



**Greater  
Western  
Water**

# **Residential Customer Charter**

2021 – 2023



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# 1. Introduction

Greater Western Water (GWW) supplies water, sewerage, trade waste services and, where available, recycled water services to customers in Melbourne's central business district, inner suburbs, western suburbs and outer western suburbs. We are one of three retail water corporations that service Melbourne.

We provide services and conduct our business in accordance with the [Customer Service Code: Urban Water Businesses<sup>1</sup> \(the Customer Service Code\)](#), the [Water Act 1989](#), the [Water Industry Act 1994](#) and other laws established by Government.

For more information visit our [website](#).

To receive hard copy documents, call 13 44 99 (Customer Service, Monday to Friday 8.30am to 5pm) and ask to have documents mailed to you.

We also have a *Business and Non-residential Customer Charter* and *Trade Waste Customer Charter* that refer to the rights and obligations of those customers.

This document refers to historical customer service areas – City West Water (CWW) and Western Water (WW) – recognising that the organisations have integrated to form Greater Western Water (GWW).

A summary of this document and copies of all charters are available from our [Customer charters](#) webpage.

## 1.1. About the Residential Customer Charter

This *Residential Customer Charter* outlines the rights and obligations between GWW (us) and the residential customers we serve (you).<sup>2</sup> It provides information on the services we deliver between 1 July 2021 and 30 June 2023 and the standards that apply to those services.

This charter does not apply to the supply of water services for irrigation, diversion services, stock and domestic use and irrigation drainage. All aspects of the charter may not apply to Water Supply Agreement Customers.

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- 1 As set out by our regulator, the Essential Services Commission (ESC). The ESC is the independent economic regulator established by the State Government of Victoria, Australia to regulate Victoria's energy, water and transport sectors, administer the rate-capping system for the local government sector and administer the Victorian Energy Efficiency Target (VEET) scheme.
  - 2 In addition to the circumstance-specific obligations placed on customers as outlined through the body of this document, there are some general obligations that apply to customers – these obligations are outlined in [Appendix A](#).

## 1.2. About Greater Western Water

On 1 July 2021, Greater Western Water became the new water corporation for Melbourne's CBD and north western region, bringing together the areas previously known as City West Water and Western Water.

Greater Western Water has a 3700 square kilometre service area, stretching from Melbourne's CBD, inner and north west suburbs through the Melton and Sunbury growth corridors to Bacchus Marsh and the Macedon Ranges.

Greater Western Water brings together the best of City West Water and Western Water to continue to meet the growing demands of this fast-growing region and maintain the reliable, efficient and affordable water services that are so important to our customers and community.

As we work to align all services within the Greater Western Water area, you may sometimes be directed to information based on the location of your property or business. You may also see some references to areas previously known as City West Water or Western Water.

To find the information relevant to your property or business, refer to Figure 1 below or go to [www.gww.com.au](http://www.gww.com.au) and enter your postcode. You can also contact us on 13 44 99.

## 1.3. Structure of this document

The content of this document is governed by the requirements set out in the *Customer Service Code*. In accordance with clauses 16(c) – (g) of the Code, it provides information across three areas:

1. Your experience as a customer – what you can expect when we interact with you and how we help customers in difficult circumstances (Section 2 to Section 6).
2. Normal service delivery – services you can expect under business as usual conditions (Section 7 to Section 8).
3. When things don't go to plan – how we will work with, and for you, when things don't go to plan, for example related to service reliability, quality concerns, conserving our limited water supply and non-payment of bills (Section 9 to Section 12).

See the appendices for:

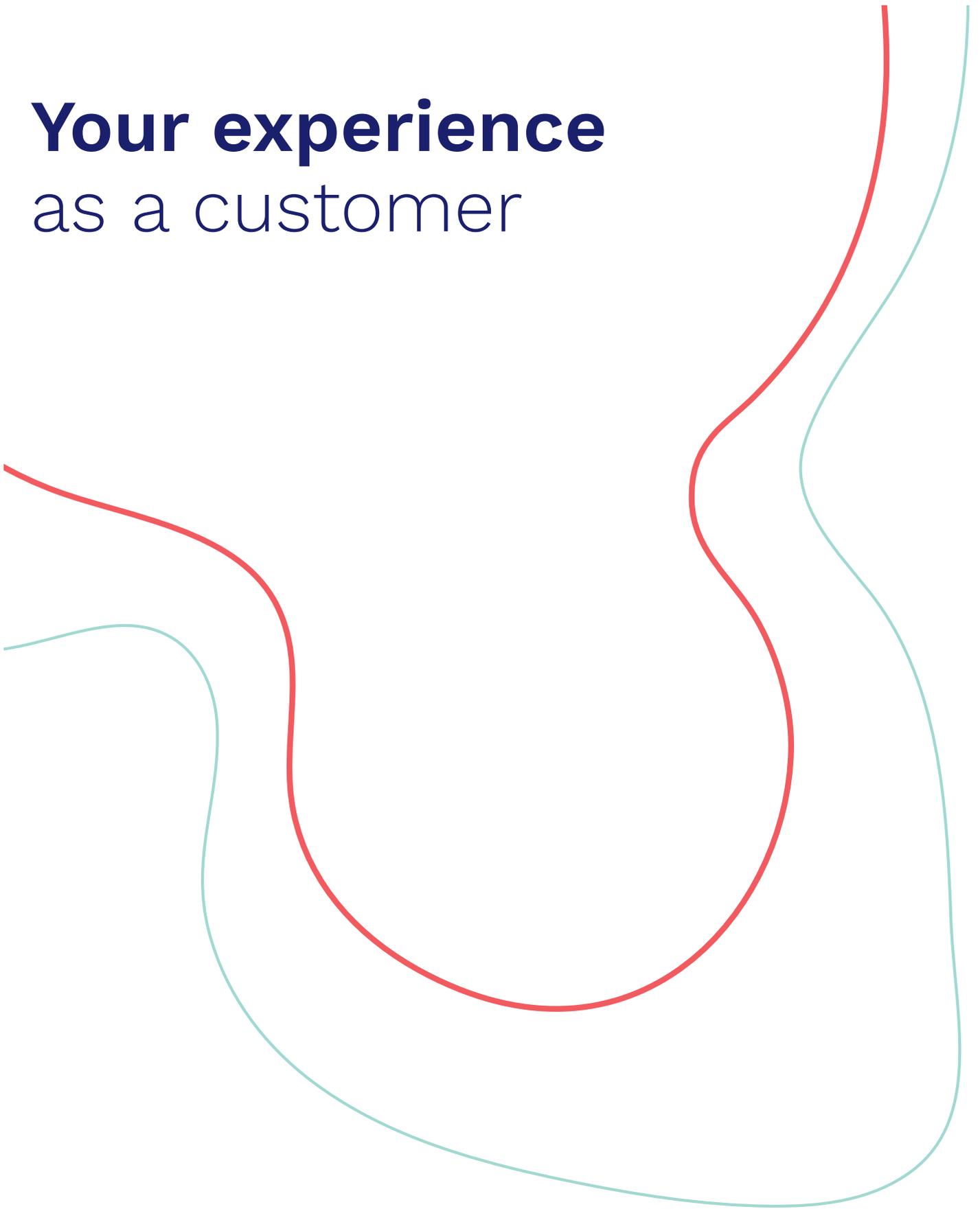
- customer responsibilities and obligations (Appendix A)
- information that must be included in a bill (Appendix B)

**Figure 1. Greater Western Water’s service area (consisting of historical City West Water and Western Water service areas)**



Your experience as a customer

# Your experience as a customer



## 2. Communicating with you

### 2.1. How to contact us

We embrace our region's diversity and offer a range of options for contacting us.

Mailing address	Greater Western Water, Locked Bag 350, Sunshine, Victoria 3020
Website	<a href="http://www.gww.com.au">www.gww.com.au</a>
Customer Service (day-to-day contact point for account, billing, concessions, payment options, payment difficulties, hardship policy or general enquiries)	Telephone: 13 44 99 (Monday to Friday 8.30am to 5pm) email: <a href="mailto:contact@gww.com.au">contact@gww.com.au</a>
Operational Control Centre (contact point for faults & emergencies in our water or sewer networks)	Telephone: 13 44 99 (24 hours a day, 7 days a week) email: <a href="mailto:faults@gww.com.au">faults@gww.com.au</a> (monitored 24 hours a day, 7 days a week)
Connections & Technical Services (contact point for plumbing works associated with building approvals and property development)	Telephone: 13 44 99 (Monday to Friday 8.30am to 5pm) Email: <a href="mailto:contact@gww.com.au">contact@gww.com.au</a>
Social media accounts	Facebook: <a href="#">Greater Western Water</a> LinkedIn: <a href="#">Greater Western Water</a> Twitter: <a href="#">@GWWVic</a> Instagram: <a href="#">@GreaterWesternWater</a>

We assist customers with particular needs in the following ways:

Circumstance	Nature of assistance provided
Customers with special needs – e.g. those on dialysis or other forms of life support	Call 13 44 99 (faults & emergencies, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week) if you are experiencing any issues with water supply
Customers who speak a language other than English	Call 03 9313 8989 (interpreter services) if you need help communicating with our staff Call 13 44 99 (Customer Service, Monday to Friday 8.30am to 5pm) if you need the information in this document in languages other than English
Customers who are hearing or speech impaired	Call 133 677 (National Relay Service) if you need help communicating with our staff
Customers who are sight impaired	Call 13 44 99 (Customer Service, Monday to Friday 8.30am to 5pm) if you need a copy of this document in large print

## Your experience as a customer

If your circumstances are different, please call 13 44 99 (Customer Service, Monday to Friday 8.30am to 5pm) and we will make every effort to meet your needs.

Unless stated otherwise in this document or on our [website](#), we will not charge a fee to provide information or advice to customers or others affected by our operations.

For more information on our policies relating to accessibility, visit our [website](#).

### 2.2. Keeping you informed

Our [website](#) is the main way we keep our customers informed about what is going on in our service area and the things we are doing to enhance our services. It's an information hub with content covering topics such as water saving tips, education resources and major network upgrades. The website is also a gateway for online services including property and land development applications, registering for eBilling and applying for payment extensions.

We also use social media to communicate with our customers about our projects and services. We currently do this via [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [Instagram](#).

