement tools</li> <li>• Hybrid IAP2 frameworks for Traditional Owners</li> <li>• Customer accountability panel</li> <li>• Water cafes as pop-ups</li> <li>• Organisational partnerships</li> <li>• Interviews</li> <li>• Larger-scale events with industry cohort</li> </ul>
Rural water corporations (n=2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased involvement in project engagement</li> <li>• Early community engagement in projects</li> <li>• Continuation of engagement at local events</li> <li>• Presence in the community through social media</li> <li>• Strategic Futures Forum involving various stakeholders</li> </ul>

Catchment management authorities (CMAs) (n=3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Continuation of market stalls</li><li>• Regular community stakeholder meetings</li><li>• Activities with Traditional Owners</li><li>• Catchment Connections Biodiversity presentations</li><li>• Community boat tours</li><li>• Pop-up community workshops</li><li>• Community walks and talks</li><li>• Community paddles</li><li>• Social media campaigns</li><li>• Participation in festivals</li><li>• Events by sustainable agricultural facilitator</li><li>• Promotion of project activities</li></ul>
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## Best practices

The following 4 case studies demonstrate aspects of best practices in community engagement within the water sector. These case studies include the Hobsons Bay Main Sewer Upgrade by Melbourne Water, the Perth Groundwater Replenishment by WA Water Corporation, the Sunbury IWM Community Panel by Western Water and Melbourne Water, and the Wetland Photography Gallery by North Central Catchment Management Authority. These projects stand out for their alignment with not just one but 2 or more of DEECA's principles of community engagement: be available, speak and listen, and take action.

These case studies effectively engaged communities by being *visible* and *accessible* in local areas. For instance, Hobsons Bay Main Sewer Upgrade used immersive storytelling, community-friendly language, and visually engaging photo to make complex topics like sewage treatment more accessible and interesting. The cases demonstrated an ability to adapt engagement strategies to *local needs*. The Wetland Photography Gallery showcased photography by CMA staff and collaborative projects, featuring Traditional Owner art and some local artist contributions, to engage the community on environmental topics through diverse artistic expressions. This method demonstrates how art can be a powerful tool for engagement.

They also excelled in *actively listening* to and understanding diverse community views. This is exemplified by the Perth Groundwater Replenishment project, where face-to-face engagement, such as community forums and educational facility tours, was prioritised to build trust and acceptance of a novel water supply option.

Moreover, these projects were proactive in involving communities in decision making and *taking actions*. The Sunbury IWM Community Panel incorporated a deliberative engagement process that placed the community at the heart of decision making about water management options for a rapidly growing population. Over several sessions, the panel, comprising randomly selected local residents, discussed, and deliberated various water-related issues, leading to recommendations that were later accepted by Western Water and Melbourne Water. This approach not only empowered the community but also demonstrated a proactive stance in addressing water challenges.



## **Case 1. Hobsons Bay Main Sewer Upgrade**

**Location:** Hobsons Bay, Melbourne, Victoria

**Lead agency:** Melbourne Water

The innovative and engaging design of the hoarding around the Melbourne Water Hobsons Bay Main Sewer Upgrade at Scienceworks aims to make sewage waste more engaging and fun for the community. It was an opportunity to educate children and families about the water cycle, and to let them see science, technology, and engineering in practice.

### **About**

The Hobsons Bay Main Sewer upgrade involves building a duplicate pipeline while the existing pipeline is rehabilitated. The project will extend the life of the existing pipeline and add extra capacity for Melbourne's growing population.

Melbourne Water's engagement campaign centres around vividly designed hoarding at the construction site at the Scienceworks Museum. 'Poo-like' figures deliver the sewer project facts and figures. People can also see the construction site via 9 viewing windows. QR codes along the hoarding link to an online game – 'Drip Trip' – that provides more information. And Melbourne Water released several short, animated videos that follow Lucey's (the tunnel boring machine) journey.

### **Drivers**

The campaign was designed to appeal to children and families and aimed to:

- educate people about the water cycle and the need for the upgrade – topics that are often perceived as technical and complex
- encourage visits to Scienceworks
- complement the museum's STEM learning experience.

By incorporating playful characters and activities, the campaign softens the awkward and uncomfortable conversation about sewage. The campaign also recognises that engagement should target emotions, as well as knowledge and behaviour.

### **Outcomes**

The campaign was internationally recognised, awarded Gold in the Marketing – Print category at the 2023 Better Future GOV Design Awards in New York. The award "celebrates the courage of commissioners and creators of design projects within the government, community and public sectors".

### **Lessons**

The key lessons for future engagement activities are:

- Use immersive storytelling to connect the community with work of water utilities and the value of water and the environment.
- Use community-friendly and fun language that resonates with children and family.
- Use various channels that involve emotionally resonant and relevant visual imagery to engage the audience.
- Use art: communication is more than just text.

## **Case 2. Perth groundwater replenishment**

**Location:** Perth, Western Australia

**Lead agency:** WA Water Corporation

International evidence suggested replenishing groundwater with treated wastewater was a viable option technologically. WA Water Corporation needed to demonstrate that this novel water supply option could operate within Western Australia's water licensing and regulatory arrangements, and that the community would approve.

### **About**

Prolonged drought and lower rainfall prompted WA Water Corporation to consider an innovative groundwater replenishment trial, involving treating wastewater and then injecting it into groundwater aquifers. At the same time as trialling the technology, the organisation implemented an extensive community engagement program, which included:

- anticipating potential developments and distracting influences, and preparing mitigation or management procedures.
- delivering communication and engagement activities, such as: face-to-face engagement via community forums and an educational facility built at the treatment facility for tours and open days; a website; newsletters; and a social media campaign.

### **Drivers**

The campaign aimed to promote both community and industry acceptance of an additional water source for Perth. To build trust, the engagement strategy focused on face-to-face activities.

- Engaging decision makers: Sustained and open engagement with decision makers, regulators, thought leaders and politicians aimed to mitigate the risk of adverse media reports and ensure all parties were well informed to assess and approve a full-scale scheme.
- Engaging the community: WA Water Corporation recognised the scheme would not proceed without community endorsement. Again, the campaign focused on face-to-face activities, supplemented by a website, social media, and newsletters.

### **Outcomes**

Community support for wastewater treatment and groundwater replenishment has stayed above 70% since WA Water Corporation started measuring it. Surveys showed support for groundwater replenishment rose from 74% before a visitor centre tour to 93% at the end of a tour.

### **Lessons**

The key lessons for future engagement activities are:

- Use pilot projects as an engagement tool to challenge prevailing perceptions. Allow the community to engage directly with the pilot project through tours etc. that demystify the infrastructure and 'bust myths'.
- Invest time and money in creating and delivering a range of communication resources and engagement activities.
- Take a long-term perspective, to allow decision makers and the community to carefully consider options.

### Case 3. Sunbury IWM community panel

**Location:** Sunbury, Victoria

**Lead agencies:** Western Water<sup>1</sup> and Melbourne Water

Sunbury's Water Future Community Panel was a cross-section of 35 randomly selected people from Sunbury and surrounding communities. They were asked to consider information and ideas and make recommendations to Western Water and Melbourne Water about the following question: *What water management options are best for our community and the environment?* This 'deliberative' community engagement process put the community affected by a decision at the centre of that decision.

#### About

Sunbury's population is expected to double in the next 20 years. Western Water and Melbourne Water need to meet the growing demand for water, as well as manage the increased volume of wastewater and stormwater.

A key part of the community engagement process was establishing a community consultation panel.

Over 5 full-day sessions in May and June 2019, the panel explored and deliberated topics and solutions related to recycled water, stormwater, catchments and waterways, climate change and urban growth. The panel established 7 criteria for determining the options that were 'best' for the community and environment. Options did not have to meet all criteria, but they could not conflict with the criteria.

