

# Rural Water Use Strategy Implementation Plan 2025-27



**November 2025**



# Acknowledgement of Country

The Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania acknowledges and pays respect to Tasmanian Aboriginal people as the traditional and original owners and continuing custodians of this land, and acknowledges Elders past and present.



# Rural Water Use Strategy Vision

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.

## Goals



Sustainable management of Tasmania's water resources



Strategic development to maximise opportunities from water resources



Effective regulation, strong entitlements and planning



Optimising services



# Introduction

The Rural Water Use Strategy (RWUS), released in March 2021, is the Tasmanian Government's blueprint for managing the state's water resources now and into the future. The first Implementation Plan for the Strategy was released in March 2022 and is being updated to incorporate learnings from activities undertaken so far and important input from partners and stakeholders. This Rural Water Use Strategy Implementation Plan (2025-2027) identifies where activities have moved into new phases of work and where new funding has been secured to deliver on the strategy's goals and priorities.

Since its commencement, there has been substantial progress on the implementation of the strategy. Work has focused on building and improving the science and information that informs water management decisions and policies that underpin the State's water management framework. Learnings from these foundational science projects have helped guide and shape this next phase of work to continue to deliver the strategy.

The schedule of activities to deliver the RWUS has evolved and grown to include:

- existing commitments that have been extended or enhanced to achieve better outcomes and incorporate new learnings,
- new projects that are taking the findings or recommendations from completed projects into new phases, and
- rationalisation of other activities which have been superseded or incorporated into other projects/initiatives.

This new Implementation Plan supports Tasmania's continued implementation of the 2004 National Water Initiative (NWI).

**The Implementation Plan focuses on four key initiatives:**

- Developing sustainable water infrastructure.
- Enhanced information and data that supports water managers, business and the community to make informed decisions.
- Reviewing and refreshing water management policy settings to get the balance right.
- Looking after the health of our freshwater waterways and water quality.

This Implementation Plan lists in detail the actions the Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania (NRE Tas) will undertake to drive the implementation of the strategy, building on the first Implementation Plan. In addition to these key activities, NRE Tas will continue to undertake numerous ongoing activities that will deliver outcomes in line with our role managing the sustainable use and allocation of Tasmania's water resources, and the goals of the strategy.

Implementation is being led by NRE Tas, but there are many other areas of government, government businesses, non-government organisations and individuals playing a role in managing our freshwater resources and waterways. Collaboration, partnerships and engagement in water management are seen as key to achieving the goals of the strategy. Advisory groups such as the Rural Water Roundtable, and other stakeholder consultation and involvement, will guide the delivery of actions within this Implementation Plan.

Photograph: Paddlers on the edge of the Mersey River | Scott Hardie, NRE Tas.



# Progress to date

Key highlights so far include:

- Leveraged additional funding from the Australian Government through the National Water Grid Fund to increase commitments since the commencement of implementation from \$232.1 million to a total investment of \$409.7 million for supporting water infrastructure development\* and undertaking key water science projects.
- Completed phase 1 of work to incorporate contemporary climate change projections in water management including development of modelling methodologies and evaluation of new climate datasets in six catchment models.
- Developed a new Groundwater Risk Assessment Tool to assess potential risks (economic, social, and environmental) to our groundwater resources and support groundwater management decisions.
- Completed a review of Tasmania's water accountability framework and commenced implementation.

Progress on implementation is published annually on the NRE Tas website [www.nre.tas.gov.au/rural-water](http://www.nre.tas.gov.au/rural-water) and reports capture the collective effort required to deliver the actions of the Rural Water Use Strategy.

*\*Includes recent announcements relating to Australian Government funding for the Cape Barren Island Water Resilience Project and the Greater South East Irrigation Scheme Project.*

Photograph: Lower Great Forester River | Danielle Hardie, NRE Tas.