Our customer newsletter is produced in digital and print formats for our residential and business/non-residential customers. This newsletter usually accompanies bills and provides:

- updates on current capital works projects and local community events
- updates on innovations about our drinking water, sewerage, trade waste and recycled water services
- tips on how to use water efficiently
- the latest regulation and policy news.

In addition to our newsletter we regularly add messages on our bills, for example about eBilling, capital works initiatives, water efficiency campaigns, payment channel options and competitions.

We are committed to operating our business for the benefit of our customers and being accountable for the promises we make. By the end of September each year, we publish a set of

indicators, *Customer outcomes reporting*, that show our performance against the targets we have set. These indicators represent a range of measures that help ensure we deliver exceptional service and value to our customers.

See [Section 3](#) for more details on the standards of service you can expect in relation to water and sewer network performance.

### 2.3. Protecting personal information

#### Collecting and using personal information

We collect personal information that we need to provide you with water and sewerage services and products, promote those services and products and conduct market research. We try to collect personal information directly from you, although there are certain situations in which we may collect personal information about you from someone else, such as your agent or authorised representative.

We understand our responsibilities and legal obligations in relation to keeping, using and protecting your personal information.

We only use and disclose your personal information for purposes related to the reasons for collecting it, or where you have consented to the use or disclosure.

We may provide personal information about you to third parties who assist us in service delivery, such as:

- data processing
- bill production
- research
- mail services
- water and sewer system maintenance and repair.

The information is provided to those third party service providers on a confidential basis so they can effectively provide services to you.

We may use or disclose your personal information where required or authorised by law, for example in emergency situations and to assist law enforcement agencies, as permitted under the [Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014](#).

## Accessing your personal information

If you need to access or correct any personal information we hold about you please contact us by either:

Email	<a href="mailto:privacy@gww.com.au">privacy@gww.com.au</a>
Mail	The Privacy Officer Greater Western Water Locked Bag 350 Sunshine, Victoria 3020
Phone	Customer Service: 13 44 99 (Monday to Friday 8.30am to 5pm) TTY: 133 677 Interpreter Service: (03) 9313 8989

When seeking to access or correct personal information, we ask you to provide as much detail as you can about the information you seek, to help us retrieve it. An access fee may be charged to cover our costs of providing that information to you. In certain circumstances, we may not be required by law to provide you with access or to correct your personal information. If that is the case, we will give you our reasons for that decision.

We take reasonable steps, in accordance with the Victorian Protective Data Security Standards (VPDSS), to protect all of the personal information we hold from misuse and loss and from unauthorised access, modification or disclosure. This protection applies in relation to information stored in both electronic and hard copy forms.

When an application is made for documents under the *Freedom of Information Act 1982*, we will withhold information if that information would otherwise entail an unreasonable disclosure relating to the personal affairs of any person, when that person is not the applicant.

For more information on our policies relating to privacy, visit our [website](#).

## 2.4. Complaints and disputes

### Making complaints

We are committed to providing the best services possible. If you have feedback or complaints, we would like to hear from you so we can continue to improve.

Please send feedback and complaints to:

Email	<a href="mailto:customerresolution@gww.com.au">customerresolution@gww.com.au</a>
Mail	Greater Western Water Locked Bag 350 Sunshine, Victoria 3020
Phone	Customer Service: 13 44 99 (Monday to Friday 8.30am to 5pm) TTY: 133 677 Interpreter Service: (03) 9313 8989
Web	<a href="http://www.gww.com.au">www.gww.com.au</a>

### Responding to complaints

We will direct your concern or query to the relevant business area:

- Telephone calls will be directed through Interactive Voice Response, an automated telephone menu system.
- Written correspondence (email and mail) will be directed on the day it is received.

We will try to either:

- resolve in good faith the enquiry/complaint on first contact via telephone
- respond as quickly as possible if the enquiry/complaint is received via email.<sup>3</sup>

If the issue or query cannot be resolved straight away, we will investigate it further and contact you within 10 business days to advise on our progress. We aim to fully resolve all enquiries/complaints in no more than 10 business days.

If you are not satisfied with our initial response, you can ask for the issue to be referred to management.

<sup>3</sup> For all our customers, we expect to reply within 3 business days.

## Your experience as a customer

### Energy and Water Ombudsman of Victoria

If we are unable to agree on a suitable resolution to your complaint, you can take the matter to the Energy and Water Ombudsman of Victoria (EWOV):

Telephone	1800 500 509 (freecall)
Web	<a href="http://www.ewov.com.au/complaints/online-complaint-form">www.ewov.com.au/complaints/online-complaint-form</a>

EWOV is a not-for-profit, independent and impartial dispute resolution service. EWOV expects that:

Before you complain to [EWOV], you must give [us] a reasonable opportunity to resolve the dispute itself. If you've tried but you can't sort the problem out, [EWOV] can help you and [us] to reach a resolution.

EWOV also refers some enquiries and complaints to us.

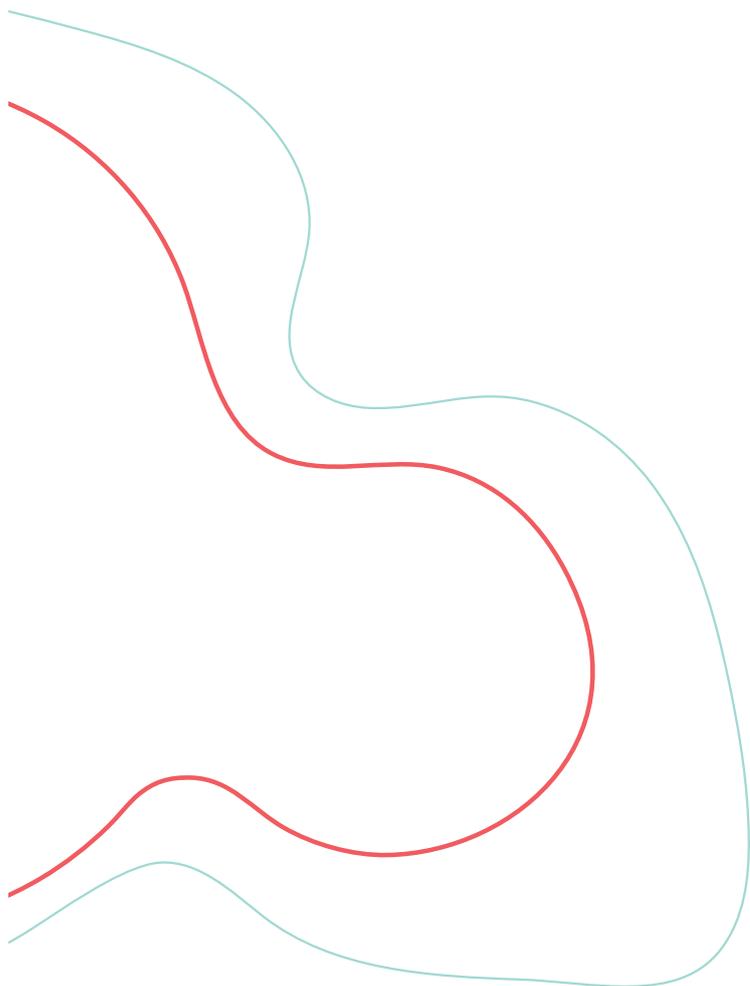
### Complaints about charges

If a complaint or dispute relates to an amount of money we have charged, we will not seek to recover that money until the matter is resolved. If there is no formal agreement between you and us that the matter has been resolved, we will consider it resolved if each of the following apply:

- we have informed you of our decision or any internal review outcome
- 10 business days have passed since you were informed
- you have neither:
  - sought a further review
  - lodged a claim with EWOV or another external dispute resolution forum.

We will not consider the complaint or dispute resolved until any claim lodged with EWOV or another external dispute resolution forum has been finalised.

For more information on our policies relating to complaint resolution, visit our [website](#).



### 3. Standards of service you can expect

We aim to provide all customers with uninterrupted water and sewerage services. However, service interruptions can occur due to maintenance work or when we need to repair unexpected bursts, leaks or blockages. When we need to undertake planned works in your area, we will notify you at least two business days prior to works occurring.

To help ensure you do not experience unacceptable interruptions to service, we are committed to meet (or exceed) our Essential Services Commission (ESC) approved service standards (Table 1) in relation to management of:

- planned water supply interruptions
- unplanned water supply interruptions
- sewer spills and blockages

As our two organisations integrate, we will have two separate service standards for customers depending on where they live. Table 1 includes the service standards for historical CWW and WW service areas. We expect to have a single set of service standards in place by 1 July 2023.

**Table 1. ESC approved service standard for water and sewer network performance**

Approved service standard	Performance target for 2018 to 2023 (Historically CWW)	Performance target for 2020 to 2023 (Historically WW)
Water		
Customers experiencing more than 5 unplanned water supply interruptions in the year	0	0
Average time taken to attend bursts and leaks (priority 1)	32 minutes	30 minutes
Average time taken to attend bursts and leaks (priority 2)	40 minutes	60 minutes
Average time taken to attend bursts and leaks (priority 3)	252 minutes	1440 minutes
Average duration of unplanned water supply interruptions	125 minutes	126 minutes
Average duration of planned water supply interruptions	133 minutes	240 minutes
Sewerage		
Customers experiencing more than 3 sewer blockages in the year	No more than 6 customers*	No more than 0 customers
Average time to attend sewer spills	31 minutes	30 minutes
Average time to attend sewer blockages	31 minutes	60 minutes
Average time to rectify a sewer blockage	124 minutes	47 minutes
Spills contained within 5 hours	100%	100%

\* Revised down to six customers.

## Your experience as a customer

In addition to these service standards, we are also committed to delivering on a wider range of customer-focused key performance targets. Our customer outcomes and performance are available from our [website](#).

We know that if we fail to meet our performance targets, our customers are inconvenienced. If your service levels are less favourable than the guaranteed service level (GSL) thresholds (see [Table 2](#) and [Table 3](#)), a rebate will automatically be applied to your bill.

As our two organisations integrate, we will have two separate guaranteed service levels (GSLs) for customers depending on where they live. [Table 2](#) and [Table 3](#) set out the guaranteed service levels (GSLs) for historical CWW and WW service areas.

Where there are shared GSLs between our historical CWW and WW service areas, we have adopted the higher rebate that would be applied to your bill. We expect to have a single set of GSLs in place by 1 July 2023.

