



Central South Island Water | General Manager Customer and Community

Position Description and
Additional Information

October 2026





Position Description | Central South Island Water

General Manager Customer and Community

Title:	General Manager Customer and Community
Reports to:	Chief Executive
Direct Reports:	Billing Administrators x2, Customer Support x2, Communications and Community Advisor
Function:	Customer and Community comprising billing and revenue collection, customer service, communications and community engagement
Head Office:	Timaru

Central South Island Water | In Summary

Central South Island Water has been established to deliver drinking water and wastewater services across the Timaru and Mackenzie districts, serving approximately 25,000 connections. From its planned operational commencement on 1 July 2027, it will bring together the councils' existing water teams, assets and service arrangements within this standalone organisation. It will also provide stormwater services to both councils (the method of service provision is currently being determined).

The organisation will be responsible for safe, reliable services, sustainable infrastructure investment and a direct relationship with customers through billing, service support and community engagement. Its founding priorities are strong leadership, decisions grounded in reliable data and evidence, and genuine customer focus. It will build a culture of performance, accountability and continuous improvement where people can develop their careers and contribute to better services.

Led by the Chief Executive and four General Managers across Operations, Planning and Delivery, Corporate Services, and Customer and Community, the executive team will share responsibility for establishing the organisation, shaping its culture and delivering outcomes across both districts. Each General Manager will lead their portfolio while contributing to decisions and priorities that support the success of Central South Island Water as a whole.

Role purpose

The General Manager Customer and Community (the GM) will provide executive leadership of Central South Island Water's customer relationship, bringing together reliable billing and revenue collection with clear communications, community engagement and responsive service. The GM will establish accurate, timely billing and accessible customer support from day one, and build trust by helping households and businesses understand their services, charges and how to get help. Through a capable team, the GM will embed a culture of performance, accountability and continuous improvement, using customer data and feedback to improve service and inform decisions. As a member of the executive team, the GM will bring the customer and community perspective to organisational direction, investment and pricing, sharing responsibility for the success of the whole organisation.





Key accountability areas

Collective executive leadership | the GM will

- Work with the Chief Executive and fellow General Managers to shape organisational direction, agree priorities and take shared responsibility for performance and customer outcomes.
- Bring customer and community insight and constructive challenge to executive decisions on service, investment and pricing, making customer impacts, affordability and communication needs clear.
- Lead across portfolio boundaries, support collective decisions and model a culture of accountability, continuous improvement and customer service.
- Provide visible executive leadership of health, safety and wellbeing, taking shared responsibility for a culture where risks are understood, people speak up and safe work is expected.
- Ensure decisions, resources and assurance support the safety of employees, contractors and the public, with clear accountability and learning from incidents.

People leadership and performance | the GM will

- Lead and develop a capable team whose members take ownership of their responsibilities and contribute to organisation-wide outcomes.
- Set clear expectations, measurable outcomes and decision-making authority; coach direct reports to strengthen their judgement, capability and confidence.
- Build engagement and a culture of performance and accountability through visible leadership, regular review of results, feedback, recognition and timely, constructive conversations when expectations are not met.
- Create opportunities for learning and career development; prioritise succession planning, knowledge transfer and specialist capability so the organisation retains the expertise needed for reliable services.

Establishment and transition | the GM will

- Lead customer, billing and communications readiness for commencement on 1 July 2027, with tested arrangements that support accurate invoices, clear public information and responsive service from day one.
- Build the team and agree clear responsibilities, service standards and workflows with Operations and Corporate Services, ensuring customer enquiries and billing issues have accountable owners.
- Provide assurance on customer and property data, billing calculations, payment arrangements and contact channels; resolve readiness risks and plan further improvements beyond commencement.

Billing and revenue performance | the GM will

- Set direction and performance expectations for billing, customer accounts, revenue collection and credit and debt management, including trade waste and bulk water invoicing.





- Hold the team accountable for accurate, timely billing, effective reconciliation and prompt correction of exceptions, using data and controls to identify errors before they affect customers.
- Work with Corporate Services on approved pricing, revenue assurance and financial controls, ensuring charges are applied consistently and collection practices balance fairness, customer needs and financial discipline.

Customer service and resolution | the GM will

- Lead an accessible, responsive customer service function, with clear standards for enquiries, complaints, faults and service requests across both districts.
- Work with Operations to connect customer contact, field response and outage communications through to resolution, with clear escalation and timely updates.
- Use service data, complaints and customer feedback to identify recurring issues and lead improvements across portfolio boundaries.

