

Strategic Plan 2026-2036

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Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge all the aboriginal nations and their Elders whose lands lie within the Mount Barker district and respect their spiritual relationship with their Country, and also acknowledge and thank them for their custodianship of the lands and waters of the region.



"Tear Drops" by Quentin Gore, Laratinga Wetland

Message from the Chair



On behalf of the Board of GMB Water, I am pleased to introduce the GMB Water Strategic Plan 2026-2036. This plan establishes the roadmap for GMB Water, where we want to be over the next ten years and how we will measure success. It is guided by our vision and will be used to ensure decisions in relation to the provision of wastewater, recycled water and bore water service are aligned to delivery of our desired outcomes for customers, the wider community and the environment.

This Strategic Plan has been developed through a robust process of review, consultation, and engagement across the organisation. I acknowledge the work of the management team and the input from the Board in developing and refining this plan.

To deliver our vision we have aligned our objectives into four pillars:

- Driving Customer and Community Outcomes – provision of safe and reliable services
- Proactive Environmental Leadership – safely and sustainably preserve and improve the environment.
- Successful and Socially Responsible Business – socially responsible and manage revenue collected responsibly and fairly and with integrity.
- High Performing Culture – deliver results focusing on safe and healthy workplaces, employee engagement, inclusion, innovation and accountability.

The vision and associated objectives represent the natural evolution of GMB Water as we mature as an organisation following our establishment as a wholly owned subsidiary of the Mount Barker District Council in mid-2025.

Implementation of this Strategic Plan, and progress toward achieving the identified objectives, will be closely monitored by the Board.

I look forward to GMB Water continuing to deliver high quality essential services to the customers and community we service and living our vision of delivering sustainable water recovery services for the benefit of our economy, community and the environment.

Mark Gobbie
Chair of the Board

About GMB Water



Aerial view of Bald Hills Olive Grove and Little Dublin Road Recycled Water Treatment Facility



About

GMB Water owns and operates the largest local government-run wastewater and recycled water scheme in South Australia comprising wastewater collection, wastewater treatment, bore water supply, and recycled water treatment and distribution.

GMB Water provides essential wastewater, recycled water and bore water services to properties in Mount Barker, Littlehampton, Nairne, Brukunga, Meadows, Macclesfield and Echunga. At 1 July 2025 GMB Water had:

	14,964 Wastewater Customers	10,808 Community Wastewater Management Systems (CWMS) + 4,156 Sewer
	254 Recycled Water Customers	18 non-residential + 236 residential in Meadows
	45 Bore Water Customers	

Structure

The Mount Barker Region Wastewater Utility, which trades as GMB Water, is a wholly owned subsidiary of the Mount Barker District Council (the Council) established pursuant to Section 42 of the Local Government Act. The Mount Barker Region Wastewater Utility Charter, which outlines the governance framework for the subsidiary, was gazetted in January 2025.

GMB Water is governed by a skills-based Board appointed by the Council. The Charter defines the authority delegated to the Board, the process for appointing Board members, and the Board’s reporting obligations to Council.

Objectives

- The Mount Barker Region Wastewater Utility Charter, sets out the principal objectives of the Authority, namely to achieve the following objects and purposes:
- To provide a safe and reliable Wastewater Utility to protect public health
 - To endeavour to provide a level of service to customers and the community that meets or exceeds their expectations
 - To support and enable agriculture and economic growth in the Wastewater Utility area
 - To safely and sustainably preserve and improve the environment by conducting operations in compliance with the principles of ecologically sustainable development
 - To be socially responsible
 - To manage revenue collected responsibly and fairly and with integrity to provide a defined service to the Council’s community
 - To deliver results, focusing on safe and healthy workplaces, employee engagement, inclusion, innovation and accountability.