#### Drivers

Western Water and Melbourne Water had several objectives for establishing a community panel:

- put the community affected by a decision at the centre of that decision.
- build community understanding about water, water utilities and the water challenges.

#### Outcomes

Western Water and Melbourne Water reconvened the panel in October 2019 to discuss their responses to the panel's recommendations. Panel members provided positive feedback on the engagement process they experienced. Western Water and Melbourne Water accepted all recommendations which was a good outcome.

#### Lessons

The key lessons for future engagement activities are:

- Deliberative panels are very resource intensive for organisation to run but are highly effective in rapidly lifting water literacy levels.
- Deliberative panels operate at the 'empower' end of the IAP2 spectrum, so it is important to properly frame the question that the community is empowered to decide on.
- Provide stakeholders with detailed information from various sources.
- Give stakeholders time and supporting to discuss and weigh up options.

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<sup>1</sup> Western Water and City West Water merged on 1 July 2021, to form Greater Western Water.

#### **Case 4. Wetland photography gallery**

**Location:** Cohuna, Victoria

**Lead agency:** North Central Catchment Management Authority

The North Central Catchment Management Authority delivered important messages about water-related topics using a photographic exhibition at a local gallery in regional Victoria.

##### ***About***

The North Central Catchment Management Authority (NCCMA) hosted a photography exhibition that celebrated local wetlands at a regional art gallery. The exhibition predominantly featured photographs taken by NCCMA staff and through collaborative efforts, alongside Traditional Owner art including necklaces and feather-adorned hats, with some contributions from local artists.

The exhibition was an opportunity to improve awareness and understanding of water-related topics such as catchment management, climate change, Traditional Owners' cultural water use and environmental flows. It was also an opportunity for the community to engage with NCCMA staff about local environmental activities.

##### ***Drivers***

The photography gallery was successful because it:

- was a different way of engaging the community compared to traditional methods.
- combined storytelling style and photography.
- fostered a good relationship between water agency staff and gallery staff people.
- focused on building trust and relationships with the community.

##### ***Outcomes***

Engaging the broader community through art to raise awareness of the North Central CMA and the environmental, social, and economic benefits of delivering water for the environment to Gunbower Forest and local wetlands.

##### ***Lessons***

The key lessons for future engagement activities are:

- Communicate around community values to establish a point of connection for other messages.
- Use visual assets to convey messages.
- Photos resonate with local areas and activities such as watering the forest.
- Collaborate with local stakeholders to deliver key messages.

## Barrier and Enabler Analysis

Our analyses of the interviews and reviews of best practices in existing literature highlight various enablers and barriers that contribute to or constrain successful community engagement. To maximise the current enablers and address those barriers, it requires an organisational shift and DEECA's support.

### Organisational Capability

Organisational capability refers to the quality and quantity of available staff resources, leadership and support, the organisation's culture, innovation (in engagement and communications), and adaptive capacity, which help engagement teams in particular and water agencies in general implement effective community engagement programs.

At a time when customer affordability is a key issue, below are key *enablers* that are helpful in ensuring the success of engagement activities.

- **Internal training for all staff.** Practical, place-based training programs led by engagement teams demonstrating the benefits of good engagement and 'celebrating successes can empower frontline staff' and senior management, create engagement advocates, and dispel the notion that engagement is merely engagement staff's responsibility and an additional burden to projects.
- **Stakeholder management.** As part of the induction of new staff, training involving stakeholder management approaches and tools, harmonises messages across the organisation and respects the community's time by reducing repetitive communication.
- **Progress tracking.** Regular internal surveys to measure staff members' engagement knowledge provide insights for enhancing organisational support and capacity.
- **Staff retention.** Encouraging staff longevity aids in preserving institutional knowledge and sustaining community relationships.
- **Collaboration.** Sharing resources and expertise across organisations. E.g., joint activities, template collaterals, and engagement materials that can be adapted to local context.
- **Organisation's focus.** All organisations incorporated stakeholder management and community engagement into their strategy.

Studied respondents highlighted that while the intrinsic value of good engagement is widely understood, some barriers arise due to an organisation's lack of procedures in place or leadership. In particular, water organisations stated that the effectiveness of engagement is affected by the following *barriers*:

- **Small engagement teams.** Often, engagement teams, especially those in the *regional areas*, are small, and each member has multiple roles (e.g., media, communications, events, engagement, and others). They often need to outsource some tasks to consultancies.
- **Lack of capacity to turn good ideas into practice:** Some engagement staff do not know how to effectively apply ideas or frameworks into good practices.
- **Lack of experience exchange.** Communication and engagement managers often work on their own and do not have a suitable platform to exchange their experience and solutions.
- **Lack of staff's interest in engagement:** Lack of enthusiasm and interest among staff for community engagement initiatives makes it difficult for engagement managers to involve other members in in community engagement.
- **Difficulties with innovating engagement practices.** Often, the default is doing what organisations have always done.
- **Sporadic leadership support.** Leadership support for engagement activities is not consistent.

## Engagement Approach

The engagement approach refers to the frameworks and methods of planning, designing, implementing, and evaluating community engagement and also includes building rapport and addressing conflicts with target groups, who could be the public, customers, stakeholders, the community of interest, or others.

Current practises reveal *good practices* by water managers in particular and their organisations in general that help effectively engage communities and customer groups.

- **Understand and be sensitive to context.** Spend time in the community, face-to-face, to understand context. Engagement is not necessarily project-related. DEECA support for these types of activities will be important for price submissions and funding proposals, particularly where they are not tied to a specific project.
- **Build a positive legacy.** Address negative sentiment requires significant effort to rebuild relationships and gain trust. Have a clear intent and process for showing positive impacts. Be recognised as an organisation that the community can come to for help. Be empathetic by checking in with the community during disasters and knowing how to respond.
- **Take a proactive approach.** Previously, communication was reactive, where the community would call or contact when something had occurred; now organisations are on the front foot.
- **Young people (18–30 year olds).** Engage with youth councils every year and allow their members to join the organisation’s community advisory group.
- **Tailor engagement.** Plan engagement to reflect context, be direct on how the engagement can (and cannot) influence decision-making and be clear on how to engage and get the best outcomes. Be transparent and clear about why your organisation is engaging and what people will get out of it.
  - **Deliberative panels.** These have been used successfully for pricing submissions. Having an independent facilitator helps ensure a representative sample and unbiased discussions.
  - **Advisory panels** provide regular feedback on business performance and hot-spot issues. However, it is important to turn over membership regularly (e.g., every 2–3 years) to avoid the institutionalisation of these panels.
  - Use **digital engagement tools** to stay relevant and connected.
  - **Tailor the language** to suit the community. Keep messages simple. Use clear and accessible language. Avoid jargon when possible and explain terms in local languages if they must be used.
  - Deliver **consistent messages.** Work with government agencies to develop and deliver consistent communications using the same messaging and an integrated approach.
  - **Use of art and local image.** Partner with an art gallery to present photographs related to an environmental watering program.
- **Use engagement as a tool to create partnerships,** with communities, Traditional Owners, and other agencies such as schools.
- **Using data to plan and assess engagement outcomes.** Invest in data collection, and leverage data in planning and evaluating engagement effectiveness.

Despite these positive forces, our data unveils that engagement activities are facing many *barriers*.

- **Culturally and linguistically diverse groups and other target groups.** Participants' backgrounds, beliefs, and attitudes towards water topics can hinder engagement and participation.
- **Communities with low levels of trust.** Organisations may experience low levels of community trust for many reasons (e.g., past conflicts, an asset that does not keep up with demand, external reasons beyond the organisation’s control).

