



Waterways and Drainage Investment Plan

PERFORMANCE REPORT

2021–2023



'We Will Walk Country Together' Artist: Gerard Black ©2023

Aboriginal Acknowledgement

Melbourne Water respectfully acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Owners and custodians of the land and water on which all Australians rely.

We pay our respects to Bunurong, Gunaikurnai, Taungurung, Wadawurrung and Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung, their Elders past, present and future.

We acknowledge and respect the continued cultural, social, economic and spiritual connections of all Aboriginal Victorians. We also acknowledge the broader Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community and their connections with lands and waters, and recognise and value their inherent responsibility to care for and protect them for thousands of generations.

Melbourne Water acknowledges Aboriginal Victorians as Traditional Owners and, in the spirit of reconciliation, we remain committed to developing partnerships with Traditional Owners to ensure meaningful, ongoing contributions to the future of land and water management.



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Summary

Every five years Melbourne Water develops a Waterways and Drainage Investment Plan (WDIP) which sets out our responsibilities, goals, levels of service and programs of work for waterway management, flood management and drainage.

It outlines the cost of delivering these services and programs of work funded by property owners across the Port Phillip and Westernport region through the Waterways and Drainage Charge.

The preparation of a WDIP is a key requirement of Melbourne Water's Statement of Obligations, which are issued in accordance with the Water Industry Act 1994.

Our 2021 WDIP outlines nine distinct services to support environmental health and the health, safety and recreational opportunities of our customers and community. These services work together to maintain and improve:



**Community
value**



**Waterway
health**



**Protection
from flooding**

And to reduce the impact of:



**Urban
development**



**Climate
change**

Each year, our progress to deliver the WDIP is assessed and reported against 19 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), which were developed in consultation with subject matter experts, stakeholders and community groups, and local government representatives.

We are now in the third year of delivering our 2021-2026 WDIP and, while progress has been made to deliver on our commitments, we recognise that there are still some areas where we are off track. We are working closely with our customers, community and partners to address these areas.

Relationship to the Price Submission and performance reporting

The 2021 Price Submission details our proposed services in water, sewerage, waterways and drainage over a five-year period, as well as the cost of delivering these services and the prices we intend to charge customers.

The WDIP informs the development of Melbourne Water's Price Submission, which is subject to approval by the Essential Services Commission, Victoria's independent regulator.

Our 2021 Price Submission is underpinned by six customer outcomes which are monitored, measured and reported each year in the annual Customer Outcomes Performance Report. This report is published on our website. In 2022-2023, we have assessed our overall performance against our customer outcomes as close to or largely met.

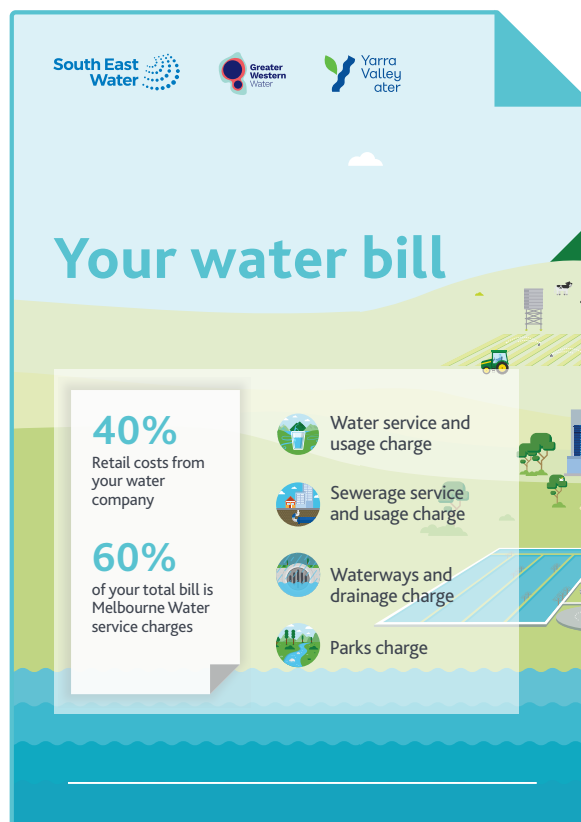


In 2022-2023, community satisfaction with waterways was 91%, well above the target of 85% and an improvement on last year's satisfaction score of 84%. Our performance against 17 of 19 of KPIs was assessed as 'met' or 'substantially met'.