# New and enhanced program

The schedule of activities to deliver the RWUS has grown to include:

- **Phase 2 of the Catchment Yield Science Update Project** that will implement the pathway developed in phase 1. This will update our hydrological models to provide new statewide catchment yield estimates using updated climate science. This work is supported by \$1.3 million of funding from the Australian Government, through the National Water Grid Fund.
- **Bass Strait Islands Water Security Strategies Project** to undertake groundwater investigations and develop water security strategies for King Island and Flinders Island to meet community needs. This project is being delivered with \$600,000 funding from the Tasmanian Government.
- **Water Accountability Project** to deliver strengthened water accountability measures, based on the findings of the review of the Water Accountability Framework.
- Updating and replacing the State's water licensing and permitting system (**Water Information Management System**), with \$600,000 funding from the Tasmanian Government.
- Support for the Derwent Estuary Program to deliver the **Derwent River Monitoring and Restoration Project**, with \$500,000 funded by the Australian Government's Urban Rivers and Catchments Program to improve the environmental health of the River Derwent and its estuary.

## KEY



Indicative timing for activity



RWUS Goal 1  
Sustainable management of Tasmania's water resources



RWUS Goal 2  
Strategic development to maximise opportunities from water resources



RWUS Goal 3  
Effective regulation, strong entitlements and planning



RWUS Goal 4  
Optimising services

# Developing sustainable water infrastructure

## Water infrastructure and security

### RWUS Actions: 2.1 and 2.3



#### Outcomes

- Supporting industry and water users to adapt, leverage opportunities for growth, and manage risk in a changing climate.
- Improving water quality outcomes of wastewater treatment, disposal and reuse.

#### Key parties / collaborations

- NRE Tas
- National Water Grid Fund
- Tasmanian Irrigation
- TasWater
- Infrastructure Tasmania
- Individual businesses and industry

Headline activities	Status	2025-26	2026-27
<b>Water infrastructure and security</b>			
Work with Tasmanian Irrigation to prepare irrigation scheme proposals under the tranche 3 irrigation development program, for approval and funding by the Government.	Ongoing	✓	✓
In conjunction with the Australian Government deliver funding contributions for water infrastructure projects.			
Assist with coordinating state approvals for new irrigation projects.			
Work with TasWater, Tasmanian Irrigation and private proponents to access Australian Government funding for smaller remote and regional water infrastructure projects.			
Identify and develop projects to deliver new science to better understand future investment opportunities for water infrastructure.			

# Emerging water industries

## RWUS Actions: 2.4



### Outcomes

- Supporting industry and water users to adapt, leverage opportunities for growth, and manage risk in a changing climate.

### Key parties / collaborations

- NRE Tas
- Renewables, Climate and Future Industries Tasmania
- National Water Grid Fund
- Tasmanian Irrigation
- TasWater
- Hydro Tasmania
- Individual businesses and industry

Headline activities	Status	2025-26	2026-27
Emerging water industries			
Provide technical input and policy advice to support emerging industries such as a renewable hydrogen industry.	Ongoing	✓	✓

Photograph: Sheep and cows standing under a pivot irrigator | Amanda Locatelli, NRE Tas.



# Enhanced information and data that supports water managers, business and the community to make informed decisions

## New water science

**RWUS Actions:**  
1.1, 1.2, 1.4, 1.5 and 1.7



### Outcomes

- Reinvigorating collaboration, partnerships and engagement in water management.
- Initiating, developing and delivering research partnerships that support enhanced water resource, river health and water quality management outcomes.
- Delivering new water information and data to inform water management policy, planning and decision making to respond to emerging trends including:
  - increasing productive value and competition for water,
  - increased investment in irrigated agriculture,
  - increasingly complex water management requirements,
  - changing community expectations of water use accountability, and
  - climate change.