- **Low levels of community water literacy.** Education and building community understanding and awareness about activities that are threatening processes in waterways is an ongoing challenge. Regional areas have greater water literacy because communities are often more directly impacted by floods or droughts, making them more connected with their local environment.
- **Community's fatigue.** Overload of events, leading to reduced community interest and participation. The prevalence of numerous events by multiple agencies causing community disinterest.
- **Time and financial constraints.** Community members are constrained by time and financial resources, hindering participation.
- **Insufficient planning and organisation** of content may hinder the impact of interventions.
- **Lack of “closing the loop” procedure.** Sometimes closing the loop with the community and stakeholders is missed.
- The absence of **reliable instruments** to evaluate and measure engagement and effectiveness limits the ability to assess program outcomes.
- **Digital literacy and access:** Limited digital literacy and internet access hinder online engagement.

### Institutional and Technological Systems

Institutional and technological systems refer to the existence of the government's policies, guidance, and supports in place and the involvement of other institutions, including social media, the press, and news, schools, local organizations, and local partners, in supporting water agencies in carrying out successful engagement activities. Some positive examples identified by engagement managers as enablers for their engagement activities include:

- **Availability of DEECA's funding:** At various times DEECA offers funding for engagement activities.
- **DEECA's guidance and charter:** Current guidance by DEECA helps set up water organisations' own framework for engagement.
- **Existing frameworks and guidance:** There are many credible and helpful engagement guidance and frameworks from both within and outside the water sector that organisations can learn, such as the IAP2.

Despite these enablers, our analysis reveals *existing barriers* associated with the differences between metro/urban areas and regional areas.

- **Metro-centric content.** Some planning, data sharing, messaging, and engagement advice is metro-centric and not relevant to regional areas. State/ federal-level messaging needs to be delivered in a way that is effective to local communities.
- **Differences in risk appetite between levels of government.** There are some challenges faced between state/ federal/ local level messaging and water corporation delivery. In particular, regional water corporations want to be proactive, while state and federal government agencies can be more reactive.
- **Lack of support for fund application:** Although DEECA's funding is available, it is a challenge to apply for these fundings for the engagement teams in the regional areas, whose human resources and time are already stretched. The big 3-4 metro water corporations get funds and have resources to apply for funds. Regional authorities need to get together to try and support each other to maximise available resources and funds. As such, funding and resource allocation do not match the push for good engagement or innovative thinking and delivery.
- The absence of **familiarity, trust and strong relationships** with authorities can hinder the success of interventions.
- **Limited formal integration of water education into mainstream school curricula** adds to the barriers.

- **Reduced diversity of media channels in regional areas.** Media in regional areas is becoming more centralised, so getting local stories out can be challenging. At the same time, low digital literacy and unreliable connectivity can limit online engagement activities.
- **Achieving 'cut through' in a busy news cycle.** Stories and good news often have to cut through lots of information and reach people who are already bombarded with news and information.



## 6. Conclusion

This report presents a useful analysis of the engagement activities within the Victorian water sector, undertaken by water corporations and CMAs. This conclusion synthesises the findings and implications of the study, underlining key aspects and future directions for community engagement in water management.

### General findings

- **Diverse engagement practices:** The report highlights a spectrum of engagement activities, from digital outreach to interactive workshops and community events. This diversity reflects a shift to more 2-way engagement and use of more diverse channels.
- **Varying levels of maturity and practice:** There is a small variance in the maturity levels of engagement approaches and practices across organisations. This disparity underscores the ongoing evolution and learning curve within the sector as organisations refine their engagement strategies.
- **Adaptation to changing circumstances:** The engagement landscape has evolved in response to external factors such as the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change. These shifts have prompted a move towards more online platforms and digital tools, enhancing accessibility and broadening reach.
- **Importance of tailored frameworks:** The use of various tailored engagement frameworks demonstrates a commitment to context-specific engagement approaches at the local level. This adaptability ensures engagement activities are relevant and effective for their intended audiences.
- **Organisational needs versus community engagement:** Historically, engagement was largely driven by organisational needs, such as brand building, project de-risking, or compliance with government requirements. However, this focus is shifting, particularly among regional organisations. These entities increasingly recognise the value in responding to community-identified issues and acting as gateways to government support in times of need.
- **Challenges and barriers:** The report acknowledges the challenges faced in engagement, including engagement fatigue, resource constraints and digital literacy gaps. These barriers highlight the ongoing need for continuous improvement in engagement strategies.

### Metropolitan vs regional differences

- **Activities:** Regional organisations including CMAs and rural water corporations are more hands-on with direct participation in natural environmental activities, aiming to foster a deeper connection to regional water resources and environmental issues. Metropolitan/urban organisations focus on addressing urban water supply concerns and maintaining public trust.
- **Capability:** Regional organisations are facing challenges because of small team, multitasking, while metropolitan organisations have more time and resources.
- **Topics:** In metropolitan and urban water agencies, wastewater management, pricing, planning, governance and customer support, and recycled water are predominant concerns. Climate change, although less prominent, is gaining traction in urban areas. Similarly, the cultural water use of Traditional Owners is increasingly recognised, albeit modestly. Meanwhile, regional organisations prioritise catchment management and sustainability more than urban areas and focus more on agricultural water use. This division of focus mirrors the distinct necessities and pressures of densely populated urban areas against the environmentally and agriculturally centric regional locales.
- **Evaluation:** All organisations evaluate their engagement activities, with post-engagement surveys and social media engagement monitoring being the most common methods. Regional organisations are more active in social media engagement monitoring, whereas metropolitan organisations use more stakeholder interviews.
- **Planned engagement activities:** Both metro/urban and rural water corporations plan to increase community involvement and awareness raising. However, metropolitan organisations appear to be

more information-focused, while rural organisations have a broader range of activities planned, including specific environmental and educational initiatives.

## Implications and future directions

Given the above analyses, our recommendations for water agencies and DEECA are as follows:

### For water agency

- **Recommendation 1.** Be clear on the purpose of the engagement and what it can (and cannot) influence as a basis for genuine 2-way engagement. Incorporate a 'closing the loop' component in the engagement strategy by keeping customers and communities regularly updated on project progress and outcomes.
- **Recommendation 2.** Invest in core, regionally appropriate, water literacy programs, as well as specific project campaigns and behaviour change for target groups. For example, develop consistent resources that can be used by other organisations such as local governments, community groups, etc.

### For DEECA

#### Build capability within and between water sector organisations

- **Recommendation 3.** Continue promoting opportunities for sharing experience through state-wide forums for communications and engagement professionals, especially for regional staff. This could include co-designing and providing targeted training and engagement resources across organisational levels (from the toolbox to the boardroom). This could build engagement staff's capability and organisational alignment and focus on tailoring engagement frameworks that are already widely accepted (e.g., IAP2) to local contexts.
- **Recommendation 4.** Promote and facilitate strategic alliances among water sector (and other) organisations, especially in regional and rural areas. These alliances could be structured around common goals such as resource pooling, joint funding applications, and shared engagement initiatives, to improve efficiency and extend the reach and impact of engagement activities.

#### Improving proactive engagement and evaluation methods for different target groups

- **Recommendation 5.** Improve incident response by providing visible support for water business to invest in understanding local contexts and building profiles of different target groups *before* emergency events by spending time in the community, face-to-face and regularly to build water literacy and understand emerging priorities (e.g., exposure to natural hazards and climate-induced disasters such as bushfires, droughts, and flooding).
- **Recommendation 6.** Increase opportunities to share experience and improve the efficiency and impact of engagement evaluation by including guidance and industry knowledge exchange events on how to select an evaluation approach, integrate this with other business systems, and operationalise evaluation outputs.

In conclusion, this report offers valuable insights into the state of community engagement within the Victorian water sector. Its findings and recommendations provide a roadmap for enhancing engagement practices, ensuring they are effective, inclusive, and adaptable. This approach benefits the water sector and also serves as a model for other sectors seeking to improve their community engagement and impact.