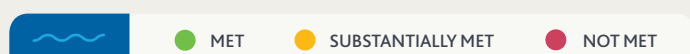
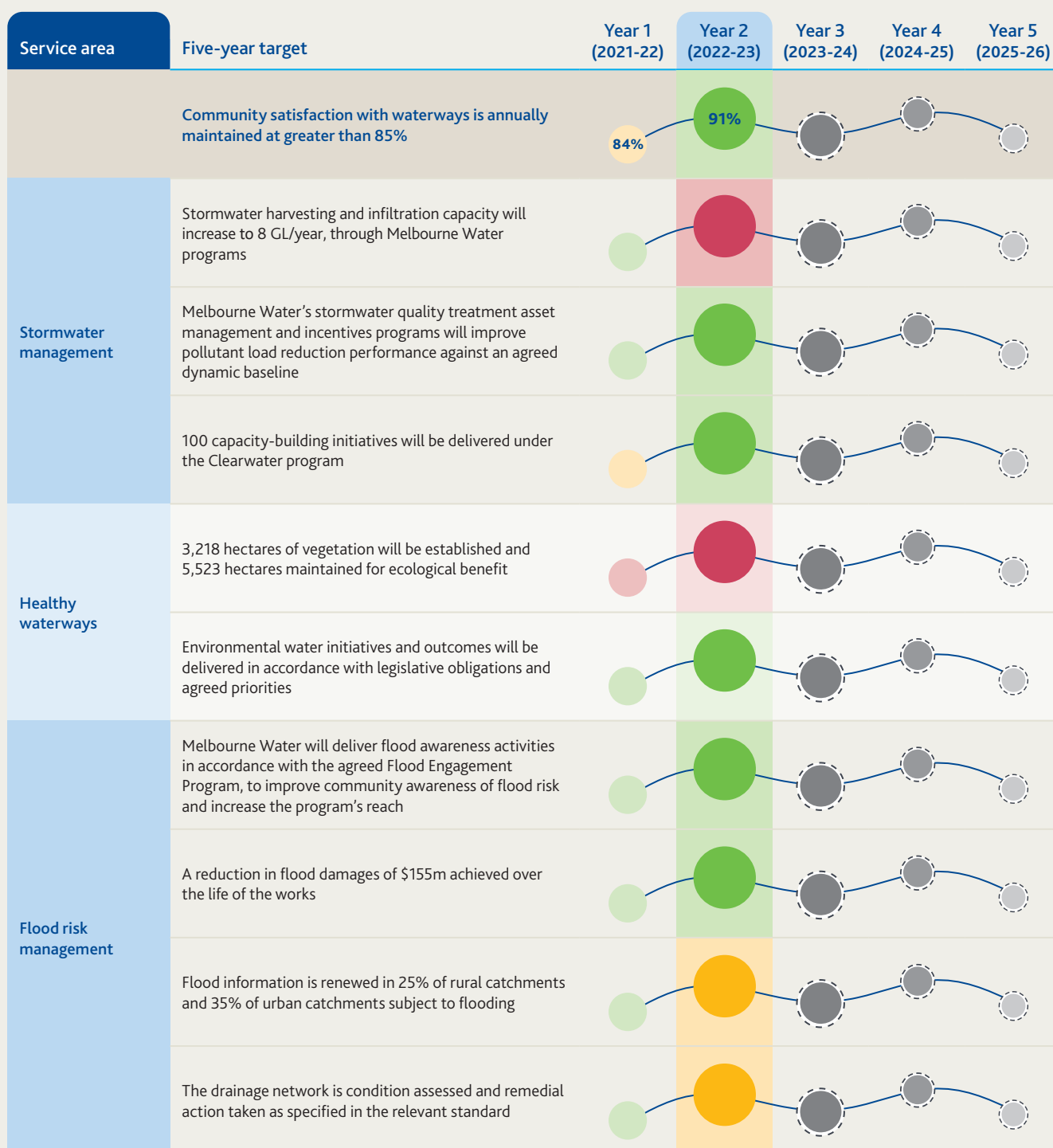
Your water bill