Services

The services provided by GMB Water and considered in this plan are:



NETWORK EXPANSION

Wastewater and recycled water infrastructure expansion to support growth in areas of service



WASTEWATER COLLECTION

Operation and maintenance of the wastewater - Community Wastewater Management System (CWMS) and sewer - collection systems to meet required levels of service



WASTEWATER TREATMENT

Operation and maintenance of the wastewater treatment plants and other associated infrastructure to meet required levels of service



DISPOSAL

Discharge of suitably treated effluent from the wastewater treatment plants and other associated infrastructure to the environment and to provide recycled water to connected customers and sites



NON-DRINKING WATER SUPPLY

Provision of non-drinking and bore water supply to a limited number of residential customers in Meadows and non-residential users around Mount Barker and out to Callington

Regulation

GMB Water operates in a wider statutory and regulatory framework established through legislation such as the Water Industry Act 2012 and various Regulations. The regulatory bodies most relevant to operations are:



Essential Services Commission of South Australia (ESCOSA) the independent economic regulator and licensor of Water Industry Entities



SA Environment Protection Authority (EPA) regulates GMB Water under the Environment Protection Act 1993



Department of Health and Wellbeing regulates GMB Water under the South Australian Public Health Act 2011 and the South Australian Public Health (Wastewater) Regulations 2013



Office of the Technical Regulator (OTR) is responsible for monitoring and regulating safety and technical standards for water infrastructure

About the Strategic Plan



Recycled Water in use at Eastbook Farms

Introduction

The GMB Water Strategic Plan sets the direction for GMB Water over the next decade to 2036. Building on the achievements of the past, this strategic plan reflects the evolving needs of GMB Water's customers and the Mount Barker district, the urgency of global issues, and our vision.

Context

As the largest local government provider of wastewater and recycled water services in South Australia, GMB Water is an industry leader.

With a focus on sustainability and operational efficiency, GMB Water is committed to maximising productive reuse of our quality recycled water for the benefit of our economy, community and the environment.

Serving one of Australia's fastest growing regions, our careful planning and use of leading edge technology and equipment ensure our wastewater and recycled water networks are being expanded and upgraded in a sustainable and efficient manner.

Current and Emerging Trends and Influences

By 2036 and beyond, life will be significantly different to how it is now. To position GMB Water for future success there is a need to interpret the impact of megatrends on delivery of customer and community needs and aspirations. An understanding of these trends also helps in consideration of the contribution of GMB Water to solving global problems that impact on GMB Water activities, such as reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Climate Change and Resource Stress

The Mount Barker district is already experiencing the impacts of climate change with rising temperatures, and altered rainfall patterns, whilst the region benefits from solar energy uptake and progress toward 100% renewable energy. The need for climate resilience and adaption action is growing, with more frequent extreme weather events expected. The shift to renewable energy presents opportunities for GMB Water to reduce its carbon footprint. Embracing energy efficient practices, building resilience into assets, electrifying transport and integrating low-carbon technologies into new infrastructure will be essential to mitigating climate impact.

Digital Transformation

Technological change is creating new opportunities as well as new risks. Current and emerging technologies are changing the ways in which utilities operate and compete. Widespread adoption of IoT sensors, data analytics, and digital twins allows for real-time monitoring, leak detection, and optimised operations. The rapid rate of data creation provides opportunities to seek new value through more sophisticated analytics. Applications of artificial intelligence,

ubiquitous linked sensors, augmentation and virtual reality will increase together with customers being increasingly able to access high quality information and expecting utilities to use big data to provide value and enable increase customer self-sufficiency. However, as utilities become more digital, they are increasingly vulnerable to cyberattacks, making digital security a top priority.

Customer Empowerment and Demographics

Advances in global education, health and technology are empowering individuals like never before. New platforms allow customers to voice their expectations and create empowered community networks. Individuals are showing greater trust in their peers through these networks than with large organisations, leading to an increased demand for transparency and openness in decision-making processes. Individual empowerment of Millennials and younger generations is building a values-led workplace culture, with a focus on opportunity, recognition, trust and flexibility as much as remuneration. This philosophy is shaping customer expectations and behaviours.

Economic Connectivity

The interconnected global economy is causing and will increasingly result in international trade and capital flows. The export of water intensive commodities, such as food and mineral resources, will raise national water demand. Operating in a global market that is responsive to evolving customer behaviours, technologies and regulatory policies is the new norm and drives continual transformation of strategy and business models. International conflicts and other disruptions are, and will continue to, contribute to global resource demands which may exacerbate existing and predicted materials and labour shortages, thereby impacting on delivery of infrastructure projects and the ability to purchase plant, equipment and other materials.