**Table 2. Payments for breach of guaranteed service levels for customers in the historical City West Water service area**

Guaranteed service level threshold	GSL payment Historically CWW
More than 5 unplanned water supply interruptions within any 12 month period	\$200
More than 3 unplanned water supply interruptions within any 12 month period	\$100
More than 3 sewer blockages within any 12 month period	\$100
Unplanned water supply interruption not restored within 5 hours of notification	\$100
Sewer blockages not restored within 5 hours of notification	\$75
Sewage spill in a house, caused by the business or a failure of the business' system(s), not contained within 1 hour of notification	\$3,000
Sewage spill not contained within 5 hours of notification	\$75
Restricting the water supply of, or taking legal action against, a residential customer prior to taking reasonable endeavours (as defined by the ESC) to contact the customer and provide information about help that is available if the customer is experiencing difficulty paying.	\$300
Failure to give at least 2 business days' notice of a planned water supply interruption	\$75
Planned water supply interruptions during peak hours (5am to 9am and 5pm to 11pm)	\$100*
Sewage spill in a house, caused by the business or a failure of the business' system(s)	\$1,000

\*These rebates have been increased to reflect the higher amount paid for common GSLs.

**Table 3. Payments for breach of guaranteed service levels for customers in the historical Western Water service area**

Guaranteed service level threshold	GSL payment Historically WW
More than 5 water supply interruptions within any 12 month period	\$200*
More than 3 sewer blockages within any 12 month period	\$100
Sewage spill in a house, caused by the business or a failure of the business' system(s), not contained within 1 hour of notification	\$3,000*
Restricting the water supply of, or taking legal action against, a residential customer prior to taking reasonable endeavours (as defined by the ESC) to contact the customer and provide information about help that is available if the customer is experiencing difficulty paying.	\$300
Planned water supply interruptions longer than notification given	\$100
Planned water supply interruptions during peak hours (5am to 9am and 5pm to 11pm)	\$100

\*These rebates have been increased to reflect the higher amount paid for common GSLs.

## 4. Customers with special needs

If you or a member of your household relies on some form of life-support device (for example a haemodialysis machine) or has other special needs that require them to have a continuous supply of water, you can register as a special needs customer and we can put in place some measures to help you.

To register:

- Ask your health service provider (doctor, nurse or hospital social worker) to complete a Life support concession and machine notification application form.
- Usually your health service provider will advise us of your circumstances, however you can contact us directly to be sure we know about your special needs.

If you have any questions, contact us:

Email	<a href="mailto:privacy@gww.com.au">privacy@gww.com.au</a>
Mail	The Privacy Officer Greater Western Water Locked Bag 350 Sunshine, Victoria 3020
Phone	Customer Service: 13 44 99 (Monday to Friday 8.30am to 5pm) TTY: 133 677 Interpreter Service: (03) 9313 8989

Once you are registered as a special needs customer, your property will be flagged in our systems to ensure we give you priority treatment if your water supply is at risk of being interrupted. We always try to minimise inconvenience to our special needs customers.

We will contact you:

- as soon as possible if there is an unplanned interruption to a service
- at least four business days before a planned interruption to a service. If you would like a longer period of notice, let us know and we will try to make this happen.

As a registered special needs customer you may also be entitled to a free water allowance.

If you are on dialysis, life support or have other special needs, and you experience any issues with your water supply that we may not be aware of, please call 13 44 99 (faults & emergencies, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week).

## 5. Responding to hardship or family violence

### 5.1. Hardship

We understand that the cost of services is important to you and that, from time-to-time, some people may experience hardship. If you are experiencing hardship or are experiencing family violence, we are committed to:

- exempting you from further recovery action or restriction of supply
- ensuring you are managed in an appropriate manner including security provisions and access to hardship programs
- providing information to you on our support programs, including water efficiency, dispute resolution processes and payment options
- referring you to an accredited financial counselling agency.

These commitments guide our Customer Service staff and credit management processes that:

- defines hardship
- encourages the early identification of residential customers experiencing hardship
- explains the rights and responsibilities of our customers
- directs the provision of relevant and timely information for residential customers experiencing financial hardship
- allocates accountability for managing such customers within the business
- provides training of our staff to ensure residential customers in hardship are treated with sensitivity and without value judgements.

If you enter our hardship assistance program, you are required to meet the agreed payment arrangement and contact us if you need to renegotiate your payment arrangement. If you fail to do this, the assistance will 'cease to apply' and you will be advised that normal debt recovery practices will commence.

We will notify you in writing a confirmation of any alternative payment method or arrangement that has been agreed upon within 10 business days.

We offer dispute resolution for all customers, including those in the hardship program and all customers have a right to lodge a complaint with EWOV about the hardship program or any other matter.

We will review our *Residential Hardship Policy* and associated procedures on a regular basis and can provide it to you upon request.

For more information on our policies relating to hardship, visit our [website](#).

### 5.2. Family violence

As a provider of essential services, GWW has a role to play in supporting customers who may be experiencing some form of family violence. When dealing with customers experiencing or affected by family violence, we are committed to:

- recognising that victims of family violence experience a broad range of behaviour that is not limited to physical violence. This can include a high prevalence of economic and emotional abuse.
- providing a careful and sensitive response, in consultation with the victim to achieve the best outcomes
- empowering customers, with our support, to manage financial impacts, security of their data, and future account management in a way that helps them with outcomes that meet their needs and supports them to move forward.
- providing a safe environment for customers and employees to access relevant information and support.

## Your experience as a customer

The guiding principles we adopt are:

- The psychological and/or physical wellbeing of people affected by family violence is our first priority.
- People affected by family violence, either directly or indirectly, are provided with support that is sensitive, respectful and without judgment.
- Our support services are accessible for our people and our customers, and flexible enough to respond to an individual's needs.
- Any personal information is managed privately and sensitively.

For customers who may be affected by family violence we will:

- case-manage them on an individual basis and considering:
  - circumstances around accounts in joint names
  - debt waiver or deferment
  - allocation of debt and debt collection activities
  - application of our *Residential Hardship Policy* (see [Section 5.1](#) of this document)
  - access to utility relief grants and concessions

- ensure their information is handled securely and confidentially
- ensure processes are in place that:
  - avoid customers having to repeat disclosure of their family violence
  - provide for continuity of service for those customers
- provide information on our support programs including water efficiency, dispute resolution processes and payment options
- refer customers who provide consent to specialist family violence services.

We will review our policy and associated procedures on a regular basis and can provide it upon request.

For more information on our policies relating to family and domestic violence, visit our [website](#).

## 6. Power to enter your property

Under the *Water Act 1989* (ss. 133, 134, 149 and 221), we have the power to enter land in certain circumstances. From time to time we may need to exercise that power to enter your property. Whenever this happens, our employees or contractors are required to carry appropriate identification.

You are required to allow us to enter your property for:

- inspecting, reading, testing or replacing your meter
- carrying out planned works
- inspecting new drainage or plumbing connections
- altering existing connections
- restricting the water supply
- inspecting works or undertaking any test to assess compliance with the *Water Act 1989*
- removing trees that cause damage or interfere with access to our assets.

In most circumstances, unless you consent otherwise, we will provide you with seven days' notice before we enter your property and we will carry out the required works and to undertake work between the hours of 7:30am to 6:00pm. If we hold keys to your premises, they will be held in safe custody and returned upon notification from the customer.

There are some circumstances where we are not required to give you notice of intention to enter your property.

### 6.1. When notice to enter your property is not required

We are not required to give you prior notification to enter your property:

- in case of an emergency
- to read your water meter
- if we suspect that your meter is not connected or installed in accordance with our water metering and servicing guidelines<sup>4</sup>

- if entry is required by an authorised officer under a warrant
- if there are reasonable grounds to believe there has been a breach of the *Water Act 1989*.

Where we do enter your property without prior notification, we will either:

- notify any occupant present of the purpose for entry
- if no occupant is present at the property, leave a notice stating the identity of our employee/contractor and the date, time and purpose of entry.

### 6.2. Our obligations when entering and leaving your property

Regardless of the purpose for entering your property, our employees or contractors are required to ensure that they:

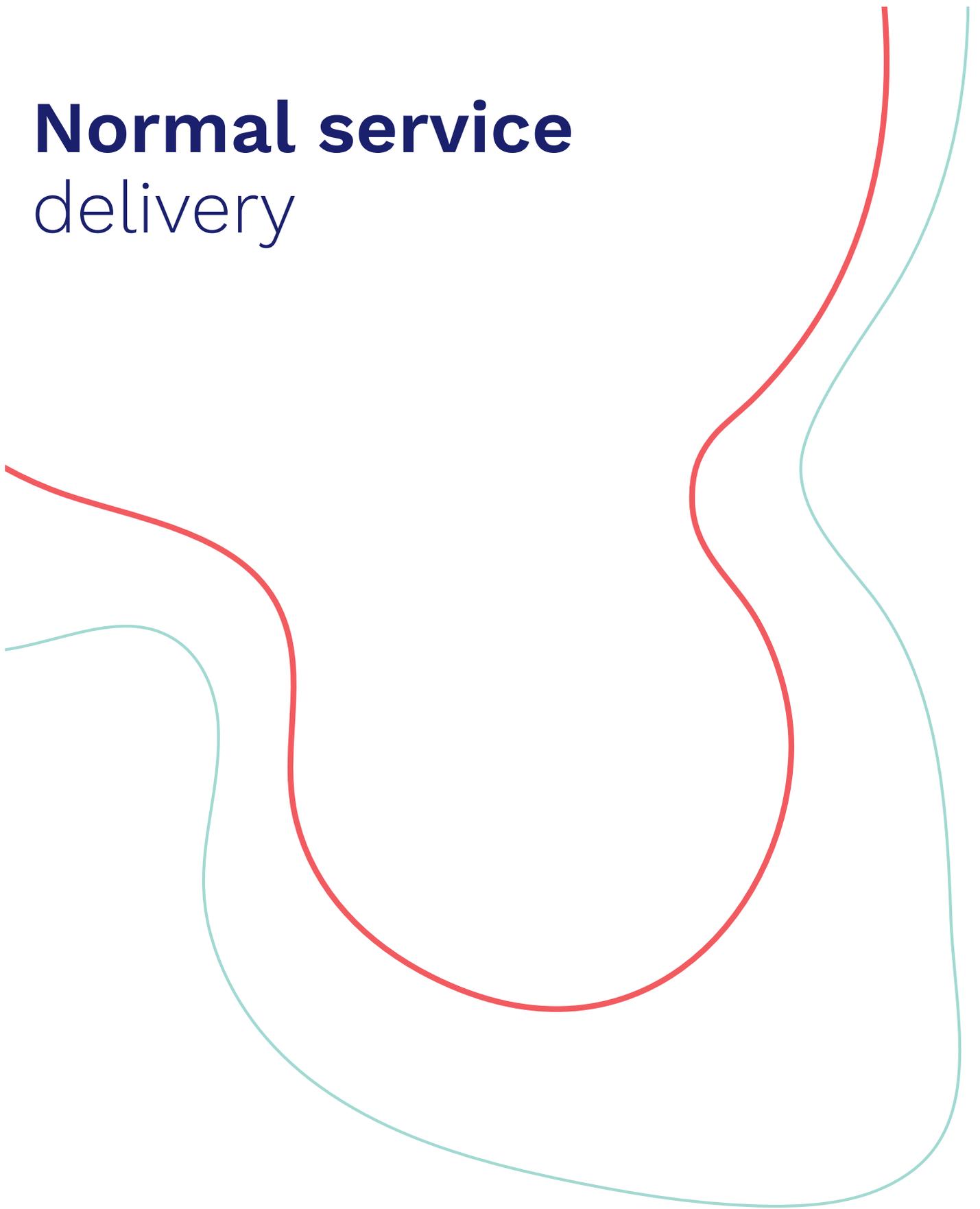
- cause as little inconvenience as possible
- only stay on the property for as long as is reasonably necessary
- remove all equipment they have brought onto the property
- remove any debris and leave the property as close as possible to its original condition.<sup>5</sup>

