



## Have your say on East Gippsland Water’s survey

### A guide for people who care about our rivers, groundwater and fair water bills

**Prepared for:** Friends of Gippsland Lakes, Parks and Reserves Inc. (FOGL) supporters

East Gippsland Water (EGW) is running a survey that will help shape its next Urban Water Strategy, which is a 50-year plan, and its prices for 2028–33. How people answer will influence whether EGW invests in **protecting our rivers and groundwater** and in **climate-resilient water sources**, or in expensive new extraction that pushes up bills.

The survey is framed in places that can nudge people toward the expensive, high-extraction path. For example, it asks whether you want “fewer restrictions” without telling you, at that point, that fewer restrictions mean higher bills. This guide suggests how to answer the key questions to support our rivers, groundwater, climate-resilient supply and fair bills.

**Please answer honestly and in your own words wherever you can** — especially the written questions at the end (Q23–Q25), which carry more weight than tick-boxes. The suggestions below are a starting point, not a script. Identical, copied answers count for less than genuine individual feedback.

*The survey marks every question as required. Move through it by selecting the option closest to your view; the written questions are where your voice counts most.*

**Take the survey:** <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/FWT53X7>

### Part A — the multiple-choice and slider questions

Question	What we suggest	Why
<b>Q5 — Level of service (how often restrictions apply)</b>	Keep the Current Agreed Level of Service	“Fewer restrictions” sounds good but means a bigger spending program, higher bills and more pressure on rivers. EGW’s own outlook projects the Mitchell River — our main supply — to decline, so the answer is demand management and climate-resilient sources, not locking in higher-cost service now.

Question	What we suggest	Why
<b>Q6 — Rank what you value water for (1–7)</b>	Put rivers/environment near the top (1) and water for Traditional Owners high (2); essential home use next; put “growth and economic development / industry” last	Environmental and First Peoples’ water have legal and policy standing — they should not be ranked below pools and industry.
<b>Q7 &amp; Q18 — Rank facilities for Stage 4 restrictions</b>	Rank street trees and significant trees highest, then parks/gardens and urban lakes; rank lawn bowls, tennis, splash parks and sporting turf lowest. Answer both questions the same way	Mature trees and canopy are long-lived, cooling and hard to replace; discretionary turf can wait. Better still, use recycled/stormwater so these never compete with drinking water.
<b>Q8 — “Don’t mind where water comes from if safe/fit-for-purpose”</b>	Disagree (or neutral)	Source does matter: protect rivers and groundwater and use fit-for-purpose recycled water and stormwater for non-drinking uses — don’t just accept any new source.
<b>Q9 — “Always use the cheapest source”</b>	Disagree	Cheapest isn’t best if it harms rivers and aquifers or isn’t resilient to drought.
<b>Q10 — “Use the most reliable source”</b>	Agree, with a caveat	Reliability matters — and climate-resilient recycled water and stormwater are reliable and protect rivers.
<b>Q11 — “Use the most environmentally sustainable source”</b>	Strongly agree	This is the heart of a river- and groundwater-protective approach.
<b>Q12 — “Only use water from dams and rivers”</b>	Disagree	This is the over-extraction path. We want to diversify into recycled water and stormwater to take pressure off rivers and groundwater.
<b>Q13 — “Explore more groundwater bores”</b>	Disagree / strongly disagree	Groundwater is already under pressure — EGW’s own outlook treats Mitchell groundwater as ‘emergency supply only’. More bores risk over-extraction and can harm connected rivers and wetlands, including Macleod Morass.
<b>Q14 — “Build desalination in coastal towns”</b>	Neutral — only as a renewable-powered last resort	Desalination is energy-intensive and costly. Support it only if renewable-powered, and only after demand management and recycled/stormwater.

