

Customer Assessment Panel

Terms of Reference 2024

Version No	1
Approved By	Executive Team
Approval Date	March 2024
Next Review Date	March 2025

1. Purpose:

Westernport Water recognises the importance of actively engaging with customers to enhance service delivery and meet the community's evolving needs. Establishment of a new performance management framework and Customer Assessment Panel (the Panel) aims to create a forum for meaningful dialogue between Westernport Water and its customers. The Panel will be empowered to rate Westernport Water's performance each year to provide commentary on Westernport Water's performance to accompany the Annual Watermark.

2. Objectives

The primary objectives of the Customer Assessment Panel are as follows:

- foster open communication between Westernport Water and its customers
- provide commentary on Westernport Water's performance against the Outcomes Framework
- enhance transparency and accountability in delivering on commitments to customers.

3. Role

The role of the Customer Assessment Panel is to assess and provide honest feedback to Westernport Water by:

- reviewing its performance against Price Submission customer outcomes
- rating its performance against a set of key metrics reported to customers each year in the Annual Watermark
- recommending amendments or changes to the outputs and/or output targets for consideration.

4. Scope

The Customer Assessment Panel will focus on Westernport Water's performance against its customer commitments that were developed by customers for the Pricing Submission 2023-28 and subsequently approved by the ESC.

Customer Commitments include:

- Provide me with high-quality drinking water
- Keep my essential services affordable
- Resolve sewer blockages quickly
- Keep water interruptions to a minimum
- Reduce your environmental impact and adapt to climate change
- Be there when I need you.

5. Composition and membership

The Panel will consist of diverse representatives from the community, ensuring a broad spectrum of perspectives. Members may include residential customers, businesses, community leaders, and other stakeholders with an interest in Westernport Water's performance.

The Customer Assessment Panel will comprise 16 to 20 members to incorporate the perspectives of as many customer cohorts as possible.

6. Responsibilities of the Customer Assessment Panel

- Attend two scheduled meetings annually, to discuss Westernport Water's performance.
- Review and provide feedback on performance against customer commitments.
- Disclose relevant interests and take reasonable steps to avoid actual and perceived conflicts of interest.
- Protect and preserve the confidentiality of any information provided or discussed at meetings identified explicitly as being commercial-in-confidence or confidential.
- Abide by Westernport Water's Customer Engagement Code of Conduct, which includes an obligation to treat members of the Panel and Westernport Water staff respectfully and courteously.

7. Responsibilities of Westernport Water

- Provide relevant information and updates to the Customer Assessment Panel to assist them to evaluate performance.
- Provide a facilitator during assessment panel discussions, guiding the dialogue to ensure all perspectives are considered.
- Foster a constructive and inclusive atmosphere during Panel discussions by presenting information that is accessible to all members.
- Allocate resources to support the functioning of the Customer Assessment Panel and provide administrative support.
- Establish mechanisms for communicating the outcomes of the Customer Assessment Panel's evaluations and the Corporation's responses.
- Ensure transparency in reporting through the Annual Watermark.

8. Meetings

The Panel will meet twice annually for two hours, aligned to the end of the financial year. Meetings may be held in person or virtually.

Meetings may be held in person at Westernport Water's Newhaven Head Office or online via Microsoft Teams, by agreement with the Chair. A quorum shall be at least 75% of the total members.

9. Duration

The term of the Customer Assessment Panel will be four months.

10. Attendance and participation

Attendance and active participation at Panel meetings is essential. For unavoidable absences, members should inform Westernport Water's panel coordinator in advance.

11. Reporting

The Panel will discuss and provide a report against customer commitments. This report will be made available to the public and Westernport Water's Board of Directors through the Corporation's Annual Watermark.

12. Decision-making process:

Assessment reports will be made through a collaborative and consensus-driven process. If a consensus cannot be reached, the facilitator will guide the decision-making process after considering all perspectives and relevant information.

13. Remuneration

Members of the Panel will be eligible for remuneration to acknowledge their valuable time and commitment. A sitting fee of \$100 per meeting will be provided for each member's active participation in panel meetings, working groups, and related activities.

This fee is intended to recognise and compensate members for the time and expertise they contribute to the collaborative efforts aimed at enhancing Westernport Water's services.

Reasonable expenses incurred in the execution of obligations in these Terms of Reference will be reimbursed by Westernport Water. (This may include such things as petrol and childcare). Only external independent members will be reimbursed for reasonable out-of-pocket expenses incurred in carrying out their Customer Assessment Panel duties. Prior acceptance for agreed reasonable expenses must be approved in advance.

14. Review and amendments

This Terms of Reference may be reviewed annually and amended as needed, with input from both the Customer Assessment Panel and Westernport Water.

15. Role of Westernport Water employees

- The Corporation's Manager Communications and Engagement will manage the relationship and provide the interface between the Customer Assessment Panel and the Corporation.
- The Corporation's Communication and Engagement Team shall provide administrative advice and support to the Customer Assessment Panel.
- Subject matter experts will provide information on performance to enable the Customer Assessment Panel to provide feedback on performance against Customer Commitments.

16. Conclusion

By establishing the Customer Assessment Panel, Westernport Water aims to strengthen its commitment to customer satisfaction and continuous improvement. The Corporation looks forward to a constructive partnership with the Panel in shaping the future of water services.

CONTACT

For more information on **Westernport Water's** Customer Assessment Panel please email communications@westernportwater.com.au or visit...