Communications and community engagement | the GM will

- Lead the organisation's communications and engagement approach, building understanding and trust through clear, timely information about services, charges, works and investment priorities.
- Oversee external communications, community engagement and public channels, ensuring information is accessible, consistent and responsive to the needs of both districts.
- Coordinate incident and sensitive-issue communications with Operations and the Chief Executive, explaining service impacts and decisions clearly and responding constructively to community concerns.

Pricing and the customer perspective | the GM will

- Contribute customer evidence, affordability insights and community perspectives to the executive team's collective decisions on pricing strategies and outcomes.
- Work with Corporate Services and fellow executives to test customer impacts and implementation requirements, connecting agreed pricing with billing readiness and clear communications.
- Lead communication of charges and service commitments, setting realistic expectations and using community feedback to inform ongoing executive decisions.

Relationships with iwi and mana whenua | the GM will

- Build respectful relationships with iwi, rūnanga and mana whenua, coordinating engagement relevant to services, community needs and organisational decisions.
- Work with the Chief Executive and fellow executives to ensure engagement informs planning and delivery, with clear ownership and follow-through on commitments.
- Coordinate with councils on respective engagement responsibilities, recognising the Treaty partnership role retained by councils in the operating model.





Customer information and systems | the GM will

- Take ownership of the quality and use of customer and property information, ensuring reliable records, meter-reading data and billing and service workflows.
- Work with Data and Digital to ensure systems, privacy and information governance support dependable billing, responsive service and evidence-based decisions.
- Guide the development of customer platforms and channels as the organisation matures, assessing service benefits, affordability and opportunities to simplify processes.

Resources continuous improvement and assurance | the GM will

- Lead portfolio planning and resource allocation, aligning budgets, team capability and capacity with billing, communications and service priorities.
- Set measurable expectations for billing accuracy, collection, response, resolution and customer experience; use results and feedback to improve processes and hold the team accountable.
- Provide the Chief Executive and Board with clear advice on customer outcomes, revenue performance and material risks, supporting coordinated regulatory reporting with Corporate Services.

Person specification

The role requires a customer and communications leader with the discipline to oversee billing and revenue performance in a lean organisation. The successful candidate will combine visible people leadership and community engagement with attention to data, controls and execution, contributing confidently to the whole executive team. Relevant transferable experience will be considered alongside sector knowledge.

Experience

- Senior leadership in customer operations, service delivery or a comparable environment, with responsibility for customer outcomes and team performance.
- Experience overseeing billing, revenue collection or customer account functions, with a strong understanding of data quality, financial controls and service risks.
- A record of leading external communications, community engagement or stakeholder relationships, including sensitive issues and service disruption.
- Experience establishing or improving services, building engagement and capability, and leading teams through change.
- Experience using customer and performance data to improve processes, inform executive decisions and hold teams accountable for results.
- Utilities, telecommunications or other essential-service experience would be valuable; local government or water experience is not essential. Experience engaging with iwi and mana whenua is desirable.

Qualifications

- A relevant tertiary qualification in business, communications, customer services or a related discipline, or equivalent depth of relevant professional experience.





- Further learning in leadership, communications, customer experience or service design would be valuable.

Skills and leadership qualities

- Strategic customer judgement, balancing service expectations, affordability, financial discipline and operational realities.
- Ability to oversee billing performance and controls, interrogate data and assumptions, and identify risks without losing sight of customer experience.
- Clear written and verbal communication, with the confidence to explain complex charges and decisions and respond to public scrutiny.
- Visible, inclusive leadership with effective coaching, clear expectations and accountability for measurable results.
- Strong relationship skills and cultural awareness, with the ability to engage respectfully with diverse communities, iwi and mana whenua.
- Ability to prioritise in a lean organisation, lead continuous improvement and collaborate across the executive team to turn customer insights into action.

Our Process



OUTREACH AND ADVERTISING | Applications close 6 November 2026

Potential candidates identified through targeted search; applications reviewed and responded to.



APPLICANT SCREENING | Late October Early November

Initial screening of applications as they are received. This may include a discussion with candidates about their motivations for applying. We aim to run a timely and efficient process.



