



# **BUSSELTON WATER**

## **SUMMARY**

### **CUSTOMER SURVEY 2010**

**Survey undertaken by:**  
SMR  
Strategic Marketing and Research  
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## **Introduction**

Busselton Water services approximately 20,000 domestic, commercial, light industrial and special rural customers located in the Busselton Town site and close environs such as Port Geographe, Siesta Park and Wonnerup<sup>1</sup>.

Water is drawn from artesian aquifers with the raw water supply of a high quality.

Busselton Water continues to support the State-wide Water Efficiency Measures, including the two day per week watering roster, winter & daytime sprinkler bans and the establishment of Water Efficiency Management Plans with high end commercial users.

The new brand for Busselton Water was launched in January 2009, and has now been established for over a year.

Future challenges for Busselton Water relate to the growth of the population and the expansion of the residential areas to accommodate this growth. Busselton Water currently services its customers with water drawn from the aquifers, which is aerated, filtered and stored in tanks before being pumped through 281 kilometres of mains. Currently UV irradiation is used to disinfect the water. However due to a growing reticulation network and the ongoing detection of non-pathogenic amoebas Busselton Water is moving to full time chlorination.

## **Methodology**

The “self-complete” questionnaire used last year was updated to reflect recent marketing activities and the increased emphasis on water conservation. New questions were included to measure:

- Awareness of the shift to chlorination
- Awareness of reasons why Busselton Water is shifting to chlorination
- Understanding of the public health rationale for the change.

1000 customers were mailed a four page questionnaire (see Appendix I) designed to measure their satisfaction with Busselton Water on 27 April 2010. By 7 May, 277 customers had returned a completed questionnaire, a response rate of 27.7%.

A sample size of 277 has a maximum error margin of  $\pm 5.85\%$  at the 95% confidence interval. All demographic differences reported are statistically significant.

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<sup>1</sup> Busselton Water Annual Report, 2008/2009, p3 & p9.

<http://www.busseltonwater.wa.gov.au/LinkClick.aspx?link=Reports%2fAnnual+Report+07-08+Full.pdf&tabid=89&mid=475>

## **Sample Description**

Respondents were heavily skewed towards the older demographic. 37.7% were aged 65 plus and 61.2% were aged over 55 years. In comparison, the 2006 ABS Census indicates that only 37.9% of residents in the Busselton urban centre were aged over 55 years.

<b>Age</b>	<b>2010 Survey</b>	<b>2006 ABS Census Busselton Urban Centre</b>
18-25 years	0.4%	10.6%
26-35 years	4.4%	15.3%
36-45 years	16.1%	18.8%
46-55 years	17.9%	17.3%
56-65 years	23.4%	14.2%
65 plus <sup>2</sup>	37.7%	23.7%

Because of this skew, the 2010 survey results have been weighted to reflect the correct age distribution. The same decision to weight was also made in 2008 and 2009 surveys.

The skew towards the older demographic also affected the distribution of household sizes in the sample. Weighting reduced the proportion of single and 2 person households and increased the proportion of larger households in the sample.

<b>Household Size</b>	<b>2010 Survey Unweighted</b>	<b>2010 Survey Weighted</b>
Single person household	17.3%	11.8%
2 person	50.2%	48.8%
3 person	12.3%	13.2%
4 person	12.6%	15.5%
5 person	4.7%	6.9%
6+ person	2.9%	3.8%

<sup>2</sup> In the questionnaire, the age response codes for question 19 are not mutually exclusive. A respondent aged 65 years could select either 56 – 65 years or 65 plus. The age ranges used for the Census data shown in the table are 56 – 65 years and over 65 years, so 65 year olds will be found in the 56 – 65 years range.

## **Summary**

The key findings are:

### **Satisfaction with customer service received from contacting Busselton Water**

- 22.5% of respondents had contacted Busselton Water for a reason other than to pay their water rates in the 12 months prior to taking part in the survey, similar to previous years.
- Going against the trend of recent years, there has been a move away from the telephone to personal visits to the office.

### **Experiences with interruptions to the water supply**

- 79.0% of respondents have not experienced an interruption to their water supply in the previous 12 months and most of those who had, reported experiencing only one disruption, similar to last year.
- Notifications have declined significantly with 70.2% of the respondents who experienced an interruption receiving prior notification for at least some of the interruptions, down from 93.0% in 2009. This is due to an increase in the proportion who received no notification, up from 7.0% to 29.8%.
- The length of disruption has not changed. 95.0% of respondents were without water for five hours or less, similar to 97.0% in 2009.
- After deteriorating significantly between 2008 and 2009, Busselton Water's record for turning the water back on within the time frame specified in the notification has remained stable. 80.1% had their water turned back on in all instances and 91.4% had their water turned back on in all or some instances.
- There has been no change in the level of inconvenience experienced from disruptions to the water supply. 33.5% of respondents found the disruption to their water supply inconvenient.