Question	What we suggest	Why
<b>Q15 — “Use treated stormwater”</b>	Strongly agree	Climate-resilient, eases pressure on rivers, and makes towns greener — and EGW’s governing strategy backs it.
<b>Q16 — “Use purified recycled water”</b>	Strongly agree for non-drinking uses	Strongly support Class A recycled water for irrigation, sport, parks and street trees. For drinking water, prioritise protecting natural flows; treat purified recycled water for drinking as a carefully safeguarded option only if genuinely needed.
<b>Q17 — How much extra to avoid restrictions</b>	Answer honestly — if you’d rather EGW invest in cheaper, climate-resilient sources than raise bills, choose a low or ‘not willing to pay extra’ option and use the “Other” box to explain	The question is one-sided (it only asks how much more you’d pay). In “Other” you can say: restrictions are a fair tool that protects essential indoor use; invest in demand management and recycled/stormwater before big bill rises; and protect low-income households. Put it in your own words — identical answers count for less.
<b>Q19 — Infrastructure upgrades (agree/disagree to four)</b>	Strongly agree: withstand extreme weather; improve connectivity for resilience. Agree (with care): improve for growth. Lower: like-for-like	Prioritise climate-resilience and efficiency over business-as-usual or growth-driven gold-plating.
<b>Q20 — Most important to discuss with the community</b>	Protect the environment/rivers; education and incentives to conserve and re-use water; keep bills low, affordable and transparent	Signals environment + demand management + affordability together. You can add in “Other”: show the full cost and environmental trade-offs of each supply option.

## Part B — the written questions (these matter most)

These three open-text questions carry the most weight. Suggested wording is below — edit it into your own voice.

### Q23 — What does EGW need to do differently in 5–10 years’ time?

#### Suggested answer

*Protect our rivers and groundwater aquifers by investing in climate-resilient water sources — Class A treated recycled water and stormwater for irrigation, sporting facilities, parks and street trees. Always prioritise natural surface flows for potable (drinking) supply, and operate within EGW’s existing water entitlements rather than taking more from stressed rivers. Protect*

*the recycled-water supply that already keeps the Macleod Morass Ramsar wetland fresh, and rule out reallocating recycled water to environmentally harmful industrial use.*

#### **Q24 — The most important water security outcome for the next 20–30 years?**

##### **Suggested answer**

*Expand investment in climate-resilient water sources — Class A treated recycled water and stormwater for irrigation, sporting facilities, parks and street trees. Always prioritise natural surface flows for potable supply. Where additional supply is genuinely needed, prefer demand management and a renewable-powered option rather than taking more from stressed rivers and aquifers. Protect the recycled-water supply that keeps the Macleod Morass Ramsar wetland fresh, and rule out reallocating recycled water to environmentally harmful industrial use.*

#### **Q25 — How could EGW engage more effectively with you?**

##### **Suggested answer**

*Ensure survey questions are structured to support genuinely informed feedback. Question 5, for example, lacks context: it asks people to choose a level of service without explaining that fewer restrictions mean higher bills and more pressure on rivers, so it is likely to skew results toward ‘fewer restrictions’. Treat this survey as an early sense-check, and use focus groups and community drop-in sessions — where the real costs, bill impacts, environmental effects and the full range of options (recycled water, stormwater and demand management) are presented in a balanced way — for the decisions that involve trade-offs.*

### **Part C — key messages**

Use these if you are writing your own answers or speaking at a meeting:

1. Protect rivers and groundwater — prioritise natural flows for drinking water and operate within existing water entitlements.
2. Invest in climate-resilient recycled water and stormwater for non-drinking uses (irrigation, sport, parks, street trees).
3. Fix network leaks and manage demand before building expensive new supply — in some EGW towns a third or more of water is currently lost to leaks.
4. Protect the recycled-water supply that already keeps Macleod Morass fresh.
5. No reallocation of recycled water to environmentally harmful industrial use.
6. Don't push up bills with expensive gold-plating that hits the disadvantaged hardest — restrictions and demand management are fair tools.
7. Make EGW show the real cost and environmental trade-offs of every option.

## Part D — one more thing: go to a meeting

If you can, tick “yes” to a meeting for your water supply district (Q26) and give your contact details. The community meetings are where the detailed options will be discussed, and it matters that people who care about rivers, groundwater and fair bills are in the room.

**Thank you for caring about our Lakes, their catchments and all the communities who depend on them!**

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**About this guide:** Prepared to help Friends of Gippsland Lakes, Parks and Reserves Inc. (FOGL) supporters respond to East Gippsland Water’s Urban Water Strategy 2027 and Price Submission 2028–33 survey. It reflects FOGL’s positions; **please answer in your own words.**