The bill you receive from your water retailer helps fund the services we deliver. Your water bill is made up of the following charges:

- **Water and Sewerage services and usage charges** – These include both the retail costs of supplying water to you which are charged by your water retailer, as well as wholesale costs from Melbourne Water. These wholesale costs make up just over half the usages charges on your bill.
- **Waterways and Drainage Charge** – This charge is collected on behalf of Melbourne Water by your water retailer which funds activities outlined in the WDIP, including to protect waterway health, manage drainage and provide flood protection.
- **Parks Charge** – These charges collected by your water retailer on behalf of the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action and supports Melbourne's parks, trails, public facilities and zoos, as well as the Royal Botanic Gardens and the Shrine of Remembrance. This charge does not fund waterways and drainage services or other water industry charges.



Our performance



Service area	Five-year target	Year 1 (2021-22)	Year 2 (2022-23)	Year 3 (2023-24)	Year 4 (2024-25)	Year 5 (2025-26)
Flood risk management and healthy waterways	In collaboration with key delivery partners, Melbourne Water will implement the Monitoring and Evaluation, Reporting and Implementation plans for the Healthy Waterways Strategy and Flood Management Strategy					
Aboriginal cultural values	Formal partnership agreements with Traditional Owner organisations will be established and agreed commitments implemented					
Community access, involvement and recreation	42 hectares of vegetation will be improved and programmed maintenance undertaken to enhance amenity and community benefit					
	31 hectares of Melbourne Water land and assets are activated to increase community enjoyment of nature and recreation					
	200 community education and/or citizen science initiatives will be delivered					
	Community satisfaction with the cleaning up of litter will improve and litter will be reduced at management sites					
Emergency and pollution response	100% of incidents that require a response will be managed in accordance with relevant legislation					
Urban development	Responses will be provided for 100% of statutory and non-statutory applications and at least 95% will be within the agreed timeframe					
	100% of development services schemes will be implemented in accordance with the development planning program					

Stormwater management

The WDIP invests heavily in programs that manage stormwater quality and quantity, as these are crucial to protecting the health of our waterways and bays, and making more water available for community uses such as irrigating parks and sport fields.

We manage stormwater through three key programs:

- Stormwater quality
- Stormwater harvesting and infiltration
- Stormwater monitoring, planning and research, in collaboration with partners, including councils, water retail companies and water industry.

Five-year target	Year 1 (2021-22)	Year 2 (2022-23)	
Stormwater harvesting and infiltration capacity will increase to 8 GL/year, through Melbourne Water programs			This target represents a significant step change for Melbourne Water and the broader industry. In 2022-2023 stormwater harvesting and infiltration capacity was increased by 0.13 GL/year through the delivery of the stormwater incentives program. This fell short of the 0.5 GL/year target. Despite a number of delivery challenges, particularly around cost escalations, a number of projects are progressing. This includes a project in Sunbury that will add 1GL/year by 2026. We are also working closely with local government and other partners to develop guidelines that streamline development and identify partnership opportunities.
Melbourne Water's stormwater quality treatment asset management and incentives programs will improve pollutant load reduction performance against an agreed dynamic baseline			Total nitrogen is the most useful indicator of pollutant load reduction available, and is also the key limiting nutrient relating to the health of Port Phillip Bay. For the second year running, we have surpassed the target of reducing total nitrogen by 445.2t in 2021-2022 and 470.8t in 2022-2023. In 2022-2023, we invested \$6.4m on improving stormwater quality through renewing and revegetating wetlands at Police Road, Southern Road, Chirnside Park and Hallam Valley. We also partnered with the University of Melbourne through the Melbourne Waterway Research-Practice Partnership to conduct research into the major sources and fate of sediments in streams, wetlands, estuaries and bays to inform management opportunities.
100 capacity-building initiatives will be delivered under the Clearwater program			Clearwater is a leading capacity building program funded by Melbourne Water and the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action. It is recognised for its practical, customer-driven approach to building integrated water management capability in the water industry. This year, 22 initiatives were delivered under the Clearwater program, against a target of 20. These included virtual and face-to-face industry training programs, tailored in-house training events for two local councils and an onsite permeable pavement tour in collaboration with the City of Yarra. Clearwater's partnership with the Institute of Public Works Engineering Australasia has delivered a new foundational stormwater training package, designed to forge collaboration between public sector professionals such as engineers, technical officers, and works supervisors.

