

**South East Water
Price Submission**

Panel Report

4 December 2021

Remit

Water is essential to all of us, and our community has different needs and expectations regarding our water and sewerage services.

How should we balance differing community needs and cost our services effectively for current and future communities?

Introduction

In late September of 2021, 50 of 10,000 South East Water customers were selected to be a part of the South East Water Price Submission Community Panel. The panel is composed of various demographics that encompass the consumer base of South East Water.

Through 7 full day zoom sessions from October to December, we were provided with detailed and in depth information from a range of sources to give us a deeper understanding and inform our price submission decisions for 2023-2028.

Our remit underpinning our recommendations is “How should we balance differing community needs and cost our services effectively for current and future communities?”

We were given time and support to consider and discuss information and ideas, weigh up issues and agree on recommendations.

Recommendation 1

Heading	<p><i>What would best describe the experience we want in a few key words?</i></p> <p>Water security (quality and quantity) achieved sustainably for now and the future.</p>
Description of experience	<p><i>What sort of service (more, less, same or different) do you want and why is this important? Provide any evidence to support?</i></p> <p>Increase SEW's commitment to providing alternative water sources for current and future generations in a sustainable and cost effective manner. Recommend installing a system that uses alternative water sources where practical.</p>
What is success?	<p><i>How would we know if this was successful?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased uptake and installation of alternative water systems where practical. • Increased alternative water use by customers that already have access to alternative water. • Develop a strategy to connect (the highest amount possible) properties to alternative water.
What should happen?	<p><i>What should be offered to people if this experience is not met by South East Water?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SEW needs to continually monitor the status and act with urgency should the need arise. • If alternate water usage isn't increasing, provide an explanation as to why.

Recommendation 2

Heading	<i>What would best describe the experience we want in a few key words?</i> Reliable service across the whole network
Description of experience	<i>What sort of service (more, less, same or different) do you want and why is this important? Provide any evidence to support?</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Increase spending on proactive planned maintenance and upgrades to systems and processes to reduce unplanned disruptions.● Stricter targets on disruptions (fewer disruptions).● Environmentally sustainable materials and processes are prioritised and implemented where the benefits outweigh the costs and they are not cost prohibitive
What is success?	<i>How would we know if this was successful?</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Reduced unplanned disruptions to our sewage and water supply in a cost-effective way.
What should happen?	<i>What should be offered to people if this experience is not met by South East Water?</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Current consumers compensation for sewer spills is maintained at \$1500.● Consideration be given to compensating affected businesses.

Recommendation 3:

Heading	<p><i>What would best describe the experience we want in a few key words?</i></p> <p><i>Water Security Awareness</i></p>
Description of experience	<p><i>What sort of service (more, less, same or different) do you want and why is this important? Provide any evidence to support?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Educating all demographics (as well as future generations ie schools) about the importance of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ water supply, ○ water wastage and disposal, ○ water as a valuable but finite resource ○ alternative water reducing strain on the network.
What is success?	<p><i>How would we know if this was successful?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Success will be determined on the efficient water usage of the average household over a period of time (SEW to determine time frame dependent on campaign).
What should happen?	<p><i>What should be offered to people if this experience is not met by South East Water?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> € Survey/Questionnaires to be sent out to measure level of awareness. SEW to report on these findings. ● SEW to report on what they are doing in regards to education within the community (ensuring efficiency and the costing of that education is effective)

Recommendation 4:

Heading	<p><i>What would best describe the experience we want in a few key words?</i></p> <p>Bill to be clear, simple (easy to navigate) and transparent</p>
Description of experience	<p><i>What sort of service (more, less, same or different) do you want and why is this important? Provide any evidence to support?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Provide facts/tips in every bill for all account holders usage ● Customers should be encouraged to receive electronic bills- those who don't have access to technology still receive paper bill ● Accessibility to all customers, e.g all languages, ability, and age etc.
What is success?	<p><i>How would we know if this was successful?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reduction in complaints received from customers related to satisfaction or understanding of their bill ● An increase in customers receiving electronic bills. ● The bill is easily understood and navigated by all customer groups.
What should happen?	<p><i>What should be offered to people if this experience is not met by South East Water?</i></p> <p>Utilise complaint data to improve the bill format.</p>

Recommendation 5:

Heading	<p><i>What would best describe the experience we want in a few key words?</i></p> <p>Digital Meter Rollout</p>
Description of experience	<p><i>What sort of service (more, less, same or different) do you want and why is this important? Provide any evidence to support?</i></p> <p>Replacing all meters with digital meters over 5 years</p> <p>Ongoing communication (through the use of an app, SMS or other appropriate method according to customers' circumstance) of accurate, insightful data, and timely notification of any faults or leakages.</p> <p>Facilitation of flexible payment terms.</p>
What is success?	<p><i>How would we know if this was successful?</i></p> <p>Meters are rolled out within the time frame.</p> <p>Consumers receive timely notification of leakages or disruptions.</p> <p>SEW to identify benefit targets for consumers and the network due to digital meter installations. Water wastage across the network drops.</p>
What should happen?	<p><i>What should be offered to people if this experience is not met by South East Water?</i></p> <p>Transparent communication between SEW and customers regarding why rollout targets are not met.</p>