### Key parties / collaborations

- NRE Tas
- National Water Grid Fund
- Renewables, Climate and Future Industries Tasmania
- Information experts such as CSIRO, Bureau of Meteorology and University of Tasmania
- Information users such as Tasmanian Irrigation, Hydro Tasmania, TasWater



Catchment Yield Science Update



Groundwater Assessment



Water Accountability Framework Review



Hydrological Monitoring Network Review

Headline activities	Status	2025-26	2026-27
<b>Catchment yield science update</b>			
<i>Catchment Yield Science Update Phase 1 Project.</i>	Complete		
Scoping of the <i>Catchment Yield Science Update Phase 2 Project.</i>	Complete		
In partnership with the Australian Government through the National Water Grid Fund, undertake the <i>Catchment Yield Science Update Phase 2 Project</i> to provide updated catchment yield estimates that consider future climate projections.	Underway <b>(New)</b>	✓	✓
<b>Groundwater assessment</b>			
Groundwater Risk Assessment Tool and Framework.	Complete		
Apply the Groundwater Risk Assessment Tool and undertake targeted case-study groundwater research to improve information on groundwater use and interactions between surface water and groundwater.	Underway	✓	✓
<b>Bass Strait islands water security strategy</b>			
Undertake technical studies to better understand the capacity and availability of water resources on King Island and Flinders Island.	Underway <b>(New)</b>	✓	
Work with water users, stakeholders and communities to better understand the need and demand for urban and rural water on the islands.	Underway <b>(New)</b>	✓	✓
Develop water security strategies for King Island and Flinders Island that outline short, medium and long-term options for secure water supply to meet community needs both now and into the future.	Underway <b>(New)</b>	✓	✓

Headline activities	Status	2025-26	2026-27
<b>Water accountability framework review</b>			
Review of the Water Accountability Framework.		Complete	
Stakeholder consultation and engagement on the findings of the review.		Complete	
<b>Hydrological monitoring network review</b>			
Internal review the hydrological monitoring network operated by NRE Tas.		Complete	

Photograph: Groundwater bore assessment | Wendy Wyker, NRE Tas.



# Better integrated and more accessible water information and data

**RWUS Actions:**  
**1.1, 1.8, 1.9, 1.10, 3.3, 3.10, 3.14, 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4**



<p><b>Outcomes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reinvigorating collaboration, partnerships and engagement in water management.</li> <li>• Improving water information functionality and accessibility for water managers, businesses and the community to make informed decisions.</li> <li>• Making it easier for water users and the broader community to engage with and understand how freshwater is managed in Tasmania.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Key parties / collaborations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NRE Tas</li> <li>• Environment Protection Authority Tasmania</li> <li>• Hydro Tasmania</li> <li>• Tasmanian Irrigation</li> <li>• TasWater</li> <li>• Natural Resource Management organisations</li> </ul>
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**Water Information Management System (WIMS) Replacement**



Headline activities	Status	2025-26	2026-27
<b>Water Information Management System (WIMS) replacement</b>			
Initial scoping of functional requirements for a new water licencing and dam permitting system.	Complete		
WIMS replacement business case.	Complete		
Test the capability of a new software system to meet future needs and expectations of our stakeholders and water users.	Underway <b>(New)</b>	✓	
If deemed suitable through testing phase, update WIMS to new system delivering similar functionality as current licencing and permitting system.	Yet to commence	✓	✓
Review stakeholder water information needs relating to water allocations, permits, water availability and limits (see also Water Accountability Project) and develop a proposal to design, build and implement a fully enhanced new Water Information Management System.	Yet to commence		✓
Undertake full upgrade of WIMS, including additional enhancements such as water accountability and user access.	Dependent on future funding		➔

# Reviewing and refreshing water management policy settings to get the balance right

## Review and refresh of water management policies

**RWUS Actions:**  
3.1, 3.2, 3.4, 3.6, 3.7, 3.11,  
3.12, 3.13 and 3.14



### Outcomes

- Ensuring water resource management policies and regulatory settings are fit for purpose, align with the objectives of the *Water Management Act 1999*, and effectively respond to emerging trends such as:
  - increasing productive value of water and competition for water,
  - increasing investment in irrigated agriculture,
  - increasingly complex water management requirements,
  - changing community expectations of water use accountability, and
  - climate change.