Healthy waterways

Healthy rivers, estuaries and wetlands play a vital role in many aspects of our daily life.

The Healthy Waterways Strategy 2018-2028 sets a long-term vision for managing the health of rivers, wetlands and estuaries in the Port Phillip and Westernport region, and protecting and enhancing environmental, social, cultural and economic value. The strategy is shared across Melbourne Water, state and local government, water corporations, Traditional Owners and land management councils, non-government organisations and community.

Across our region, Melbourne Water monitors and provides targeted maintenance and improvement works for 25,000 kilometres of rivers and creeks, 33 estuaries and more than 14,000 natural wetlands – including three listed as ‘internationally significant’ under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance.

Five-year target	Year 1 (2021-22)	Year 2 (2022-23)	
3,218 hectares of vegetation will be established and 5,523 hectares maintained for ecological benefit			In 2022-2023 Melbourne Water established 475 hectares of vegetation, for a total of 757 hectares over the two-year period. Although a significant increase on the 2021-2022 result of 57%, this result fell short of the two-year target of 1,238 hectares. A total of 6,522 hectares of vegetation was also maintained in 2022-2023 – well in excess of the target of 2,210. More than 48% of this is high quality vegetation. While the maintenance target was far exceeded, the shortfall in vegetation established means that the target has been assessed as not met in 2022-2023. An improvement in performance is expected in future years, as a result of increased program momentum, investment and a focus on establishing vegetation in priority areas.
Environmental water initiatives and outcomes will be delivered in accordance with legislative obligations and agreed priorities			We continued to meet our target to deliver key environmental water commitments and priorities as part of our role in managing the Environmental Water Reserve in the Port Phillip and Westernport region on behalf of the Minister for the Environment and the Victorian Environmental Water Holder (VEWH). One initiative delivered in 2022-2023 focused on the improved health of the Bolin Bolin Billabong as a result of inflows from the Birrarung (Yarra River). A follow up on Country knowledge day – held in partnership with the Narrap Team and the University of Melbourne – led to the tracking and tagging of 20 eels in Bolin Bolin, to understand their movements and support their life cycle.

Emergency and pollution response

Maintaining the health of our waterways demands our effective management of and response to waterway pollution, including industrial pollution.

Our legislated obligations under the Environment Protection Act 2017, Emergency Management Act 2013, Water Act 1989 and Statement of Obligations, as well as the clear expectations of our customers and the community, drive our emergency and pollution response.

Five-year target	Year 1 (2021-22)	Year 2 (2022-23)	
100% of incidents that require a response will be managed in accordance with relevant legislations			We continued to comply with our obligations to protect waterway health in the event that any waterway or designated land in the Port Phillip and Westernport region is polluted or an environmental hazard occurs. No spills that met the criteria for response were recorded in 2022-2023. We have continued to improve our processes by developing a new training program aimed at enhancing our team’s knowledge and skills in pollution response roles, responsibilities, capabilities, and safety management. The training will be rolled out to our service delivery personnel in early 2024.



Flood risk management

The Flood Management Strategy for Port Phillip and Westernport sets the 10-year direction for flood management in the region. As floodplain manager, Melbourne Water works with more than 50 organisations to manage the region's vast network of drainage and flood mitigation infrastructure.

