



CUSTOMERS AND THE COMMUNITY

Community Service Obligation

Goulburn Valley Water is required to provide a range of concessions and rebates on behalf of the Victorian Government. In 2006/2007, the combined total of these concessions and rebates was \$2.2 million. The table below outlines the value of the Authority's community service obligations.

| Type | 2006/2007 | 2005/2006 |
|---|-------------|-------------|
| Pension Concessions | \$1,973,846 | \$1,924,591 |
| Water & Sewerage Rebate Scheme | \$233,625 | \$227,185 |
| Utility Relief Grant Scheme | \$3,021 | \$950 |
| Life Support Machines | \$170 | \$214 |
| Hardship relief grants | - | - |
| Water Conservation Assistants Pilot Program | - | - |
| | \$2,210,662 | \$2,152,727 |

Community Engagement

Goulburn Valley Water is committed to community engagement as an integral part of its business activities. To enhance the community engagement capability of the Authority, key staff members have undertaken a comprehensive training program in Public Participation. In early June 2006, 31 employees, including the Chief Executive, two directors, technical services managers and project managers undertook the first module in a three module training program. 22 employees including the two directors, undertook modules two and three during July and August 2006 to complete the certificate course. The identified benefits of this training program include:

- Examining a carefully researched and clearly defined process for thinking about, planning and conducting community engagement programs.

- Providing a broad-based learning experience covering all of the concepts required by those who seek to engage communities in decisions making; and
- Presenting a range of techniques and tools to make consultation and communicating more effective.

Community Engagement Plans

Goulburn Valley Water develops a community engagement plan for every major project undertaken and other important areas of operations such as the water plan, customer charter, water supply demand strategy and regular maintenance works. Components of a community engagement plan may include:

- Identification of key stakeholders including multi-cultural and indigenous interests;
- The engagement level required with each stakeholder;
- Establishment of a Community Reference Committee to assist with liaison between the Authority and the Community;
- Focus Groups;
- Newsletters/Information Bulletins;
- Open Meetings and Open Days;
- Presentations to Service Clubs; and
- Regular articles in local papers.

Community Reference Committees

During 2006/2007, Goulburn Valley Water worked with four community reference committees. Two were for major projects, the Marysville Recycled Water Facility and the Upper Goulburn Regional Water Supply Project. The other two were for the Water Supply Demand Strategy and the Water Plan.

Marysville Community Reference Committee

The Marysville Community Reference Committee was established in 2004, comprising 11 local residents/business people. The purpose of the group is to review and provide input into potential

Four members of the Water Plan - Customer Reference Committee



site selection for a new recycled water storage lagoon and irrigation area. In December 2005, the committee and members of the public participated in a workshop to determine the social component of the triple bottom line analysis for the options. The result was the identification of an option not previously investigated and this has resulted in a win/win outcome for the Marysville community and the Authority. Goulburn Valley Water employees and the chair of the Community Reference Committee met with the neighbours on two occasions to discuss the project and to identify any concerns they may have with the project. The Authority recently submitted a planning application to Council for approval and is awaiting the outcome from this application.

Upper Goulburn Regional Water Supply Project

Prior to establishing a Community Reference Committee in May 2007 for the Upper Goulburn Regional Water Supply Project, the Authority held an information gathering meeting in Eildon and one in Thornton during October/November 2006. The purpose of these meetings was to identify the best method of communications with the community and potential members for a community reference committee for the entire project.

In addition to the information gathering meeting, public information days were held at Thornton and Eildon and information booths were set up at the Eildon Visitors Centre and the Alexandra Library for a one week period in early February 2007.

In May 2007 a Community Reference Committee was established for the project. The committee comprises nine local residents/business people from Alexandra, Eildon and Thornton. The purpose of the committee is to review and provide input into the pipeline route selection.

Water Supply Demand Strategy – Steering Committee

To assist in the development of Goulburn Valley Water's Water Supply Demand Strategy a Steering Committee was formed with representatives from three Councils, (City of Greater Shepparton, Shire of Murrindindi, Shire of Mitchell), the Ethnic Council, GV Disability Services, two major customers (SPC-Ardmona and Kraft Foods), the Goulburn-Broken Catchment Management Authority, Goulburn-Murray Water and the Department of Sustainability and Environment. The role of the steering committee was to represent the views of a number of customers and stakeholders and to provide input from a wide range of perspectives.