### **Satisfaction with Busselton Water's water supply service**

- Satisfaction with Busselton Water's water supply service continues to be very high. More than 9 in 10 respondents are very or somewhat satisfied with all aspects of the water supply service, except for *encouraging water conservation*.
- Busselton Water's best performing areas are *the quality of water* (90.0%, 98.0%), *the tap water service* (89.6% very satisfied, 98.5% satisfied overall) and *the clarity of the water* (86.8%, 98.0%).
- There have been few changes in satisfaction since 2009. They include:
  - *Very satisfied with the tap water service provided by Busselton Water*, up from 83.4% to 89.6%
  - *Very or somewhat satisfied with the pressure of your water*, up from 92.6% to 96.2%.
  - *Very satisfied with the clarity of your water*, up from 77.1% to 86.8%.

### **Attitudes to Busselton Water**

There are three strongly held attitudes to Busselton Water

- 83.7% strongly agree that *the water supplied by Busselton Water is safe to drink*. 96.1% agree overall.
- While 87.8% agree overall that *Busselton Water has provided clear information about my allocated watering dates*, the strength of that belief is weaker than the top attitude with only 56.1% strongly agreeing.
- And while 86.6% agree overall that *Busselton Water does a good job informing the public about its services*, the strength of that belief is also weaker than the top attitude with only 49.7% strongly agreeing.

### **Awareness of Busselton Water's marketing and promotional activities**

- Busselton Water's marketing and promotional activities have generated a high level of awareness. 94.4% recalled at least one activity, 79.2% recalled more than one activity and 60.3% recalled more than two activities.
- The best recalled activity was the *fridge magnet with rostered watering days*, recalled by 69.0%. The other four activities were equally recalled.

### **Areas Busselton Water can improve on**

- The most popular area respondents felt that Busselton Water could improve remained conservation-related: *educating the public on water conservation* (46.7%).
- The next most important areas for improvement were *reduce water charges* (29.5%) and *resource management for the future*, which declined slightly from 35.3% to 29.0%.

### **Attitudes to water conservation**

- Respondents used an average of 3.4 water conservation measures in their households.
- The two most popular measures remained *mulch on the garden* (84.9%) and *manage the use of water, through shorter showers, etc.* (74.0%). These are arguably the cheapest and easiest measures to use.

### **Relevance of proposed water conservation initiatives**

- Two initiatives stood out from the rest as clearly most relevant. They were *information sheets about how to conserve water in the home and garden* (62.6%) and *information newsletter issued twice per annum* (which increased from 64.2% to 73.5%).

### **Awareness of and attitudes to changing from UV to chlorination**

- 98.2% of respondents are aware that Busselton Water will start treating drinking water with chlorination in twelve months.
- Respondents heard about the change from 2.43 sources on average, with *articles in the local newspapers* (86.0%) and *letter sent to my house by Busselton Water* (57.8%) the two most commonly recalled sources.
- While awareness is high, the reasons behind the decision are not well understood (*as at the time the survey was undertaken May 2010*).
- Respondents were aware of the *growth in size of the pipe network* (75.2%). And while they were moderately aware that chlorination is needed to *reduce the risk of Busselton's water developing a health-related amoeba water quality problem in the future* – at 59.5% it is the second most well known reason that Busselton Water has given to explain its decision - 33.5% were unsure if that was a reason for Busselton Water's decision.
- Approximately 50% completely agree, mostly agree or agree a moderate amount that the decision to treat Busselton's water with chlorination is important for public health.
- Those who don't agree that the change is important for public health (40%) tend to be "unsure" of the reasons for Busselton Water's decision to change to chlorination.

## **Recommendations**

The high levels of customer satisfaction of previous years have continued into 2010. Marketing initiatives are well recalled and attitudes remain strong and positive.

However, the challenge facing Busselton Water in 2010 is to gain community understanding of its decision to change from UV treatment of the drinking water to chlorination. This is an enormous challenge, as Busselton Water has spent many years talking up its choice of UV treatment and the quality water supply that has resulted from that. In many respects, Busselton Water has to undo its good work of previous years.

Busselton Water has conducted an extensive education campaign to explain this to the community, and this is reflected in the high levels of awareness of the decision to change. However, the underlying rationale is not yet understood. While the community understands the growing pipe network, it is unsure of most of the Board's other reasons. As a result, the scientific and public health concerns driving the decision are not well understood and not widely accepted.

The size of the pipe network is on the way to being accepted. It is a relatively widely accepted reason amongst those who agree that chlorination is important for public health. There is room for increased acceptance amongst those who disagree with the public health argument.

The amoeba risk and the residual disinfection messages are partly accepted by those who agree that chlorination is important for public health.

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***Busselton Water will continue to review its activities and implement a range of educational programs in the coming year to provide customers with information and guidance in relation to full-time chlorination, state-wide water efficiency measures and conservation matters generally.***

***Busselton Water would also like to congratulate Mr Ken Clarke, randomly selected from the surveys received to win \$500 worth of water saving garden supplies.***