



# Tasmanian Groundwater Assessment Project

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### Why is NRE Tas undertaking the Groundwater Assessment Project?

Sustainable groundwater volumes and use, aquifer (the rock and sediment that holds groundwater) properties and recharge rates across Tasmania are not well understood due to the complexity of Tasmania's hydrological and geological conditions. These are core water resource knowledge gaps that are needed to be filled so that we can plan and ensure that our water resources are well managed and can meet the challenges of increasing demand and a changing climate.

While there is a network of monitoring bores, and the locations and details of drilled bores is regulated and documented, NRE Tas has limited information on the success of, or on-going production of the bores, the purpose for which the groundwater is used, or the amount of groundwater being taken on a seasonal and annual basis. This poses challenges to the sustainable management of the groundwater resource.

### Why is it so important to have more information about groundwater?

Groundwater extraction can adversely impact water supply to water users either directly by lowering groundwater levels, potentially reducing the reliability and security of water for other groundwater users, or indirectly by reducing groundwater flows to rivers, therefore impacting on the amount of water entering the system and the environment.

Better understanding our groundwater systems is important to support sustainable and reliable access to freshwater into the future and protect the environment.

## What is the Groundwater Risk Assessment Tool (GRAT)?

The GRAT is a risk screening tool that can be applied consistently to identify areas for further investigation or inform water resource management policy and water infrastructure investment planning.

The GRAT utilises multiple quantitative criteria, each with their own scoring and weighting schemes, to assess the likelihood and consequence of individual risks relating to potential impacts on groundwater dependant ecosystems, water quality and production base.

## Why is NRE Tas only surveying the Smithton Syncline area?

Smithton Syncline was one of the areas identified as being 'high risk' by the Groundwater Risk Assessment Tool (GRAT). The high risk areas primarily guide where we need to undertake further investigations to improve our confidence in the GRAT, with Smithton Syncline being the first area to be further assessed.

## What do 'high risk areas' mean?

The GRAT is identifying areas of potential high risk, so we know where to focus our resources for further investigation. This investigation will involve targeted field studies to further confirm this risk, gather information on level of risk, and inform the management response required for the area.

## How will groundwater usage be estimated?

Our estimates of groundwater use will be made based on the area of land irrigated / number and type of stock each year from groundwater and the number of weeks per year irrigation is applied, or using data from water meters, where installed. If these options are not available, we will use pumping rates.

## Will all groundwater uses be surveyed?

Groundwater use for stock and domestic, and irrigation use will be surveyed to determine the purpose and volume of water use.

## Will groundwater be regulated?

The Groundwater Assessment Project will help inform future regulation required to sustainably manage our groundwater resources so those that rely on our water resources, and the environment can continue to be provided with water security into the future.

Where changes are required to our water management policies, full consultation will be undertaken.