### Key parties / collaborations

- NRE Tas



Surface Water Allocation Review



Water Trading Review



Water Management Planning Review

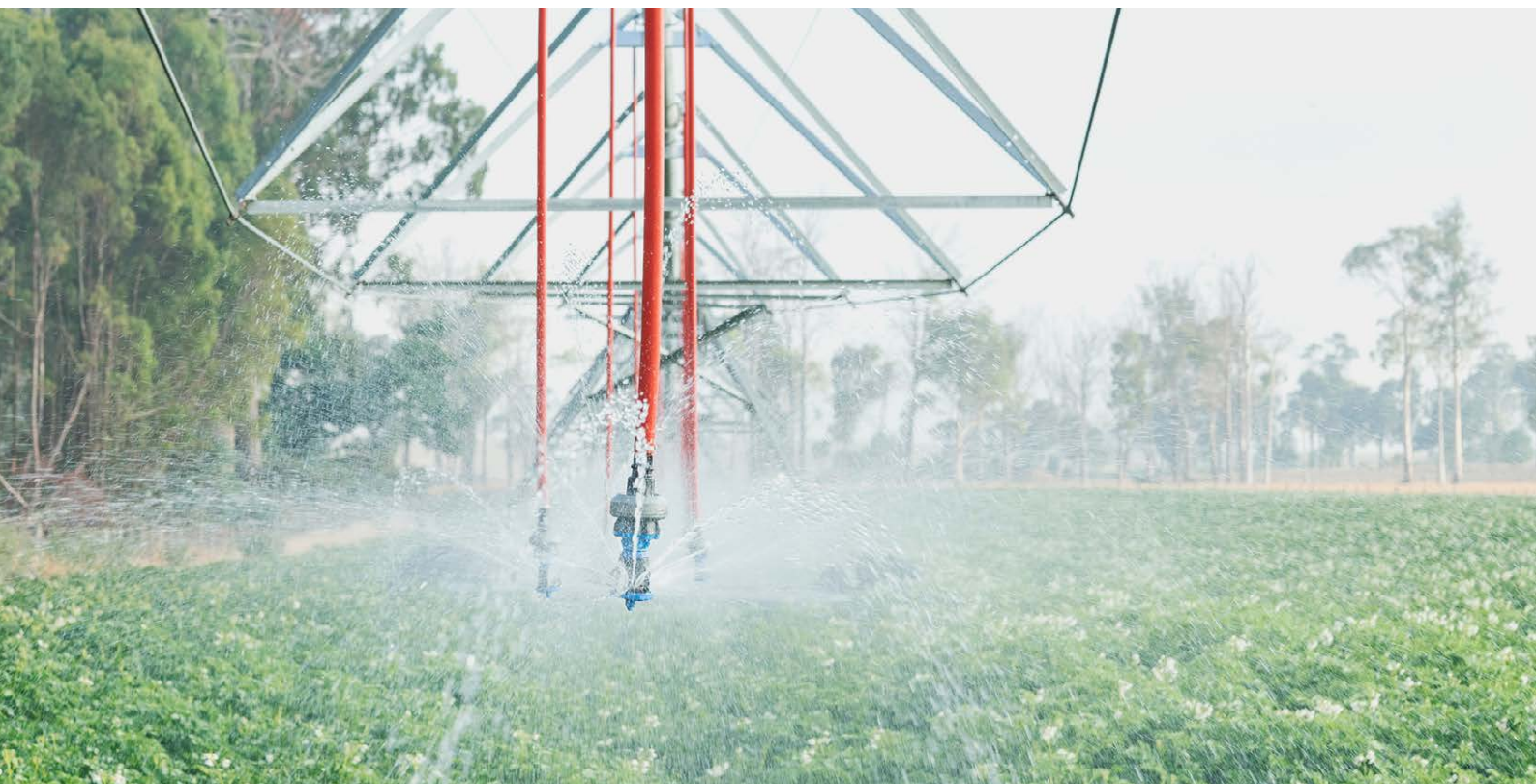
Headline activities	Status	2025-26	2026-27
<b>Surface water allocation review</b>			
Review Tasmania's water allocation policy framework including the <i>Surface Water Allocation Decision Framework</i> and Part 6 of the <i>Water Management Act 1999</i> .	Underway	✓	✓
Update surface water allocation framework incorporating learnings from <i>Catchment Yield Science Update Project</i> for stakeholder consultation.	Yet to commence		✓
Finalise and implement changes.	Yet to commence		➔
<b>Water trading review</b>			
Internal review of water trading policy.	Complete		
<b>Water management planning review</b>			
Internal review of Tasmania's water management planning policy frameworks.	Complete		
Updated water management planning guiding principles for stakeholder consultation.	Yet to commence		✓
Finalise and implement changes.	Yet to commence		➔
<b>Dam safety regulations</b>			
Continue to deliver and expand on activities to raise awareness about dam safety.	Underway	✓	
Ensure the regulatory settings for dam safety continue to be appropriate.	Underway	✓	
Remaking of the <i>Water Management (Safety of Dams) Regulations 2015</i> by December 2025.	Underway	✓	
<b>Irrigator self-management</b>			
<i>Water Miscellaneous Amendments (Delegation and Industrial Water Supply) Act 2023</i> .	Complete		

