



Tamar Estuary Management Taskforce (TEMT)

River Health Action Plan

Background

The Tamar Estuary Management Taskforce (TEMT) was established in April 2017 under the Launceston City Deal with an aim of identifying investments to improve the health of the kanamaluka/Tamar estuary.

As part of this work, the TEMT was charged with delivering a River Health Action Plan by the end of 2017 to:

- Recommend priority government investments and policy actions;
- include preferred options for mitigating the effect on the kanamaluka/Tamar estuary of the combined sewerage and stormwater system;
- enable long-term oversight of the health of the estuary and its catchments;
- identify measurable targets and accountability for meeting them over the life of the City Deal and the longer term;
- build on the work of the Tamar Estuary and Esk Rivers (TEER) Program led by NRM North, including the 2015 Water Quality Improvement Plan; and
- deliver annual reports to the Launceston City Deal Executive Board on progress towards targets.

Who is involved?

The TEMT has the following membership:

- State Growth (Chair)
- City of Launceston
- Northern Midlands Council
- George Town Council
- West Tamar Council
- Meander Valley Council
- NRM North
- TasWater
- Hydro Tasmania
- Tamar Estuary and Esk Rivers (TEER) Program
- Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment



River Health Action Plan

There are many factors cited as reasons for the kanamaluka/Tamar not meeting modern expectations of health and amenity including:

- Raw sewage discharged directly to the estuary during high rainfall events from the city's historical combined sewerage and stormwater system;
- the poor ability to flush sediments due to marine tides meeting freshwater rivers;
- agricultural practices further up in the catchment;
- historical mining and industrial practices;
- outflows from multiple wastewater treatment plants throughout the estuary; and
- river floods and man-made changes to the flow and channel of the estuary.

The River Health Action Plan builds on the work undertaken by the Tamar Estuary and Esk Rivers Program to develop a Water Quality Improvement Plan.

The TEMT identified that the initial priority was to reduce pathogens and improve public health measures of water quality in the estuary between Launceston and Legana.

Two TEMT working groups were established - one considering key actions in the estuary's catchments to address pathogens entering the estuary and a second looking at options to mitigate untreated overflows from the city's combined sewerage and stormwater system entering the estuary. The working groups included stakeholders and technical experts from industry, agriculture, government and natural resource management to undertake modelling and cost benefit analysis of options.

Technical reports were prepared by each working group and submitted to TEMT to form the recommendations in the River Health Action Plan.



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River Health Action Plan Implementation

The TEMT and relevant stakeholders are working together to implement the River Health Action Plan, with encouraging results from early work.

The Tasmanian and Australian governments have jointly committed \$85 million to fund infrastructure improvements identified in the River Health Action Plan. In addition, the City of Launceston and TasWater have committed a further \$44.2 million to support improvements in the combined sewerage system.

To support broader catchment works, the Tasmanian and Australian governments have jointly funded \$11.5million for actions to remove livestock from waterways, improve dairy effluent management, and address urban cross-connections between sewage and stormwater systems in the greater Launceston area. These works are well underway with excellent uptake and results on the ground.

Community Submissions

In 2017, TEMT also sought community submissions on priorities for the estuary and has considered what other action is needed through:

- a peer review of community proposals;
- a study into targeted flow releases to manage sediment;
- a review of the governance arrangements for the estuary; and
- ongoing work to determine appropriate sediment management options.

The TEMT continues to work with partners to identify on-going projects and investments to address issues impacting on the health of the estuary.

Want more information?

A copy of the Tamar Estuary River Health Action Plan is available to download from https://www.stategrowth.tas.gov.au/infrastructure_tasmania/tamar_estuary_management_taskforce