Urban Growth

Rapid urban expansion is reshaping the Mount Barker district placing pressure on natural habitats, water quality and local ecosystems. This growth is increasing energy consumption, waste production, and transport demands, highlighting the need for sustainable urban planning and infrastructure delivery and a move to integrated water management treating water supply, sewerage and stormwater as a single holistic system.

Regulatory and Industry Standard Change

As environmental and public health protection standards and regulatory requirements evolve, there is a need to predict where standards will change when planning long life infrastructure to ensure ongoing compliance whilst maintaining operational efficiency and informed investment. For example, there is increasing regulatory scrutiny and growing concern over "forever chemicals" (PFAS) which is driving investment in advanced treatment technologies like granular activated carbon and ozone treatment.

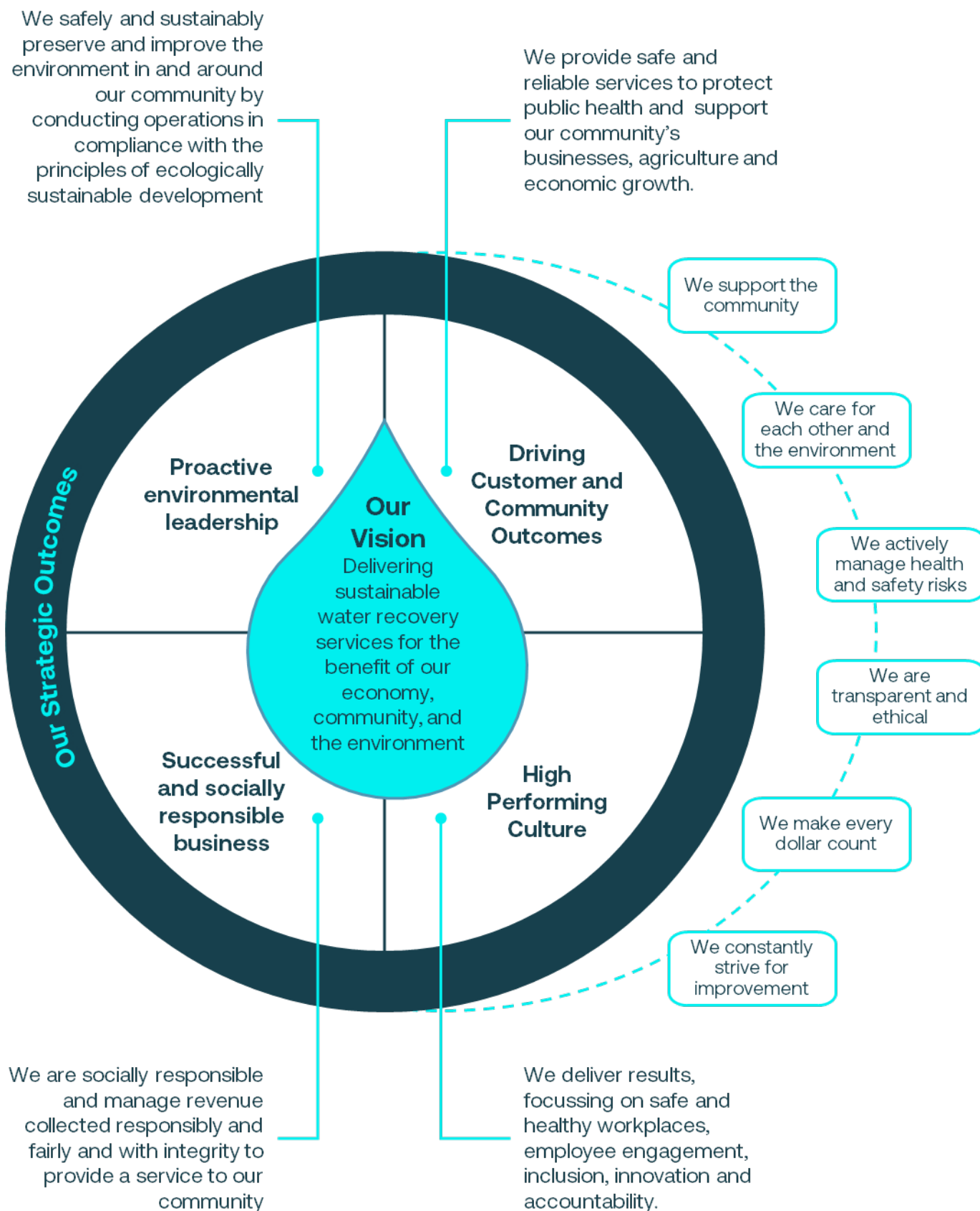
Vision





Our Vision

Delivering sustainable
water recovery services
for the benefit of our
economy, community and
the environment