## Water Accountability



Headline activities	Status	2025-26	2026-27
<b>Water accountability</b>			
Develop a new Tasmanian Catchment Water Risk Assessment Framework to inform fit-for-purpose risk-based water accountability.	Underway <b>(New)</b>	✓	
Deliver updates to Tasmania's water accountability policy & regulatory settings to implement the water accountability review recommendations for strengthened water accountability.	Yet to commence <b>(New)</b>	✓	✓
Undertake regulatory system updates including supporting protocols, procedures and implementation plans.	Yet to commence <b>(New)</b>		✓
Ensure Water Information Management System improvements being delivered through the <i>WIMS Replacement Project</i> supports water user and water manager needs and functionality for water accounting.	Yet to commence <b>(New)</b>		✓
Roll-out of new water accountability measures with changes made to regulatory instruments in accordance with implementation plans and supporting communication campaign.	Yet to commence <b>(New)</b>		➔

Photograph: Irrigating a potato field | Daniel Peck.



# Tasmanian Aboriginal people's water interests

## RWUS Actions: 3.5



### Outcomes

- Increasing understanding of Tasmanian Aboriginal people's interest and connection to freshwater systems to achieve positive and meaningful outcomes for Tasmanian Aboriginal people.

### Key parties / collaborations

- NRE Tas
- Australian Government
- Tasmanian Aboriginal people

### Aboriginal Freshwater Interests



Headline activities	Status	2025-26	2026-27
<b>Aboriginal freshwater interests</b>			
Support Tasmanian Aboriginal people's representation at the <i>Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Water Interests</i> under the National Water Committee.	Ongoing	✓	✓
Work in partnership with the Coalition of the Peaks Partner Organisation to progress the development of a Tasmanian Inland Waters Target and Actions under Closing the Gap.	Ongoing	✓	✓
Build relationships and coordinate with other areas within Government and Government Businesses working on matters with a direct relevance to Aboriginal freshwater interests.	Ongoing	✓	✓

# Improving the functionality of Tasmania's water resource management legislation

## RWUS Actions:

1.7, 2.2, 3.1, 3.2, 3.4, 3.8, 3.9, 3.10, 3.13, 3.14 and 4.1



## Outcomes

- Enhancing the efficiency, consistency and effectiveness of the water management framework with fit-for-purpose contemporary water resource management legislation.

