
Summary of the Five Year Work Plan for Water Resource Management: Annual Review and Update 2015

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Background

The inaugural Five Year Forward Work Plan for Water Resource Management (the Work Plan) took effect from November 2014. It provided for the first time a common understanding of upcoming water resource management planning work across the state.

This enabled an improved coordination of efforts and efficient use of staff resources available across the Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources (DEWNR) and in conjunction with NRM boards. Clear timelines are also benefiting water users and providing them with more certainty about future water allocation and licensing projects.

The Work Plan was reviewed and updated in October 2015 and a revised schedule of proposed work for the period 2015–20 was completed.

Key facts about water resource management in South Australia

- The government maintains sustainable water supplies for many industries including irrigated agriculture (worth \$1.5bn annually), for mining development of \$4.4bn annually and also for manufacturers including Coopers, Lion Co (Lion Nathan), and Coca-Cola Amatil.
- Drinking water sourced from sustainably managed water resources also underpins all rural and urban communities.
- Water resource management assists in meeting the government's environmental objectives and also contributes to the following economic priorities: "Unlocking the full potential of South Australia's resources, energy and renewable assets" and "Premium food and wine produced in our clean environment and exported to the world."
- Being a tradeable asset means that a water right can be borrowed against to raise capital. It can also be leased or sold, which allows water use to move towards the most profitable activities. This in turn increases the return per unit of water and increases the income of the region as a whole. The estimated market value of water on licence for the state is \$2.8 bn.
- Water resource management planning is essential to maintain the state's water supplies and ensure that all water users get a fair share of water. Regional NRM plans and water allocation plans ensures our water resources are used sustainably, so they remain viable in the long-term.
- It provides a high level of security for the ongoing ability to take water and protects the resource from over exploitation. This security then enables long-term planning and investment with greater confidence.
- Development, maintenance and review of the Five Year Work Plan has been extremely useful in building an understanding of regional and branch water planning priorities. It has also highlighted that there are a number of opportunities to further improve the state's water planning and management system and these could be pursued in the next stage of reforms.
- Improving water planning and management remains a strategic priority and good progress has been made in the last two years particularly on improving internal processes. This was an important task as it puts DEWNR and the NRM boards in a better position to deliver water planning for its customers. There is now an opportunity to develop a coherent set of further

improvements, in consultation with stakeholders, focusing on improvements to the water planning and management system itself.

- These wider reforms to water planning were the main focus of the Better Water Planning and Management workshop held on 15 October 2015. Workshop participants from DEWNR and the NRM boards identified many areas that were working well and also a number of opportunities to improve water planning. They also provided a comprehensive list of potential external stakeholders for a further dialogue on priorities for reform.
- The workshop gathered a large amount of information to add to the existing ideas on how to improve water planning and management. There may be some potential quick wins, which are easy to implement, and could be pursued as no regrets improvements. Other ideas may require further refinement and follow up. They may be of a longer term nature and have interdependencies with other programs and so there is a need to consider appropriately sequencing actions.
- The senior level Water Planning Steering Committee and its sub group will consider the ideas and next steps to develop a work plan for better water planning and management, which will be pursued in 2016 and beyond.

2014/15 Progress Report

There were a number of highlights from the first year of the Five Year Work Plan including significant progress made in the following projects:

- Lower Limestone Coast Water Allocation Plan – Completed the issue of 165 licences to all existing commercial plantations licences and the conversion of approximately 2,500 area based water licences to volumetric allocations.
- Eastern Mount Lofty Ranges Water Allocation Plan – Issued 94 percent of existing user water licenses and developed an implementation plan and associated governance arrangements for the Plan. Regulations were developed to enable large stock and domestic dams in the Eastern Mount Lofty Ranges to return low flows.
- Western Mount Lofty Ranges Water Allocation Plan – Majority of water licences issued to existing users (licence rollout over 99 per cent complete) and work has commenced on operational policy to implement the Plan.
- Adelaide Plains Water Allocation Plan – Completed scientific work to determine capacity of the groundwater resource and ranges of acceptable extraction limits for each management zone. Developed draft policies for supporting managed aquifer recharge and ensuring sustainable use of the aquifers for storage.
- Alinytjara Wilurara Regional NRM Plan – Plan policies including the issuing of Water Affecting Activity permits are being implemented.
- Southern Basins and Musgrave Water Allocation Plan – First unbundled groundwater plan in the state. Draft Plan was finalised and successful public consultation process was carried out.
- River Murray Water Allocation Plan – Policy content developed and draft Plan was finalised and public consultation process completed.

