



# Response to draft recommendations

Pricing Submission 2023-2028



1300 363 200  
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The following responses are to the Draft Recommendations made by the Community Panel on Saturday 5 March 2022.

To help read the document there is an overview of the headings below.

**What you said**

This is the recommendation that you have made, it has not been altered by us.

**What we understand this to mean**

This is how we have interpreted the meaning or intent of the recommendation.

**How we would use this**

This is how we believe we could use the recommendation to help shape the pricing submission, or as a general area of focus for the future.

| What you said                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | What we understand this to mean                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | How we would use this                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
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| <b>Intergenerational equity/debt</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <p><b>Recommendation 1</b></p> <p>We support an equitable increase to billing for both today’s community and future generations.</p> <p><b>Description</b></p> <p>In order to avoid unnecessary burden and deferment of cost to future generations, we acknowledge we need to take responsibility for the current financial position and therefore incur a rise in water costs to open investment opportunities and allow future generations to respond to unknown circumstances. The alternative is leaving future generations with little choice but to shoulder heavy debt</p> <p>Equitable means starting to deal with this debt now and ensuring that the cost burdens of intergenerational debt are equitably allocated.</p> <p>Noting the compounding nature of debt, it would be fair that a greater increase is born by today’s generation</p> | <p>We understand this recommendation supports an increase in prices so that debt levels can rise more modestly. The mid-point of the Bill Simulator resulted in smooth price increases of approximately ~10% over 5 years above inflation.</p> <p>We understand the panel is requesting that future assets be funded over the life of the assets.</p> <p>As per comment from the panel, there is a desire for us to ensure customers experiencing vulnerability are protected from cost increases.</p> | <p>Our base assumption would be to increase prices by 10% over five years for the purposes of intergenerational equity. This would improve Coliban Water’s financial position by approximately \$50 million, and improve our cash flows by about \$15 million per year by 2028. This would significantly improve financial resilience and ability to deal with future unknown impacts of climate change and potential asset failures. As we seek to invest \$400 to \$500 million in capital expenditure over the next 5 years, a price increase needs to be borne by today’s customers to better manage future debt loads.</p> <p>Subject to balancing costs and debt levels, and to mitigate price increases, we will endeavour to continue to utilise long term debt to fund new long term assets over the lives of those new assets.</p> <p>It is noted that this annual price increase for an average customer is \$27 per year (about 52 cents a week).</p> <p>Our response to this recommendation provides some protection for customers experiencing vulnerability by reducing future costs. However specific support for customers experiencing vulnerability, such as enhanced hardship support, is covered in other recommendations.</p> |
| <p><b>Recommendation 2</b></p> <p><b>Description</b></p> <p>Since debt equals assets in this situation, there is no possibility or need to pay it back in full within any timeframe. Coliban is not paying back the Principal, but the interest on each asset over its lifetime.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | <p>As per comment from panel, this recommendation to be rolled into recommendation #1.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <p><b>Recommendation 3</b></p> <p><b>(no longer a recommendation)</b></p> <p>Combination of immediate price increases and debt restructuring to ensure that the cost burdens of intergenerational debt are equitably allocated.</p> <p><b>Description</b></p> <p>Any funding actions taken must be seen to be fair and reasonable to all consumers. When funding assets with long lifespans, a combination of immediate price increases and future borrowings should be considered in order to spread the cost burden across all generations of ratepayers that will be serviced by the asset.</p> <p>When opportunities arise to restructure existing debt in order to capitalise on more favourable financing arrangements they should be considered with priority within the broader context of Coliban’s financial planning.</p>                    | <p>As per comment from panel, this recommendation to be rolled into recommendation #1.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |