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## Appendix 1. Victorian water sector

<p>Metropolitan water corporations</p>	<p>Greater Western Water Melbourne Water South East Water Yarra Valley Water</p>
<p>Rural and urban water corporations</p>	<p>Barwon Water Central Highlands Water Coliban Water East Gippsland Water Gippsland Water Goulburn–Murray Water Goulburn Valley Water Grampians Wimmera Mallee Water Lower Murray Water North East Water South Gippsland Water Southern Rural Water Wannon Water Westernport Water</p>
<p>Catchment management authorities</p>	<p>Mallee Wimmera Glenelg Hopkins Corangamite North Central Melbourne Water Goulburn Broken West Gippsland North East East Gippsland</p>

## Appendix 2. Survey

### Introductory text

You are invited to participate in a survey about community engagement activities in the Victorian water sector to promote water literacy. Your name has been provided by the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA), who is funding Water Sensitive Cities Australia (WSCA) to conduct research into current and planned community engagement activities being undertaken by the Victorian water sector. This project (ID 40579) has been approved by Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC). If you would like to know more or have any concerns, please contact the Chief Investigator of this project, Dr Kien Nguyen at [kien.nguyen@monash.edu](mailto:kien.nguyen@monash.edu).

The survey will take approximately 10–15 minutes to complete.

During the survey you will be asked questions about:

- the types and topics of community engagement your organisation has undertaken
- why your organisation undertakes community engagement
- planning and evaluating community engagement
- your organisational capacity to undertake community engagement.

The research outcomes will be shared openly with Victorian water sector representatives and so any confidential content should be appropriately identified. Your answers will not identify you or your organisation.

Your consent to participate in this research is indicated by the completion and submission of the attached survey.

### Questions

*Description of organisation/agency*

1. Name of organisation
2. Position in organisation

The next set of questions are on perspectives of community engagement and the types of engagement your organisation undertakes.

*By engagement, we mean a process of establishing effective and productive relationships with community members to enable a shared understanding of goals or a shared commitment to change. Engagement processes are those that inform, consult with, build trust with, and get communities actively involved in decision making, gauge community opinion and preferences, and build active community stewardship.*

3. What does your organisation hope to achieve through community engagement? <Open text response>
- 4a. In the spaces provided below please list at least 3 key and distinct community engagement activities related to water your organisation has undertaken in the past 12 months (October 2022-October 2023).

1. <survey piping> TEXT WILL BE “PIPED” TO 4b

2. <survey piping>
3. <survey piping>
4. <survey piping>
5. <survey piping>

4b. <survey piping> Engagement 1

i. Why does your organisation undertake this activity? Please select all that apply.

- To reduce project delivery risk (1)
- It is a requirement (e.g. required by law, regulation etc) (2)
- To meet community/stakeholder expectations (3)
- To build awareness, for education (4)
- To influence behaviours (5)
- Public service announcements (6)
- To build relationships with community; marketing; build trust (7)
- Reputation management; public relations (8)
- To collaborate; to improve project outcomes (9)
- Community licence/approval for activities/projects (10)
- Other (please specify) (11)

ii. What is the topic of this engagement activity? Please select all that apply.

- Wastewater (1)
- Drainage (2)
- Flooding (3)
- Catchment management (4)
- Sustainability (5)
- Pricing, planning, governance, customer support (6)
- Recycled water (7)
- Climate change (8)
- Traditional Owners cultural water use (9)
- Agricultural water use (10)
- Environmental flows (11)
- Other (please specify) (12)

iii. How often does your organisation undertake this activity?

- Continuously
- Daily
- Weekly
- Monthly
- Yearly
- Every 2 years
- Other (please specify)

iv. How is this engagement delivered?

- Online (including websites)
- In-person workshops
- In-person one-on-one engagement
- Hybrid (combined in-person and online)
- Other (please specify)

v. Who is your organisation's engagement targeting?

- Consumers: water users who pay for water and related services
- Public: any individual or group of individuals
- Stakeholders: individuals that have an 'interest' in the issue. This may include those directly or indirectly affected by the issue, or those whose interest is personal, financial, moral or legal
- Other (please specify)

<survey piping> Engagement 2

<survey piping> Engagement 3

6a. What frameworks (e.g. International Association for Public Participation (IAP2)) do you use when designing/planning community engagement in your organisation? Please select all that apply.

- Frameworks originating outside the water sector (please specify below)
- Frameworks developed for the water sector (please specify below)
- Government guidelines or frameworks
- Organisation's own framework
- No specific framework
- Don't know

- Other (please specify)

6a. How does your organisation evaluate your community engagement? Please select all that apply.

- Post-engagement surveys
- Stakeholder interviews
- Focus group discussions
- Monitoring social media engagement
- Sentiment analysis
- Web analytics (e.g. page views, time spent on online resources)
- Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)
- Public consultations or follow-up meetings
- Internal review and debriefing
- Third-party evaluation
- Financial metrics (e.g. ROI)
- There is currently no evaluation
- Other (please specify)

6b. What aspects of evaluation does your organisation focus on? Please select all that apply. Skipped if no in 6a.

- Process indicators (e.g. targeting effectiveness, community representativeness, perceptions of initiatives)
- Outcome indicators (e.g. changes in awareness, behavioural adoption, information promotion within social networks)
- Impact indicators (e.g. reduced water demand, improved water quality)
- Other (please specify)

7. What does your organisation need in order to be more effective with your community engagement? Please select all that apply.

- Staffing resources
- Financial resources
- Time allocation
- Technological tools
- Planning frameworks
- Expert consultancy
- Knowledge of engagement methods
- Cultural awareness
- Organisational innovation
- Leadership support



- Knowledge/skills of evaluation methods
  - Access to industry networks
  - Case studies of best practice
  - Research on engagement
  - Other (Please specify)\_\_\_\_\_
8. What future engagement activities does your organisation have planned in the next 12 months? <Open text>
9. Thank you for your contribution today. Is there anything else you would like to share regarding your community engagement related to water?

Thank you again for participating in the survey. Your response was submitted successfully.

For further information or to report any problems or concerns with the survey please contact Kien Nguyen by phone or via email [kien.nguyen@monash.edu](mailto:kien.nguyen@monash.edu).

## Appendix 3. Interview protocol

### Briefing and script

Thank you for agreeing to meet with me and participate in this interview. My name is [name] and I am a [role] for this project led by Water Sensitive Cities Australia, Monash University in partnership with Mosaic Insights and Alluvium Consulting. Funded by the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA), this project aims to research about the current and best practices in community engagement in the Victorian water sector, and how effective the sector believes these activities are, and any differences observed between the engagement underway within metropolitan and urban versus regional and rural Victoria.

As we described in the explanatory statement, we won't share anything you say in this interview beyond the research team in a way that you could be identified. We'd also like to record the audio or video of this interview so that we can listen back and pick up on any notes that we missed. Let me know if you'd like to do this, or if you'd prefer that I not record. Can I confirm that you have read the explanatory statement and consent to participate? [wait for a response].



[start recording if agreed]

### Questions

1. Could you tell me a bit about your background and your role at ...\_\_\_\_\_
2. What is your experience in community engagement?
  - Prompt: Do you have any training in community engagement (informal or formal)
3. In your own words, how do you define community engagement?
4. What is your organisation's current approach to community engagement in the water sector?
  - a. Please tell us key community engagement programs your organisation is undertaking.
  - b. Please tell us how your organisation's current approach responds to state/regional strategies (e.g. Central and Gippsland Region Sustainable Water Strategy), processes (e.g. price submissions).
  - c. Please tell us about any framework, guidelines your organisation is currently using to guide community engagement (e.g. IAP2, government guideline, organisation's own framework, etc.).
5. In your opinion, what is the 'best practice' in community engagement in the water sector?
  - a. Why do you think so?
6. Could you tell us one specific best practice example of your organisation's community engagement in the water sector?
7. What do you feel is working well in your organisation's community engagement?

