



MESSAGE FROM OUR MANAGING DIRECTOR

**We're all about going
beyond water for
strong communities.**



It's tough to be in financial stress. People in financial hardship can not only find it difficult to access the essential services they need, but financial stress can have a profound impact upon their social and emotional wellbeing.

A significant proportion of people in our community are currently, or have at one time, been in financial hardship. Around a quarter of households in our service region are on low incomes and there are multiple communities that experience significant socio-economic disadvantage. About one in 10 householders in our region are in mortgage stress and a further quarter of householders are in rental stress. Furthermore, economic abuse is a form of family violence that has a direct relationship to financial hardship and we know that the south-west experiences high rates of family violence as compared to the whole of Victoria.

Women, young people, people with disabilities and people from diverse cultural backgrounds are often over-represented in financial hardship figures. However all of us are at risk and many households are only one catastrophic event away from being severely financially vulnerable.

Financial inclusion and resilience is an approach that seeks to ensure fair and affordable access to finance in order to achieve economic wellbeing. In other words, it's about ensuring people have access to basic essential services so they can live healthy and fulfilling lives.

This Financial Inclusion Action Plan builds on our past performance and takes another step in improving financial inclusion and resilience for our customers. Additionally, this plan demonstrates Wannon Water's commitment to improving our support for our employees, suppliers and the wider community who are experiencing financial hardship.

I thank Good Shepherd Microfinance (GSM) for the support it has provided Wannon Water in the development of this plan. We are excited to continue to work with GSM, and also with EY, the Centre for Social Impact and other Financial Inclusion Action Plan 'trailblazers' as we implement our foundational FIAP in 2018.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Jeffers' followed by a stylized flourish.

Andrew Jeffers

ABOUT WANNON WATER

Wannon Water provides services that are integral to the economic prosperity and health and wellbeing of our community.

Wannon Water (Wannon Region Water Corporation) is a regional urban water corporation wholly owned by the Victorian State Government and constituted under the Water Act 1989 as a statutory corporation in July 2005.

Wannon Water is Victoria's second largest regional urban water corporation, covering a 23,500 square kilometre region in south-west Victoria in the municipalities of Warrnambool City, Corangamite Shire, Glenelg Shire, Moyne Shire, Southern Grampians Shire and Colac Otway Shire.

We provide services to more than 84,000 residents and 34 towns, including residential, commercial, industrial and rural customers. Our functions include the collection, storage, treatment and delivery of water; the collection and treatment of sewage and trade waste; and water recycling.

We manage more than \$770 million in assets, provide 10,600 megalitres of water, treat 12,000 megalitres of sewage and trade waste and provide nearly 2,000 megalitres of recycled water for reuse each year.

Wannon Water is a major employer with more than 200 operational, engineering, financial, environmental and administrative employees. We embrace all forms of diversity and promote family-friendly working hours and leave arrangements to ensure our workforce is representative of the community that we serve.





WHY IS A FIAP IMPORTANT?

This Financial Inclusion Action Plan is one practical way we are working towards our vision of going beyond water for strong communities.

Wannon Water has a strong track record of supporting customers who are in financial hardship.

In 2016/17 we supported 474 customers and provided allowances and rebates of more than \$3.5 million through programs such as concession card rebates, a customer hardship program, flexible payment plans and financial assistance incentives.

Wannon Water has a vision to go beyond water for strong communities. To realise this vision, Wannon Water recognises it needs to work in partnership with others to foster regional prosperity and ensure the health and wellbeing of those who live here. This 2018 Financial Inclusion Action Plan (FIAP) is one practical way we are working towards our vision.

The development of the plan was overseen by a multi-disciplinary committee drawn from all parts of Wannon Water's business. Over a six-month period, numerous workshops and sub-committees carefully analysed our current environment and prioritised actions for the future.

Wannon Water's FIAP covers four strategic areas:

1. Products and Services
2. Capabilities, Attitudes and Behaviours
3. Awareness and Understanding of Culture and Diversity
4. Economic Participation and Status

Products and Services



Wannon Water will:

- Continue to strengthen our work in supporting and providing easy access to services for customers who are financially vulnerable
- Strengthen relationships and increase coordination efforts with local support agencies

Stakeholder	Committed Action Statement	Output	Outcome	Responsibility	Timeframe
Community Customers	Identify opportunities for collaborating on financial inclusion and resilience within our service region	Opportunities for collaboration on financial inclusion and resilience in the region have been investigated	Wannon Water is in a better position to be able to collaborate on financial inclusion and resilience within its service region	Community & Corporate Services	December 2018
Community Customers	Explore opportunities to partner with youth services and educational institutions to support young people in financial hardship	Wannon Water will work with local youth services and educational institutions to increase awareness of Wannon Water's programs to support people facing financial stress	Wannon Water appropriately supports young people and students who are experiencing financial hardship	Customer Relations	December 2018
Community	Introduce a Water for Community program to support public health and wellbeing	A Water for Community Program is developed and implemented	Wannon Water provides support to our community in relation to the access and use of water for public health and wellbeing	Community & Corporate Services	December 2018
Customers	Continue to offer flexible payment options and financial support for customers experiencing difficulty in paying their account	Customers continue to access flexible payment arrangements and assistance	Customers are better equipped to deal with payment of their accounts	Customer Relations	Ongoing