This work focuses on preparing for and mitigating the impacts of flooding, maintaining and renewing the region's drainage network, modelling and mapping flood risks, providing flood information and strategic planning and providing enhanced rural drainage services in the Koo Wee Rup and Longwarry Flood Protection Districts (on a fee-for-service basis).

Five-year target	Year 1 (2021-22)	Year 2 (2022-23)	
Melbourne Water will deliver flood awareness activities in accordance with the agreed Flood Engagement Program, to improve community awareness of flood risk and increase the program's reach			For the second year running we exceeded the target of 90%, with the delivery of 100% of flood awareness activities against the agreed Flood Engagement Program. In 2022-2023 the Community Engagement for Disaster Risk Reduction (CEDRR) program was delivered in partnership with the University of Melbourne. The online and face-to-face program was designed to empower people in flood prone areas to improve their flood readiness by providing them with information that enables them to make informed decisions.
A reduction in flood damages of \$155m achieved over the life of the works			In 2022-23 we achieved a reduction of \$125.6m against a target of \$21m (\$148.9m achievement against a \$42m target over two years). This result reflects three areas of focus: land use planning advice, flood mitigation works, and education programs directed to communities in flood prone areas. In particular, Melbourne Water responded to a much higher number of Building Permit and Planning Permit for Development cases than targeted in 2022-23.
Flood information is renewed in 25% of rural catchments and 35% of urban catchments subject to flooding			Information renewal in 50 catchments has been completed since the start of the WDIP, compared with a target of 94. Although renewal of flood information for new catchments was not fully completed in 2022-2023 An additional, 56 catchments are significantly progressed and expected to be completed in 2023-2024. Melbourne Water has also invested in new processes to streamline and accelerate completed flood map uploads.
The drainage network is condition assessed and remedial action taken as specified in the relevant standard			In 2022-2023, Melbourne Water completed 66% of total planned inspections and actions – short of the target of 75%. Performance is expected to improve next year with the establishment of a new service provider.



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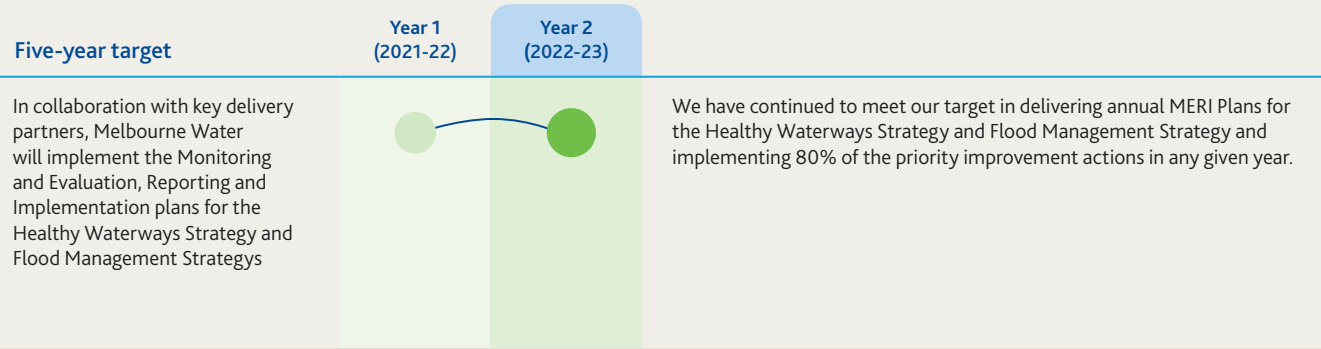
 SUBSTANTIALLY MET

 NOT MET

Flood risk management and healthy waterways

Monitoring, evaluation, reporting and improvement (MERI) plans are currently in place for the Healthy Waterways Strategy and Flood Management Strategy – Port Phillip and Westernport.

Monitoring and reporting on our progress in delivering our strategies helps guide annual planning, and ensure our actions are creating the change we envisioned. Evaluating our efforts gives us confidence that we are employing the right approaches to create change.



Aboriginal cultural values

Melbourne Water recognises and deeply respects the connections of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples with land and waterways. We are committed to partnering with Traditional Owners as we carry out our role of managing and protecting Melbourne’s catchments and waterways.