- SA Murray Region Water Resource Plan – Completed a risk assessment and development program to deliver a Basin Plan compliant water resource plan.

Risk Assessment for the Five Year Work Plan

- To support development of the initial Five Year Forward Work Plan in 2014 a comprehensive risk assessment, based on triple-bottom line principles, was completed for all of the major water resources in the State for both prescribed and non-prescribed areas. For the 2015 update the risk assessment methodology and results were reviewed at a high level in mid-2015 with new data and information incorporated where available.
- The set of risk criteria were based on the key government and community water planning objectives of balancing productive, environmental and social needs and are outlined in Table 1:

Table 1: Risk assessment criteria

Risk criteria	Details
Resource condition	This risk assessment considered consequences affecting environmental and beneficial use values
Social and economic factors	The assessment of the risk criteria for economic factors was based on the volume of water allocated by water use category. Economic categories were taken to be irrigation, industrial, mining, plus forestry in the Lower Limestone Coast Prescribed Wells Area and stock water in the Far North Wells Prescribed Wells Area. The use of water for town water supply was used as a proxy for social value.
Effectiveness of current controls	This was an assessment of the effectiveness of the current controls in each water resources area and the current level of implementation of the controls (if at all)
Financial risks	This was an assessment of potential loss of income to NRM boards and DEWNR and/or loss of investment from significantly delaying work
Reputational risks	This was an assessment of the 'political' consequences from postponing work and included intergovernmental obligations

- With the exception of the resource condition assessment, the risk assessment for non-prescribed areas mainly consisted of qualitative assessments and expert views only, given the absence of quantitative information.
- The Five Year Work Plan recognises that a number of tasks are already underway or committed to and that many of the state's most important resources already have management controls in place.

Suggested treatments for priority statewide work

Table 2 outlines a summary of the proposed treatments for the highest ranked work priorities, as well as commitments under the Murray-Darling Basin Plan. The treatments are in accordance with the NRM boards' plans and acknowledge the stage each water resource area is at in the water planning lifecycle. The size of the task is not based on a detailed assessment of the resources required but reflects the complexity of the tasks and the range of expertise required to deliver them.

The detailed internal work related to this table aims to ensure that priority tasks can be delivered within the current capacity of DEWNR (the 2015/16 budget).

Table 2: Suggested treatments for priority statewide work

Ref	Area (NRM region)	Work priority	Scale of work	Comments	Suggested treatment
A.	South East regional surface water (including drainage system) (SE)	High	Medium	<p>To help better control the management of the resource, the SE NRM region is developing a South East Drainage and Wetlands Strategy, which will sit under the SE Regional NRM Plan in its planning hierarchy.</p> <p>In addition the region will review its current water affecting activity policies as part of the preparation of the SE NRM Plan.</p>	<p>Develop and refine draft South East Drainage and Wetlands Strategy, which is due to be released for public consultation in 2017/18. Tasks include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design and implementation of a risk assessment framework • Definition of management boundaries and objectives for drainage and wetland management <p>Commence review of Water Affecting Activity permit policies for the revision of the South East Regional NRM Plan. Tasks include review and drafting of amendments to current Water Affecting Activity policies by April 2016 for review by the MDBA prior to statutory consultation.</p>
B.	Southern Basins & Musgrave (EP)	High	Medium	<p>The new draft Water Allocation Plan, which is the first unbundled groundwater plan in the state, was finalised in 2014/15 and a successful public consultation process was carried out in the period March to June 2015.</p>	<p>Complete amendments to the draft Water Allocation Plan, continue implementation planning and seek ministerial approval to adopt the Plan.</p> <p>Complete implementation plan including setting up systems and processes to enable the issuing of unbundled water licenses in 2016/17.</p>