- a. What is not working well? (Asking about the gaps)
8. How do you gauge the effectiveness of your organisation's community engagement?
  - o Prompt: Ask if their evaluation focuses on process, outcome, impact or all of them and why?
  - o Evidence or gut feeling?
9. What has changed in the past few years in the way your organisation engages communities?
  - o Prompt: What about before and after COVID-19?
10. What barriers do you experience in running community engagement at your organisation?
  - o Prompt: Ask why and for an example of each barrier.
  - o Prompt: Ask about barriers within and from outside the organisation.
11. What does your organisation need to address these barriers?
  - a. Of these barriers, which one do you think can be addressed at a policy level?
12. Any other best practice examples you have seen in Victoria, Australia, globally?
13. Do you have any recommendations?
  - o Prompt: To build community knowledge about water and improve multi-way dialogue between the water sector, Traditional Owners and the community, culturally and linguistically diverse groups, recommendations/learnings about working with young people (under 25).
14. Before we end this interview, is there anything else that we have not covered that you would like to discuss?
15. Do you have any questions for me?

Thanks again for your participation in these interviews and I want to thank you on behalf of Monash and DEECA.



[Stop recording]

## Appendix 4. Organisations that participated in the study

Organisation	Categories	Survey	Interview
Glenelg Hopkins CMA	Catchment management authorities	Yes	Yes
North Central CMA	Catchment management authorities	Yes	Yes
North Central CMA	Catchment management authorities	Yes	Yes
East Gippsland CMA	Catchment management authorities	Yes	Yes
Southern Rural Water	Rural water corporations	Yes	Yes
Lower Murray Water	Mixed urban and rural corporations	Yes	Yes
Coliban Water	Urban water corporations	Yes	Yes
Goulburn Valley Water	Urban water corporations	Yes	
Westernport Water	Urban water corporations		Yes
North East Water	Urban water corporations	Yes	
Yarra Valley Water	Metropolitan water corporations	Yes	
Greater Western Water	Metropolitan water corporations	Yes	Yes

## Appendix 5. Participants' position in organisation and aims of community engagement

Position	What does your organisation hope to achieve through community engagement?
Communications and Engagement Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undertaking community engagement activities and establishing and managing partnerships are essential elements of any organisation.</li> <li>• We achieve organisational objectives through strategic purposeful and valuable interactions with stakeholders including community and partners.</li> <li>• [Our organisation] implements government policy and disseminates information to the regional community and provides strategic leadership on current and emerging government initiatives in natural resource management. It acts as a conduit between government and community to build cooperative connections between the two.</li> </ul>
Media and Communications Coordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased literacy, community input and reputation. We also hope that better community involvement helps to create better projects.</li> </ul>
Engagement Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding what our customers want to see from our organisation, customer satisfaction and new and innovative ideas they may have to improve our services.</li> </ul>
Communication and Engagement Coordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diverse perspectives including (enhancing) social licence to undertake current and future works and (building) community ownership of natural resource management activities post-funding cycle.</li> </ul>
Manager – Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensuring everyone has a voice to contribute to projects, programs and systems that impact or are of interest.</li> <li>• We have a community engagement framework that outlines our strategic intent and process steps and a set of decision making principles.</li> </ul>
Senior Community Engagement Advisor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open and transparent communication on projects and initiatives with our farmers, Traditional Owners and key community and regulatory stakeholders.</li> </ul>
Manager Strategic Communications and Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We have a clear commitment to engagement within our organisation. Some of the goals we commit to include:</li> <li>• being clear about why we are engaging</li> <li>• explaining the level of influence</li> <li>• if possible, co-designing our engagement</li> <li>• using different channels to maximise opportunities and encourage diverse participation</li> </ul>

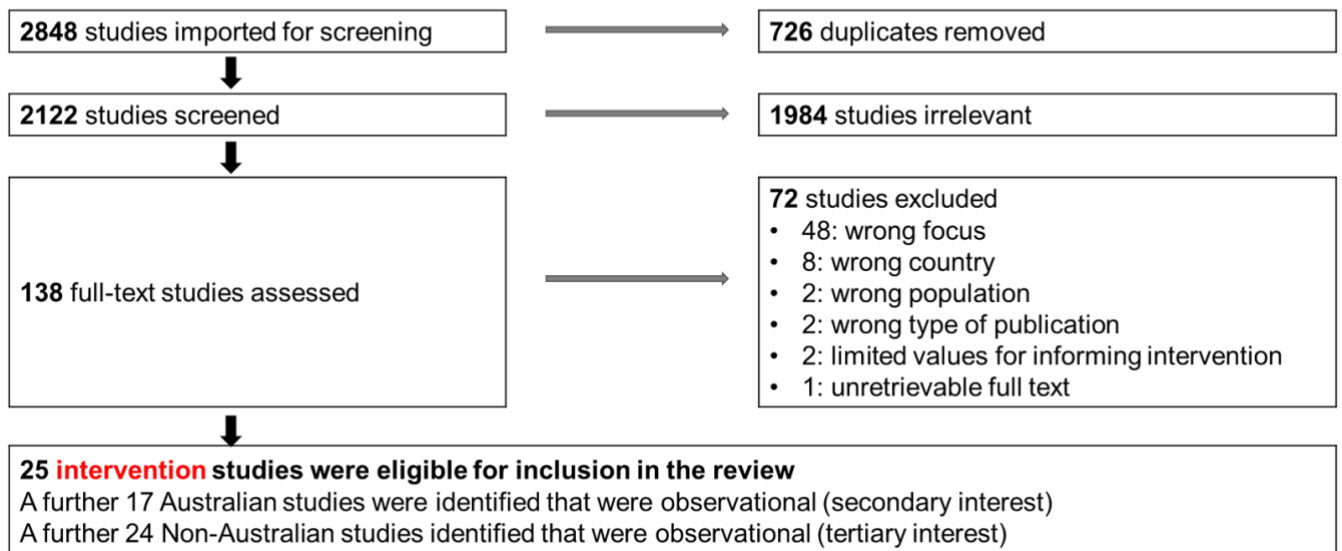
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• conducting engagement that is planned, purposeful, inclusive and beneficial to all parties.</li> <li>• We will listen, confirm and carefully consider all feedback that we receive.</li> <li>• We will close the loop and tell you how your feedback has been used.</li> </ul>
Media and Engagement Advisor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greater awareness and understanding of the projects being completed by the organisation and increased knowledge about the importance of these and the outcomes they deliver.</li> </ul>
Manager Communications and Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To understand the needs, aspirations, challenges and issues of our customers, community and stakeholders.</li> <li>• By understanding the drivers and issues experienced by our customers and community, our strategic directions, products and services can be better tailored to meet their needs and expectations.</li> </ul>
Communications and Engagement Manager	<p>Assuming your definition of community engagement includes customers, we aim to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• increase awareness and understanding of what we do to build trust</li> <li>• increase water literacy to help us do things like design education programs to influence water use</li> <li>• seek feedback on services to help us improve</li> <li>• understand values and preferences to guide and inform planning and decision making</li> <li>• co-design and collaborate on programs and projects</li> <li>• test concepts and ideas before implementation.</li> </ul>
Communications and Engagement Advisor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minimise project impacts through provision of information; manage expectations.</li> <li>• Build brand and reputation.</li> <li>• Build trust.</li> </ul>

## Appendix 6. WSCA’s review of water literacy and community engagement

The main research question for the review was, ‘What is the effectiveness of strategies for building water knowledge in Australia?’ For this review, we searched the Scopus and Web of Science academic databases, using a rapid review process. A modified search string was used to search Google Scholar with the first 100 citations screened by one reviewer. Inclusion criteria were:

- type of publication: primary studies, reviews, report
- language of publication: English
- date: No date set
- setting: Australia, UK, USA, Canada, New Zealand, Northern Europe, and South Africa (major cities)
- study focus: Evaluating interventions or programs that enhance water literacy among participants with a focus on school students and general community.

