



TAMAR ESTUARY MANAGEMENT TASKFORCE (TEMT)

RIVER HEALTH ACTION PLAN

BACKGROUND

The Tamar Estuary Management Taskforce (the Taskforce) was established in April 2017 under the Launceston City Deal with an aim of identifying investments to improve the health of the Tamar estuary. As part of this work, the Taskforce 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 Tamar estuary of the combined sewerage and stormwater system;
- Enable long-term oversight of the health of the Tamar 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.

The Taskforce was established with the following membership:

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

RIVER HEALTH ACTION PLAN

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

- The city's combined sewerage and stormwater system;
- The inability to flush sediment due to marine tides meeting freshwater rivers;
- Agricultural practices further up in the catchment;
- Historical industrial practices;
- Outflows from multiple waste water treatment plants throughout the Tamar River estuary; and
- River floods and man-made changes to the flow and channel of the estuary.

The Taskforce identified the initial priority was to improve public health measures of water quality in the estuary between Launceston to Legana. Two Taskforce working groups were subsequently established - one considering key actions in the estuary's catchments to address pathogens entering the Tamar (the Catchment Action Working Group) and a second looking at options to mitigate untreated overflows from the city's combined sewerage and stormwater system entering the Tamar (the Combined System Overflow Working Group).

The working groups included key stakeholders and technical experts from across 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 the Taskforce for consideration and to form the basis of the recommendations in the River Health Action Plan.



THE KEY RECOMMENDATIONS DETAILED IN THE RIVER HEALTH ACTION PLAN INCLUDED:

1. Catchment actions to the value of \$10 million to be implemented across dairy, grazing and urban areas. These actions aim to exclude stock from streams, rehabilitate riparian vegetation buffers on grazing properties, ensure better effluent management on dairy farms and remove sewage intrusion into separated stormwater system in urban areas around Launceston. These actions are expected to reduce pathogen concentrations in the Launceston to Legana zone of the estuary by more than 4 per cent.
2. Priority projects to the value of \$84.6 million to be implemented within the combined system. The projects include improved pumping rates and transmission capacity to take greater volumes of combined system flows to Ti Tree Bend sewerage treatment plant, implementing a series of off-line storages to capture the "first flush" of combined system sewage which would otherwise overflow into the estuary and diverting separated sewerage catchments straight to Ti Tree Bend instead of joining the combined system at Margaret Street and the Esplanade. These projects are expected to reduce pathogen concentrations in the Launceston to Legana zone of the estuary by more than 35 per cent.
3. A discussion paper to be prepared by the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment on the regulatory arrangements surrounding the combined system in consultation with relevant stakeholders. The paper would then form the basis of a review to be undertaken by EPA Tasmania on potential changes to the existing regulatory framework to recognise and regulate combined systems consistent with best practice frameworks elsewhere.
4. An increased monitoring and analysis program in the estuary to accompany the proposed actions and investments. This will ensure that progress against the expected improvements can be tracked and reported on and any learnings captured to aid future management decision making or to improve on-ground actions and investments.
5. The Taskforce continues work to determine appropriate ongoing governance arrangements for the estuary and what actions may be taken to improve amenity values associated with sedimentation.

WHERE TO FROM HERE?

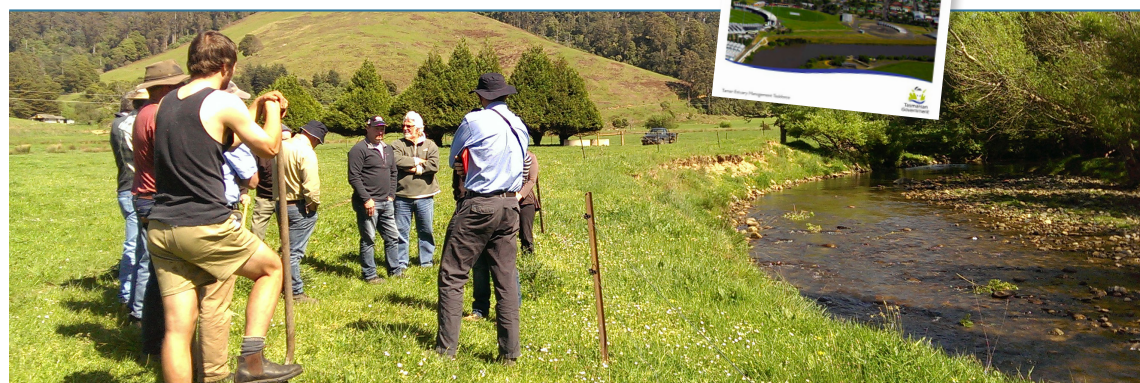
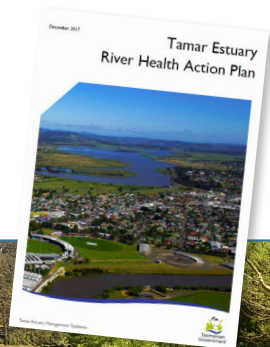
The Tasmanian and Australian governments have jointly committed to funding the recommendations from the River Health Action Plan. A total investment of \$95 million will be split in a 50:50 funding arrangement.

In 2018, the Taskforce will continue to explore governance options for the Tamar and identify the most appropriate model to deliver effective governance and planning and long-term oversight for the health of the Tamar estuary and its catchments. The Taskforce will also explore options that may be taken to improve amenity values associated with sedimentation.

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



FURTHER INFORMATION

TEER Program

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