

Potential supply of Class A recycled water to Diggers Rest

In June 2021, we invited community members to share their concerns and attitudes about the potential supply of Class A recycled water to properties in Diggers Rest. We also asked how they'd like to be kept informed.

We received input from community members through our online consultation site as well as at online community sessions.

This fact sheet provides a summary of what we heard from the community, answers key questions raised through the engagement process, and outlines the next steps.

What we heard

We heard the community are mostly positive about recycled water. Some are looking forward to using recycled water around the home to do their bit for the environment.

Some people expressed concern about the timing of the connection and how Class A recycled water might be charged in the future.

We understand the community would like more information and to be kept updated about Class A supplies.

Next steps

A summary of the engagement findings report is available at the Your Say website along with the Board's recommendations.

Questions and answers

Why were purple pipes installed when recycled water supply wasn't available?

Across our service region, there are many new housing estates that have been developed with sustainability in mind. It is much easier and cost-effective to install alternative water infrastructure in an estate as it is being built, rather than excavate and install pipes and meters at a later stage.

Why is it taking so long to supply Class A recycled water to my estate?

We must carefully plan and prioritise our infrastructure projects to keep prices affordable for all our customers. We also have a very long-term vision. What we put in the ground today may still be in operation in 40 or 50-years' time.

When planning the timing of infrastructure projects we consider:

- population growth, level of demand and the stage of the development of new estates

to ensure there are sufficient customers to make the service financially viable

- other projects in the area that may enable related infrastructure and supply to be available cost-effectively, and
- location of new estates to financially viable supply solutions in terms of access to infrastructure like supply pipes and a suitable water supply from a treatment plant.

We regularly review and assess planning and infrastructure requirements for the estates with recycled water infrastructure as well as the best time to supply recycled water to them. Hearing from the community will help inform this planning.

What is required to supply Class A recycled water to my estate?

We need a pipeline to transfer the recycled water from the Sunbury Recycled Water Plant to Diggers Rest. This will become possible when the major recycled water transfer main for the Western Irrigation Network is constructed (as it will pass directly by Digger Rest).

Water from the Sunbury plant is Class B recycled water so we will need to also build a small Class A recycled water plant at Diggers Rest to treat the Class B recycled water to Class A standard to use in homes. This treatment plant could be housed in a shed no bigger than a double garage.

When would it be possible to have recycled water supply?

Given the infrastructure required to connect the estates to recycled water supply, we estimate that the earliest it could be supplied would be 2025.

Customers will be notified well in advance when a decision to connect to recycled water is made.

Why are some properties in my suburb set up for recycled water whilst others are not?

The Western Water Class A recycled water servicing policy was amended in 2017 to no longer mandate the installation of dual reticulation systems in new estates.

However, new housing developments are required to plan sustainable, integrated water management solutions when building new houses. Whether properties are set up for Class A supply remains an option for developers - along with other measures such as installing water tanks.

When will a decision be made as to whether we will get a recycled water supply?

The information gathered through our consultation with customers was shared with

Greater Western Water's (GWW) Board and management. As the next step to inform a decision, we will now proceed with developing a servicing plan over the next 18 months. This plan will incorporate an options analysis for supplying Class A recycled water to properties in Diggers Rest.

Will landowners need to pay for the infrastructure required to connect the estate to the recycled water supply?

No. Landowners will not need to contribute to the cost of any of the works required to connect Class A recycled water to Diggers Rest.

Am I being charged for Class A recycled water?

No. Because recycled water is not being supplied to your property, you are not being charged either the recycled water service availability charge or for recycled water usage.

Until recycled water is supplied through the purple pipes, drinking water will be supplied through both meters and you will be charged drinking water usage charges for all the water you use.

Will having Class A recycled water cost me more?

Under our current pricing approach, customers will receive an additional service availability charge for recycled water supplies when it is available to their property. Recycled water usage charges will also apply.

For customers in the region previously serviced by Western Water (which includes Diggers Rest), the annual service charge

has been set at \$116.91 for the year beginning 1 July 2021 and the usage charge has been set at \$1.8882 per kilolitre, which is set below the price charged for drinking water.

We're considering the level of these charges under GWW as we plan for our next Price Submission.

We have shared the community's feedback about Class A recycled water with the price submission team and will share opportunities with customers for how you can get involved in price submission engagement activities.

If a recycled water supply is further delayed or not connected will I be reimbursed the costs associated with having Class A infrastructure at my property?

We believe Class A supplies will be available to properties in your estate so are not considering the suggestion of compensating customers for Class A infrastructure costs.

Installing Class A infrastructure in new estates with the intention of supplying alternative water in the future is an investment in sustainable water management for the region.