## Key parties / collaborations

- NRE Tas

Headline activities	Status	2025-26	2026-27
<b>Improving water resource management legislation</b>			
Based on findings from a review of key water management policies and processes, identify the suite of legislative changes required to update Tasmania's water resource management legislation.	Underway	✓	✓
Consider and address any legislative and policy change to support Tasmania's ongoing implementation of the National Water Initiative.	Ongoing	✓	✓

Photograph: Forth River | Wendy Wyker, NRE Tas.



# Looking after the health of our freshwater waterways and water quality

## Waterway health projects

**RWUS Actions:**  
New actions 1.8, 1.9 and 1.10



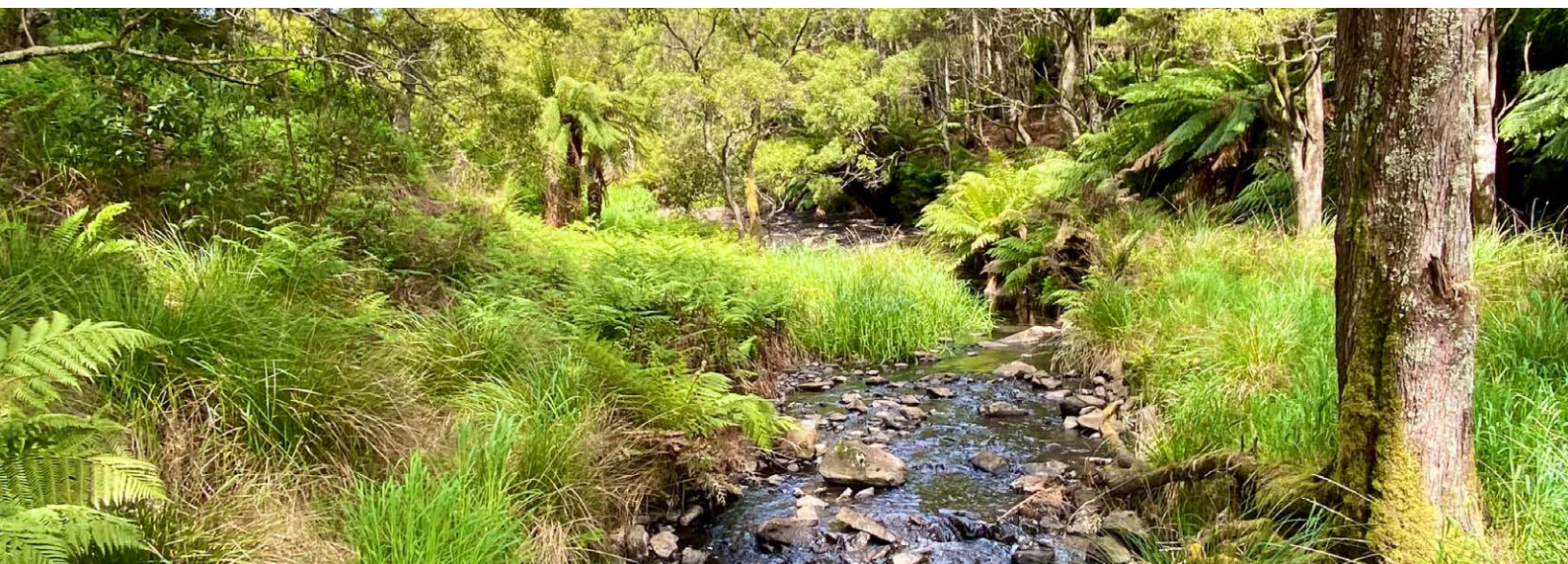
### Outcomes

- Improving understanding of the specific drivers of river health trends in Tasmania to support development of targeted and coordinated catchment- and industry-specific mitigation initiatives.
- Delivering information to support the review of regulatory requirements for water access or other regulatory settings for water and land management.
- Supporting the social licence of Tasmanian farmers and land and water developments and infrastructure investments in the state.

