

Shaping the outcomes that matter most to our customers

2028-33 Price Submission

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As we work to prepare our Price Submission for 2028–2033 (PS28), we're talking with customers about the services, investments and improvements that matter most across our region.

Importantly, we're not starting from scratch.

Drawing on the engagement undertaken during the development and delivery of our 2023–2028 Price Submission, as well as regular interaction and engagement opportunities in recent years, including customer surveys, community forums, pop-ups and workshops, information sessions, customer service interactions and community submissions – we've gathered extensive feedback. In total we reviewed more than 100,000 customer interactions and responses to test whether the outcomes our customers identified in the past still reflect what matters most today.

What we've heard is clear: while customer needs evolve, the things people care about most remain consistent. Customers want reliable water services, a great customer experience, a healthy environment and a thriving region.

Industry regulator the Essential Services Commission (ESC) expects water corporations to develop Customer Outcomes that reflect the value customers want to receive and demonstrate how those outcomes have been shaped by customer engagement. Our proposed outcomes for PS28 build on what customers have already told us while reflecting changing community expectations and priorities.

Based on this research, we're proposing four Customer Outcomes for the next price period.

Customer Outcome 1: Water services you can trust

We safeguard service quality and reliability for our customers, now and into the future.

Customers have consistently told us they expect safe, reliable and high-quality water services. Whether they live in a town, run a business, manage a farm or are planning for the future, they want confidence that water will be there when they need it and that it will be safe to use. The feedback included comments such as:

"I would love to be able to turn on the tap and drink water with the knowledge I wasn't going to spend the next several hours on the toilet."

"Water is good, water pressure is good, no down time unless there is an emergency or planned disruption."

"Getting the best quality water to your tap."

Customers also told us they value clear communication when interruptions occur and want services restored as quickly as possible.

"All you've got to do is communicate."

These conversations reinforced the importance of safe drinking water, reliable supply, good pressure, water quality and long-term water security.

Customer Outcome 2: Easy to deal with

We are easy to reach, responsive, fair and respectful.

Customers have told us that how we deliver our services is just as important as the services themselves.

People want quick responses, clear communication and confidence that issues will be resolved without having to follow up repeatedly. We heard comments such as:

"Make sure they document every call and contact and follow up."

"Establish a callback system that is actually followed."

"Let us know if the water will be off or an estimate of how long it will be off for."

"Whenever there's been an issue in our area Coliban are quickly on the scene."

We also heard how important it is for customers to receive support when they need it.

"Sometimes that extra couple of weeks has been a bit of a lifesaver."

"They have helped me with my account when I find myself in financial difficulties and always have been very approachable."

"We did not know about the Utility Relief Grants ... All because of the Coliban team giving us such incredible service."

These insights helped shape an outcome focused on responsiveness, fairness, communication and support.

Customer Outcome 3: Environmentally responsible

We minimise our impact on the environment and champion sustainability.

Customers expect us to protect the natural environment while delivering essential water and sewer services. The research showed strong support for protecting waterways, wildlife and local ecosystems, while preventing environmental harm. Customers told us:

"It is great that Coliban is working with the local Landcare group on making the creek cleaner and good for the platypus."

"Ensure flow remains sufficient to support wildlife and riparian ecosystems."

"Continue release of treated wastewater to maintain platypus habitat."

We also heard interest in sustainability and helping the community use water wisely.

"Environmental flows, what you are doing towards sustainability, how you are reducing your emissions, how you plan to keep us water secure in a changing climate."

"Water saving tips."

"Regular requests for users to do their bit to contribute to water savings and nature conservation"

These themes confirmed that customers want us to act responsibly today while helping protect the environment for future generations.

Customer Outcome 4: Regional prosperity

We strengthen our local community by supporting the economic growth of our region and the wellbeing of our community.

Customers told us they want Coliban Water to make a positive contribution to the communities we serve.

This was reflected in feedback about local jobs, local suppliers and investment in infrastructure that supports growth and future generations. Customers said:

"Use local people."

"It is wonderful to speak to a local customer service team."

"They employ so many locals."

Customers also want confidence that we're investing wisely for the future.

"Supply and infrastructure for the future."

"Looking to see where the money is spent to ensure we get value for money."

"Continued upgrades is a good thing."

"We need better planning to secure water in droughts."

Together, this feedback shows that customers see Coliban Water as more than a utility provider. They see us as an organisation that can help support strong communities, local businesses and regional growth.

Key recommendations from our customers

Our customers have told us repeatedly through our engagement in recent years that Coliban Water should prepare for tomorrow while being fair to customers today. In general, customers support responsible investment in water security, infrastructure and long-term financial sustainability, while recognising the need to protect customers experiencing vulnerability and to communicate clearly about how customer money is spent.