Water Plan – Customer Reference Committee

To assist in the development of Goulburn Valley Water's five year water plan for 2008-2013, the Authority sought the views of its customers and the community about planned works across the region and proposed pricing structures. A community reference committee, comprising 18 people from across the region, was established to help the Authority consult with its customers on this important document.

Two half-day workshops were held and representatives were provided with background reading on the topics to be discussed, ie; service level targets, tariff structures, guaranteed service levels. The objectives for the workshops were:

- to provide information to representatives so they were informed on the background and current status of the relevant water issues;
- for members to understand and broadly agree on the customer service targets to be set for each element in the water plan;
- to explain the capital works required to achieve service levels and other regulatory requirements;
- to gain agreement on the type of tariff structure to be adopted; and
- to decide whether guaranteed service levels should be introduced.

The committee will come together again in September 2007 for another half-day workshop to provide feedback on the draft water plan.

Management of Social and Economic Impacts

The Authority has in place a Hardship Policy and Revenue Officers are trained to encourage customers to talk about their personal circumstances surrounding non-payment of accounts. The Officers then discuss the range of payment options available to the individual customer and assist them in working out the best option for their situation. The Hardship Policy is reviewed and updated on an annual basis.

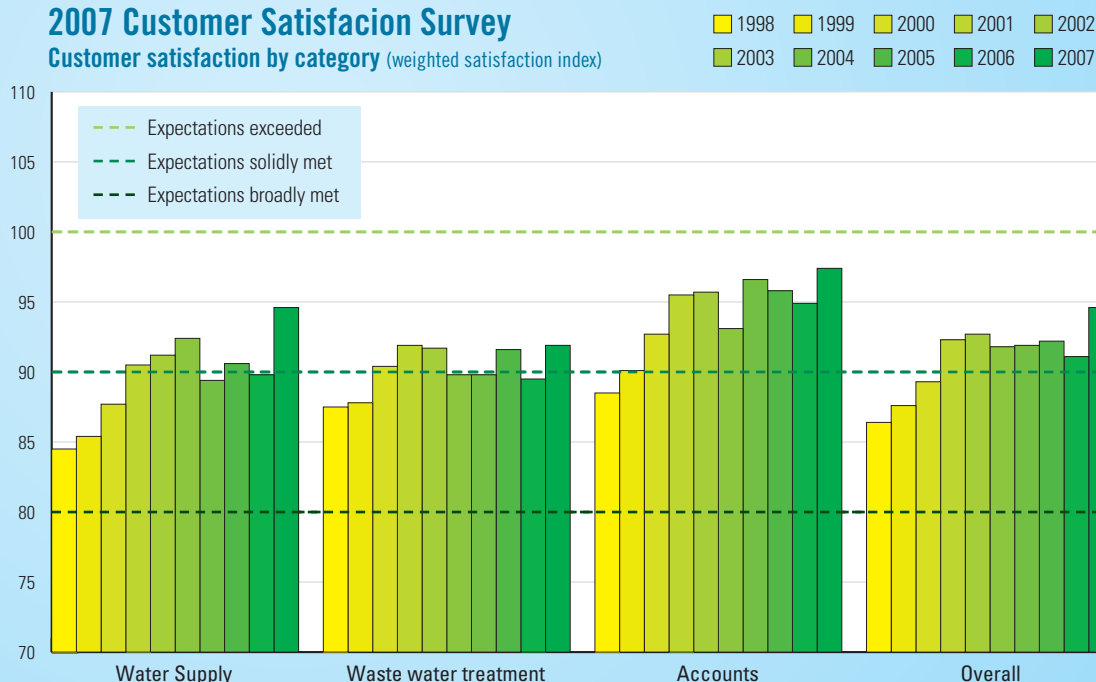
Goulburn Valley Water operates a 24 hour seven day per week Customer Service Centre. This centre takes all calls in relation to service difficulties and faults. Each call is logged into the Authority's computerised customer service software, Hansen and then dispatched to the relevant district office for attention. Once the service is rectified the field staff complete a form and this is returned to the customer service centre for logging into Hansen and closing the file. This process was recently reviewed as part of the Essential Services Commission's audit program.



Create A Critter entry

2007 Customer Satisfaction Survey

Customer satisfaction by category (weighted satisfaction index)



Customer Satisfaction Survey

Each year Goulburn Valley Water undertakes a customer satisfaction survey which is designed to:

- Quantify gaps which may exist between customer’s rating of importance of services attributes and their perception of the Authority’s performance on each service attribute.
- Measure the Authority’s performance against benchmarks established in the previous customer satisfaction studies.

