

Patterson Lakes Precept Ratepayer Survey – Brief Summary of Results from the Tidal Waterways

In July/August 2011 Melbourne Water (MW) engaged Evaluation Solutions to facilitate a consultation survey with precept ratepayers in Patterson Lakes. The survey was designed to seek feedback about the preferred basis for calculating precept rates, the customer service charter, the importance of and priorities for current services, and interest in additional services.

A total of 900 ratepayers from the Tidal Waterways were invited to complete the survey. Eighty-seven responses were received, giving a response rate of 9.7%.

This one page document provides only a brief summary of results. Refer to the complete report for full details of the survey results.

Basis for Calculating Precept Rates

Just under half of respondents (44%) preferred that precept rates are a fixed percentage of 1990 land values for all precept ratepayers, which is how rates are currently calculated. Therefore, the majority (55%) of respondents were advocates for change, but these respondents were divided between a single flat rate, and variable rates based on cost of service provision.

Customer Service Charter

Respondents were asked to indicate their three most important purposes for the customer service charter, from a list provided. The highest priority was for the customer service charter to clearly define the services that MW provides to ratepayers; three quarters (75%) of respondents selected this. Close to half (44%) prioritised achieving mutually agreeable outcomes for ratepayers and MW. Around one third prioritised providing information to assist ratepayers to assess whether they receive value for money (35%) and providing information around the way rates are calculated and reviewed (34%). Clarifying areas of enforcement was an area of interest for 28% of respondents.

Importance of Current Services

The service rated most highly in terms of importance by respondents was tidal gate operation and maintenance, with 60% of respondents giving this the highest possible rating. Jetty maintenance, dredging of moorings and debris removal were also rated as extremely important by more than half of respondents. The lowest rated service in terms of importance was minor civil works and asset monitoring.

In terms of respondents' highest priorities across all of the current services, the service receiving the most mentions overall was jetty maintenance (51% of respondents included this in their top 3 priorities), followed closely by tidal gate operation (49%) and dredging of moorings (47%); tidal gate operation was the service receiving the highest proportion of "first priority" mentions (23%). The fourth most mentioned service was grounds and beach maintenance (40% of respondents included this in their top 3 rankings).

Additional Services

More than four out of five respondents (83%) indicated they are interested in additional dredging, and more than two thirds (70%) are interested in enforcement of guidelines by MW. However, only a small proportion of those interested would pay more for these services.

General Comments

General comments were received from 34 respondents and the following themes emerged:

- Respondents wanting to see more restrictions and enforcements
- Maintenance requests
- General positive feedback for Melbourne Water
- The precept rate, including requests to clarify what this covers, and comments on the increase in rates
- The need for improved management of projects and finances
- The Jetty Replacement Program, including a range of criticisms about the project