### SEARCH RESULT:



## Appendix 7. Reflections

The survey and interviews were a valuable source of information for the review of Victorian water sector engagement activities and effectiveness. The outputs will help develop best practice case studies and inform the final research report recommendations to support DEECA's ongoing commitment to enhancing community engagement within the Victorian water sector.

Eleven organisations were engaged across surveys and interviews, with participants from varying levels of experience in the industry and duration of employment at their organisation. The feedback indicates the organisations are at varying levels of maturity in terms of engagement practice.

The IAP2 engagement framework was recognised as the best practice guide in the industry and a number of participants were IAP2 certified. The IAP2 framework was generally an underpinning guide for bespoke frameworks within each organisation. The internal engagement frameworks were acknowledged as reflecting the organisation and the local community the organisation works with. The internal engagement frameworks are quite flexible and reviewed and updated regularly to reflect changes in engagement practice, the water sector and communities.

Engagement approaches are not one size fits all and approaches generally combined online and in-person engagement. Approaches included community activities and events, workshops, community meetings, community markets, surveys, project related engagement, drop-in sessions, pricing submission engagement, education, engagement related to natural hazards and events, forums, door knocking, and activations and art.

These various methods generally respond to the drivers and what the organisation hopes to achieve through engagement. Drivers included community expectations, project related (community licence, reduce risk and improve project outcomes), pricing submissions, program related, relationship and trust building, reputational management, internal organisation drivers for best practice (e.g. internal champion), education, state and federal funded projects, law/regulation requirement, influence behaviour, public service announcements, and in times of natural events.

A number of positive practices and aspects work well across the organisations including spending time in the community building relationships and trust, having an organisational attitude of customer focus, using stakeholder management systems, including all staff in engagement and having clear advocates across the organisations (outside of core engagement teams), retaining engagement staff, focusing on authentic and clear communications, moving from reactive to proactive engagement and communication, improving data collection, sharing information across organisations, and integrating approaches with government and other agencies.

Organisations gauged their effectiveness through post-engagement surveys, stakeholder management system data, internal review and sharing information, and monitoring social media and print media. Participants identified staffing resources, financial resources, time allocation and technological tools as the main things needed for more effective engagement.

All organisations noted the COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact over the past 5 years. Events cancelled during the pandemic seemed to set back community relationships because organisations were not present in the community. However, continuity of staff meant impacts were not as keenly felt. Participants also noted the community is now more open to online engagement and hybrid options, and staff are now more familiar with and trained in delivering online, in-person and hybrid methods.

Climate change and natural hazard events also contributed to change in the past 5 years. In particular, the role of organisations is more important in people's lives and the community has a greater desire to understand what is going on in the sector. Natural hazard events contribute to trauma and exhaustion in the community, and staff in regional areas are now being trained and understand how to respond appropriately. Engagement fatigue was also



common in regional areas with natural hazard events. Participants noted the need to tailor engagement to account for community context.

Traditional Owner engagement has also evolved in the past 5 years, with organisations partnering with Traditional Owners and working closely to understand what engagement should look like. It was acknowledged that Traditional Owner engagement should sit outside of the IAP2 spectrum as 'partner'.

Participants also acknowledged a shift towards a storytelling approach in communications and away from bureaucratic language. This was generally noted as a direct response to community needs and expectations. Sometimes, there is a disconnect between urban and regional messaging where language can be too urban centric and doesn't apply to the regional context. In addition, regional communities were considered to have greater water knowledge because they experience hazards and are more connected to water use, yet communications from state and federal sources sometimes did not reflect this. Further, regional organisations feel their communities respond best to proactive engagement, yet state and federal government messaging can often be more reactive which creates challenges and can impact community relationship building.

Participants noted a continuing focus on two-way engagement to understand how the community wants to be engaged. Organisations know their community best, so they should be central to determining how state and federal messages are communicated in their communities. Organisations expressed a desire for more co-design opportunities with the community and to use 'community' rather than 'customer' or 'stakeholder'.

All participants want opportunities to collaborate and share information across the sector. This includes considering consistent resources and a standardised industry framework, and generally employing a culture that starts with DEECA encouraging collaboration to drive efficiencies and reduce costs.

## Appendix 8. Engagement activities

Engagement	Drivers	Topics/ projects/ programs/ strategies	Organisation	Frequency	Delivery	Audience
Community boat tours of East Gippsland rivers for community members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To meet community/stakeholder expectations</li> <li>To build awareness, for education</li> <li>To influence behaviours</li> <li>To build relationships with community; marketing; build trust</li> <li>For reputation management; public relations</li> <li>To collaborate; to improve project outcomes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Catchment management</li> <li>Sustainability</li> <li>Agricultural water use</li> <li>Environmental flows</li> </ul>	East Gippsland CMA	Yearly	In-person workshops	Public, Stakeholders
Participated in the Wild Harvest Seafood Festival in Mallacoota to support this event and community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To meet community/stakeholder expectations</li> <li>To build awareness, for education</li> <li>To influence behaviours</li> <li>To build relationships with community; marketing; build trust</li> <li>For reputation management; public relations</li> <li>To collaborate; to improve project outcomes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Catchment management</li> <li>Sustainability</li> </ul>	East Gippsland CMA	Yearly	In-person workshops, Whole-of-community event	Public, Stakeholders

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Engagement	Drivers	Topics/ projects/ programs/ strategies	Organisation	Frequency	Delivery	Audience
Flood class level workshops with community across the East Gippsland region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● To reduce project delivery risk</li> <li>● To meet community/stakeholder expectations</li> <li>● To build awareness, for education</li> <li>● To influence behaviours</li> <li>● For public service announcements</li> <li>● To build relationships with community; marketing; build trust</li> <li>● For reputation management; public relations</li> <li>● To collaborate; to improve project outcomes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Flooding</li> <li>● Catchment management</li> <li>● Sustainability</li> </ul>	East Gippsland CMA	As required	In-person workshops, In-person one-on-one engagement	Public, stakeholders
Flood town meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● To reduce project delivery risk</li> <li>● It is a requirement (e.g. required by law, regulation etc.)</li> <li>● To meet community/stakeholder expectations</li> <li>● To build awareness, for education</li> <li>● To influence behaviours</li> <li>● For public service announcements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Flooding</li> <li>● Catchment management</li> <li>● Sustainability</li> <li>● Climate change</li> <li>● Traditional Owners' cultural water use</li> <li>● Other: environmental flows</li> </ul>	North Central CMA	As needed for planning and emergency management	In-person workshops, In-person one-on-one engagement, Hybrid (combined in-person and online)	Public, Stakeholders

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Engagement	Drivers	Topics/ projects/ programs/ strategies	Organisation	Frequency	Delivery	Audience
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To build relationships with community; marketing; build trust</li> <li>For reputation management; public relations</li> <li>To collaborate; to improve project outcomes</li> <li>For community licence/approval for activities/projects</li> </ul>					
Stall at community markets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To reduce project delivery risk</li> <li>To build awareness, for education</li> <li>To influence behaviours</li> <li>To build relationships with community; marketing; build trust</li> <li>For reputation management; public relations</li> <li>To collaborate; to improve project outcomes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Flooding</li> <li>Catchment management</li> <li>Sustainability</li> <li>Other: environmental water and sustainable agriculture</li> </ul>	North Central CMA	Monthly	In-person workshops, In-person one-on-one engagement	Public, Stakeholders
Photo exhibition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To reduce project delivery risk</li> <li>To build awareness, for education</li> <li>To influence behaviours</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Catchment management</li> <li>Other: water for environment and</li> </ul>	North Central CMA	Only once so far	In-person workshops, In-person one-on-one engagement	Public, Stakeholders