### Key parties / collaborations

- NRE Tas
- Environment Protection Authority Tasmania
- Department of Premier and Cabinet
- Hydro Tasmania
- Tasmanian Irrigation
- TasWater
- Inland Fisheries Service
- Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture
- Natural Resource Management organisations
- Peak industry groups

Photograph: Preston Creek, north-west Tasmania | Wendy Wyker, NRE Tas.



## Healthy Waterways



Headline activities	Status	2025-26	2026-27
<b>Waterway data coordination and sharing</b>			
Review of river health and water quality monitoring that is collectively undertaken by Tasmania's key water agencies.		Complete	
<b>Drivers of change in waterway health</b>			
Enhance understanding of drivers of changes in river health through targeted case-study research and reporting.	Underway	✓	
<b>Strategic directions for healthy waterways paper</b>			
Scope and identify key challenges and opportunities, and new operational and/or policy initiatives to maintain or improve water quality and waterway health in Tasmania.	Yet to commence	✓	✓
Develop a Strategic Directions for Healthy Waterways paper that will set out a roadmap of roles and responsibilities for river health and water quality management and monitoring. It will also identify gaps, remove duplication or uncertainty and improve governance arrangements.	Yet to commence		✓

Photograph: River health monitoring | Scott Hardie, NRE Tas.



# Tasmanian water resource monitoring and reporting framework and new water quality monitoring program

**RWUS Actions:**  
New actions 1.8, 1.9 and 1.10



## Outcomes

- Provide a contemporary assessment of the water quality status of our freshwater resources to enable targeted and coordinated catchment- and industry-specific mitigation initiatives to be developed if required.
- Provide information to help protect water quality which is important for maintaining low-cost and reliable supply of water for drinking water and other human uses, irrigation, farming, aquaculture, produce processing, recreation and environmental values.

## Key parties / collaborations

- NRE Tas
- Environment Protection Authority Tasmania
- Hydro Tasmania
- Tasmanian Irrigation
- TasWater
- Inland Fisheries Service
- Natural Resource Management organisations

## Water Quality Monitoring Program



Headline activities	Status	2025-26	2026-27
<b>Tasmanian water resource monitoring and reporting framework and new water quality monitoring program</b>			
Review of river health and water quality monitoring that is collectively undertaken by Tasmania's key water agencies, and gap analysis.	Complete		
Informed by the gap analysis, determine an appropriate resourcing model for the establishment of a new collaborative diffuse Water Quality Monitoring Program.	Underway	✓	
Commence implementation of the new collaborative diffuse Water Quality Monitoring Program.	Dependent on future funding		✓

# Derwent River Monitoring and Restoration

## RWUS Actions: New actions 1.8 and 1.9



### Outcomes

- Supporting improvements to the environmental health of the River Derwent and its estuary.
- Improving access to data on the Derwent Estuary for natural resource managers, councils, industry and the general community of the greater Hobart area.
- Increasing awareness and understanding of the environmental values and threats of the Derwent Estuary.

### Key parties / collaborations

- NRE Tas
- Derwent Estuary Program
- Australian Government's Urban Rivers and Catchments Program

Headline activities	Status	2025-26	2026-27
<b>Derwent River monitoring and restoration</b>			
<p>Support the Derwent Estuary Program to deliver the <i>Derwent River Monitoring and Restoration Project</i>, which is funded by the Australian Government's Urban Rivers and Catchments Program.</p> <p>The project includes the following sub-projects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stormwater pollution monitoring to improve water quality,</li> <li>• Conservation actions for the threatened Spotted Handfish,</li> <li>• Restoration of the Windermere Bay saltmarsh, and</li> <li>• Improved data communication.</li> </ul>	Underway <b>(New)</b>	✓	✓

# Ongoing monitoring and assessment

**RWUS Actions:**  
New actions 1.3 and 1.6



## Outcomes

- Supporting ongoing water planning and management activities of NRE Tas.