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4 Visit our [website](#) for our *water metering and service guidelines* depending on the location of your home or business.

5 'As close as possible to its original condition' will be subject to ensuring our assets are readily accessible in accordance with our *water metering & servicing guidelines*. Visit our [website](#) for our water metering and service guidelines depending on the location of your home or business.

# Normal service delivery



## 7. Service connection and quality

Unless otherwise stated, in this section:

- references to ‘services’ cover both water delivery services and wastewater disposal services
- references to ‘water’ cover drinking water services and recycled water services.

This chapter focuses on connecting and using services under ‘business as usual’ conditions. See [Section 9](#) for information on what happens in the case of *Service faults and disruptions*.

Our cornerstone services are drinking water delivery and wastewater disposal. In some areas we also supply recycled water to our customers through a network of purple pipes – recycled water is not suitable for drinking.

### 7.1. Connection and maintenance of services

Under the *Water Act 1989* (s. 145), we have control of connections to services. Through our conditions of connection,<sup>6</sup> you have an obligation to ensure our employees and contractors have reasonable access to connection infrastructure in order to maintain the reliability of our services.

#### Application to connect

When you request connection to our services, we will:

- issue ‘consent to connect’ within 10 business days (provided all requirements are met)
- connect, or permit connection to, your property within 10 business days after ‘consent to connect’ has been granted or a later date as agreed.

This is conditional on you paying or agreeing to pay all applicable connection fees and meeting our terms and conditions of connection for drinking water, recycled water or sewerage as appropriate.

We are committed to processing standard plumbing applications and 20mm new meters and associated assemblies installed as quickly as possible.<sup>7</sup>

#### Water service access

Once connected, you must ensure that any meter on your property is easy for us to access to read, maintain or replace.

Our water metering and servicing guidelines state that the ‘water meter assembly must be ... within two metres of the title boundary that abuts the water main’.<sup>8</sup> In this case, we are responsible for maintaining the water meter and what is known as the ‘property service pipe’ for services for residential supply (excluding fire services). You are responsible for the pipe beyond the water meter leading into your property.

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6 Visit our [website](#) for our conditions of connections depending on the location of your home or business.

7 ‘Standard’ (in this context) means a single residential development where all GWW assets are available for connection and the customer has provided all requested information.

8 If there is any concern that your meter is not legally connected or installed according to our water metering & servicing guidelines, GWW has authority to access your property without notification.

## Normal service delivery

### Customer responsibility for pipework may extend back into the network

Where there is no meter, or the meter is either inaccessible or located in a position that does not comply with our water metering and servicing guidelines, we are only responsible up to and including the first accessible stop tap located no further into your property than two metres from the property boundary – you are responsible for the pipe beyond that stop tap.<sup>9</sup>

Property owners are responsible, and pay all costs, for:

- maintaining the private fire service and its components from the outlet flange of the first valve immediately after the water supply main, regardless of whether the connection is for a 'standalone fire service' or a 'combined fire service and drinking water service'
- private extensions or trunk services up to and including the ferrule or ball valve at the connection to our water main
- property services from private extensions
- property services for residential supply (excluding fire services)
- backflow prevention including any devices and required testing (if applicable)
- maintenance of any approved meter pit or cage, installed to protect our water meter.

For more information on our water metering and servicing guidelines and our conditions of connection, visit our [website](#).

### Sewer service access

If you are the property owner, you are responsible for the maintenance of all plumbing and fixtures up to the point where these pipes connect to our sewerage mains. As a basic guide, you need to:

- ensure access at all times to fittings including inspection openings and GWW access points such as manholes
- gain our consent before altering any pipes connected to our network.

For more information on sewer blockages and responsibilities, visit our [website](#).

### Charges for (re)connection services

If you are connecting a new service or reconnecting an old service, charges may apply for:

- meter connection
- tapping for a new connection into an existing water main
- plugging of an existing water connection
- cut and seal for an existing sewer connection.

Standard charges that apply to relevant (re)connection services are outlined on our [website](#). Additional information is available from our Connections & Technical Services team (call 13 44 99).

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<sup>9</sup> A stop tap is the valve that controls the flow of water that enters your property.

## 7.2. Our promise of service quality

### Water quality

At all times we strive to ensure that the drinking water we supply is of high quality and meets all applicable standards. We expect to be held to account and do what we reasonably can to ensure no customer has reason to be concerned about water quality.

We operate a robust water quality management system focused on preventing the introduction of any hazards into the drinking water system. As part of this system, we carry out regular water quality sampling and testing and are subject to ongoing audits to ensure the system is working as it should be. One of the reasons we do this is to determine compliance with the *Safe Drinking Water Act 2003* and the *Australian Drinking Water Guidelines (2011)*. We publish the results of our testing program in our annual Drinking Water Quality Report.

Recycled water schemes are subject to stringent health standards, regulated by the Victorian Environment Protection Authority (EPA Victoria) and the Department of Health and Human Services. With respect to stormwater harvesting schemes, GWW follows the *Australian Guidelines for Water Recycling: Stormwater Harvesting and Reuse*.

For more information on our *Drinking Water Quality Reports*, visit our [website](#).

### Water flow rates

GWW ensures that your water supply and recycled water supply (where available) are at all times at least equal to our minimum flow rates as outlined in Table 4. The flow rate is measured at the meter or the tap nearest to the meter on your property.

Exceptions to the minimum flow rates may apply if:

- a property owner's infrastructure is of a lower standard than required
- a service is provided via a private water main extension
- there is a drought or an emergency
- there is a water shortage due to peak summer demand
- there is an unplanned or a planned interruption
- recycled water supply is reduced due to a shortage
- recycled water supply is reduced in accordance with our permitted use rules
- supply is restricted or disconnected in accordance with this document or the *Water Act 1989* (section 145).

**Table 4. Minimum flow rates for drinking water and recycled water services**

Diameter of the property service pipe (millimetres)	20	25	32	40	50
Performance target for 2018 to 2023: minimum flow rate (litres per minute)	20	35	60	90	160

## 8. Metering, billing and payment

The following discussion focuses on metering, billing and payment under ‘business as usual’ conditions. What happens when things go wrong (for example, unusually high bills, payment difficulties, restriction of service) is discussed in Section 12 of this document.

### 8.1. Meter reading

A water meter measures the amount of water that enters a property.

Your bill is based on the number of kilolitres of water you use, which is measured periodically by reading your water meter. Some customers receive bills four times a year and some receive bills three times a year.

Your property may have its own meter or it may share a common water meter with other properties. If your property shares a common meter, we apportion the number of kilolitres used among the properties sharing the meter.

If your property shares a meter and you are part of an ‘owners corporation’, you can ask the owners corporation to provide you with information regarding your water meter connection and charges.

You must ensure your water meter is accessible at all times for reading and maintenance by GWW. If a gate to your property is locked or you have a dangerous dog at the property you should call 13 44 99 (Customer Service, Monday to Friday 8.30am to 5pm) to discuss the options available.

If the meter on your property is not accessible, our meter readers may leave instructions or send an SMS asking you to take a meter reading. You may then advise us of your meter reading (see [Box 2: How to read your water meter](#)) by completing relevant details on the card and either:

- posting the card to:  
Greater Western Water  
Locked Bag 350  
Sunshine, Victoria 3020
- emailing relevant details to:  
[contact@gww.com.au](mailto:contact@gww.com.au)
- calling: 13 44 99 (Customer Service, Monday to Friday 8.30am to 5pm)

GWW will try to ensure you receive an actual meter read at least once every 12 months, provided the meter is accessible. If we cannot get an actual meter reading, the reading will be estimated based on past consumption. To avoid overpayment, it is in your interests to ensure the meter reading provided over the telephone is correct.

#### Box 2: How to read your water meter

A water meter is used to measure the amount of water that a property uses. It is generally located close to the front of a property, often just inside the boundary or fence line. It is also useful to know where the water meter is because a stop tap that controls the flow of water to the house is normally located with the water meter. In an emergency, such as a burst pipe, you can use this stop tap to turn off the water supply to the house.

Looking at a meter from the top, all meters have an engraved serial number which is unique to each meter. This number allows us to identify which meter is associated with a property. The meter number appears on the back of your water bill.

There is a series of numbers on the water meter that register the amount of water that has passed through your meter.



The numbers on the meter can be interpreted as follows:

- black/white numbers indicate kilolitres and red numbers indicate litres
- 1 kilolitre = one thousand litres
- only kilolitres are used to calculate your bill
- meter numbers are read from left to right

## 8.2. Billing cycle, content, presentation and history

A typical residential customer will be billed for their water consumption based on actual (or estimated) meter reads once every three or four months depending where they live. If your property is part of a large owners corporation that collectively consumes in excess of 5,000 kL per quarter, you may get a monthly bill.