The results for 2007 are based on responses to a telephone survey of 318 customers located throughout Goulburn Valley Water’s region. The overall 2007 customer satisfaction rating of 94.6 has increased by 3.5 from the 91.1 overall rating in 2006.

The past ten years results in the key areas of water supply, wastewater treatment and tariffs are shown in graph above.

The survey measured 16 service items, including taste of water, colour of water, smell of water, bills are easy to understand etc. Of the 16 items 13 have a customer satisfaction score of 90 or above suggesting that customers are strongly satisfied with the Authority on these issues.



Melva Themelis serving a customer

Energy and Water Ombudsman (Victoria)

The Energy and Water Ombudsman (Victoria) (EWOV) is an independent body, funded by the member utilities, to assist customers who are dissatisfied with some aspect of the service or interaction with utilities around the state.

The number of contacts to EWOV for 2006/2007 for Goulburn Valley Water and all Regional Urban Water Authorities are set out in the table below.

| Type of Contact | Goulburn Valley Water | All RUWA |
|---|-----------------------|----------|
| Enquiries | 6 | 128 |
| Enquiries referred to Provider | 9 | 82 |
| Complaints referred to higher – level contact | 6 | 107 |
| Complaints Investigated | 1 | 89 |

Community Inclusiveness

Goulburn Valley Water is mindful of the State Government’s Multicultural Policy and shares its commitment to promoting programs and strategies aimed at delivering culturally appropriate services. The Board endeavours to ensure that the Authority’s systems and employees are sensitive to cultural and language diversity within the Authority’s customer base and regional community.

Cultural Diversity

Goulburn Valley Water offers interpreting services for all non-English speaking customers and the Authority’s Customer Charter has been translated into the five main languages for the Goulburn



Allen Gale explaining the HRAL process to some Shepparton News staff members

Valley Region, Greek, Italian, Turkish, Arabic and Albanian. Water Restrictions brochures have also been translated in Arabic. The Authority also invites a representative from the Ethnic Council to participate in community engagement processes, eg. the Water Supply Demand Strategy Steering Committee.

Young People

The Waterwatch Education Program is offered to all schools in our region each year. 52 schools participated in some of the many activities during 2006/2007. The program is a practical science-oriented program that is easily accessible to all students, including those who may not excel at the more academic school curriculum. Waterwatch is promoted to schools as an activity that fits well in vocational education curriculum and alternative community-based programs. In addition, a School Holiday Program was run during the September. 40 children aged 7-14 years attended the week long program. Activities included a tour of the Shepparton water treatment plant, salinity testing, macro invertebrate sampling, artwork using recycled material and other environmental activities.

Goulburn Valley Water works with agencies and community organisations such as Landcare to offer programs designed to broaden the experience of young people in environmental and resource-based issues.

Indigenous People

Goulburn Valley Water has for many years worked closely with the Indigenous Communities across the region. In 2000 Goulburn Valley Water and the Yorta Yorta Community negotiated an agreement for a pipeline from Mooroopna to Shepparton. In 2002 the Authority worked with the Cumeragunja Community in NSW to provide treated water from across the Murray River at Barmah. Goulburn Valley Water encourages Indigenous representation in community engagement committees to ensure that culturally significant areas are recognised.

The Authority includes "Welcome to Place" in all major community activities sponsored by Goulburn Valley Water. During National Water Week 2005 local Yorta Yorta women sang an indigenous welcome song at the opening of the Goulburn Broken National Water Week Awards Ceremony and Indigenous Communities and their relationship with natural resources (specifically water) is promoted in the "Catchment Capers" Community Education Project.

Women

Goulburn Valley Water embraces "best practice" recruitment and management principles and supports the employment and development of females in non-traditional roles. Goulburn Valley

Water has participated in the EWOV workshop on women prisoners and offenders, the Authority's Manager – Revenue is the contact for this program and handles all contacts in a confidential manner. The Authority also encourages female employees to participate in water industry groups such as VicWater, AWA and IWA. The Public Relations Officer for Goulburn Valley Water initiated and chaired the VicWater working group for the development of the Guidelines for Water Restriction in Victoria.