- **Balance today's bills with future needs.** Customers support an equitable approach to intergenerational debt, recognising that delaying necessary investment could create a greater burden for future customers.
- **Invest in water security and drought resilience.** Customers recommend adequate expenditure to prepare for drought, population growth and a changing climate, including infrastructure and planning that helps ensure all communities have access to water.
- **Support customers experiencing hardship.** Customers recommend increased funding, stronger partnerships with support agencies and greater awareness of programs such as customer assistance, so people experiencing vulnerability can access help when they need it.
- **Be more visible in community contribution.** Customers encourage Coliban Water to continue and expand its role in community benefit, including education programs, water refill infrastructure, support for community events and collaboration with councils and other partners.
- **Explain how customer money is spent.** Customers want clearer, ongoing communication about investment in infrastructure, liveability, climate change response, support for vulnerable customers and community contributions.
- **Lead innovation and water efficiency.** Customers support investment in technologies and processes that improve leak detection, treatment, storage and efficient use of water resources.

These recommendations strongly align with the four proposed Customer Outcomes for PS28. They reinforce the importance of trusted water services, fair and responsive support, environmental responsibility and a strong contribution to regional prosperity. They also show that customers understand the trade-offs involved in price submissions and want to see transparent decisions that deliver long-term value for the whole region.

Performance review: how we are tracking

Our most recent Customer Outcomes Performance Report shows strong progress in delivering the outcomes customers asked us to focus on during the 2023–2028 price period. For 2025–26, Coliban Water's preliminary results indicate an overall **green** result, with **16 of 18 performance measures achieved and two measures close to target**, while customers participating in our Annual Customer Forum rated **all five Customer Outcomes as green overall**.

- **Water services remained reliable and high quality.** All five measures under this outcome met or exceeded target. There were zero Schedule 2 water quality non-compliances, pressure performance continued to improve across water supply systems, all 19 water supply systems achieved aesthetic water quality targets, customers experienced an average of just 7.04 minutes of unplanned water supply interruption, and no towns were subject to water restrictions beyond Permanent Water Saving Rules. Customers strongly endorsed this outcome and highlighted confidence in water quality, reliability and asset renewal programs.
- **Customer service continued to perform strongly.** Targets were achieved for leak notifications to customers with digital meters, planned outage notifications and digital billing uptake. Customers particularly valued digital metering technology and proactive leak alerts, with several participants sharing positive personal experiences of being notified quickly about unexpected water use. Communication and engagement were consistently identified as strengths.

- **Environmental performance remained strong.** Four of the five environmental measures met target, including biodiversity enhancement works, greenhouse gas reduction, catchment improvement works and water efficiency education. One measure relating to sewer main inspections and cleaning was below the annual target; however, customers generally accepted the result given strong overachievement in previous years and the explanation that performance should be considered across the three-year period. Customers expressed strong support for biodiversity programs, waterway protection and environmental stewardship initiatives.
- **Regional investment remained on track.** Local benefit criteria continued to be included in all open tenders and delivery of the Big Water Build capital program remained close to target. Customers strongly supported Coliban Water's commitment to local employment and regional procurement, recognising the benefits these investments bring to local communities and economic growth.
- **Support for customers in need continued to deliver positive outcomes.** Processing times for financial assistance requests significantly exceeded target, awareness of financial assistance programs remained strong and more than \$551,000 in assistance was provided through the Coliban Assist program. Customers praised the organisation's proactive and compassionate approach to supporting people experiencing financial hardship and encouraged ongoing efforts to build awareness of available assistance.

Customers were invited to review interim results at the Annual Customer Forum in June 2026. Their feedback strongly supported Coliban Water's performance, with all five Customer Outcomes receiving an overall green rating. A follow-up pulse check also showed overwhelmingly positive sentiment, with participants agreeing that Coliban Water is delivering trusted water services, responsive customer support, environmental responsibility, regional prosperity and assistance for customers in need.

This performance review gives us confidence that the proposed Customer Outcomes for 2028–2033 are grounded in areas that customers continue to value most: trusted water services, responsive and respectful customer experiences, environmental responsibility and regional prosperity. It also highlights opportunities for continued improvement, including strengthening awareness of support programs, communicating future water security planning and helping customers better understand the benefits delivered through environmental and regional investment initiatives.

Have we got it right?

Based on the research and feedback we've reviewed, we believe the four proposed Customer Outcomes for PS28 accurately capture the things that matter most to our customers now and into the future. They reflect priorities that were identified through our 2023–2028 Price Submission engagement program and have been reaffirmed through more recent research and analysis.

However, this is not the end of the conversation.

While we're confident these outcomes provide a strong foundation for our 2028–2033 Price Submission, we're still interested in hearing whether there are any important gaps, emerging issues or expectations we may have missed.

The feedback that helped shape these outcomes came directly from our customers, and we want to make sure the final outcomes continue to reflect what matters most to the people and communities we serve. After all, the best outcomes are not defined by us – they are defined by the customers and communities who rely on our services every day.