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Engagement	Drivers	Topics/ projects/ programs/ strategies	Organisation	Frequency	Delivery	Audience
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To build relationships with community; marketing; build trust</li> <li>For reputation management; public relations</li> <li>To collaborate; to improve project outcomes</li> </ul>	floodplain management				
Attending community farmers' markets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To build awareness, for education</li> <li>To build relationships with community; marketing; build trust</li> <li>For reputation management; public relations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wastewater</li> <li>Pricing, planning, governance, customer support</li> <li>Other: levels of service</li> </ul>	Lower Murray Water	Yearly	In-person one-on-one engagement	Consumers, Public
Holding a community meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To reduce project delivery risk</li> <li>It is a requirement (e.g. required by law, regulation etc.)</li> <li>To meet community/stakeholder expectations</li> <li>To build relationships with community; marketing; build trust</li> <li>To collaborate; to improve project outcomes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wastewater</li> <li>Flooding</li> <li>Sustainability</li> <li>Other: land management</li> </ul>	Lower Murray Water	Project based timeline	In-person one-on-one engagement	Stakeholders

Review of Victorian water sector engagement activities and effectiveness

Engagement	Drivers	Topics/ projects/ programs/ strategies	Organisation	Frequency	Delivery	Audience
Customer surveys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To meet community/stakeholder expectations</li> <li>To build awareness, for education</li> <li>To build relationships with community; marketing; build trust</li> <li>For reputation management; public relations</li> <li>To collaborate; to improve project outcomes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wastewater pricing, planning, governance, customer support</li> <li>Recycled water</li> </ul>	Lower Murray Water	Yearly	Online	Consumers
Engaging through CMA photography at local art gallery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To reduce project delivery risk</li> <li>To meet community/stakeholder expectations</li> <li>To build awareness, for education</li> <li>To influence behaviours</li> <li>To build relationships with community; marketing; build trust</li> <li>For reputation management; public relations</li> <li>To collaborate; to improve project outcomes</li> <li>For community licence/approval for activities/projects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Catchment management</li> <li>Climate change</li> <li>Traditional Owners' cultural water use</li> <li>Environmental flows</li> </ul>	North Central CMA	Once off	In-person workshops, Other (please specify)  Gallery open to the public	Stakeholders

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Engagement	Drivers	Topics/ projects/ programs/ strategies	Organisation	Frequency	Delivery	Audience
Breakfast with the birds (Kerang wetlands)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To meet community/stakeholder expectations</li> <li>To build awareness, for education</li> <li>To influence behaviours</li> <li>To build relationships with community; marketing; build trust</li> <li>For reputation management; public relations</li> <li>To collaborate; to improve project outcomes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Catchment management</li> </ul>	North Central CMA	Yearly	In-person workshops	Public, Stakeholders
Attendance at local farmers' market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To meet community/stakeholder expectations</li> <li>To influence behaviours</li> <li>To build relationships with community; marketing; build trust</li> <li>For reputation management; public relations</li> <li>To collaborate; to improve project outcomes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Catchment management</li> </ul>	North Central CMA	Monthly	In-person one-on-one engagement	Public, Stakeholders
Macedon Ranges Future of Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To reduce project delivery risk</li> <li>It is a requirement (e.g. required by law, regulation etc.)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wastewater</li> <li>Sustainability</li> </ul>	Greater Western Water	Monthly	Online, In-person workshops, In-person one-on-one engagement, Hybrid (combined	Consumers, Public, Stakeholders

Review of Victorian water sector engagement activities and effectiveness

Engagement	Drivers	Topics/ projects/ programs/ strategies	Organisation	Frequency	Delivery	Audience
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To meet community/stakeholder expectations</li> <li>• To build awareness, for education</li> <li>• To influence behaviours</li> <li>• For public service announcements</li> <li>• To build relationships with community; marketing; build trust</li> <li>• For reputation management; public relations</li> <li>• To collaborate; to improve project outcomes</li> <li>• For community licence/approval for activities/projects</li> <li>• Other: better understand community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pricing, planning, governance, customer support</li> <li>• Recycled water</li> <li>• Climate change</li> <li>• Traditional Owners' cultural water use</li> <li>• Agricultural water use</li> <li>• Environmental flows</li> </ul>			<p>in-person and online),</p> <p>Other: deliberative panel</p>	
Romsey Recycled Water Plant Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To reduce project delivery risk</li> <li>• It is a requirement (e.g. required by law, regulation etc.)</li> <li>• To meet community/stakeholder expectations</li> <li>• To build awareness, for education</li> <li>• To influence behaviours</li> <li>• For public service announcements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wastewater</li> <li>• Flooding</li> <li>• Pricing, planning, governance, customer support</li> <li>• Recycled water</li> </ul>	Greater Western Water	As per project	Online, In-person workshops, In-person one-on-one engagement, Hybrid (combined in-person and online)	Consumers, Public, Stakeholders



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Engagement	Drivers	Topics/ projects/ programs/ strategies	Organisation	Frequency	Delivery	Audience
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To build relationships with community; marketing; build trust</li> <li>For reputation management; public relations</li> <li>To collaborate; to improve project outcomes</li> <li>Other: to understand community</li> </ul>					
Pascoe Vale Road Watermain upgrade	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To reduce project delivery risk</li> <li>To meet community/stakeholder expectations</li> <li>To build awareness, for education</li> <li>To influence behaviours</li> <li>For public service announcements</li> <li>To build relationships with community; marketing; build trust</li> <li>For reputation management; public relations</li> <li>To collaborate; to improve project outcomes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pricing, planning, governance, customer support</li> <li>Other: water supply</li> </ul>	Greater Western Water	Continuously	In-person workshops, In-person one-on-one engagement, Hybrid (combined in-person and online)	Consumers, Public, Stakeholders
In-person customer discussion on projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To reduce project delivery risk</li> <li>To meet community/stakeholder expectations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Agricultural water use</li> </ul>	Southern Rural Water	Continuously	Online, In-person one-on-one engagement	Consumers, Public, Stakeholders

Review of Victorian water sector engagement activities and effectiveness

Engagement	Drivers	Topics/ projects/ programs/ strategies	Organisation	Frequency	Delivery	Audience
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To influence behaviours</li> <li>To build relationships with community; marketing; build trust</li> <li>For reputation management; public relations</li> </ul>					
Formation of project advisory groups on key projects and initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To reduce project delivery risk</li> <li>To meet community/stakeholder expectations</li> <li>To build awareness, for education</li> <li>To influence behaviours</li> <li>To build relationships with community; marketing; build trust</li> <li>To collaborate; to improve project outcomes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Agriculture</li> </ul>	Southern Rural Water	When required	Hybrid (combined in-person and online)	Consumers, Stakeholders
Customer drop-in sessions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To reduce project delivery risk</li> <li>To meet community/stakeholder expectations</li> <li>To build awareness, for education</li> <li>To influence behaviours</li> <li>To build relationships with community; marketing; build trust</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Agriculture</li> </ul>	Southern Rural Water	Twice a year	In-person one-on-one engagement	Consumers, Stakeholders

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Engagement	Drivers	Topics/ projects/ programs/ strategies	Organisation	Frequency	Delivery	Audience
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To collaborate; to improve project outcomes</li> </ul>					
Pricing submission engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It is a requirement (e.g. required by law, regulation etc.)</li> <li>To collaborate; to improve project outcomes</li> <li>For community licence/approval for activities/projects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pricing, planning, governance, customer support</li> </ul>	Coliban Water	Continuously	Online, In-person workshops, In-person one-on-one engagement, Hybrid (combined in-person and online)	Consumers, Public, Stakeholders
Community education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It is a requirement (e.g. required by law, regulation etc.)</li> <li>To build awareness, for education</li> <li>To influence behaviours</li> <li>To build relationships with community; marketing; build trust</li> <li>To collaborate; to improve project outcomes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wastewater</li> <li>Drainage</li> <li>Flooding</li> <li>Recycled water</li> </ul>	Coliban Water	Continuously	Online, In-person workshops, Hybrid (combined in-person and online)	Consumers, Public, Stakeholders
Flood impacted town engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To meet community/stakeholder expectations</li> <li>For reputation management; public relations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Flooding</li> </ul>	Coliban Water	As needed	Online, In-person workshops	Consumers, Public, Stakeholders