We acknowledge the unique perspective and role of First Nations peoples in managing waterways. Melbourne Water is building strong partnerships with the Wadawurrung, Wurundjeri Woiwurrung and Bunurong Traditional Owners, who represent most of our operating area. We also work with the Taungurung and Gunaikurnai, who also have areas of land within our boundaries.

Five-year target	Year 1 (2021-22)	Year 2 (2022-23)	
Formal partnership agreements with Traditional Owner organisations will be established and agreed commitments implemented			In line with the 2022-2023 target, we have a total of two formal Partnership Agreements with Traditional Owners; the Wadawurrung Partnership agreement was finalised during National Reconciliation Week in May 2023. The benefits of our partnership approach were illustrated in the successful 10-hectare cultural burn of high-quality grasslands led by the Wadawurrung at the Western Treatment Plant in May 2023. The first in an ongoing collaboration with the Country Fire Authority and Forest Fire Management Victoria, the Wadawurrung used traditional firesticks to achieve a slow, patchy burn that is safer and better for the ongoing management of flora and fauna.

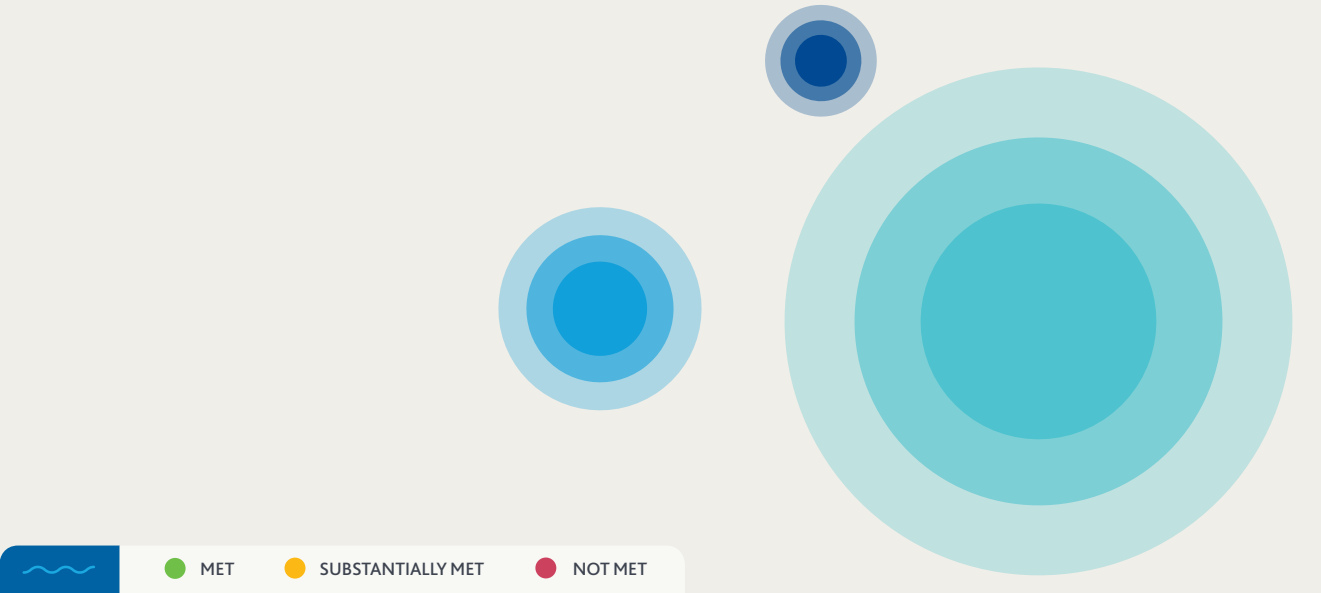
Urban development

Melbourne Water contributes to the healthy, sustainable growth of our community by providing support to development across the urban spectrum – from broadacre greenfield sites, through to renewal and development in established suburbs.

Statutory applications are those relating to land subdivision and development in flood prone areas which are referred to Melbourne Water under municipal planning scheme requirements. A 28-day statutory response period applies to these applications.