Ref	Area (NRM region)	Work priority	Scale of work	Comments	Suggested treatment
C.	Western Mount Lofty Ranges (AMLR)	High	Medium	The Water Allocation Plan was adopted in September 2013. The vast majority of water licences have been issued to existing users.	Co-ordinate roll-out of Water Allocation Plan implementation plan in the period 2016–18. Main tasks include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finalise operational policy and systems • Releasing unallocated water • Establish a monitoring and evaluation framework • Progress securing of low flows.
D.	Cooper Creek (SAAL)	High	Medium	The SAAL NRM Board is developing a new regional NRM plan, which will incorporate specific water affecting activities for Cooper Creek, Western Rivers and Georgina Diamantina as well as the North East Pastoral region, which forms part of the SA Murray Region Water Resource Plan area under the Basin Plan.	Continue preparation of the new draft Regional NRM Plan in 2015/16, ready for public consultation in 2016/17. Seek ministerial agreement to adopt Plan following consultation.
	Lake Eyre Basin Western Rivers & other non-prescribed water resources (SAAL)				
E.	Eastern Mount Lofty Ranges (2nd generation) / Marne Saunders (SA MDB)	High	Medium (depends on outcome of risk assessment and gap analysis)	The <i>Water Act 2007</i> (Cth) requires that the Eastern Mount Lofty Ranges water resource plan be accredited by 30 June 2019. This plan will cover the groundwater and surface water of the areas covered by the Eastern Mount Lofty Ranges and Marne Saunders water allocation plans.	Complete risk assessment and development program to assist with the development of a Basin Plan compliant water resource plan.

Ref	Area (NRM region)	Work priority	Scale of work	Comments	Suggested treatment
F.	Adelaide Plains (AMLR)	High	Major	The AMLR NRM Board committed to the preparation of a new WAP in 2009 (combining the existing Northern Adelaide Plains WAP with a new WAP for Central Adelaide and Dry Creek).	<p>Issue licences for Kangaroo Flat users and complete the Central Adelaide existing user licensing process by August 2017.</p> <p>Prepare draft Water Allocation Plan in consultation with community and industry stakeholders, ready for statutory consultation by the end of 2016.</p> <p>Assuming no reductions are required, commence reissue of Northern Adelaide Plains licences in 2017/18.</p>
G.	Barossa (AMLR)	High	Major	<p>The 2009 Barossa WAP was reviewed in 2014 by the AMLR NRM Board.</p> <p>The Board agreed that an amended Barossa WAP will be developed, in collaboration with key stakeholders and supported by the community-based Barossa Water Allocation Plan Advisory Committee.</p>	<p>Continue analysis and investigations to inform development of the new Plan (tasks include assessing groundwater resource capacity).</p> <p>Prepare draft Plan ready for public consultation in mid-2017.</p>
H.	River Murray (4th generation) (SA MDB)	Medium	Medium (depends on risk assessments and gap analysis for Basin Plan compliance)	A fourth generation River Murray Water Allocation Plan will need to be prepared for Basin Plan accreditation by 30 June 2019.	<p>Review third generation Water Allocation Plan for Basin Plan compliance.</p> <p>The scope of subsequent work will depend on risk assessment and gap analysis and negotiations with MDBA.</p>

Ref	Area (NRM region)	Work priority	Scale of work	Comments	Suggested treatment
I.	Tatiara	Medium	Medium (depending on review outcomes and scoping)	The Tatiara Water Allocation Plan was adopted in 2010. The Plan was written on the basis of the former five-year plan review timeframe and does not contain principles that would allow any adjustments to be made to water allocations after five years.	Commence review of the Tatiara Water Allocation Plan in July 2016 at the same time a community engagement process will be undertaken to support decision making about the potential to develop a combined WAP for Tintinara-Coonalpyn, Tatiara and Padthaway.
	Padthaway			The Padthaway Water Allocation Plan was adopted in 2009. A review of the condition of the resource in mid-2014 resulted in a decision to not implement the final reductions that were outlined in the Plan. Given the Padthaway condition of the resource review, this Plan is not due for review until 2018 (subject to a decision to combine the Tatiara, Padthaway and Tintinara Plans into one- see below).	
	Tintinara-Coonalpyn			The SE NRM Board is considering including the Tintinara-Coonalpyn Water Allocation Plan in the review of the Padthaway and Tatiara Plans with a proposal to combine the three plans into a single plan.	
J.	Far North (SAAL)	Medium	Medium	In August 2012 the SAAL NRM Board agreed to amend the Far North WAP. However actual development of a new WAP may not occur until after 2016/17.	Continue with minor investigations work and implementation of current WAP. Contribute to Great Artesian Basin (GAB) Strategic Management Plan Work. Progress implementation of the current WAP.

