Rural Water Use Strategy

UPDATED ACTIONS – March 2022

The Rural Water Use Strategy guides Tasmania's future water management arrangements to ensure integrated, fair and efficient regulation of our water resources to deliver sustainable outcomes for rural water users, rural communities and the environment, while maintaining Tasmania's competitive advantages in a changing climate.

The Rural Water Use Strategy (published March 2021) contains actions that are principally focused on management of Tasmania's freshwater resources. With the announcement in September 2021 of a suite of waterway health initiatives, new actions that are closely aligned to Rural Water Use Strategy were developed and are captured in this summary of updated actions.

The new focus area, 'Enhancing partnerships and exploring new initiatives to better understand, maintain and improve water quality and the health of Tasmania's waterways', sits within Goal 1 of the Rural Water Use Strategy and incorporates the following new activities:

New Action 1.8 – Improve coordination and data sharing of river health and water quality data.

New Action 1.9 – Undertake targeted case-study research and reporting to enhance understanding of drivers of changes in river health in catchments in Tasmania.

New Action 1.10 – Deliver a Strategic Directions for Healthy Waterways Paper.

These new actions aim to improve coordination and collaboration with water sector stakeholders. The actions will look broadly at the regulatory settings and responsibilities for waterway health and water quality management but will not specifically review policies such as the *State Policy on Water Quality Management 1997*. It is envisaged that future initiatives and work of government in this space will continue to evolve, in collaboration with water sector stakeholders.

Learn more about the waterway health projects – www.nre.tas.gov.au/water/water-legislation-policies-and-strategies/rural-water-use-strategy/activities-underway/looking-after-the-health-of-our-waterways

Read more about the Rural Water Use Strategy – www.nre.tas.gov.au/rural-water-use-strategy

Department of
Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania

Tasmanian Government

Summary of Rural Water Use Strategy Actions

Goal 1 – Sustainable management of Tasmania's water resources	
1.1	Seek partnerships and collaborate with other organisations to share, collate and develop information and tools to better understand water availability in a changing climate.
1.2	Consider any knowledge gaps identified through the ongoing Groundwater Risk Assessment and Management Framework project and identify actions to improve our management of groundwater resources.
1.3	Continue to undertake a range of assessments of environmental and ecosystem water requirements that are required to support water resource management and planning.
1.4	Update surface water data and modelling, including updated climate scenarios, by working with BoM, Hydro Tasmania and others to enhance information for water resource management and for water users.
1.5	Undertake a strategic review of hydrological monitoring networks, and where required, expand or upgrade the networks.
1.6	Continue the River Health Monitoring Program.
1.7	Review water accountability and reporting frameworks to strengthen water use and water conveyance measurement and reporting to provide transparency, security and investor certainty.
1.8	Improve coordination and data sharing of river health and water quality data.
1.9	Undertake targeted case-study research and reporting to enhance understanding of drivers of changes in river health in catchments in Tasmania.
1.10	Deliver a Strategic Directions for Healthy Waterways Paper.

Goal 2 – Strategic development to maximise opportunities from water resources	
2.1	Continue to progress the sustainable irrigation development program led by Tasmanian Irrigation including Pipeline to Prosperity Tranche 3 irrigation scheme development and any future schemes or augmentations in partnership with irrigators and the Australian Government.
2.2	Modernise and clarify the legislative framework under which Hydro Tasmania's water rights and obligations sit, to support Tasmania's energy future.
2.3	Support ongoing development of policies to encourage water recycling and reuse.
2.4	Support emerging water-dependent industries in Tasmania including a renewable hydrogen industry.

Goal 3 – Effective regulation, strong entitlements and planning	
3.1	Review the surface water allocation policy framework to ensure it considers best available science, continues to deliver outcomes in line with the objectives of the Water Management Act 1999, and enhances transparency of decision making.
3.2	Explore options to increase flexibility for water users to manage allocations responsively either through market-based mechanisms or other water sharing and management approaches.
3.3	Explore options to enable greater visibility of allocations, water availability and limits in catchments to help water users and the community to better understand our water resources and to support positive and sustainable water trading.
3.4	Review the statutory processes outlined in the WMA underpinning risk-based water management planning to ensure that water management planning is timely, adaptive and responsive to water management issues.
3.5	Participate in national strategic policy initiatives on Aboriginal water interests and ensure that Tasmanian Aboriginal people have the opportunity to be engaged in these forums as well as in water planning in Tasmania.
3.6	Further enhance options available for developing collaborative and community-based water management arrangements such as developing a guide for local water user group establishment and operation.
3.7	Finalise amendments to the Water Management Act 1999 and the Irrigation Company Act 2011 to facilitate opportunities for irrigator self-management of publicly owned irrigation schemes.
3.8	Modernise the legislative arrangements for the establishment and operation of water districts.
3.9	Ensure the legislative framework continues to provide for community-led water development such as community-led development of irrigation schemes where appropriate and sustainable.
3.10	Review arrangements to better facilitate sustainable, efficient and effective water management and administration in catchments with multiple water managers.
3.11	Investigate the appropriateness of the Australian National Committee on Large Dams (ANCOLD) Guidelines for smaller private dams.
3.12	Work with relevant stakeholders to address concerns about the potential for downstream developments to impact on dam risk ratings.
3.13	Review policy settings for water trading to provide for positive market and sustainable outcomes for Tasmania's water resources.
3.14	Explore information requirements to better support water trade and transfer opportunities.

Goal 4 – Optimising services	
4.1	Identify the suite of amendments to legislation to enhance efficiency, consistency and effectiveness of the water management framework.
4.2	Commence scoping of a new licensing and permitting platform that will meet the current and future needs and expectations of the community and water-dependent industries for the management of Tasmania's freshwater resources.
4.3	Investigate options for improved coordination and data sharing between water entities for the efficient management of the State's freshwater resources.
4.4	Investigate options to update and modernise existing databases to provide a better integrated platform to underpin planning, decision making, and use in strategic development of the State's freshwater resources.