You may request a special meter read outside of your normal billing cycle and we will calculate the outstanding charges and provide a bill. If the bill is based on an estimated off-cycle meter reading, there will be no charge. However, an additional charge may apply to an actual off-cycle meter reading but will not apply to the off-cycle bill itself.

### Types of charges

Depending on ownership of the premises you occupy, you can be billed for:

- variable charges – that change with change in metered water volume and are payable by the occupier of the premises
- fixed charges – a set fee regardless of the metered water volume and are payable by the owner of the premises.

Over the course of a year, residential owner-occupier customers can be billed for the following:

- Water use (variable) – as metered (or estimated) for the billing period. GWW has a two-step structure for water use based on average daily water use. The price charged for water use increases when average use increases beyond the tiered thresholds.
- Water network (fixed) – is billed in advance and this charge contributes to maintaining and updating the water network to ensure it remains available to connected customers.
- Sewage disposal (variable) – some customers are billed for their sewer disposal volumes. Unlike water, sewage is not metered for residential customers. GWW estimates volumes discharged to the sewer for each property using a formula based on the metered amount of water consumed.
- Sewerage network (fixed) – is billed in advance and this charge contributes to maintaining and renewing the sewerage network so it remains available to connected customers.
- Recycled water use (variable) – as metered (or estimated) for the billing period.
- Recycled water network (fixed) – is billed in advance for properties that are connected to the recycled water services network. This charge contributes to maintaining and renewing the recycled water network to ensure it is available to connected customers.
- Private fire service connection (fixed) – is billed in advance for properties that have a fire service connection. This charge contributes to maintaining and renewing fire service connections to ensure they are available to connected customers.<sup>10</sup>
- Waterways and Drainage Charge (fixed) – is billed on behalf of Melbourne Water. Money collected through this charge is not retained by GWW.<sup>11</sup>
- Parks Charge (fixed) – is billed on behalf of the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning.<sup>12</sup> Money collected through this charge is not retained by GWW.

10 A private fire service connection is an additional connection servicing a property that allows for delivery of water to dedicated firefighting services such as in-building sprinkler systems.

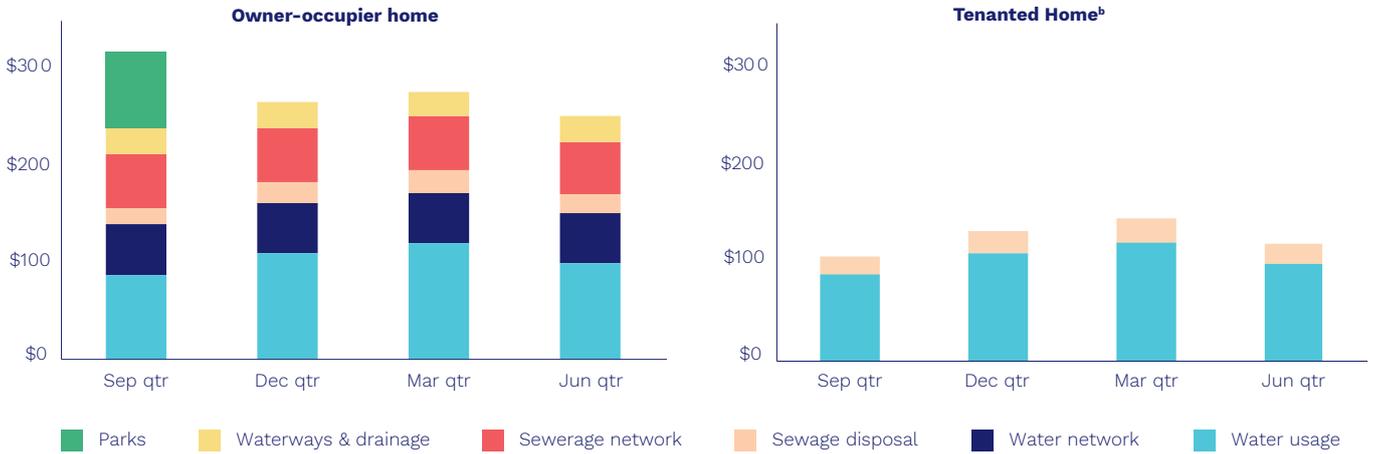
11 The Waterways and Drainage Charge funds a range of programs to protect and improve the health of our rivers and creeks, and provide regional drainage services, flood protection and flood warning systems throughout the Port Phillip and Westernport region.

12 Funds raised from the Parks Charge go to Parks Victoria, Zoos Victoria, the Royal Botanic Gardens and the Shrine of Remembrance for the development, management and maintenance of metropolitan parks, gardens, trails, waterways, and zoos.

## Normal service delivery

Figure 2 and Figure 3 show the charges paid by the average water user (assuming user is not connected to the recycled water network and does not have a private fire service connection).

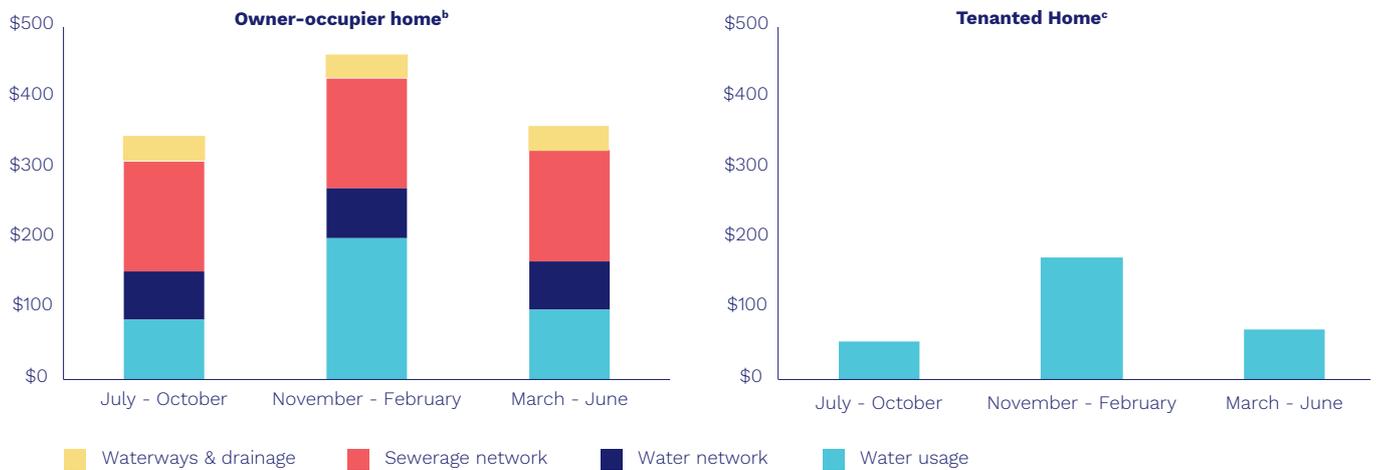
**Figure 2. Indicative bills for average water users in Greater Western Water (formally City West Water) area (150 kL per annum)<sup>a</sup>**



<sup>a</sup> Assumes there is no connection to either the recycled water network or private fire services.

<sup>b</sup> Tenants are not liable for fixed charges.

**Figure 3. Indicative bills for average water users in Greater Western Water (formally Western Water) area (180 kL per annum)<sup>a</sup>**



<sup>a</sup> Assumes there is no connection to either the recycled water network or private fire services.

<sup>b</sup> Some customers in Melton will be charged the Parks charge.

<sup>c</sup> Tenants in Greater Western Water (formally Western Water) area are not liable for fixed charges and a rebate has been applied to their indicative average bills.

The prices applied for the water use, water network, sewage disposal and sewerage network components of your bill are set by the Essential Services Commission (ESC) through periodic price reviews. The full set of charges and prices is available on our [website](#). Charges for each of our services are typically amended (and updated on our website) effective from 1 July each year to reflect price paths approved by the ESC – if your billing period includes time both before and after 1 July, pro rata charges will be applied.

See [Appendix B](#) for further information about the content of your bill.

### Issue of bills

We will issue bills:

- to you at the physical or electronic address specified by you
- to your agent at your agent’s physical address or electronic address if you have submitted a written request for us to do so
- to any person authorised to act on behalf of you at the physical or electronic address specified by that person.

If no address has been specified, we may send the bill to the physical address of the property in respect of which the charges have been incurred, or to your last known address.

A ‘List Statement’, from which a single payment for at least five properties or individual accounts can be made, may be available upon request to eligible customers or agents of multiple properties in a single billing district.

## Normal service delivery

### Billing history

You can request a billing history. In most cases, we will provide your account and use history for the preceding three years within 10 business days, or other period by agreement. However, we may refuse to do this if the provision of such information is contrary to the information handling procedures set out in our *Family Violence Policy* (see Section 5.1 of this document).

We may impose a reasonable charge for providing account and use history held beyond three years. We will advise you before extracting your billing history whether a fee will apply and, if so, what that fee will be.

### 8.3. Vacating a property

#### Giving notice when vacating – property owners

If you buy or sell a property in the GWW service area, your solicitor/conveyancer will notify us that the property sale has taken place.

Conveyancers or solicitors can send notices of disposition (sold property) or notices of acquisition (bought property) to: [noticeofsale@gww.com.au](mailto:noticeofsale@gww.com.au). When a property is sold or transferred, any outstanding GWW charges are incurred by the purchaser.

It is your responsibility as the (vacating) owner to notify us if you have set up a direct debit that needs to be discontinued.

#### Giving notice when vacating – tenants

If you are a tenant, we ask that you give us notice of at least two business days before vacating a property, so that a final/special reading of the meter can be registered. This is necessary to determine the final bill for water use and sewage disposal charges.

If you do not contact us to advise you are vacating the property, you will be liable for the cost of all water supplied to the property until either the next reading on the meter or to the end of the billing period that you vacated, whichever occurs first.

### 8.4. Payment

Most customers will receive a quarterly bill and have 14 days from the date the bill is issued to make the payment.