Ref	Area (NRM region)	Work priority	Scale of work	Comments	Suggested treatment
K.	Eastern Mount Lofty Ranges (SA MDB)	Medium	Major (depending on low flows funding and MERI scoping)	The WAP was adopted in December 2013. Water licences have been issued to all existing users.	Co-ordinate roll-out of Water Allocation Plan implementation plan in the period 2016–18. Main tasks include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop strategy to manage high demand in collaboration with the community • Develop a monitoring and evaluation plan. • Progress securing low flows.
L.	River Murray (3rd generation) (SA MDB)	Medium	High	Following development of policy content the draft Plan was finalised and released for a three month public consultation in November 2014. Issues raised during consultation have required further consideration by the SA MDB NRM Board and the need for investigations on the costs and benefits of the use of the desalination plant as an alternative to allocation reductions during dry years has been identified.	Complete amendments to the draft Water Allocation Plan, continue implementation planning and seek ministerial approval to adopt the Plan. Identify system requirements and system development to enable reissue of unbundled water licences, consistent with the Plan.
M.	Lower Limestone Coast (SE)	Medium	Medium	This WAP was adopted in November 2013. The issuing of licences to all existing commercial plantations and the conversion of area based water licences to volumetric allocations was completed in 2014/15.	Implement reductions in the high risk management areas contained in the Water Allocation Plan and develop a monitoring and evaluation plan. Complete volumetric conversion for Delivery Supplement and Specialised Production Requirements (DS&SPR) by the end of 2015/16.

Ref	Area (NRM region)	Work priority	Scale of work	Comments	Suggested treatment
N	Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands (AW)	Medium	Minor	Amendments to the AW NRM Regional NRM Plan took effect from July 2014. Plan policies including the issuing of Water Affecting Activity permits are being implemented.	Continue the issuing of Water Affecting Activity (WAA) permits. Policies were tested as part of the application for the drilling of a significant number of wells to support road construction in the region.
	Yalata and Maralinga (AW)				
O.	Kangaroo Island Middle River (KI)	Medium	Medium (dependent on further scoping)	The KI NRM Board is currently in the process of updating its regional NRM plan, which will include the refinement of the Water Use Limits (WUL) based on new KI specific data. There has been significant DEWNR science and policy support to assist with the development of the plan.	Continue preparation of draft Regional NRM Plan, ready for public consultation in 2016. Commence a hydro-ecological assessment and associated ecological monitoring to enable development of sustainable extraction limits.
	Kangaroo Island Eastern, Northern & Western Rivers (KI)				
P.	Penong, Port Kenny, Warrambo, Kielpa (EP)	Medium	Minor (depending on scoping)	Natural Resources Eyre Peninsula have indicated that they are intending to review and amend the Water Affecting Activity policies for the new Regional NRM Plan	Review and amend Water Affecting Activity policies in 2015/16.
	Tod River (EP)				

Ref	Area (NRM region)	Work priority	Scale of work	Comments	Suggested treatment
Q.	SA Murray Region (SA MDB, SE, SAAL)	Low	Medium	<p>Work on regional NRM Plan policies will form part of the SA Murray Region Water Resource Plan to be prepared for Basin Plan accreditation by 30 June 2017.</p> <p>DEWNR is funded through the Murray-Darling Basin National Partnership Agreement to work on these issues in 2015/16 and (indicatively) beyond.</p>	<p>Harmonise Water Affecting Activity policies across relevant areas within SA Arid Lands, the South East and the SA Murray-Darling Basin NRM regions in 2015/16 to demonstrate Basin Plan Sustainable Diversion Limits compliance.</p> <p>Consult on draft Regional NRM plan with the MDBA and the public in the first half of 2016/17.</p>
R.	Mallee / Peake, Roby & Sherlock / Noora (SA MDB)	Low	Minor	<p>These three existing WAPs will require review, and if necessary, amendment, as they will form part of the SA Murray Region Water Resource Plan to be prepared for Basin Plan accreditation by 30 June 2017.</p>	<p>Develop the revised Noora Water Allocation Plan and minor amendments to the Peake Roby Sherlock and Mallee Water Allocation Plans.</p>



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