Recommendation 6

Heading	<p><i>What would best describe the experience we want in a few key words?</i> Effective and Efficient Communication</p>
Description of experience	<p><i>What sort of service (more, less, same or different) do you want and why is this important? Provide any evidence to support?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Continue to receive communication via bills (paper or e-bill). ● Ability to opt in or out of email communication by SEW for those with an online account. ● Email notifications of works happening before, during and after disruptions. In addition, paper and text message notices for planned disruptions, and text message alerts for unplanned disruptions.
What is success?	<p><i>How would we know if this was successful?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reduced complaints as customers have been notified well in advance.
What should happen?	<p><i>What should be offered to people if this experience is not met by South East Water?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> € Assurance to the customer that water is suitable for use again. ● Discount on the next bill for substantial inconvenience as a result of no communication (eg a week with no water).

Recommendation 7

Heading	<p><i>What would best describe the experience we want in a few key words?</i></p> <p>Delivery of innovative and best service methodology by SEW.</p>
Description of experience	<p><i>What sort of service (more, less, same or different) do you want and why is this important? Provide any evidence to support?</i></p> <p>To ensure that the delivery of the service and the methodology of that delivery is leading edge and best practice.</p> <p>Aims for innovation:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Security of water supply 2 Sustainable delivery of all services (e.g water and sewerage) <p>Innovation may include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3 Recycling options 4 Become a leader in the use of smart technology 5 Make use of innovative communication technology 6 Benchmarking and aspiration toward best practice in comparison to like providers.
What is success?	<p><i>How would we know if this was successful?</i></p> <p>Water and sewerage service delivery is provided with the appropriate mix of sources with the latest technology including established areas.</p> <p>Information and education is undertaken making use of any technological advancements made.</p> <p>They compare favorably to other utility providers aiming for best practice.</p> <p>Delivery of environmental/R&D type projects.</p>
What should happen?	<p><i>What should be offered to people if this experience is not met by South East Water?</i></p> <p>Funding of third party environmental/R&D type projects outside of SEW.</p>

Recommendation 8

Heading	<p><i>What would best describe the experience we want in a few key words?</i></p> <p>Affordable and accessible service.</p>
Description of experience	<p><i>What sort of service (more, less, same or different) do you want and why is this important? Provide any evidence to support?</i></p> <p>Continue providing bill relief to customers on a needs basis. Review tiered pricing for commercial and high water usage customers only. Create a fund to help support vulnerable customers when in need (optional participation).</p> <p>SEW continues to work with community panels/groups to gain feedback from consumers to understand why they are unable to pay their bills and how SEW can better assist them during times of need.</p>
What is success?	<p><i>How would we know if this was successful?</i></p> <p>Positive feedback received from customers who require assistance. <i>Having established a fund to assist/help the vulnerable.</i> <i>A reduction of unpaid bills.</i></p> <p>Reasonable/affordable price increases.</p>
What should happen?	<p><i>What should be offered to people if this experience is not met by South East Water?</i></p> <p>Explanation of why services were not delivered/met via digital or other means. Compensation to customer /penalty to SEW for substantial delivery failures and interruptions.</p>

Minority Reports

A note on minority reports:

- *Written by at least 3 people*
- *Two or less want to say something = separate submission to South East Water*
- *Not to exceed one page in length – follows the format in our report*

Minority Report 1:

Heading	<i>What would best describe the experience we want in a few key words? (3-5 words)</i> Recycled water for agriculture and business.
Description	<i>What sort of service (more, less, same or different) do you want and why is this important? Provide any evidence to support? (3-4 sentences)</i> Utilization of the recycled water available through the Eastern Treatment plant for use by agriculture and food processing businesses within the Outer South East Region of Melbourne and Western/Southern Gippsland (eg: pipeline).
Recommendation on this relates to (if applicable)	<i>List the recommendation number or name this relates to - if applicable.</i> Recommendation 1: Water security (quality and quantity) achieved sustainably for now and the future.

Minority Report 2:

Heading	<i>What would best describe the experience we want in a few key words?</i> Green House Gases
Description	<i>What sort of service (more, less, same or different) do you want and why is this important? Provide any evidence to support?</i> Continue making it a priority to reduce greenhouse gas emissions rather than just buying credits
Recommendations this relates to (if applicable)	<i>List the recommendation number or name this relates to - if applicable.</i> This is related to these recommendations: 1 – water security 2 – Service reliability 7 - Innovation