
OUR RELATIONSHIPS

STRATEGIC GOALS

- > Work collaboratively with stakeholders and strengthen relationships
- > Listen to and engage the community to seek support for our projects and priorities
- > Ensure our suppliers and partners apply sustainable business practices
- > Support a culture of information and knowledge sharing
- > Preserve and promote cultural heritage

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

- > Achieved very strong results on community engagement and consultation with community committees in independent evaluation surveys
- > Improved community engagement by expanding social media
- > Created an in-house training program for employees focusing on improving awareness and delivery of engagement relating to their projects and programs
- > Developed a plan to improve our approach to customer service
- > Developed an innovative 'engaged compliance' model with the Indigenous communities with whom we work
- > Constructed a Discovery Centre at the Edithvale-Seaford Wetlands to help educate students and the community about the importance of wetlands and the plants and animals that they support

DISAPPOINTMENTS

- > Our failure to apply Cultural Heritage management processes to a maintenance project near a sewerage pipeline in Brimbank Park near the Maribyrnong River has the potential to challenge strong existing relationships with stakeholders and expose the organisation to penalties

CHALLENGES

- > Consider a number of grouped project approvals at once to provide stakeholders with increased clarity and ensure that negotiations are taking place in the most efficient manner possible
- > Working with communities and local councils around major project sites to help deliver community legacy projects within agreed timelines
- > Increasing community confidence in our waterway and drainage management at Patterson Lakes and Koo Wee Rup
- > Implementing a *Customer Focus Strategy* to better meet the needs and expectations of customers, and deliver value for money

OUR RELATIONSHIPS

BUILDING STRONG RELATIONSHIPS

Achieving our goals and delivering our commitments to the community, customers and key stakeholders rests on our ability to build and maintain mutually beneficial and genuine relationships.

Actions within our *Stakeholder Engagement Strategy* continue to increase our employees' understanding of the value of good communications and engagement and increase their capacity to deliver it on behalf of their projects and programs. This is providing real benefits to us, our project partners and customers.

Independent evaluation surveys returned increased results on the already strong effectiveness of our community committees and consultation processes, from scores of around 85% in 2009/10 to scores around 95% in 2010/11.

Melbourne Water's major capital projects and its Alliances also recorded great results in independent evaluation surveys conducted over the past year, achieving a minimum score of 85% on satisfaction with community engagement.

The significant increase in our capital program in recent years resulted in the need for a greater degree of communications and engagement. Most big capital projects have now been completed or are nearing completion and Melbourne Water's focus will switch to consolidating business efficiencies.

The integration of communications and engagement practitioners working within teams who are delivering projects, programs and policy activities helps ensure that existing strong relationships with customers, stakeholders and the community achieve the best outcomes for all participants.

KEEPING COMMUNITY AND STAKEHOLDERS INFORMED

Flood management

After more than a decade of drought, this year Melburnians had to deal with floods. In particular, during the February 2011 floods, Melbourne Water crews were active in the north and south-east of the city responding to the impacts of flood. We worked closely with a range of stakeholders, including the metropolitan retail water businesses, to respond to the heavy rain and its impacts on the drainage and sewerage network.

In Bangholme, our crews spent several weeks pumping floodwaters from around low-lying residential properties and farmland. During an extremely trying time for residents, we kept them informed of our works and listened to their concerns while teaming with stakeholders such as the local council and EPA Victoria to resolve issues.

Similarly, our customer information centre handled hundreds of calls from the community in the Koo Wee Rup flood protection district and around Cardinia, seeking assistance from our maintenance crews who service these areas. In addition to responding to these calls on-the-ground, we immediately teamed with local councils and key agencies to provide information to the affected communities through a series of community information sessions.

In response to stakeholder and community feedback, our flood protection team also began a targeted engagement process with affected communities, again working closely with councils and local MPs to look at planning for areas hit hard by February's floods. This has included individual visits to properties in the region by our hydrology experts to understand residents' experience of the behaviour of floodwaters and how this can inform our future flood protection works in these areas.



Controlled release of wastewater

Another issue brought to light through the February floods was the controlled release of wastewater into drains and waterways from emergency release points along the sewerage network. Melbourne's sewerage network, like most across Australia, is designed to cope with up to 1-in-5 year storm events before controlled releases may be necessary to waterways. This issue resulted in significant dialogue between the community, key stakeholders, interest groups and Melbourne Water.

In response to community feedback and consultation with EPA Victoria, Melbourne Water and the retail water businesses instituted a process to inform the community of each controlled release to a waterway. To accompany this, we will be looking for ways to raise community awareness and have further conversations around the robustness of the sewerage system, how events such as the February floods can impact the system, and the design decisions made by water corporations to best balance the financial burden on customers that comes with building a system that can better manage extreme rain events.