| What you said                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | What we understand this to mean                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | How we would use this                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
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| <b>Community Contributions</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <p><b>Recommendation 4</b></p> <p>Coliban expand upon existing community contribution and Collaboration</p> <p><b>Description</b></p> <p>Coliban can expand their support by leveraging the things they are good at to include furthering local community projects.</p> <p>Coliban to collaborate with private sector entities to show them how they could reduce water usage.</p> | <p>We understand that the panel is seeking Coliban Water to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Further assist/collaborate in local community projects where we can contribute items or provide advice which are in our area of expertise.</li><li>• Engage with large water-use customers to assist in identifying how the customer can reduce their water usage.</li></ul> <p>Note: The suggested success factors don’t appear to directly link to these two items so have not been addressed in this recommendation. Community projects are also identified in Recommendation 5.</p> | <p>Participate in community or other stakeholder’s projects/programs/events to provide advice, information/education, or materials/booklets and promote the use of water saving appliances.</p> <p>Via our Digital meter program, we can analyse large industrial customer usage patterns and identify significant leaks or other unusual usage patterns. This may lead to water savings which benefit our customers/community as well as saving money for the specific customer.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <p><b>Recommendation 5</b></p> <p>Coliban should be a leader in the provision of water for community benefit</p> <p><b>Description</b></p> <p>Coliban need to convey clearly and in a transparent manner their role in community contributions alongside other agencies and community groups</p>                                                                                   | <p>We understand that the panel wishes Coliban Water to lead and collaborate with local government and other organisations to provide community benefits as they relate to water, and promote what we are doing in this space more broadly.</p> <p>We understand that the panel is supportive of Option 4 in the bill simulator, which implies a smooth price increase of 1.5% over 5 years at an additional cost of \$1.2 million beyond any price increases applied for other recommendations.</p>                                                                                             | <p>We could consider a combination of the following projects or programs:<br/>(note that a list of projects and their costings was provided in the response to panel Day 2 Questions)</p> <p>Increased contribution to Liveability and education:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Engage a Green &amp; Active Communities Coordinator to work with local government, public open space managers and large customers to deliver better outcomes (link to Recommendation 4)</li><li>• Expand our kinder, school and/or community education programs.</li></ul> <p>Water is available and the drink of choice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Increase the number of permanent water bubbler/bottle refill units for use in public spaces.</li><li>• Engage with venues to participate in a “Refiller Campaign” to promote water as a drink of choice by showing that water bottles can be refilled at their venue.</li><li>• Increase our fleet of bottle refill and bubbler units for community events.</li><li>• Expand the scope of the reusable water bottle program which uses metal bottles instead of plastic.</li><li>• Investigate other opportunities to support community events such as misting systems for hot days.</li></ul> <p>Water security and improve liveability:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Continue or expand our discounted water program for public open space aimed at keeping and increasing green spaces, improving water efficiency, and assist in identifying alternative water source options.</li><li>• Expand our collaboration with local government to:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ encourage more Water Sensitive Urban Design solutions by developers to save water and provide for urban cooling.</li><li>○ apply integrated water management principles within their sphere of influence and control.</li></ul></li><li>• Support Traditional Owners to realise their aspirations</li></ul> <p>Ecological Services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Improve wildlife corridors along the Coliban Main Channel.</li><li>• Increase and/or improve native vegetation on our land</li><li>• Construct a bird hide adjacent to the Bendigo WRP</li></ul> |

