



Consultative Group

Role and Function

*for the development of the*  
South Esk River Catchment  
*(above Macquarie)*  
Water Management Plan

Water Resources Division  
Department of Primary Industries and Water  
August 2008

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### **The Department of Primary Industries and Water (DPIW)**

The Department of Primary Industries and Water provides leadership in the sustainable management and development of Tasmania's natural resources. The Mission of the Department is to support Tasmania's development by ensuring effective management of our natural resources.

The Water Resources Division provides a focus for water management and water development in Tasmania through a diverse range of functions, including implementing the *Water Management Act 1999*, the Water Development Plan for Tasmania and the National Water Initiative; design of policy and regulatory frameworks to ensure sustainable use of surface water and groundwater resources; monitoring, assessment and reporting on the condition of the State's freshwater resources; and facilitating water infrastructure development projects.

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## **Introduction**

This report provides details of the purpose of a Water Management Plan, its main function and what content are considered within a Plan.

The role and function of the Consultative Group and their membership will also be provided and the planning process adopted during the consultation stage will also be outlined.

This report sets the scene for the Group and will provide guidance on how each member needs to provide input during the planning process.

## **Purpose of the South Esk River Catchment Water Management Plan**

Water resources are managed in Tasmania through a range of statutory measures under the *Water Management Act 1999*, Government policies and in accordance with the National Water Initiative Intergovernmental Agreement.

Water Management Plans (WMP) are recognised across Australian jurisdictions as a useful mechanism in determining water management and allocation decisions to meet productive, environmental and social objectives. Planning process are generally designed to ensure adequate opportunity for consumptive use, environmental, cultural, and other public benefit issues to be identified and considered in an open and transparent way.

In Tasmania Water Management Plans provide a framework for managing a catchment's water resources in accordance with the objectives of the *Act*.

Water Management Plans present a clear statement of the community's environmental, social and economic objectives for the relevant water resources and describe the water management regime that best gives effect to these objectives.

Water Management Plans provide a clear direction on how the discretionary powers in the *Act* are applied for a particular water resource. The water management provisions in a Plan provide the mechanisms through which specific Plan objectives can be met, including water allocation limits that will define the volume and timing of water available for sustainable allocation at various sureties.

Plans may also include issues like how the approval of water licences and dam permit applications are dealt with and as well various other water management arrangements for mitigating any impacts resulting from the taking of water.

A Plan can only consider issues relating to the objectives of the *Act* and as such can not address any landuse/management issues such as plantation forestry or changes from one crop to another (ie annual cropping to permanent pasture or dry land farming to irrigation).

## **Consultative Group**

There are many benefits from effective consultation during the development of a Plan. For Government, it enhances the awareness of the water management planning process within the community, helps to establish stronger linkages between the Department and stakeholders and results in a Plan that benefits greatly from community input.

The community benefits through being able to provide input at an early stage of the planning process and having a greater understanding of water management issues and administrative processes within the catchment.

Consultation can be facilitated through a range of activities but to start the planning process a formal group structure need to be established. This group the "Consultative Group" will represent key interest groups from within the Plan area with local representation from Commercial water users, Local Government, Waterwatch and Natural Resource Management and a basin wide perspective from Hydro Tasmania.

## **Role and Function of the Consultative Group**

The Group will operate in a formal way like a boardroom style where agenda's and discussion papers will be provided to members prior to each meeting. The Department will chair each meeting, working through agenda items in a timely manner. A record of all meetings will be minuted and provided to members prior to each meeting. Meetings will be held on a regular basis starting in early August and concluding in November 2008 (subject to progress).

Members will be required to attend meetings and dedicate the appropriate time to prepare for each meeting by having read discussion papers and previous meeting minutes prior to each meeting.

During meetings members are encouraged to discuss matters in an open forum environment and draw conclusions based on factual information and not personal views.

For the planning process to work effectively the flow of information in to the group from the member's constituents is just as important as the information provided to the group by the Department. During the planning process member's need to liase with their constituents on a regular basis and feed back to the group meetings as required.

## **Statutory Requirements and Planning Process**

Sections 24 to 28 of the *Act* describe the statutory process that will be used for the preparation and adoption of a Water Management Plan. In addition to the statutory measures the Consultative Group will be used during the development phase of the planning process over the next several months.

Once input from the Group has been provided the Department will prepare a Draft Plan and formally release it to the public for consideration. During the public exhibition period a public meeting will be held to inform the public about the content of the Plan, how it was developed and how public submissions can be made.

Figure 1 provides a step by step process that will be used during the development and approval process for the Water Management Plan.

**Figure 1.** The planning process for the South Esk River Catchment Water Management Plan (with reference to statutory requirements).

