



Case study 12

Creating shared value

South East Water

This case study showcases

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

Problem

Water businesses are all contributing to communities beyond their regulated requirements of water and sewerage provision. However many of these are opportunistic and personality driven. Many water businesses are exploring how they can take a more strategic approach to creating shared value and what they need to do within their own business.

Solution

South East Water is one of the three Metropolitan water retailers in Melbourne. They have proactively recognised the additional value they create as part of their business and are communicating it through their creating shared value program. The concept of shared value is about meaningful, long term value that delivers benefits to customers, the community and the business. South East Water's creating shared value program has a long-term approach, and:

Is aligned to its business' strategic objectives, supports the government's priorities, and meets one of the four key business-identified themes of education, liveability, innovation, and wellbeing.

Defines nine commitments to achieve, along with objectives, targets, and progress against the commitments.

Communicates these commitments to the public, stakeholders and their staff

Business case

When South East Water was looking to implement a refreshed and enhanced corporate social responsibility program, it soon became evident that what the business wanted matched with the philosophy of a creating shared value program approach. The retailer's aims were to enhance its reputation, engage with customers and community, respond to the state government's wishes about engaging with communities in meaningful ways, and boost employee engagement.

South East Water held workshops with employees and the Executive to gauge their thoughts on how the business should engage in the community or how it should approach sponsorship. They also analysed previous programs, partnerships and sponsorships to identify what worked and how it could improve. It was evident that much of what South East Water does as part of its business and its role as an essential service provider is creating shared value, and the feedback from employees highlighted this too.

There is minimal cost to setting up the program; the costs are mostly associated with how activities are supported. South East Water is continuing to explore more potential opportunities that reinforce its program, and are encouraging its people to value what they do and identify new or different ways they can create value.

For example, South East Water proudly supported SCOPE disability services by retrofitting water efficient appliances at five of their properties.

Key drivers

There were a number of drivers, with the main ones being: a desire to provide some structure and criteria around community engagement and support for activities, which would provide value for those we support while also having some benefit for us. We also wanted to help enhance our reputation, and provide a mechanism for explaining the variety of ways the essential service we provide has a positive effect on our community.

Benefit/outcome

The benefits of the Shared Value program are:

An enhanced reputation of the organisation

Improved community and stakeholder relationships

Embed the consideration of community value when evaluating business cases and investments