



Customer research summary

What customers have said



Government
of South Australia

Insights from our customers help shape our strategic outcomes and planning to ensure we remain focused on delivering the outcomes our customers expect, both now and into the future.

How customer insights are informing our planning for 2024-28

Recent research has highlighted that our customers are supportive of investment which futureproofs the water and wastewater network and they want to see this done in an environmentally friendly way.

These expectations have been further reinforced and validated in prioritisation research, providing us with assurance that both Our Strategy 2020-25 and planning for our 2024-28 regulatory submission align with our customers' expectations.

The insights we have collected from customers will be a key input into our 2024-28 regulatory submission.

Strategy research

[Our Strategy 2020-25](#) was launched in October 2020, with customer and stakeholder input a key driver of our vision and strategic focus.

Our strategy was informed by research undertaken in April 2020, which asked 1,500 customers to define what they valued in a water utility of the future. This research incorporated insights from residential and business customers (including tenants), customers living with disability, customers who speak a language other than English at home, Aboriginal communities and our Customer Advisory Groups.

It identified the 25 most important expectations of a future water utility for our customers:

Rank	Customer expectations for a water utility in the future
1	Ensures there is an uninterrupted and reliable supply of safe, quality water, even during extreme weather events.
2	Provides fair and equitable access to water for all South Australians.
3	Cleans and disposes of wastewater in a safe and hygienic way, without any risk to humans, wildlife or the natural environment.
4	Invests in new solutions or technology that in turn reduces costs to customers.
5	Employs local people.
6	Continues to research ways to maintain a clean water supply.
7	Increases the use of recycled water and make better use of environmental water (for example, stormwater or rainwater).
8	Ensures customers can identify and report leaks quickly.
9	Proactively monitors leaks and has people ready to quickly repair a leak or mains break to minimise water wastage.
10	Invests in infrastructure that captures more water in the future.
11	Acts ethically, with transparency, integrity and openness.
12	Has a dedicated and responsive problem-solving team.
13	Considers community affordability when making decisions, to keep costs low for customers.
14	Educating customers to be water conscious and to use water efficiently, and uses school programs to educate future generations.
15	Acts in a way that is as environmentally friendly as possible, and considers the environment, climate change and population growth in decision-making.
16	Aims for equal water pressure to all properties.
17	Has the ability to expand and grow the network with demand, future proofing it with modern infrastructure.
18	Takes steps to improve the quality and taste of tap water.
19	Is a leader in water and wastewater - innovative and forward thinking.
20	Advocates to Government for better water use policies.
21	Explores new ways of obtaining drinking water through the latest advances in technology.
22	Creates partnerships with other organisations (such as utilities or Councils) around sustainability, recycled water, water security, green space and creating cooler areas.

23	Has and/or creates incentives or rewards for people who capture and use rainwater, or recycle water at home.
24	Avoids implementing water restrictions.
25	Has and/or develops a system for spreading the impact of high bills in peak seasons.

Shift in customer expectations from 2017

The strategy research highlighted a change in customer expectations from our previous strategy which was developed in 2017, when our customers prioritised getting back to basics with a focus on affordability. Now our customers want to see us preparing the community, our infrastructure and the environment for the future, being environmentally conscious and community-minded in our planning and decision-making.

Prioritisation research

In June 2021, we held workshops with metro and regional customers and stakeholders to generate actions to deliver to their priorities, which informed our prioritisation survey. At these workshops, we further explored customer expectations identified in our strategy research to understand what actions they wanted from us to achieve the outcomes they desire and deliver our strategy. Our insights were shaped by the views of a wide range of customers including residential and business, customers who speak a language other than English at home, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander customers, future customers, and customers living with disability.

A customer prioritisation survey was undertaken in September 2021, with 1,400 residential and business customers validating 29 potential future actions which were identified in the workshops. These actions covered many areas of our operations including communications, customer experience, our core services, the environment, and employment. The outcomes from this research provided a ranking of our potential future actions in order of importance, and a clear timeframe to deliver to our customers' expectations.