| What you said                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | What we understand this to mean                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | How we would use this                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                 |                               |                                 |    |                                                          |              |     |    |                                                     |                 |           |    |                                                                    |                 |            |    |                                                             |                 |           |    |                                                    |                 |                |    |                                                     |                  |              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
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| <b>Community Contributions</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                 |                               |                                 |    |                                                          |              |     |    |                                                     |                 |           |    |                                                                    |                 |            |    |                                                             |                 |           |    |                                                    |                 |                |    |                                                     |                  |              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>Recommendation 6</b><br>Customer’s choice and ability to directly contribute to community projects.<br><br><b>Description</b><br>Utilising the power of online billing, having a check-box for an additional payment going toward the elected community project. Specifying what past/present/future projects are being contributed by voluntary fundraising to encourage/motivate future donations. | <p>We understand that the panel is seeking us to include an option in online billing to allow customers to select from a list of CW-nominated community-benefit projects to voluntarily contribute money towards. Also considered a good way to inform customers on what CW is doing in this area.</p> <p>We would seek confirmation from the panel that that we still continue to provide direct financial support to customers experiencing vulnerability and for other community programs. We interpret this option as not cancelling other support programs that we have in place.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | <p>The viability of this suggestion requires some investigation and consideration.</p> <p>We could explore how such a program could work, including other concepts for customers to provide additional payments for.</p> <p>However, there are some issues that would require consideration before we commit to this:</p> <p>What if insufficient funds are raised – where does the money go?</p> <p>How successful would such a scheme be when more customers are taking up email billing and direct debit?</p> <p>Would customers providing funds expect to influence the project?</p> <p>Who would get to choose the selected projects? Do they need to be water-related?</p> <p>Should the general customer base pay for the cost of implementing this system?</p> <p>Different levels of funding, and what that means?</p> <p>Should we investigate a water equivalent of “Green Energy”?</p> |                                 |                               |                                 |    |                                                          |              |     |    |                                                     |                 |           |    |                                                                    |                 |            |    |                                                             |                 |           |    |                                                    |                 |                |    |                                                     |                  |              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>Protecting against drought</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                 |                               |                                 |    |                                                          |              |     |    |                                                     |                 |           |    |                                                                    |                 |            |    |                                                             |                 |           |    |                                                    |                 |                |    |                                                     |                  |              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>Recommendation 7</b><br>Adequate expenditure to drought proofing<br><br><b>Description</b><br>Coliban must be the lead agency in developing a regional water security/drought strategy. (Coliban must first identify all relevant partners)<br><br>Coliban to ensure cost is factored in, to better prepare our infrastructure for drought.                                                          | <p>We understand that the panel recommends that we take the lead in our community and work with stakeholders to ensure our communities are prepared for drought.</p> <p>We understand the panel recommends that water resource and drought plans are adequately resourced and funded and understands this comes with higher costs.</p> <p>However, there is a cost impact of increasing our drought preparedness. As outlined in information provided to the panel after Day 2, the costs and bill increases of the options are:</p> <table><tr><th>Bill option</th><th>Descriptor</th><th>Quarterly bill impact (Owner)</th><th>Annual cost of program (change)</th></tr><tr><td>#1</td><td>Much higher chance of water restrictions during droughts</td><td>\$0.00 (Nil)</td><td>Nil</td></tr><tr><td>#2</td><td>Higher chance of water restrictions during droughts</td><td>+\$0.36 (+0.1%)</td><td>+\$80,000</td></tr><tr><td>#3</td><td>Use of groundwater in some towns to avoid/delay water restrictions</td><td>+\$0.90 (+0.3%)</td><td>+\$250,000</td></tr><tr><td>#4</td><td>Slightly lower chance of water restrictions during droughts</td><td>+\$1.80 (+0.5%)</td><td>\$500,000</td></tr><tr><td>#5</td><td>Lower chance of water restrictions during droughts</td><td>+\$5.39 (+1.6%)</td><td>+\$1.2 million</td></tr><tr><td>#6</td><td>Lowest chance of water restrictions during droughts</td><td>+\$17.98 (+5.4%)</td><td>+\$4 million</td></tr></table> | Bill option                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Descriptor                      | Quarterly bill impact (Owner) | Annual cost of program (change) | #1 | Much higher chance of water restrictions during droughts | \$0.00 (Nil) | Nil | #2 | Higher chance of water restrictions during droughts | +\$0.36 (+0.1%) | +\$80,000 | #3 | Use of groundwater in some towns to avoid/delay water restrictions | +\$0.90 (+0.3%) | +\$250,000 | #4 | Slightly lower chance of water restrictions during droughts | +\$1.80 (+0.5%) | \$500,000 | #5 | Lower chance of water restrictions during droughts | +\$5.39 (+1.6%) | +\$1.2 million | #6 | Lowest chance of water restrictions during droughts | +\$17.98 (+5.4%) | +\$4 million | <p>Ensure our long term plans prepare us and our communities for drought.</p> <p>Work with stakeholders to ensure plans are aligned for managing drought. Continue to engage with our customers to understand their expectations around drought preparedness and water restrictions.</p> <p>Increase expenditure on water resource management actions by implementing Urban Water Strategy actions and ensuring Annual Operating Plans include genuine investment in infrastructure ahead of the next drought.</p> <p>Ensure we understand the needs of Traditional Owners and return water to them where appropriate.</p> |
| Bill option                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Descriptor                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Quarterly bill impact (Owner)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Annual cost of program (change) |                               |                                 |    |                                                          |              |     |    |                                                     |                 |           |    |                                                                    |                 |            |    |                                                             |                 |           |    |                                                    |                 |                |    |                                                     |                  |              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| #1                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Much higher chance of water restrictions during droughts                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | \$0.00 (Nil)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Nil                             |                               |                                 |    |                                                          |              |     |    |                                                     |                 |           |    |                                                                    |                 |            |    |                                                             |                 |           |    |                                                    |                 |                |    |                                                     |                  |              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| #2                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Higher chance of water restrictions during droughts                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | +\$0.36 (+0.1%)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | +\$80,000                       |                               |                                 |    |                                                          |              |     |    |                                                     |                 |           |    |                                                                    |                 |            |    |                                                             |                 |           |    |                                                    |                 |                |    |                                                     |                  |              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| #3                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Use of groundwater in some towns to avoid/delay water restrictions                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | +\$0.90 (+0.3%)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | +\$250,000                      |                               |                                 |    |                                                          |              |     |    |                                                     |                 |           |    |                                                                    |                 |            |    |                                                             |                 |           |    |                                                    |                 |                |    |                                                     |                  |              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| #4                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Slightly lower chance of water restrictions during droughts                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | +\$1.80 (+0.5%)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | \$500,000                       |                               |                                 |    |                                                          |              |     |    |                                                     |                 |           |    |                                                                    |                 |            |    |                                                             |                 |           |    |                                                    |                 |                |    |                                                     |                  |              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| #5                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Lower chance of water restrictions during droughts                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | +\$5.39 (+1.6%)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | +\$1.2 million                  |                               |                                 |    |                                                          |              |     |    |                                                     |                 |           |    |                                                                    |                 |            |    |                                                             |                 |           |    |                                                    |                 |                |    |                                                     |                  |              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| #6                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Lowest chance of water restrictions during droughts                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | +\$17.98 (+5.4%)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | +\$4 million                    |                               |                                 |    |                                                          |              |     |    |                                                     |                 |           |    |                                                                    |                 |            |    |                                                             |                 |           |    |                                                    |                 |                |    |                                                     |                  |              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |

| What you said                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | What we understand this to mean                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | How we would use this                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
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| <p><b>Supporting customers experiencing vulnerability</b></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <p><b>Recommendation 8</b></p> <p>Extend financial support programs for customers experiencing hardship.</p> <p><b>Description</b></p> <p>Ensure all customers are aware of any financial support or assistance that may be available by clearly providing information on the bill. Increase awareness through partnerships with support agencies.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                          | <p>We understand that the panel has identified a need to increase awareness of the financial support and assistance for customers experiencing vulnerability.</p> <p>The panel has suggested that work to increase awareness may be achieved through a combination of promotion directly to the customer base, as well as promotion with agencies that work with people in need of support (i.e. Uniting, Anglicare, Salvation Army, Haven Homes, Centre of Non-Violence).</p> <p>That the panel recommends an increase in funding to support customers experiencing vulnerability without being prescriptive as to the amount of funding.</p>                                                                               | <p>We are aware of the need to be better informing potential customers and support agencies of the support we provide customers experiencing vulnerability. This recommendation is aligned with this self-identified need</p> <p>Increase the funding available to ensure customers experiencing vulnerability are protected from any price increases. While the recommendation does not yet prescribe the level of funding increase, we would first consider whether doubling of the program would achieve the outcome. As per the Bill Simulator, an increase of 0.2% (\$0.70 per quarter on the average bill) would enable funding to double from \$285,000 to \$570,000 per year.</p> <p>Note #1: the description of this recommendation requests that all customers be aware of financial support. We would suggest that the target of all may be difficult to achieve. We wholeheartedly agree that improved awareness is key. Setting a target that is both challenging but realistic may be set by the organisation as part of finalising the Pricing Submission.</p> <p>Note #2: We currently promote the available financial support and assistance across a variety of formats, including the bill, customer newsletter and social media, as well as through stakeholder meetings with support agencies.</p> |
| <p><b>Recommendation 9</b></p> <p>Increase education about CW services for Customers Experiencing Vulnerability</p> <p><b>Description</b></p> <p>There is a concern that there is not enough awareness of the services Coliban provides to customers experiencing vulnerability. Further, it would increase customer’s trust and belief in CW’s culture statement to let its customers know its commitment for people experiencing vulnerability, as its Coliban Assist Program shows it is a caring and community orientated organisation.</p> | <p>We understand that the panel has identified a need to increase awareness of the financial support and assistance for customers experiencing vulnerability. That Coliban Water should promote the program more broadly as a positive commitment that it has to supporting customers in need.</p> <p>The panel has suggested that work to increase awareness may be achieved through a combination of promotion directly to the customer base, as well as promotion with agencies that work with people in need of support. (i.e. Uniting, Anglicare, Salvation Army, Haven Homes, Centre of Non-Violence)</p> <p>This recommendation does not propose any additional funding be made available for education purposes.</p> | <p>We are aware of the need to be better informing potential customers and support agencies of the support we provide customers experiencing vulnerability. This recommendation is aligned with this self-identified need</p> <p>In the event that the panel recommended additional funding for education and engagement with agencies that support customers in need, then we could significantly expand our engagement with these agencies.</p> <p>Note #1: the description of this recommendation requests that all customers be aware of financial support. We would suggest that the target of all may be difficult to achieve. We wholeheartedly agree that improved awareness is key. Setting a target that is both challenging but realistic may be set by the organisation as part of finalising the Pricing Submission.</p> <p>Note #2: We currently promote the available financial support and assistance across a variety of formats, including the bill, customer newsletter and social media, as well as through stakeholder meetings with support agencies.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <p><b>Recommendation 10</b></p> <p>Voluntary Contribution Option to Support Vulnerable Customers</p> <p><b>Description</b></p> <p>We would like CW to provide an option on the bill so customers can voluntarily contribute extra: this may include specific projects that target people experiencing hardship because of natural disasters, COVID 19, or domestic violence. This would increase the available funds to support the vulnerable without necessarily increasing bills for all customers.</p>                                      | <p>We understand this to mean that Coliban Water has insufficient funds to support customers experiencing vulnerability.</p> <p>The perceived short-fall would be resolved via an innovative (crowd-sourcing and / or donation) approach.</p> <p>We would seek confirmation from the panel that that we still continue to provide direct financial support to customers experiencing vulnerability. We interpret this option as not cancelling other support programs that we have in place.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | <p>The viability of this suggestion requires some investigation and consideration.</p> <p>We note there are opportunities for customers to make tax deductible donations to local support agencies supporting customers in need.</p> <p>We need to understand the regulatory implications of this recommendation.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |

| What you said                                                                                                                              | What we understand this to mean                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | How we would use this                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
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| Other                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <p><b>Recommendation 11</b></p> <p>Community Education</p>                                                                                 | <p>We understand that the panel is recommending that we increase community awareness with regard to how we:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Contribute to the community</li><li>• Support customers experiencing vulnerability</li><li>• Prepare for drought</li><li>• Combat climate change</li><li>• Invest in projects and assets</li><li>• Spend customers money (what a typical bill pays for)</li></ul> <p>This recommendation does not propose any additional funding be made available for education purposes.</p>                                                     | <p>We currently have an ongoing communications, engagement and education plan where we use established networks to communicate our story. We will review our program and consider its effectiveness and how to leverage these existing plans to focus on these topics, considering the different ways an audience digests information. Including a broad range of educational content available across multiple platforms.</p> <p>We will aim to target groups that are often under-represented in our research or engagement like culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) and indigenous communities.</p> <p>As this recommendation does not propose additional funding, we would continue to focus on these areas without providing additional dedicated staffing to achieve this.</p>                                                                                                      |
| <p><b>Recommendation 12</b></p> <p>Invest in innovations to ensure future water availability</p>                                           | <p>We Understand that the panel recommends that we collaborate with other water corporations to develop innovative ways to save water and improve the efficiency of the water supply system overall.</p> <p>This recommendation does not propose any additional funding be made available for innovation purposes We seek clarification on what level of additional investment (if any) should be made in this area.</p>                                                                                                                                                                   | <p>Increase our focus on improving the efficiency of our water supply systems through collaboration with other water corporations and industry bodies. Use innovation and new technologies to save water throughout our processes, reduce evaporation, improve storage, supply recycled water and other alternative water products. We will continue to use and build on the existing work we do with VicWater, Water Services Association Australia (WSAA) and Intelligent Water Networks (IWN) to see how new technologies and innovation can be applied.</p> <p>As this recommendation does not propose additional funding, we would continue to focus on these areas without providing additional dedicated staffing to achieve this.</p>                                                                                                                                                      |
| <p><b>Recommendation 13</b></p> <p>Develop opt-in options for customers to pay additional voluntary amounts to support future programs</p> | <p>We understand that the panel is seeking us to include an option in online billing to allow customers to select from a list of CW-nominated community-benefit projects to voluntarily contribute money towards. Also considered a good way to inform customers on what CW is doing in this area.</p> <p>We would seek confirmation from the panel that that we still continue to provide direct financial support to customers experiencing vulnerability and for other community programs. We interpret this option as not cancelling other support programs that we have in place.</p> | <p>The viability of this suggestion requires some investigation and consideration.</p> <p>We could explore how such a program could work, including other concepts for customers to provide additional payments for.</p> <p>However, there are some issues that would require consideration before we commit to this:</p> <p>What if insufficient funds are raised – where does the money go?</p> <p>How successful would such a scheme be when more customers are taking up email billing and direct debit?</p> <p>Would customers providing funds expect to influence the project?</p> <p>Who would get to choose the selected projects? Do they need to be water-related?</p> <p>Should the general customer base pay for the cost of implementing this system?</p> <p>Different levels of funding, and what that means?</p> <p>Should we investigate a water equivalent of “Green Energy”?</p> |