Community Education

The community education program at Goulburn Valley Water continues to develop from the relatively focussed Waterwatch community water quality monitoring program, introduced into the Goulburn Broken catchment fourteen years ago to a broader education program across the region.



Michaela Bicknell working with a school group

Working with Schools

Goulburn Valley Water continued its strong focus on education in 2006/2007. The Authority worked with a total of 105 schools undertaking programs such as Waterwatch and Catchment Capers and organising a range of water related activities during National Water Week.

Waterwatch

Waterwatch is still proving to be a most successful mechanism for introducing water issues into the school curricula. The program provides schools with the tools to incorporate water activities, especially water quality monitoring, into their curricula. Across the Goulburn Valley region 58 schools participated in the Waterwatch Program in 2006. Activities undertaken included water quality monitoring, aquatic invertebrate sampling and habitat surveys.

Catchment Capers

Catchment Capers is a Water Quality Monitoring Project for Primary and lower Secondary schools. The Project assists schools to carry out monthly monitoring at a local waterway, as well as participate in a variety of water-related activities each month focussing on stormwater, water conservation and waterway flora and fauna. During 2006, 28 schools were involved in Catchment Capers.

New resources that have been produced for the 2008 school year include an updated Program folder and a Catchment Capers website. Data collected by all participating schools together with their project work will be accessible to all at this website.

Working with the Community

Goulburn Valley Water recognises the importance of providing the community with opportunities to learn about water conservation, water treatment, wastewater management and reuse, and the roles and responsibilities of the Authority. The Authority delivers its community education through a range of activities including:

- tours of facilities;
- presentations to local service clubs;
- stands at exhibitions;
- brochures;
- customer newsletters; and
- the Goulburn Valley Water website.

Facility Tours and Presentations

During 2006/2007 over 400 people visited Goulburn Valley Water's facilities on organised tours. The community visited water treatment and wastewater management facilities at Euroa, Shepparton, Tatura, Kyabram, Kilmore and Cobram.

In addition to the community tours a special tour of Goulburn Valley Water's Shepparton wastewater management facility was conducted for local journalists. This provided the journalists with an opportunity to find out the extent of the Authority's operations in Shepparton. The Authority plans to offer these tours on a regular basis so that new journalists to the region have an opportunity to learn about the Authority and its business.

Goulburn Valley Water's employees also gave talks at Rotary, Probus, Gardening Clubs and other Service Clubs across the region including, Cobram, Alexandra, Seymour, Shepparton, Kilmore, Tatura, Mooroopna and Numurkah.

Exhibitions

Goulburn Valley Water participated in five regional events in 2006/2007 with over 1,900 people visiting the Authority's stand. The focus at these events was about water conservation and water restrictions. One event in Shepparton focussed on property development and property connections to water and sewerage.



Welcome to Place



Orrvale Primary School performing at National Water Week Awards Ceremony

National Water Week Festival

Each year Goulburn Valley Water is an active member of the Goulburn Broken National Water Week Committee. The 2006 National Water Week was once again a huge success with a festival of events organised by the Committee.

School Activities

Vox Bandicoot Roadshow

Primary school students from around the catchment were invited to participate in an environmental show staged by the performing arts group, Vox Bandicoot. The two week long tour travelled to Shepparton, Kyabram, Alexandra, Benalla, Cobram, Numurkah and Seymour. In all, 27 shows were performed to an audience of almost 4,000 students from 37 schools.

As part of the show, students were asked to develop a short skit or community announcement about an important environmental issue in their area with the chance to win a prize for their school. Vox Bandicoot judged this competition and was very impressed with the high standard of skits performed by all schools. Some very elaborate costuming and choreography was on display along with some important water messages.

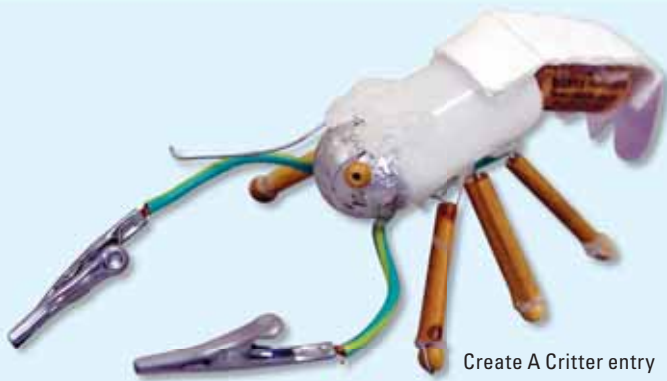
Orrvale Primary School in Shepparton won first prize for their winning skit "Water Saving Logies". Pyalong PS and Benalla East PS took out 2nd and 3rd prizes for their skits.