Capabilities, Attitudes and Behaviours



Wannon Water will:

- Improve our ability to recognise people experiencing financial hardship
- Improve our understanding of financial hardship so we can be more responsive and respectful

Stakeholder	Committed Action Statement	Output	Outcome	Responsibility	Time-frame
Employees Customers	Provide family violence training for employees	Employees are equipped in how to recognise and support those impacted by family violence	Appropriate and respectful support is provided to customers and employees experiencing family violence, including economic abuse	Customer Relations People & Wellbeing Corporate Services	December 2018
Customers	Learn more about the opportunities to support our customers experiencing financial hardship	Develop knowledge and increase awareness through participation in the Thriving Community Partnership (TCP) and the Financial Inclusion Action Plan (FIAP) Community of Practice	Wannon Water has increased its awareness of how other Australian businesses support customers in financial hardship in order to strengthen its own hardship program	Community & Corporate Services	December 2018

Awareness and Understanding of Culture and Diversity



Wannon Water will:

- Promote an inclusive workplace that embraces and promotes diversity and where everyone is treated with respect and feels valued
- Improve our communications with a broader audience and engage with isolated or hard-to-reach communities and groups

Stakeholder	Committed Action Statement	Output	Outcome	Responsibility	Time-frame
Employees	Create an inclusive workplace that promotes diversity	Implement the actions in Wannon Water's Inclusion and Diversity plan	Employees have a greater understanding of the importance of workplace inclusion and diversity, particularly for those from vulnerable groups	People & Resilience	As per the Inclusion and Diversity Plan timelines
Customers Community Suppliers	Engage with a diverse range of our customers and community, including those from vulnerable groups, to understand what they value in relation to our business.	An annual engagement cycle is developed and implemented	Customer and community engagement information, inclusive of feedback from vulnerable groups, is available to inform Wannon Water's decisions for the 2018/19 Corporate Plan	Community & Corporate Services	December 2018
Employees Community	Continue to provide workplace flexibility to support our employees and communities	Managers take individual circumstances into consideration in their assessment of flexibility requests	Employees have the opportunity to adjust their work pattern to support their particular needs	People & Resilience	December 2018

Economic Participation and Status



Wannon Water will:

- Ensure our community partnerships help our region to flourish, especially in the areas of regional economic development, education and training, health and wellbeing, environmental outcomes and assisting those in need

Stakeholder	Committed Action Statement	Output	Outcome	Responsibility	Time-frame
Community	Explore opportunities for collaborating on financial inclusion and resilience with the Victorian Water Industry	Opportunities for the Victorian Water industry to collaborate on financial inclusion and resilience have been investigated	Wannon Water understands the opportunities for collaborating on financial inclusion with the Victorian Water industry	Community & Corporate Services	December 2018
Community Employees	Continue to work with our partners on education and employment initiatives for vulnerable groups	Wannon Water actively participates in education and employment programs in the region	Wannon Water contributes to supporting education and employment outcomes for vulnerable groups in our region	People & Resilience	December 2018
Community	Continue to strategically partner with rural and regional communities in our service area, including with vulnerable groups	A community support and partnerships program is in place	Wannon Water has strategic partnerships in place to work on key economic, social and environmental issues that have been identified for our service region	Communications & Engagement Branch	December 2018
Suppliers	Continue to explore opportunities for achieving social outcomes through procurement	The social procurement components of Wannon Water's procurement policy are implemented	Wannon Water's approach to social procurement ensures opportunities for local and vulnerable groups to provide services to Wannon Water	Corporate Services	December 2018

STATEMENT BY THE FIAP PARTNERSHIP GROUP

On behalf of the FIAP Partnership Group, I would like to acknowledge and congratulate Wannon Water for your ongoing public commitment to financial inclusion and financial resilience.

Together we are embarking on a journey to explore, learn and grow – both as a program through this Foundation FIAP and as Trailblazers undertaking the important process of reducing inequalities and promoting inclusive growth in our communities.

Financial hardship can impact us all, at any stage in our lives – through the FIAP, our hope is that every organisation will be able to respond in time and every time to ensure financial hardship can be identified early, managed and overcome. By building capacity, awareness and greater access to appropriate products and services, organisations will see the social and economic benefits in their engagement, outcomes and prosperity of customers and employees.

The FIAP Partnership Group exists to support the growing community of practice to identify opportunities to better respond to financial risks, develop meaningful actions across key stakeholders and measure the social and economic impact. Drawing on our individual expertise the FIAP Partnership Group will provide implementation, evaluation and quality assurance support to ensure key actions you have identified are (i) on track to achieve the intended impact and (ii) engaging those stakeholders in most need of support. We are proud to be on this important journey with Wannon Water.

At the heart of the FIAP program is the belief that together we can achieve more. Wannon Water joins the growing community of organisations that understand they play a critical role in Australia's financial future – together we can reduce inequalities and realise inclusive growth for all Australians.

Sincerely,



**Vinita Godinho – General Manager,
Advisory Good Shepherd Microfinance
On behalf of the FIAP Partnership Group**



Supported by





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