



Sunbury's Water Future

An integrated regional approach

Sunbury's Water Future – Panel Session 10 October 2019

Feedback on organisations' response to the panel's recommendations

Western Water and Melbourne Water reconvened the Sunbury's Water Future panel on Thursday 10 October to discuss the organisations' response to the panel's recommendations. The response document was issued the week before the event to all panel members. Fourteen of the final twenty-six panel members were able to attend the session with the others given the opportunity to respond in writing prior to the event.

The first presentation provided an overview of the community engagement undertaken for Sunbury's Water Future which culminated in the community panel activity. This was followed by a presentation from Melbourne Water and Western Water addressing each of the panel's recommendations and providing the organisations' response.

Panel members were asked to provide feedback on the engagement process they experienced. They were also asked for feedback on the responses provided to their recommendations. The panel's feedback was captured during the session and is provided below.

Panel's feedback on the engagement process

- Boosted self-confidence about being involved.
- Group knowledge about water was impressive.
- Increased knowledge – learnt a lot.
- Increased appreciation of challenges for Western Water etc.
- Increased consciousness of water issues, leading to more efficient use of water in the home.
- Process made it easy to feel comfortable giving input.
- Conversations in the community post process:
 - change in attitude because felt it was a genuine process.
 - people impressed to hear about the transparency of the process.
- Brilliant organisers – conducive to getting all to fully participate.

Panel's feedback on the organisations' response to their recommendations

Minority report: Smart tanks (rainwater tanks)

- Want to emphasise having rainwater tanks installed in all new premises (houses and businesses) – not necessarily “smart” rainwater tanks. Concern around the use of smart tanks vs rainwater tanks.
- The “smart” functionality was seen as being useful for waterway health.
- WW to explore the use of rainwater tanks and, in time, the use of smart tanks (if feasible/has appetite).

Recommendation 1: Sustainable energy

- Response in “What we will do” not aggressive/specific enough and renewable energy was not highlighted as an energy source throughout the other recommendations where relevant.
- Response spoke of principles, not action:
 - WW provided examples of renewable energy projects they are currently undertaking outside of the Sunbury region.
 - Solutions were not addressed within each recommendation.
 - Recommendation isn’t aligned with WW/MW carbon emissions baseline, it is aligned with ensuring the Sunbury solutions are carbon neutral.
- WW suggest that, in technical analyses, they will explore the various recommendations that all energy used be from renewable energy sources.

Recommendation 8: More efficient use of recycled water

- Response says these are aligned with recommendations 5, 6 and 2 - Panel had not intended for these recommendations to be aligned.
- The intent was to take demand off potable water.
- The intent was that recommendation 8 would increase efficiency through fit for purpose reuse, maximising non-potable water supply, leaving only the excess for input into the drinking water system.
- WW liked the varying levels of standards and the agility that offers to supply. Looked at recommendation 8 concurrently with others.
- MW stated it’s potentially another 2 years of community and regulator engagement to understand more deeply.

Recommendation 9: Permeable roads and paths

- Comment on Hume’s response re feasibility of diverting stormwater from developers and effects on soils.
- This will continue to be further investigated – need to hit the right balance in practicality.
- New technology and science is available and Hume City Council is aware of this.

General comments – potable reuse

- Given that the Victorian Government is not currently considering potable reuse and, in light of other states moving in that the direction, can the community do more?
 - WW stated we will investigate technical and economic options. Maximising our potable resources for potable uses.
- Principles will be embedded in each project (e.g. energy requirements are sourced from renewable sources).
- Fit for purpose use – how do we start educating the community and building acceptance?
 - Next augmentation (desal) is already being planned for Victoria.
 - Infrastructure Victoria talking to Government about potable reuse.
- Potable sources supplementing potable reuse – i.e. augmentation.

Other inclusions – broaden thinking about:

- The use of water tanks and encouraging greater areas of pervious surfaces in new developments.

Final comments

- MW and WW have committed to investigating all recommendations.
- The process for further evaluation and consideration is still 2-3 years away from business case development and mapping the pathway, which will not be linear and is currently uncertain.
- All recommendations were accepted and that is a good outcome.
- The holistic range of responses was encouraging from the panel.
- Stormwater moving along impervious surface – divert onto contours around Sunbury to facilitate infiltration.
- Community education is pivotal and some individuals are disappointed it wasn’t a recommendation:

- next steps for MW and WW will include this in further investigations and how it will support engagement and implementation
- Other water utilities have watched this process and are impressed with the depth of response and level of literacy of the panel.