#### How to pay your bill

We offer a number of convenient ways for you to pay your bill:

- Easy payment plans – talk to us about smoothing your bill and paying by regular instalments to reduce the impact of a larger bill. Call 13 44 99 (Customer Service, Monday to Friday 8.30am to 5pm) to arrange your payment plan.
- Direct debit – is easy and enables you to enjoy the flexibility of choosing from regular payments or when the bill is due. We do not require customers to agree to direct debit as a condition of service.
- BPay – enables you to make payments by telephone or online. It can be arranged through your participating bank, building society or credit union.
- BPayView – provides customers with email notification that their bill is ready for viewing online. This can be arranged through your participating bank, building society or credit union. Subscribing to BPayView saves paper and reduces our carbon footprint. This is available for customers in the area previously serviced by City West Water.
- Centrepay – if you receive any type of Centrelink payment you can have an agreed instalment amount automatically deducted from your Centrelink payment.
- Credit card – payments (maximum of \$10,000) can be made by Visa and MasterCard over the telephone using our automated system on 13 44 99 or online.
- By mail – please visit our [website](#) for billing address information.
- Post Billpay – in person at any post office, online at [postbillpay.com.au](http://postbillpay.com.au) or by calling 131 816.
- In advance – as agreed with GWW.

For more information about paying bills, visit our [website](#).

## Concessions

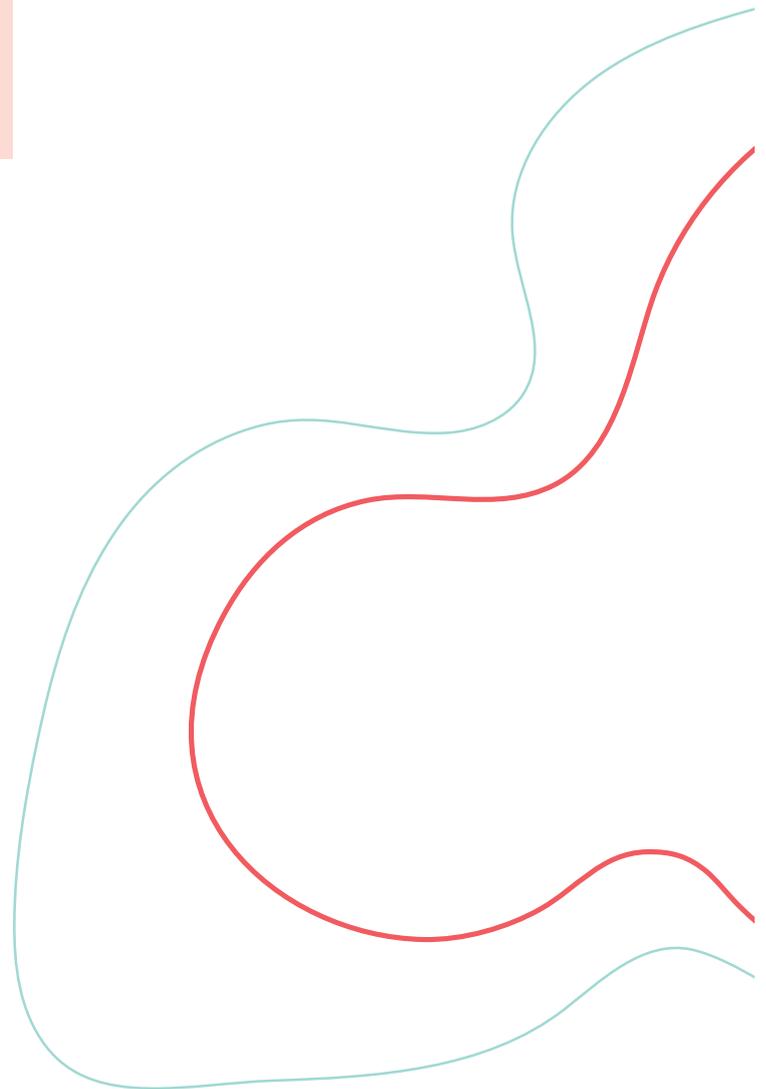
If you have a pension, veterans or health care card you may be entitled to a concession on your water and sewerage bills. Please visit our [website](#) or call 13 44 99 (Customer Service, Monday to Friday 8.30am to 5pm) for details on concessions and how to apply.

## Payment difficulties

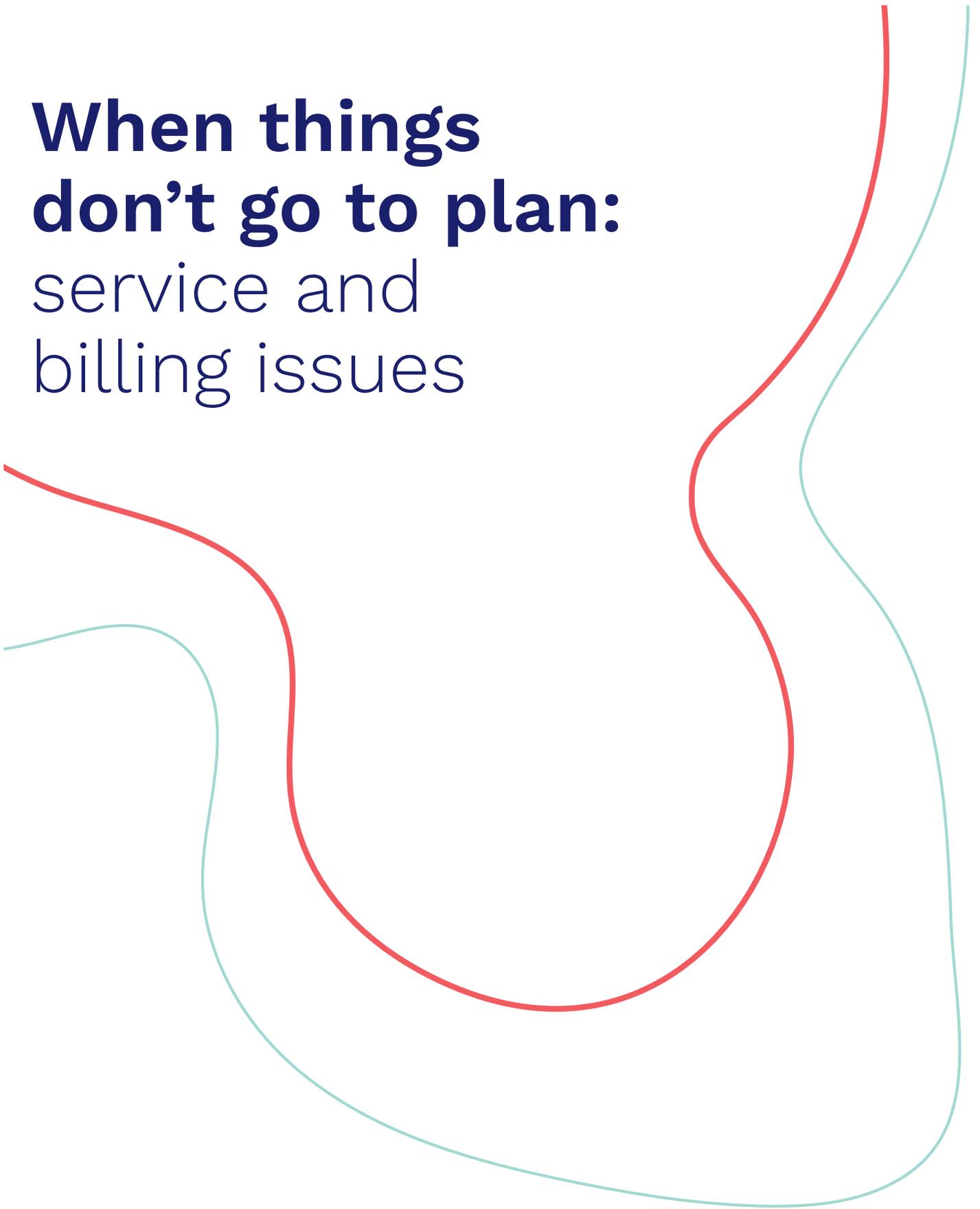
Residential customers are eligible for support in the payment of their water and sewerage bills. We have a range of options available, including payment extensions, flexible payment plans as a result of payment difficulties or family violence. For more information see Section 5 for more information on our hardship and family violence measures.

Please call 13 44 99 (Customer Service, Monday to Friday 8.30am to 5pm) to discuss the most appropriate option for your situation.

For more information on payment options (payment extensions and flexible payment plans) available for customers experiencing payment difficulties or family violence, visit our [website](#).



# When things don't go to plan: service and billing issues



## 9. Service faults and disruptions

This section deals with faults and disruptions within our water and sewerage network.

### 9.1. Repairs for which we are responsible

We always aim to minimise the impact of any disruption to services. If service is disrupted for any reason we will:

- do our best to restore service as soon as is reasonably possible
- be open and transparent with respect to how we deal with affected customers during the course of any service disruption.

Although we do our best to ensure that no customer experiences unacceptable service, sometimes we need to disrupt a drinking water or recycled water service to undertake planned maintenance, or to repair a burst, leak or blockage in part of our network.

Section 3 outlines the performance indicators we are committed to meeting (or beating) in relation to:

- planned water supply interruptions
- unplanned water supply interruptions
- sewer spills
- sewer blockages.

If there is a burst, leak or blockage in any of our drinking water, recycled water or sewerage networks, you can help us by reporting the fault via:

- telephone: 13 44 99 (24 hours a day, 7 days a week)
- email: [faults@gww.com.au](mailto:faults@gww.com.au)
- our website
- the SnapSendSolve app and website.

Once we are aware of a fault, we will:

- prioritise the fault, considering the potential or actual impact on:
  - customers
  - others who may be affected by the fault
  - property
  - the environment
- dispatch a crew to deal with the fault
- provide updates as to the status of faults and interruptions via:
  - telephone: 13 44 99 (24 hours a day, 7 days a week)
  - our *Twitter* feed (@GWWAlerts) and our website – for service disruptions that affect traffic, multiple (or large) businesses or multi-story apartment blocks.

#### Customers with special needs

If you are on dialysis, life support or have other special needs, and you experience any issues with your water supply that we may not be aware of, please call 13 44 99 (faults & emergencies, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week) and advise us of the problem and also let us know that you are a customer with special needs.

If drinking water supply is interrupted, (either planned or unplanned), we will provide access to emergency supplies of drinking water.

If there is a sewage spill on your property, we will ensure that:

- damage and inconvenience to you and others affected is minimised
- the spill is promptly cleaned up and the affected area disinfected.

## When things don't go to plan: service and billing issues

If, in dealing with an emergency and rectifying a fault, our employees or contractors need to enter your property to undertake works, they will make sure that they:

- cause as little inconvenience as possible
- only stay on the property for as long as is reasonably necessary
- remove all equipment they have brought onto the property
- remove any debris and leave the property as close as possible to its original condition.<sup>13</sup>

For more information on our policies relating to water and sewer faults and outages, visit our [website](#).