The table below shows each of the potential future actions generated through customer workshops, and the percentage of customers which rated the action as important for us to deliver in the future.

% customers rating important	Our potential future actions
85%	Ensures every South Australian home has access to drinking water.
81%	Ensures every South Australian home within a township boundary has access to mains drinking water.
79%	Invests in technology to detect breaks/leaks in the pipe network.
78%	Increases maintenance on the network to replace pipes before breaks or leaks happen.
75%	Produces zero waste – no discharge into coastal waters.
72%	Introduce processes to ensure that vulnerable customers are supported first during a service interruption/outage (for example, customers living with disability).
72%	Ensures that the environment is considered in their operations, beyond what is required to meet legal and regulatory requirements, now and into the future.
72%	Invests in technology to detect high water use, and proactively notify customers if their usage looks unusual.
71%	Invests in efficient resource management practices to ensure resources are recycled and reused across the supply chain.
71%	Provide homes and businesses with more access to recycled water for outdoor use (irrigation, watering, washing cars).
70%	Take an active role in the capture and recycling of stormwater.
69%	Improve SA Water's systems to ensure tenants have the same access to information as homeowners, particularly when it comes to water use and service interruptions.
68%	Invests to improve the taste of tap water across South Australia.
67%	Produces zero waste – in all parts of operations.
67%	Invests in localised wastewater treatment systems for new developments.
67%	Introduce initiatives to support customers having trouble affording water bills (for example, payment plans, discounts on upfront payments).
67%	Invests in communication channels that allow customers to interact with SA Water in the way that works best for them (for example, online, over the phone, by email).

66%	Invests to have a positive impact on the environment in terms of biodiversity.
65%	Provide more access to recycled water for use inside the home (for example, flushing toilets, washing machine, bathing).
64%	Communicates more about how to be water efficient in the home and the smart use of water in the garden.
63%	Becomes carbon neutral.
63%	Proactively identify, contact and support customers who experience water bill debt of any level.
62%	Invests to make smart meters more affordable for customers.
60%	Develops partnerships to increase the opportunity for people living with disability to be employed at SA Water.
56%	Develops placements/paid internships for South Australian students at SA Water.
56%	Increases communications about SA Water's response to the impacts of climate change and how they're working towards a more sustainable future.
54%	Increases communications to help people learn more about water as a resource, and the different water sources accessed to ensure future water security.
53%	Invests in SA Water's school education program to raise awareness and expand the program.
52%	Increases communications to help customers create green spaces that support healthier lifestyles.

Key insights from the prioritisation research

From our customers' perspective, the main priorities for us are:

- Investing in our network to ensure all South Australian homes have access to drinking water, and using technology to undertake proactive maintenance on the network to minimise disruptions.
- Improving the customer experience, including access to payment support for customers experiencing difficulty paying their water bill, supporting vulnerable customers during an outage, proactively contacting customers when high water use is identified, and supporting tenants in the same way as homeowners.
- Proactive environmental leadership to ensure that environmental outcomes are considered in all parts of our operations and business decisions.

Insights from diverse customer groups

We analysed the results from our prioritisation research to explore whether there were any differences between responses from the broader community and our diverse customers segments. Each of our potential future actions were ranked similarly overall, however there were some notable differences between customer groups:

- Regional customers were more likely to prioritise improving the taste of tap water across South Australia, compared to metropolitan residents.
- For customers living with disability, introducing processes to ensure vulnerable customers are supported during a service interruption, payment support initiatives, and providing greater access to recycled water for outdoor use were a high priority.
- For tenants, there was a higher importance for delivering actions which support customers experiencing financial difficulty and ensuring tenants receive the same information as homeowners.
- Our future customers had a strong focus on environmental actions and told us that our business becoming carbon neutral was most important for them.