Developers can also apply to Melbourne Water for agreements in relation to subdivisions and developments that interact with the floodplain or our assets. By agreement with the Land Development Industry, a 60-day response target applies to these non-statutory applications where they involve the construction of Melbourne Water assets, or 28 days where the application would involve payment of contributions or work on or near our assets.

Five-year target	Year 1 (2021-22)	Year 2 (2022-23)	
Responses will be provided for 100% of statutory and non-statutory applications and at least 95% will be within the agreed timeframe			Melbourne Water processed 81.3% of statutory and 82.0% of non-statutory applications in line with the designated response timeframes (against targets of 95% for each), and met the requirement to respond to 100% of all applications. Development sectors in Melbourne's growth and existing urban areas are continuing to experience very strong demand. As a result, timeframes for delivery of some of our developer services is taking longer than in previous years. A number of programs to increase collaboration, transparency, resourcing and timeliness to meet the increased demand for these services is underway.
100% of development services schemes will be implemented in accordance with the development planning program			As no new schemes required implementation in 2022-2023, the target was met. Work on other Precinct Structure Plans (PSPs) and Developer Services Schemes (DSS) continues to be undertaken, to ensure compliance in future years.



Community access, involvement and recreation

Melbourne Water manages over 33,000 hectares of land and 25,000 kilometres of waterway corridors within the Greater Melbourne Region.

We recognise the vital role that the land and water we manage plays in the physical and mental wellbeing of Victorian communities, and the strong connection between waterway health and human health. We are committed to working with the community, stakeholders and partners to maximise community benefits in the delivery of our services.

Five-year target	Year 1 (2021-22)	Year 2 (2022-23)	
42 hectares of vegetation will be improved and programmed maintenance undertaken to enhance amenity and community benefit			A total of 15.8 hectares of vegetation was established in 2022-2023 as part of Melbourne Water's Urban Cooling Program, slightly short of the target of 16.8 hectares. A project at Galada Tamboore involved planting a canopy of 100 red gums along both sides of the Merri Creek trail to enhance amenity and public use of the site's shared path, while protecting remnant grassland vegetation and biodiversity values within the reserve. We are currently focussing on identifying new project opportunities, and improving tracking of the outcomes of existing investments.
31 hectares of Melbourne Water land and assets are activated to increase community enjoyment of nature and recreation			A total of 1.5 hectares of land and assets were activated in 2022-2023. This included construction of a multi-purpose platform on the Werribee River, which provided the community with access to the river to enjoy a range of recreational opportunities, such as fishing and kayaking, and connect with nature. The platform and associated pathways and infrastructure also recognises and demonstrates the cultural significance of the lower Werribee River to the local Wadawurrung Traditional Owners.
200 community education and/or citizen science initiatives will be delivered			In an incredibly strong performance against this measure, 155 initiatives were delivered against a target of 80. One initiative involved Melbourne Water's WaterWatch Team working closely with Friends of Edendale, Edendale Community Environment Farm and Nillumbik Shire Council to improve habitat for platypus in Diamond Creek through a series of 'Planting4Platypus' events. As well as enhancing habitat with the revegetation of 1,000 plants, the events raised local awareness of the presence of endangered platypus in the area, and the threats they face. Planning for future community planting events is underway, targeting further areas along the Diamond Creek desperately needing habitat restoration.
Community satisfaction with the cleaning up of litter will improve and litter will be reduced at management sites			Community satisfaction with the cleaning up of litter in 2022-2023 was measured at 59% (more than 80% of the 70% target value). Additionally, 89% of scheduled maintenance activities were undertaken as planned. Opportunities for improvement include identifying priority sites for litter management to enable more robust tracking and delivery of the program, and a continued focus on collaborative efforts with partner agencies to prevent and manage litter within waterways, including investment in maintenance and capital initiatives. Collaborative effort across agencies at the catchment level will be key to preventing litter from entering waterways. This approach is currently being piloted through the Lower Dandenong Creek Litter Collaboration. If successful, the project could provide a model for future catchment litter collaborations.