Strategic Outcomes



Driving Customer and Community Outcomes

We provide safe and reliable services to protect public health and support our community's businesses, agriculture and economic growth.

Key Priorities

Public Health	Proactively manage events that could lead to serious impact on public health and ensure regulatory compliance
Customer Experience	Prioritise the delivery of outcomes our customers and community value
Asset Reliability and Capability	Sustain critical operations and manage reasonably foreseeable business interruptions, plan and deliver critical infrastructure and achieve product and service objectives efficiency

Objectives

- Enable customers to interact with us easily and have adequate information to make informed choices
- Embed proactive and meaningful customer and stakeholder engagement in our business-as-usual practices
- Use customer, community and stakeholder insights to inform our decision making
- Maintain trust and deliver excellence in provision of wastewater, recycled water and bore water services
- Prevent or minimise temporary interruptions for customers and the community
- Meet our regulatory responsibilities and ensure regulatory compliance
- Assist customers experiencing financial hardship to manage their payment in a manner that best suits them whilst ensuring continuity of services
- Contribute to communities through provision of wastewater services in a timely way to support the Government's priority for the provision of housing

Contribution to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals



Measures of Success

Goal	Metric	Target
Regulatory Compliance	Compliance with all ESCOSA, EPA and SA Health licence conditions	100% compliance
Infrastructure in Place to Enable Growth	Delivery of key infrastructure to support growth	Laratinga Water Recovery Plant completed by end of 2028 Trunk Sewer Program complete by mid-2027
Positive Customer Sentiment	Favourable emotional tone of customer feedback (text, voice, or social media) to determine how many interactions are favorable.	80% positive language.
Responsive and Reliable Service	Asset Performance and Customer Service Key Performance Indicators	All targets met over a 12 month rolling period



Proactive Environmental Leadership

We safely and sustainably preserve and improve the environment in and around our community by conducting operations in compliance with the principles of ecologically sustainable development.

Key Priorities

Environmental Quality	Protect, restore, regenerate and enhance the quality of our environment to the satisfaction of our regulators, customers, community and stakeholders
Climate Change	Provide wastewater and recycled water services that consider, adapt and respond to climate change
Emissions Reduction	Reduce emissions from operations and value chains, sequestering carbon in end use of products
Recycled Water Supply	Maximise the volume of wastewater harvesting and reuse for economic, environmental and community benefit.

Objectives

- Adopt circular economy practices in planning and delivery of products and services
- Maximise the beneficial reuse of biosolids as a resource, including land application and emerging recovery pathways, to support circular economy outcomes and minimise waste to landfill.
- Actively educate our customers, the community and stakeholders on benefits of a circular economy and our role in the circular economy
- Appropriate and effective water recovery treatment for intended end uses
- Minimise risk of harm from nutrient pollution
- Support stakeholder priorities to green our urban environments
- Deliver on our obligations to keep waterways clean and healthy
- Make progress towards zero impact in the environment (focus on water, waste and carbon)
- Maximise reuse of water to support enhance environment and social outcomes
- Minimise energy and emissions through efficiency and optimisation of operations

Contribution to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals



Measures of Success

Goal	Metric	Target
Efficient and Effective Treatment	Avoided energy and chemical use through innovative design of new wastewater assets	Laratinga Water Recovery Plant completed by end of 2028
Emissions Reduction	Reduction of carbon and other GHG emissions in capital projects and operational practices	Reduce emissions by at least 60% from 2023 levels by 2035 in order to achieve net zero by 2050
Increase Recycled Water Use	Volume of recycled water produced and delivered for beneficial reuse	New recycled water customers and increases to existing contracts equating to >300ML per annum each year



Successful and Socially Responsible Business

We are socially responsible and manage revenue collected responsibly and fairly and with integrity to provide a service to our community.