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Engagement	Drivers	Topics/ projects/ programs/ strategies	Organisation	Frequency	Delivery	Audience
In-person site at Sheepvention Rural Expo in Hamilton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To reduce project delivery risk</li> <li>To meet community/stakeholder expectations</li> <li>To build awareness, for education</li> <li>To influence behaviours</li> <li>To build relationships with community; marketing; build trust</li> <li>For reputation management; public relations</li> <li>To collaborate; to improve project outcomes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Catchment management</li> <li>Agricultural water use</li> <li>Environmental flows</li> </ul>	Glenelg Hopkins CMA	Yearly	In-person one-on-one engagement	Consumers, Public, Stakeholders
Waterbug activities and information tent at Casterton Agricultural Show	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To reduce project delivery risk</li> <li>To build awareness, for education</li> <li>To build relationships with community; marketing; build trust</li> <li>For reputation management; public relations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Catchment management</li> <li>Other: environmental water delivery</li> </ul>	Glenelg Hopkins CMA	Yearly	In-person one-on-one engagement	Public, Stakeholders
Community tree planting and fish hotel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To reduce project delivery risk</li> <li>To meet community/stakeholder expectations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Catchment management</li> <li>Sustainability</li> </ul>	Glenelg Hopkins CMA	As project delivery requires	In-person one-on-one engagement	Public, Stakeholders

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Engagement	Drivers	Topics/ projects/ programs/ strategies	Organisation	Frequency	Delivery	Audience
building activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To build awareness, for education</li> <li>• To influence behaviours</li> <li>• To build relationships with community; marketing; build trust</li> <li>• For reputation management; public relations</li> <li>• To collaborate; to improve project outcomes</li> </ul>					
Customer and community advisory forum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To reduce project delivery risk</li> <li>• It is a requirement (e.g. required by law, regulation etc.)</li> <li>• To meet community/stakeholder expectations</li> <li>• To build awareness, for education</li> <li>• To influence behaviours</li> <li>• To build relationships with community; marketing; build trust</li> <li>• For reputation management; public relations</li> <li>• To collaborate; to improve project outcomes</li> <li>• For community licence/approval for activities/projects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wastewater</li> <li>• Sustainability</li> <li>• Pricing, planning, governance, customer support</li> <li>• Climate change</li> <li>• Traditional Owners' cultural water use</li> <li>• Environmental flows</li> <li>• Other: informs our strategy, price submission and future service and product</li> </ul>	North East Water	Quarterly	Hybrid (combined in-person and online)	Consumers, Public, Stakeholders

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Engagement	Drivers	Topics/ projects/ programs/ strategies	Organisation	Frequency	Delivery	Audience
		improvements and delivery				
North east Victoria leaders forum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It is a requirement (e.g. required by law, regulation etc.)</li> <li>To meet community/stakeholder expectations</li> <li>To build awareness, for education</li> <li>To influence behaviours</li> <li>To build relationships with community; marketing; build trust</li> <li>For reputation management; public relations</li> <li>To collaborate; to improve project outcomes</li> <li>Other: informs our strategic direction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wastewater</li> <li>Sustainability</li> <li>Pricing, planning, governance, customer support</li> <li>Other: discovery and exploration of local community challenges, expectations and future needs</li> </ul>	North East Water	Biannual	In-person workshops, In-person one-on-one engagement	Stakeholders, Senior leaders within community
North East developer forum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It is a requirement (e.g. required by law, regulation etc.)</li> <li>To meet community/stakeholder expectations</li> <li>To build awareness, for education</li> <li>To influence behaviours</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wastewater</li> <li>Sustainability</li> <li>Pricing, planning, governance, customer support</li> <li>Recycled water</li> </ul>	North East Water	Biannual	In-person workshops	Stakeholders, Developer segment

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Engagement	Drivers	Topics/ projects/ programs/ strategies	Organisation	Frequency	Delivery	Audience
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To build relationships with community; marketing; build trust</li> <li>• For reputation management; public relations</li> <li>• To collaborate; to improve project outcomes</li> <li>• Other: strategic direction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Other: discovery and exploration of challenges, opportunities, issues in this sector</li> </ul>				
Water cafes at community events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To reduce project delivery risk</li> <li>• To meet community/stakeholder expectations</li> <li>• To build awareness, for education</li> <li>• To influence behaviours</li> <li>• For public service announcements</li> <li>• To build relationships with community; marketing; build trust</li> <li>• For reputation management; public relations</li> <li>• To collaborate; to improve project outcomes</li> <li>• For community licence/approval for activities/projects</li> <li>• Other: to seek feedback</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wastewater</li> <li>• Flooding</li> <li>• Pricing, planning, governance, customer support</li> <li>• Recycled water</li> <li>• Climate change</li> <li>• Other: projects, water conservation, water delivery, managing carbon emissions, financial support, any topic that we or community would like to talk about</li> </ul>	Goulburn Valley Water	Continuously	In-person events	Consumers, Public, Stakeholders

Review of Victorian water sector engagement activities and effectiveness

Engagement	Drivers	Topics/ projects/ programs/ strategies	Organisation	Frequency	Delivery	Audience
Annual performance forum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To reduce project delivery risk</li> <li>To meet community/stakeholder expectations</li> <li>To build awareness, for education</li> <li>To influence behaviours</li> <li>To build relationships with community; marketing; build trust</li> <li>For reputation management; public relations</li> <li>To collaborate; to improve project outcomes</li> <li>Other: to seek performance feedback from a group of customer representatives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wastewater</li> <li>Sustainability</li> <li>Pricing, planning, governance, customer support</li> <li>Recycled water</li> </ul>	Goulburn Valley Water	Yearly	Online, In-person workshops	Consumers, Stakeholders
Dunyak Moira (community fishing ponds) project delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To reduce project delivery risk</li> <li>To meet community/stakeholder expectations</li> <li>To build awareness, for education</li> <li>To influence behaviours</li> <li>To build relationships with community; marketing; build trust</li> <li>For reputation management; public relations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recreational use of Goulburn Valley Water site</li> </ul>	Goulburn Valley Water	Monthly	Community group representative meetings	Public, Stakeholders



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Engagement	Drivers	Topics/ projects/ programs/ strategies	Organisation	Frequency	Delivery	Audience
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To collaborate; to improve project outcomes</li> </ul>					
Having a retail/in-person shop for customers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To reduce project delivery risk</li> <li>To build awareness, for education</li> <li>To influence behaviours</li> <li>To build relationships with community; marketing; build trust</li> <li>For community licence/approval for activities/projects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wastewater</li> </ul>	Yarra Valley Water	Weekly	In-person one-on-one engagement	Consumers, Public, Stakeholders
Door knocking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To reduce project delivery risk</li> <li>To build awareness, for education</li> <li>For reputation management; public relations</li> <li>Other (please specify)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wastewater</li> </ul>	Yarra Valley Water	Continuously	In-person one-on-one engagement	Consumers
Shopping centre activations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To build awareness, for education</li> <li>To build relationships with community; marketing; build trust</li> <li>Other: to target areas, socioeconomic groups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pricing, planning, governance, customer support</li> </ul>	Yarra Valley Water	Ad hoc	In-person one-on-one engagement	Consumers

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Engagement	Drivers	Topics/ projects/ programs/ strategies	Organisation	Frequency	Delivery	Audience
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Other: build awareness of financial assistance available</li> </ul>				