OUR RETAIL WATER CUSTOMERS

Melbourne Water collaborated closely this year with retail water businesses City West Water, South East Water, Yarra Valley Water and Western Water and regional water businesses such as Southern Rural Water, Gippsland Water and Barwon Water.

Work on the next Water Plan is well underway and our planning aims to meet the needs of a growing Melbourne and those of the retail water businesses to supply customers. We meet regularly with the retail water businesses to share information and views on one another's work and planning.

In addition, we are working with the metropolitan retail water businesses on the *Water Supply Demand Strategy*, due in March 2012. This 50-year strategy aims to balance the supply of water to meet Melbourne's residential, business and environmental needs.

Melbourne Water, South East Water and Southern Rural Water are developing an *Integrated Water Management Strategy*. The South East Water-led strategy, which includes a stakeholder reference group, aims to provide people in the south-east with a sustainable

Actions within our Stakeholder Engagement Strategy continue to increase our employees' understanding of the value of good communications and engagement and increase their capacity to deliver it on behalf of their projects and programs



Far left: Melbourne Main Sewer Replacement (MMSR), Community engagement day

Left: Working with Registered Aboriginal Parties

mix of water solutions in urban and rural areas by considering every element of the water cycle.

Our work with City West Water in Melbourne's rapidly growing west included a project to supply Class A recycled water from our Western Treatment Plant to residents in Werribee West.

Sharper customer focus

During the year, we developed a plan to improve our customer service approach within the organisational culture, and review and identify potential process and system improvements.

A customer-focused culture is critical to achieving our vision of a sustainable water future and enabling us to better anticipate and meet customer needs. A *Customer Focus Strategy* will be implemented in 2012.

Expanding our online presence

As more people embrace digital communications, Melbourne Water continues to increase its online presence.

Overall traffic to the Melbourne Water website increased 83% this year to about 5.5 million visits. The website remained a key

destination for people wanting information on storage and river levels, especially following heavy rain. However, visits to our website on non-storm days have risen to about 10,000 per day.

Direct engagement with the community through social media (particularly Twitter) has created a new 'shop front' for us to answer questions, provide information and take part in discussions.

Our free iPhone application for storage levels has been updated several times since its launch in May 2010, and has been downloaded a total of 27,576 times.

CULTURAL HERITAGE

Melbourne Water continues to develop and deepen our relationship with Registered Aboriginal Parties (RAPs) and Traditional Owner groups.

To ensure we protect Aboriginal Heritage as we deliver our on-the-ground projects, we also work to hear and understand what is important to the Traditional Owners within the landscape. Melbourne Water regularly meets with all RAPs and we continue to co-develop education and training packages, through which we learn from each other.

COMMUNITY EDUCATION AND MONITORING

Edithvale-Seaford Wetlands Discovery Centre

Seven years after commissioning a feasibility study into a wetlands education facility in Melbourne's south-east, construction of the \$3 million Wetlands Discovery Centre at Edithvale is scheduled for completion in August 2011.

This world-class learning facility will provide school students and the general community with an opportunity to participate in practical, hands-on activities showcasing how the wetlands work, its plants and animals, and local, European and Indigenous history. The centrepiece will be a flight simulator that provides a dragonfly's-eye view of the wetland and how it functions.

Melbourne Water has worked with local schools and the Friends of Edithvale-Seaford Wetlands in the development of new education resources. Local schools will be invited to pilot the new wetlands curriculum before the official launch of the education program, which will coincide with the start of the new school year in 2012.

The Discovery Centre has been built to strict environmentally sustainable guidelines and in accordance with the Edithvale-Seaford Wetlands Ramsar Management Plan to ensure the ecological values of the wetlands are protected. The facility provides Melbourne Water with an opportunity to improve community understanding and appreciation about the importance of the wetlands, and the actions people can take to help protect this wonderful natural asset.

Educating and engaging youth

Melbourne Water maintains its commitment to engaging younger people through sponsoring the annual Kids Teaching Kids Conference.

More than 450 students and teachers from a record 52 schools participated in the 2011 conference. This year's theme, 'Waterways Superhero', encouraged students to think and act locally to improve waterway health.

ENERGY AND WATER OMBUDSMAN

The Energy and Water Ombudsman (Victoria) investigates and resolves disputes between Victorians and their energy and water service providers. Melbourne Water is one of 22 Victorian water businesses that are members of the scheme.

This year we responded to 30 investigated cases, three more cases than the previous year. Inquiries covered issues including maintenance and clearing of land over easements, drainage maintenance, drainage charge, flood management, jetty access, land access and property damage.

We are working to resolve two of these cases that remain open, both relating to flooding.