Key Priorities

Finance	Manage our financial performance (including credit, debt, liquidity, and third part exposures)
Enterprise Security	Protect against the exploitation of vulnerabilities in our digital, physical, and personnel environments
Supply Chain	Manage access to suppliers and equipment for our products and services to reduce costs, provide value for money, increase customer service and ensure supply chain resilience
Corporate social responsibility	Maintain our social licence to operate

Objectives

- Involve appropriate team members and stakeholders in process and business improvement to simplify processes and gain efficiencies
- Maintain effective governance structure that enables transparent, accountable and timely decision making
- Embed innovation and creativity in our ways of working
- Operate within Board approved risk tolerances and mitigate strategic risks to a level at or below that set as a target by the Board
- Align our investments with our priorities rather than historical performance
- Use trusted data and insights to define and shape our decisions and services
- Manage a commercially viable water recovery service that is affordable for our customers
- Ensure fair sharing in the allocation of resources and services and the contribution between current and future customers (intergenerational equity), including the appropriate use of debt to fund intergenerational long life infrastructure assets
- Be resilient and prepared for the future
- Value social impact and benefits in addition to time, cost and quality measures

Contribution to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals



Measures of Success

Goal	Metric	Target
Risk Mitigation	Treated risk rating for strategic risks	100% of strategic risks mitigated to at or below Board approved risk tolerance or target
Long Term Financial Sustainability	Achievement of key financial indicator targets in medium to long term	100% of KFI targets forecast to be achieved within 10 to 15 years
Affordable service provision	Keep service charges and other service fees as low and as stable as possible	Annual price increases broadly in line with CPI averaged over the term of the LTFP
Support the local economy	Use of local suppliers in the procurement of goods and services	Number of regional contractors / suppliers vs total number of contractors / suppliers >35% or 15% of value



Family in Keith Stephenson Park

High Performing Culture

We deliver results focusing on safe and healthy workplaces, employee engagement, inclusion, innovation and accountability.

Key Priorities

Organisational Capability	Build capabilities (people, systems and processes) required to deliver core business and strategic initiatives
Safety and Wellbeing	Foster a holistic safety-first culture where everyone goes home healthy, safe, well and thriving
Culture and ethics	Establish a culture that promotes ethical practices, and an engaged, diverse and inclusive workforce

Objectives

- Aim to be acknowledged as an employer of choice
- Collaborate to deliver our vision
- Have clear individual and team accountabilities
- Empower our people to innovate, learn and deliver
- Underpin our strong business performance with strong health, safety and well-being performance
- Develop the right people with the right qualities at the right time through our workforce plan
- Create opportunities through our workforce capability and culture

Contribution to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals



Measures of Success

Goal	Metric	Target
Build Capability	Completion of identified and / or planned improvement initiatives and training plans on time	90% completion over a rolling 24 month basis
Ensure Safety and Wellbeing	Prevention of injuries, or worse, to workers and the public	TRIFR (Total recordable injury frequency rate) ≤ 3 at all times
Staff satisfaction	Staff satisfaction measured through surveys and pulse checks	Results meet or exceed industry benchmark on a rolling 12 month basis
Team Retention	Staff turnover	<12% per annum



Monitoring and Evaluation



Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring progress, evaluating implementation and reporting of outcomes are necessary to know if a Strategic Plan is being effective or if adjustments are necessary.

