



Case study 11

Helping not hindering

Yarra Valley Water

This case study showcases

how water businesses are rethinking internal processes, services and skills to better serve communities

Problem

Keeping on top of water bills can be a challenge to many households that are experiencing difficult circumstance or financial stress. Those who experience domestic violence are especially vulnerable to financial risk.

Solution

The Yarra Valley Water hardship team evaluated its processes and touch points with these customers and put together some simple changes which enable Yarra Valley Water to effectively support and work with those experiencing

of domestic abuse, without causing extra burden. This includes flexible approaches to accessing the right support programs, founded on taking customers at their word – i.e. not requiring proof of domestic violence. The customer's safety is paramount and all processes are developed to ensure a more supported experience including; all customers who are identified as experiencing family violence are automatically transferred into the Customer Support Team where they have one point of contact, additional privacy and safety flags as well as flexible communication methods and payment plans.

Yarra Valley Water also embedded this approach within the organisation through:

Ongoing training and development for all staff that interact with clients. The training

module was developed with Kildonan Uniting Care. Contact Centre staff are also seconded into the hardship team to encourage a broader perspective and skills.

Staff Support through debriefing and discussion of difficult calls. This is an important aspect of staff retention at Yarra Valley Water. Staff in the Customer Support Team are trained to deal with a range of complex interactions. There is also additional assistance process in place, such as having another staff member listen in on the call to provide feedback and advice for particular situations.

Benefit/outcome

This method can lead to a number of broader community benefits including the reduction of mental health stress and financial burden on already strained individuals.