Where does my water come from?

Where is South East Water’s service area?

South East Water provides water, sewerage and recycled water services to over 1.6 million residential, commercial and industrial customers across Melbourne’s south east – from Port Melbourne to Portsea, and Parkdale to some 30 kilometres east of Pakenham.

We purchase water from our wholesaler, Melbourne Water, which is responsible for harvesting, storing and treating water prior to its arrival in our system.

What makes the water so good?

Once the water is chlorinated and enters the water distribution network, it does not see the light of day again until it comes out of your tap. This ensures that the water cannot become contaminated as it travels through the large network of tanks and pipes to your house.

To maintain the aesthetic quality of our water supply, South East Water has 21 secondary disinfection plants to provide a more balanced level of chlorine and to minimise fluctuations that occur with changing demand and water temperature.

South East Water takes more than 8,000 samples every year to ensure the water we supply is of the highest quality. We report these results to the Department of Health and publish them on our website. You can view these results in our annual report or visit southeastwater.com.au/waterquality

Where does my water come from?

A great deal happens behind the scenes to ensure that each time our customers turn on the tap, they enjoy good quality water.

A large proportion of our drinking water comes from protected or uninhabited mountain ash forests high in the Yarra Ranges, east of Melbourne, where more than 157,000 hectares have been reserved for the primary purpose of harvesting water. These water supply catchments were set aside more than 100 years ago to supply high quality water that requires minimal treatment. The catchments are managed by Melbourne Water and Parks Victoria. Melbourne is one of five major cities in the world that has protected catchments.

For more information, visit southeastwater.com.au/waterquality or contact our team on 131 694.
From the uppermost catchments, water flows into the Thomson and Upper Yarra reservoirs, where water may be stored for many years before being used. Holding the water for a long period allows the sediments from the forests, washed in by the rain, to settle, providing natural purification. Water from the upper reservoirs is then transferred to Silvan and Cardinia reservoirs. Upon leaving the reservoirs, it is disinfected using chlorine to kill potentially harmful microorganisms, thereby maintaining public health. The water is also fluoridated to improve dental health – a requirement of the Health (Fluoridation) Act 1973 – and corrected for pH by the addition of lime to increase and maintain it at a neutral level of 7 to 7.5.

South East Water’s area is also supplied by two water filtration plants Tarago and Winneke. The Winneke Water Treatment Plant (WTP) is located at Sugarloaf Reservoir. Water stored in Sugarloaf Reservoir is harvested from both the Yarra River at Yering Gorge as well as the Maroondah Aqueduct. The water is filtered before being chlorinated, fluoridated and pH adjusted.

The Tarago WTP is a state-of-the-art Dissolved Air Flotation and Filtration (DAFF) and ultraviolet (UV) disinfection water treatment plant. Water from the Tarago WTP is fed directly into South East Water’s supply system via the Tarago Westernport Pipeline.

What is the role of the desalination plant in our water supply system?

The Victorian Desalination Plant, capable of converting 150 billion litres of sea water to drinking water each year, has been constructed to provide Melbourne and some regional areas with a rainfall-independent source of water. Millions of people around Australia and the world are drinking and using desalinated water. Every major coastal capital city in Australia has desalinated water available to them. The Victorian Desalination Plant’s water quality is very high and complements Melbourne’s current water supplies. The State Government can place an order for water from the desalination plant to be supplied through the water network, if required.

As with all water in the Melbourne water supply system, desalinated water meets the requirements of the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines, Victorian health requirements and World Health Organisation guidelines.

For more information about South East Water’s supply system, refer to our Annual Drinking Water Quality Report at southeastwater.com.au

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