

Water price review 2023

Submission received through Engage Victoria

Date submitted: 1 May 2023

Water business: Barwon Water

Submission written by: Mary Lush

Postcode: 3127

In December 2022, we began accepting submissions on our 2023 water price review draft decisions via Engage Victoria (www.engage.vic.gov.au). On this website, people were given the option to send us general feedback or respond to questions we provided.

1. What do you think of our draft decision on the prices proposed by your water business?

ESC is required to have regard for 'environmental sustainability (including water conservation)'. There is little evidence of that regard being exercised. Harvesting and delivering water comes at a substantial environmental cost. That cost will not decrease if climate change results in a general drying in the Barwon Water management area. Point 1 in any harm minimisation scheme is to reduce use of the resource in question. At the current rates there is precious little incentive to reduce water use. You have lowered that incentive further. Lorne is unusual in Barwon Water's region in that it is supplied from a single source, the Allen Reservoir on the St George River. The reservoir is forecast to become inadequate anytime from 2027 onwards. Barwon Water does not have a strong environmental record with this reservoir, and things will get worse if the dam is raised (one option for increasing supply). There is no provision for environmental flows. Paradoxically there was provision for environmental flow many years ago when Lorne's water source was on the Erskine River. Barwon Water does not acknowledge that they have any environmental responsibilities outside their immediate management zone. They have declined to assist with one form of environmental monitoring (Australian Platypus Monitoring Network), although platypus are present and are a threatened species. Their reasons for doing so appear to be cost related. The Moorabool River is one of the most degraded rivers in Victoria. Could Barwon

Water do more to arrest its degradation if more money was available? Preservation, conservation and restoration cost money.

2. What do you think of our draft decision on the business performance and their future service commitments?

As a Barwon Water customer I would not object to a price rise.

3. Is there anything else we should consider before we make a final price review decision?

What about the relatively new term 'General Environmental Duty' (GED)? This has been incorporated into some legislation. To what extent do you recognise broad environmental responsibilities and allow water managers to include them as costs?