### 9.2. Repairs for which you may be responsible

From time-to-time, we may become aware of plumbing repairs for which the property owner is responsible. These repairs may be necessary to avoid (further) damage to:

- your property's plumbing or other assets on your property
- a neighbour's property
- our assets.

In many cases, repairs are required to prevent water leaks that result in higher water bills to the customer and wasted water, the cost of which may be ultimately borne by the wider community.

To limit the effects of leaks and other sources of damage, the property owner may be required to undertake maintenance of their water or sewerage pipes/services in accordance with provisions of the *Water Act 1989* or the *Building Act 1993*.

We may, by formal written notice to the property owner – a *Notice to repair*<sup>14</sup> – require the owner to repair or replace any property service pipes that the owner is responsible for maintaining. Relevant actions include (but are not necessarily limited to) a requirement to:

- repair faults on pipes/services that are the owner's responsibility
- maintain works on the property, or disconnect the property from our network
- remedy a contravention of either:
  - relevant provisions of the *Water Act 1989*
  - a requirement made by GWW under relevant provisions of the *Water Act 1989*.

If you fail to comply within the time specified in the *Notice to repair*, the *Water Act 1989* (s 145) provides that we may take the action specified in the *Notice to repair* – which will include possible disconnection of your property from the network – and charge the property owner the reasonable costs for which the owner is responsible.

If we carry out these works and we have been advised that the property is occupied by a tenant, both the tenant and owner will be notified.

We will promptly reconnect your property (that has been disconnected) when:

- the reason for disconnection is gone
- we receive a written undertaking as to compliance by the customer in a form acceptable to the water business and payment by the customer of any reasonable charge imposed by the water business.

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13 'As close as possible to its original condition' will be subject to ensuring our assets are readily accessible in accordance with our water metering & servicing guidelines.

14 Issued under the authority of the *Water Act 1989* (section 145).

## 10. Water quality, metering/billing accuracy and leaks

From time-to-time, customers may be faced with suspected or actual problems in relation to water quality or metering/billing accuracy.

### 10.1. Water quality or flow issues

You can expect drinking water supplies to meet the requirements of the *Safe Drinking Water Regulations 2005* – water that is clear and free from objectionable taste and odour. Our recycled water quality will meet all regulated standards and water flow rates will meet our committed service standards.

We cannot guarantee the quality or flow rate of water supplied beyond our point of supply (the meter). Flow rates beyond this point can be affected if your water pipes are in poor condition or the service is provided through a private extension to our network.

If you have concerns about the quality or rate of flow of the drinking water supplied to your property you may request a water quality or rate of flow test. However, if the test demonstrates that we comply with relevant standards, we may charge you a reasonable fee. We will advise you before testing if this fee may be applied. If the test finds that the water quality or rate of flow does not meet our standards, we will rectify the situation as soon as possible or within a period as agreed by you and we will bear the costs.

### 10.2. Metering/billing accuracy and water leaks

If you receive an unexpectedly high bill there are several possible reasons:

- you may have changed your water use habits
- there was an increase in the number of people in your household during this period
- you have purchased a new water-related appliance
- your bill is based on an estimated reading because we were unable to access your water meter
- there are water leaks somewhere around your property/residence
- your water meter may be inaccurate.

If you suspect that your water meter is not accurate, before you ask us to test it, we encourage you to do an easy overnight meter test first. Visit our [website](#) for details. It is rare that a meter will register an incorrect high meter reading. An unexpectedly high meter reading is more likely to be due to an internal leak. If you have an internal leak you will need to call a plumber to have the leak repaired.

Nevertheless, as the owner or occupier of a property you may request us to test the accuracy of the water meter that services your property. After receiving this request:

- we will replace the meter for the purpose of testing
- you will be required to pay a testing and meter replacement fee
- once test results are received, we will notify you in writing of the results of the test.

If the test shows that the meter is not meeting required standards of accuracy, we will refund the cost of the test and meter replacement. We will also refund or credit your account any amount you were overcharged.

## 11. Conserving our limited water supply

### 11.1. Permanent water use rules

Permanent water use rules apply in our service area. These rules encourage efficient use of water supplied from our network to reduce demand. They promote a commonsense approach to using drinking water:

- Gardens and lawns can be watered with a hose at any time, or with a watering system between 6pm and 10am.
- A trigger nozzle must be fitted when using a handheld hose.
- Cars, boats or other vehicles can be washed at home at any time using a high pressure cleaning device or a handheld hose fitted with a trigger nozzle.
- Windows can be washed using a high pressure cleaning device or a handheld hose fitted with a trigger nozzle.
- Pools and spas can be filled or topped up.
- Fountains and water features must use recirculated water.
- Water can be used to clean hard surfaces once a season, preferably with a high pressure cleaning device.

Certain exemptions are available automatically or on application and approval – these are in the Permanent water use rules.<sup>15</sup> These rules do not apply to the use of rainwater, greywater or recycled water, except where these sources are supplemented with drinking water.

For more information on our *Permanent water use rules*, visit our [website](#).

### 11.2. Drought preparedness

Our *Drought Preparedness Plans* help us (along with the other metropolitan water corporations) manage Melbourne's water resources during water shortages due to droughts. The plans are based on the following:

- preparedness to optimise and manage the Melbourne supply system to mitigate uncertainty in the future
- ability to react promptly to drought or water shortages
- preparedness of customers to manage their water use during droughts or water shortages
- shared commitment to the sustainability and viability of critical community assets.

During a drought, if required, we may implement water restrictions as per the *Water Restriction By-law*, to mandate water use behaviour that will conserve water. Our customers must not contravene any restriction or prohibition on water use imposed by or under this By-law; penalties will apply.

For more information on our *Drought Preparedness Plan and Water Restriction By-Law*, visit our [website](#).

15 These rules are available in Chinese, Croatian, Greek, Italian, English, Korean, Macedonian, Persian, Russian, Serbian, Spanish, Traditional Chinese, Turkish and Vietnamese and can be found on our [website](#).

### 11.3. Permitted uses for non-drinking water

Sources of non-drinking water include:

- recycled water supplied through purple pipes (Class A)
- rainwater collected from your own property
- greywater recovered from your own property.

Some properties in our service area are supplied with high quality recycled water through our network of purple pipes (Class A). This recycled water supply helps to conserve our drinking water. However, there are limitations on how recycled water can be used.

Recycled water (Class A) can be used for:

- toilet flushing
- car washing on grassed areas
- lawn and garden watering (including fruit and vegetable plants)
- filling water features such as ponds and fountains
- washing machines (for houses built after January 2015)
- washing and feeding pets (except for pigs)
- cleaning outside areas including furniture
- fighting fires.

Recycled water (Class A) should not be used for:

- drinking
- cooking or food preparation
- bathing or showering (including sanitary sprays and bidets)
- filling swimming pools or spas
- filling water toys
- operating evaporative cooling systems.

You may collect and store rainwater for your own use. You may also recycle greywater on your property for non-drinking purposes or install a composting toilet that does not require connection to our water or sewerage services. However, it is important that you are aware of the possible health and technical issues. Before any greywater reuse, we recommend that you refer to:

- the Environment Protection Authority's *Code of practice – onsite wastewater management*
- the Victorian Building Authority's *Technical Solution Sheet 91.04 91: Grey or Recycled Water*
- your local council for advice and information on required approvals
- requirements for compliance with the *Building Act 1993* is met for any plumbing work.

#### Limits on recycled water services – Class B and C

Some properties in our service area are supplied with lower quality recycled water (Class B and C) through our network. This recycled water supply helps to conserve our drinking water. However, there are limitations on how recycled water can be used.

We may refuse to provide recycled water service if the customer has not:

- entered into a recycled water supply agreement or contract in a form acceptable to us; or
- otherwise received the consent from us.

We may discontinue a recycled water service if the customer breaches the permitted use rules.

For more information on recycled water, using rainwater and greywater at home and permitted use rules for Class A, B and C recycled water, visit our [website](#).

## 12. Billing issues and service restriction/disconnection

### 12.1. Undercharging or overcharging – adjusting bills

If you are undercharged:

- any identified undercharging over the past 12 months will be recovered in full
- any identified undercharging prior to the past 12 months, that is not a consequence of illegal use of water, will be forgiven<sup>16</sup>
- depending upon your preference, we will either:
  - issue you a new (replacement) bill
  - incorporate on your bill a separately identified adjustment
- you are able to pay the amount to be recovered over a time period equal to the period in which undercharging occurred, up to a maximum of 12 months
- you are able to pay the amount to be recovered through a flexible payment plan in accordance with our payment methods.

In the event of the illegal use of water or recycled water, we will reasonably estimate the usage for which you have not paid – regardless of how far back the undercharging extends – and bill you accordingly.

If you are overcharged we will:

- let you know within 10 business days of becoming aware of the error
- refund or credit the amount overcharged in accordance with your advice – refunds may take up to 10 business days to process.

### 12.2. Other forms of financial adjustment

We may recover from you an amount charged by our financial institution if:

- your cheque is dishonoured due to lack of funds or other reasons
- you have insufficient funds available when paying by direct debit.

In circumstances where you continue to owe money to us, in accordance with the provisions of the ESC's *Customer Service Code*, we reserve the right to:

- impose a reasonable interest charge on overdue accounts consistent with maximum permissible rate set annually by the ESC<sup>17</sup>
- if you are the owner of the property, impose a charge on your property consistent with section 274(4A) of the *Water Act 1989* and section 4F(2)(f) (iii) of the *Water Industry Act 1994*.

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16 Charges will not be forgiven if undercharging prior to the past 12 months relates to some other agency's charges – such as the Parks Charge (collected on behalf of DELWP) or the Waterways and Drainage Charge (collected on behalf of Melbourne Water).

17 If we impose a reasonable interest charge on overdue amounts, we will notify you on your bill of the future date from which interest is applicable from and do not retrospectively apply interest.

## 12.3. Notices, legal actions and restriction of service

### Reminder notices

If payment is not made by the date stated in your bill, we will send you a reminder notice – in the same manner in which we sent your original bill.