Monitoring Progress

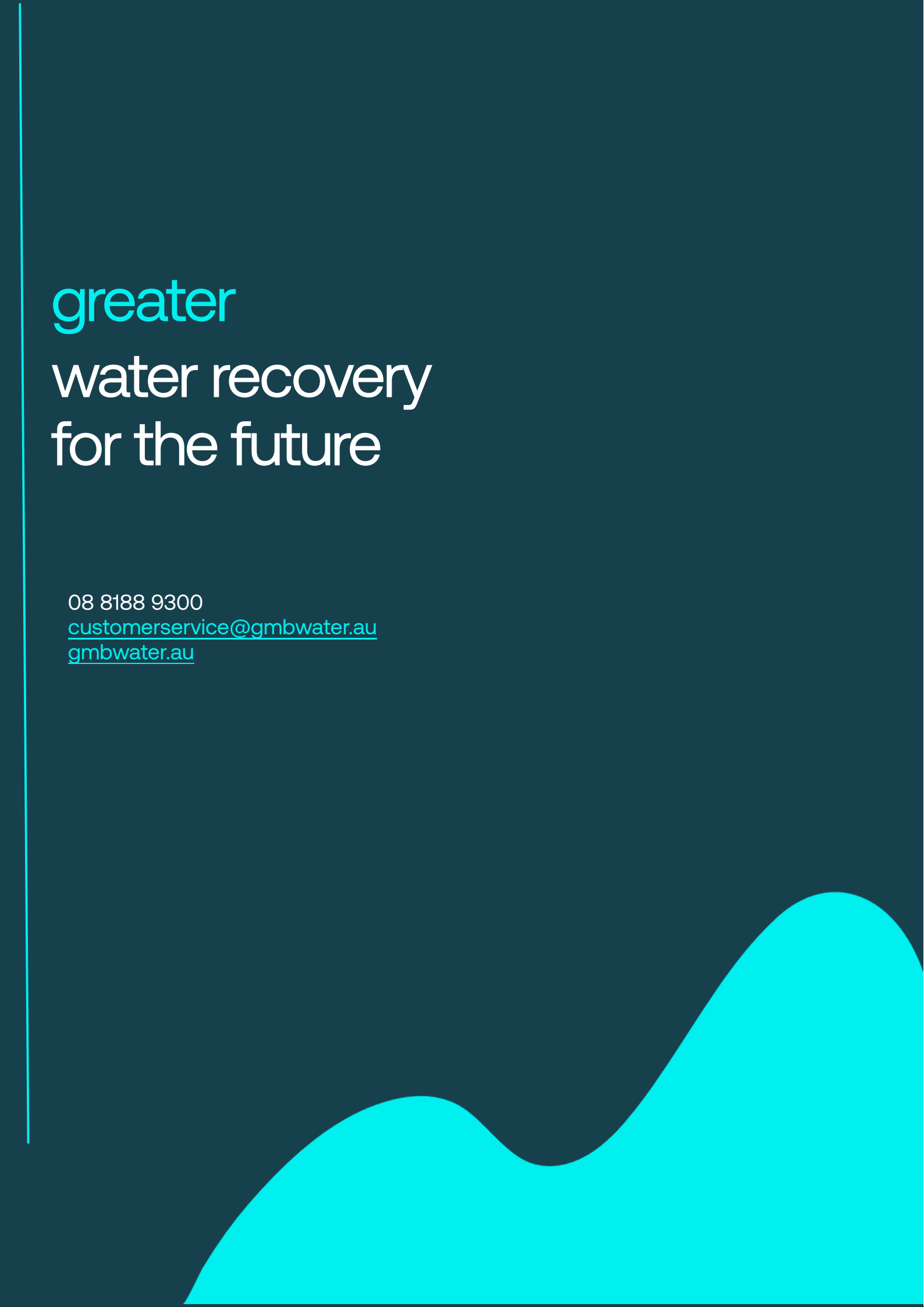
GMB Water will regularly track the implementation of actions across the four key pillars identified. This includes collecting and reviewing relevant data, keeping accurate records, and observing how well initiatives are progressing. Key indicators will be used to measure the effectiveness of actions.

Reporting

Annual progress updates will be provided to the Board and the Audit and Risk Management Committee, and shared with key stakeholders. A comprehensive review of the Strategic Plan will be undertaken at least every four years, allowing for a more in depth evaluation of progress and provide an opportunity to adjust the Strategic Plan based on emerging trends, new technologies, changes in regulation or customer needs. This review will inform the direction of the Strategic Plan for the subsequent ten years ensuring continuous improvement and responsiveness to external and internal trends and influences.

Continuous Improvement

The GMB Water Strategic Plan embraces a philosophy of adaptive management. As new data or information becomes available or circumstances change, GMB Water will refine its approach to ensure the most effective actions and solutions are pursued. Targets are set to be ambitious yet achievable, and as actions are carried out, the results will be used to refine and adapt strategies and activities, ensuring that the organisational goals are met both now and into the future.



greater water recovery for the future

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