## Key parties / collaborations

- NRE Tas

Headline activities	Status	2025-26	2026-27
<b>Ongoing monitoring and assessment</b>			
Continue environmental water requirement assessments to support water management planning activities.	Ongoing	✓	✓
Continue long-term river health monitoring at 53 sites across Tasmania (43 test sites and 10 reference sites) and implementation of the 35 recommendations of the <i>Review of the Tasmanian River Health Monitoring Program, 2018</i> .	Ongoing	✓	✓

Photograph: Water quality sampling | Christina Jackson, NRE Tas.



# Collaboration, Partnerships and Engagement

Meaningful collaboration, partnerships and engagement are fundamental to the successful delivery of the strategy. NRE Tas seeks input from water managers and other stakeholders into the design of water management arrangements and deliver water security for all Tasmanians. Key advisory groups include the following:

- **Rural Water Roundtable** – comprising water industry leaders and key stakeholders including water managers, environmental managers and industry peak bodies, to guide implementation of the strategy and provide advice on strategic directions as implementation evolves.
- **Water Managers and Data Custodians Working Group** – comprising water data experts to investigate a range of data and information sharing issues for surface water and groundwater, and support the development of a new diffuse water quality monitoring program.
- **Water Accountability Working Group** – established in 2025 to support the development of a catchment water risk assessment framework, and updates to water accountability policies and regulatory systems.
- **Bass Strait Islands Water Security Strategies Working Group** - established in 2025 to provide stakeholder views and advice in relation to groundwater assessments on Flinders Island and King Island, and on-island consultation and engagement.

Photograph: Rural Water Roundtable | Danielle Hardie, NRE Tas.



# Other continuing NRE Tas activities for the management of Tasmania's freshwater resources

NRE Tas is responsible for the management of the sustainable use and allocation of Tasmania's water resources. These activities are ongoing and will continue to deliver outcomes in line with our role and responsibilities as well as the goals of the Rural Water Use Strategy, including:

- Implementing the provisions of the *Water Management Act 1999* and related legislation and reviewing the administrative and policy settings that underpin its operation. This includes undertaking legislative reform as required.
- Meeting Tasmania's obligations under national water reform initiatives such as the National Water Initiative.
- Providing policy support for water management in the urban and rural water sectors, and to support irrigation development and other emerging water-dependent industries.
- Planning and engagement work to support statutory water management planning.
- Undertaking ecological and hydrological assessments to support and inform water management planning activities.
- Hydrological monitoring and maintenance at 82 surface water and 88 groundwater sites, including the collection of stream flow and water quality data, and sharing water resource data with the Australian Government and other stakeholders.
- Conducting hydrological modelling activities that support day-to-day water resource management, planning, and drought and flood risk preparedness.
- Licensing and permitting activities including assessing water licence, dam permit and well works permit applications, watercourse authorities and transfers.
- Awareness raising activities and compliance audits and investigations of water licences, dam permits and dam safety management obligations.
- Facilitating the establishment of irrigation districts.
- Supporting the Minister for Primary Industries and Water on the Water Ministerial Council and participating on the National Water Committee and providing advice to the Australian Government on strategic directions for national water reform.
- Participating in national communities of practice and national working groups to support strategic directions at a national level and to share learnings from these groups to align and improve decision making.
- Initiating, developing and delivering science partnerships to support enhanced water resource, river health and water quality management outcomes.



Photograph: Agriculture in the upper Ringarooma River catchment | Scott Hardie, NRE Tas.

### Further information

Full copies of the Rural Water Use Strategy and project reports:  
[www.nre.tas.gov.au/rural-water](http://www.nre.tas.gov.au/rural-water)

### Enquiries

Water Policy and Planning Branch  
Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania  
Phone: 1300 368 550  
Email: [water.policy@nre.tas.gov.au](mailto:water.policy@nre.tas.gov.au)  
Visit: [www.nre.tas.gov.au/water](http://www.nre.tas.gov.au/water)