SELECTING AND SHORTLISTING | Early to Mid November

Once the role has closed our team will present the most qualified candidates to the client. Within this period, all applicants will receive notification of the status of their application.



CANDIDATE INTERVIEWS | Early to Mid November

Decipher Group prioritises a robust and consistent interview framework, based on a behavioural and competency-based assessment. Candidates will be advised of the interview structure and who will be present on the panel. All interviewed candidates will receive prompt feedback and will be advised of next steps once we have debriefed with the interview panel.



VETTING AND DUE DILIGENCE | Mid to Late November

We conduct thorough background checks and referencing to further assess competencies of preferred candidate/s. Decipher Group utilises a third-party provider for pre-employment and probity checks such as criminal history, qualification, employment history and bankruptcy. Our team will notify you in advance prior to us contacting your referees. Throughout the entire process, candidate confidentiality and privacy remain an absolute priority.



DECISION AND ONBOARDING | Late November

Following a rigorous evaluation, a conditional offer of employment will be made, subject to the completion of the above stage. Our team will communicate regularly with both the client and the successful candidate during this period. At the conclusion of the recruitment process, all remaining candidates will be notified, with the opportunity for feedback.

GM Customer and Community – Build Trust

- Nurture customer relationships – fresh thinking, clear communication
- Bring together dependable billing and a responsive service culture
- Join a collaborative executive team with shared responsibility for success

Central South Island Water | Help shape what comes next

Central South Island Water has been established to deliver drinking water and wastewater services across the Timaru and Mackenzie districts, alongside stormwater services for both councils. Preparing to commence operations on 1 July 2027, the organisation has a clear ambition: reliable services, decisions grounded in evidence and a genuine focus on customers and the communities it serves.

The new role of GM Customer and Community is an opportunity to shape how this organisation connects with its customers from the outset - building the services, communications and relationships that will earn trust over time. Sound like you?

About the opportunity | Establish, Build, Shape

Reporting to the Chief Executive, you will join three other new General Managers who will collectively build and lead Central South Island Water. Your contribution will extend across the organisation, helping the executive team make sound decisions, navigate competing priorities and deliver shared outcomes.

You will lead a portfolio that brings together billing and revenue collection, customer service, communications and community engagement. Getting billing right from day one will be an immediate priority, alongside ensuring customers understand their charges, know where to get help and receive clear, timely information.

You will also shape the organisation's public voice and relationships across both districts, including engagement with iwi and mana whenua. Working closely with fellow executives, you will bring customer insights into service, investment and collective pricing decisions, helping the organisation understand community expectations and explain its choices clearly.

Your priorities will include:

- Establishing accurate, timely billing, effective revenue collection and dependable customer support.
- Leading clear communications and meaningful engagement about charges, services, works and investment.
- Building a capable team with clear expectations and a culture of service, performance and accountability.
- Using customer data and feedback to improve processes and inform organisational decisions.

About you | Fresh thinking, New ideas

You are a customer-focused leader who combines strong communication and relationship skills with the discipline to oversee billing and service performance. You can see the bigger picture while staying close enough to delivery to ask the right questions and ensure things work.

Your background could be in utilities, telecommunications, customer operations or another service environment. We welcome transferable capability and fresh thinking from beyond water and local government.

You will bring:

- Leadership experience across customer services, communications, engagement or a comparable portfolio.
- Experience overseeing billing, revenue collection or customer account processes, with an appreciation of controls and data quality.
- The ability to explain complex issues clearly and build confidence through sensitive conversations and public communications.
- A record of developing people, setting clear expectations and improving service performance.
- Confidence contributing to executive decisions and building relationships with diverse communities; experience engaging with iwi and mana whenua would be valuable.

You will be comfortable with ambiguity, willing to challenge established approaches and committed to working as one executive team. Above all, you will connect dependable delivery with clear communication and genuine care for the people using your services.

Help establish an organisation, build its culture and earn the confidence of its communities.

How to apply

For a copy of the position description and to apply, visit the Decipher Group website on <https://deciphergroup.co.nz/job-opportunities/general-manager-customer-and-community/>
To discover more about Central South Island Water and the partner Councils visit www.timaru.govt.nz and www.mckenzie.govt.nz

To make a time for a confidential discussion about the role, contact Deb Vaughan at Decipher Group by text to 022 850 0188 or email deb@deciphergroup.co.nz.

Applications close: Friday 6 November 2026.