### Warning notices

We will send you a payment warning notice at least seven days before taking action for non-payment in the same manner in which we sent your original bill. A warning notice will:

- specify assistance that is available to you, including information about the Energy and Water Ombudsman (Victoria) and our *Residential Hardship Policy* (see Section 5.1 of this document)
- advise you that the bill is overdue and must be paid to avoid legal action or restriction of your water supply
- caution you that if legal or restriction action is taken, you may incur additional costs in relation to those actions
- specify the date from which interest (if any) may be applied on outstanding amounts, and the percentage interest rate that may be applied
- (if you are also the property owner) specify that we may be able to recover outstanding amounts at the time of any sale of your property.

Reminder notices and warning notices will not include information about meter readings, usage, previous bills or past payments.

### Flexible payment plan notices

If you are on a flexible payment plan, the content of the flexible payment plan will be provided in writing to you. This will include information on:

- a. the amount of each payment and how it has been calculated
- b. the agreed period over which the payments are to be made
- c. how it can be renegotiated
- d. any other related matters

If you fail to meet the conditions of a flexible payment plan, it will be cancelled. If you have had two flexible payment plans in the last 12 months, you may not be offered an additional one.

### Legal action and restriction of service

In some circumstances we may take action to restrict your service by applying a restriction device to your water meter<sup>18</sup>. This device limits the flow of water to your property to no less than 2 litres per minute (as measured at the meter or the tap nearest to the meter).

We may take legal action or restrict your water or recycled water services for non-payment if:

- more than 14 business days has elapsed since the issue of the reminder bill
- you have been sent a warning notice including information on our *Residential Hardship Policy* (see Section 5.1 of this document) and other programs that are available to help you with payment difficulties
- we, or our agent, have attempted to make contact with you about the non-payment:
  - on at least two occasions, on two separate days, either in person, via telephone, or any combination of phone or personal visit; and
  - on one further occasion, in person, or via registered mail about the non-payment
  - if customer contact has not been successful in previous attempts a further personal visit will be made.
- you have been notified of the proposed legal action or restriction and the associated costs, including the cost of removing a restrictor
- you have either:
  - been offered a flexible payment plan and you have refused or failed to respond, or
  - agreed to a flexible payment plan and have failed to comply with the arrangement.

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18 Where relevant, restriction devices will be applied to both potable and recycled water meters.

## When things don't go to plan: service and billing issues

We will not begin legal action or take steps to restrict your service due to non-payment if:

- you have been identified as experiencing financial hardship (see [Section 5.1](#) of this document)
- the amount owed is less than \$200, unless you have failed to pay consecutive bills in full over a period of not less than 12 months
- you are eligible for and have lodged an application for a government funded concession and are waiting on a response
- you have made an application under the *Utility Relief Grant Scheme* and are waiting on a response
- you are a tenant and the amount unpaid is owed by the landlord
- you have a claim against the landlord in respect of a water bill pending at the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT)
- the amount in dispute is subject to an unresolved complaint in accordance with our *Complaints Resolution Policy* (see [Section 2.4](#) of this document).

If we take legal action against you or restrict your water service because of non-payment before taking 'reasonable endeavours' (as defined by the ESC) to contact you and provide information about help that is available, then we have breached our own guaranteed service level. Where we breach a guaranteed service level we will apply a rebate to your bill (see [Table 2](#) and [Table 3](#), [Section 3](#) of this document).

GWW can pursue a debt owed by a person who is no longer a customer.

### Additional limits on restriction

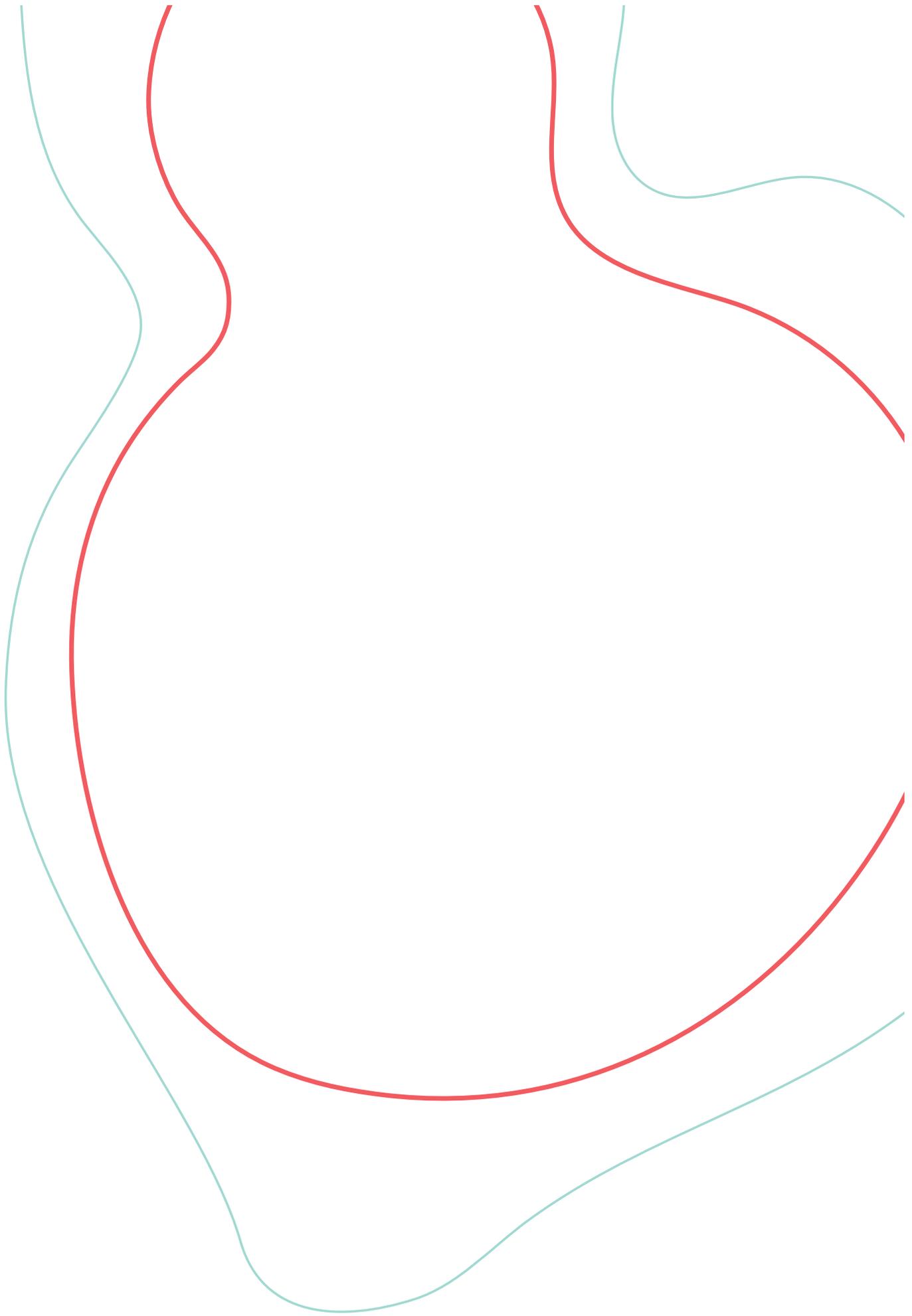
We will not take steps to restrict your service due to non-payment if:

- it is a Friday, public holiday, weekend, day before a public holiday, or after 3.00pm
- you are registered as a special needs customer
- we believe that the restriction will cause a health hazard, having considered any customer concerns
- it is a day of total fire ban declared by the Country Fire Authority in the area in which the property is located
- the restriction would reduce the supply of water (either drinking or recycled) to less than 2 litres per minute (as measured at the meter or the tap nearest to the meter).

### Removal of restrictions

We will restore a restricted service within 24 hours of becoming aware of the reason for restriction no longer existing.

We may impose a reasonable charge for the removal of restrictors.



# Appendices



## A. General customer obligations

Customers have the following responsibilities and obligations:

1. To pay charges incurred after vacating a property unless you give us at least 48 hours' notice.
2. To ensure that water meters are not damaged and can be accessed by our employees or contractors.
3. To maintain the property owner's infrastructure upon notice by us.
4. To remove trees upon request by us.
5. To seek our consent for any building or construction work that might interfere with our services or systems.
6. To not alter any works connected to our services or systems without our consent.
7. To adhere to contractual arrangements, leases or supply agreements including compliance with permitted use rules for recycled water
8. To observe restrictions imposed by us in accordance with the *Water Restriction By-law*<sup>19</sup>.
9. To comply with by-laws issued by Greater Western Water in accordance with the Water Act.
10. To maintain combined sanitary drains in accordance with the water law<sup>20</sup> or any independent agreement with other land owners connected to the combined sanitary drain.

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19 Visit our [website](#) for more information on our *Water Restriction By-Law*.

20 For further information, see Victorian Building Authority, *Technical Solution Sheet 3.03; 3: Drainage (below ground sewer), Combined Drains, Overflow Relief and Inspections*.

## B. Bill content detail

A standard bill issued by us will contain the following information:

1. the date of issue
2. your billing address and account number
3. the address of the property to which the charges in the bill relate
4. the date on which the meter was read or, if the reading is an estimation, a clear statement that the reading is an estimation
5. the amount you are required to pay
6. the date by which you are required to pay
7. the ways in which you can pay the bill
8. information about help that is available if you are experiencing difficulties paying
9. details of our enquiry facility, including a 24-hour emergency telephone number
10. referral to interpreter services offered by the water business
11. any outstanding credit or debit from previous bills
12. the total of any payments made by you since the last bill was issued
13. information on concessions that are available and to which you may be entitled
14. the average daily rate of water or recycled water use at the property for the current billing period
15. whether we intend to charge interest on outstanding amounts and, if so, a clear statement of the rate of interest and from what future date it is to be applied.

If there have been any amendments to the rate of charges that apply to elements of your bill, we will provide advice.

The presentation of your bill will include a graphical illustration of current water and recycled water use and will also separately itemise:

1. network charge for your property
2. the usage charge for each service to your property
3. any other charge in connection with the provision of services provided
4. any interest payable on outstanding amounts
5. any charges we collect on behalf of other entities – for example:
  - the Waterways and Drainage Charge collected on behalf of Melbourne Water
  - the Parks Charge collected on behalf of Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning.





Greater Western Water  
ABN 70 066 902 467

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Faults and emergencies:  
13 44 99

Interpreter service:  
03 9313 8989

Internet:  
[gww.com.au](http://gww.com.au)  
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