Poster competition entry

Poster & Create a Critter Competition

Primary School students were invited to create a watery image on paper conveying the message *The Future of Water is in our Hands*. The committee received over 300 entries for this competition. The posters were divided into three categories with a winner from each category and an overall winner. The overall winner was James Thomas from Benalla West P.S. The Grade 5/6 winner was Nicole Hayne from Seymour East P.S, the Grade 3/4 winner was Gemma Keating from Benalla West P.S, and the Grade 1/2 winner was Annamarie Pavelik from Katamatite PS.



Create A Critter entry

Over 200 entries were received for the *Create A Critter* competition. This competition was designed for students to display their creative and observational skills by creating a critter based on a real rather than an imaginary aquatic invertebrate. The aim was to make a three dimensional model, using recycled materials of an invertebrate creature that spends at least part of its lifecycle IN or ON the water. The winner of the *Create A Critter* competition was Rhiannon Stute from Seymour East P.S.

Catchment Mural

36 schools were invited to construct two murals of a waterway using recycled materials. One was to depict a healthy waterway, the other a degraded waterway. Murals were arranged to fit together to form a 25 metre by 2 metre catchment-wide mural. All murals have now been incorporated into a water issue-based computer game that has been distributed to participating schools.



Poster competition entry

Community Activities

Tours and Wetland/River walks

On Sunday 15 October National Water Week commenced with free boat cruises on the wetlands at Tahbilk Winery near Nagambie and a canoe tour along the Goulburn River at Shepparton. Participants on the canoe tour heard Koori stories about a section of Goulburn waterway and studied the aquatic invertebrates and birdlife with the help of expert tour guides.

Wetland and river walks were also popular during Water Week with around 200 people attending river and wetland walks in Yea, Mansfield, Numurkah and Seymour.

A Mini Catchment Tour provided 26 locals in the Shepparton area with the opportunity to learn about Goulburn Valley Water's water treatment and wastewater processes, Goulburn-Murray Water's new "Total Channel Control" irrigation infrastructure and Goulburn-Broken Catchment Management Authority's river management projects. 60 participants went on a tour of Mount Buller and to learn about the effect of snow melt on native vegetation, and water and wastewater management on the mountain.

Writing and Photograph Competition

The community again embraced the writing and photographic competitions in 2006 with over 500 entries being received for both competitions.

In the writing competition, the community was asked to submit fiction and non fiction stories about waterways that could focus on swimming holes, fishing days, floods and dramas, picnics and boating. The winner of the Open category was Vikki Bye with her story titled "*Undesirable*". The Junior category was won by Jessica Cornall with her story titled "*The Murray*".

The photographic competition invited the community to submit photographs depicting the rivers and creeks of the Goulburn Broken catchment. The competition was open to all ages and contained three categories: Best Historical Shot, Best Recreational Shot, and Best Nature Image.

The winner of the Best Historical Image was Shelley Straw with her photograph of Polly McQuinn's Strathbogie. The Best Nature Image category was won by Peter Ward with his photograph of Gooram Falls and the Best Recreation Shot was won by Joanne Lyons with her photograph of the Murray River.

Award Ceremony

In addition to the community and school competitions, organisations that sponsored National Water Week also presented awards.

The Water Week Awards Night was held on Wednesday 18 October in Shepparton with around 200 people attending. The winners of all Water Week Competitions were announced and guests were treated to a wonderful display of artwork and culture that included the Water Mural and a performance of the winning skit by Orrvale Primary School students.

The awards included:

- Waterwise Garden Award – sponsored by Goulburn Valley Water
- Best Practice Irrigation Management on Farm Award – sponsored by Goulburn-Murray Water
- Commitment to Natural Resource Management on a Goulburn Broken Waterway Award – sponsored by Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority
- Building Industry Award – Good Practice in Stormwater Management – sponsored by City of Greater Shepparton

Water Week activities could not occur without the support of our sponsors and committee; Goulburn Valley Water, Goulburn Broken Waterwatch, Goulburn-Broken Catchment Management Authority, Goulburn-Murray Water, Goulburn Murray Landcare Network, Resource GV and City of Greater Shepparton.