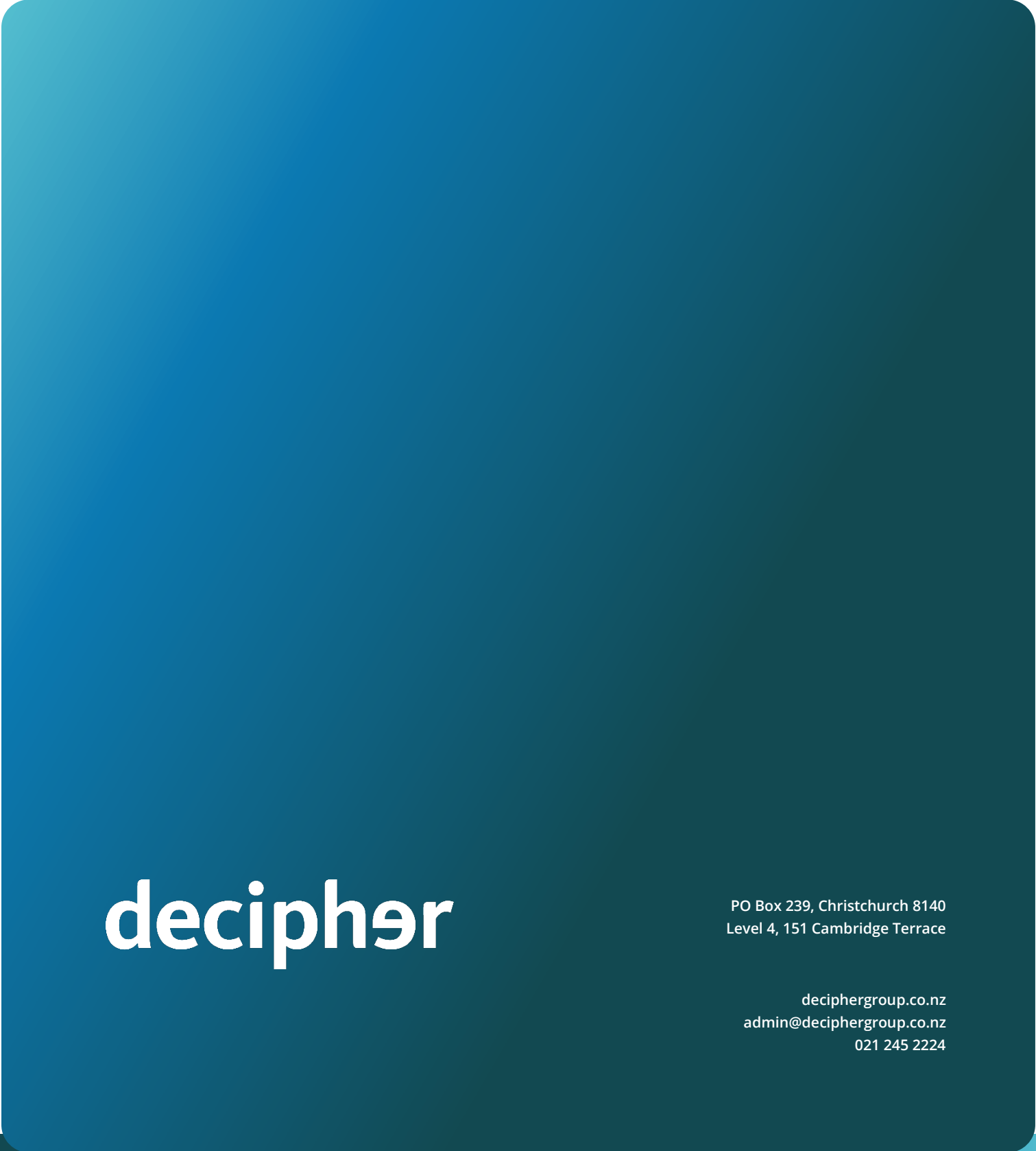
Please do not email us your CV and Cover Letter.
Please use the *Apply Now* link on our website.



Our Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Statement

Decipher Group cares deeply about helping individuals achieve their full potential and supporting organisations to thrive by working toward a more progressive future.

Fostering a culture of inclusion and belonging that truly values individual differences, backgrounds, and perspectives ignites creativity and new ideas – and this is part of what makes our team exceptional. For us, progress is the only goal worth benchmarking.



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