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# Summary of the Five Year Work Plan for Water Resource Management: Annual Review and Update 2016

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**Government of South Australia**  
Department of Environment,  
Water and Natural Resources



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## Background

The 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 alignment with NRM boards' business plans and priorities. Clear timelines are also benefitting water users and providing them with more certainty about future water allocation and licensing projects.

The Work Plan is reviewed and updated annually. The second annual review was completed in November 2016 and this document sets out the outcomes of the review including a revised schedule of proposed work for the period 2016–21.

## Key facts about water resource management in South Australia

- The government maintains sustainable water supplies for many industries including irrigated agriculture (worth \$1.8bn annually), mining development of \$4.4bn annually and also for manufacturing, intensive farming and stock use.
- 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 over \$2.8 bn.
- Water planning and management 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.

## Better Water Planning and Management

- Improving water planning and management remains a strategic priority and good progress has been made in the last few 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. Through the Better Water Planning and Management program, DEWNR and the NRM boards are now seeking to improve water planning and management in South Australia beyond the internal processes

- DEWNR has completed a first round of consultation on the better water planning and management program, including seeking feedback on twelve focus areas (see Box 1). DEWNR has met with SA Government agencies, Aboriginal representatives, and representatives from interested peak bodies, including Primary Producers South Australia, Waterfind Pty Ltd, Regional Development Australia Barossa, Regional Development Australia Murraylands and Riverland, the Chamber of Mines and Energy, and the Local Government Association of SA.

Box 1: the twelve focus areas for better water planning and management.

1. Quicker, simpler and more responsive water planning;
2. Streamline and simplify the water rights, approvals and permit system;
3. Incorporation of social and economic considerations into water planning decisions;
4. Explore opportunities for improved collaboration and facilitation of partnerships to ensure more efficient delivery of Five Year Work Plan for water planning and management projects;
5. Water planning that uses fit for purpose science and monitoring that engages the community;
6. Implementation Planning;
7. Accounting for all water use;
8. Improve incorporation of climate change impacts into water planning and management;
9. Incorporation of Aboriginal interests into water planning and management;
10. Flexibility in the use of a range of water resources;
11. Incorporation of alternative water resources in the water management framework;
12. Community participation in decision-making for water planning and management.

- DEWNR and the NRM boards will consider the findings from stakeholder consultation to develop a Strategy and Action Plan for better water planning and management, which will be pursued in 2017 and beyond through priority projects in the Five Year Work Plan as well as additional projects where collaborative opportunities can be progressed.
- The South Australian Natural Resource Management Investment Strategy 2016 has identified one of its six investment priorities as 'A new wave of economic growth is fuelled by improved water management'. It recognises that whilst much has been achieved in water management, there is more to be done to make it highly responsive and provide a transparent, evidence-based and widely understood process to respond to risks. More robust and flexible water management systems across the state could support fit-for-purpose responses to issue and economic opportunities for water resources.

## 2015/16 Progress Report

There were a number of highlights from the 2015/16 implementation year of Five Year Work Plan including significant progress made in the following projects:

- Southern Basins and Musgrave Water Allocation Plan (WAP) - adopted on 28 June 2016.
- Eastern and Western Mount Lofty Ranges Prescribed Water Resources Areas – work completed to consolidate and develop datasets, processes and systems which has enabled the opening up of trade between management zones.

- Lower Limestone Coast WAP– an amendment to the WAP was undertaken to allow for an extended application process for Delivery Supplement and Specialist Production Requirements. Volumetric conversions were completed in April 2016 following this work.
- Far North Prescribed Wells Area – major elements of an education program were delivered to support bore maintenance and to remind land occupiers of their obligations to maintain their bores, associated infrastructure and reduce water wastage.
- South East surface water – a risk assessment methodology was completed in May 2016 and implementation of the assessment has commenced to underpin the Drainage and Wetland Strategy.
- River Murray WAP – completion of a cost benefit analysis to inform policies about the use of the Adelaide Desalination Plant during dry periods in the Murray-Darling Basin.
- Developing policies for water affecting activities in the Kangaroo Island, Eyre Peninsula and South Australian Arid Lands NRM regions, with NRM Plans being released for public consultation in late 2016.
- Development of coordinated policies for managing the take of surface water in parts of the South East and South Australian Arid Lands NRM region and across the SA Murray-Darling Basin NRM region to demonstrate compliance with the Basin Plan sustainable diversion limits.

### **Suggested treatments for priority state-wide work**

Table 2 outlines a summary of the proposed treatments for state-wide water planning work, including 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 detailed internal scheduling work underpinning this table aims to ensure that priority tasks can be delivered within the current capacity of DEWNR (the 2016/17 budget).



Table 2: Proposed treatments for priority statewide work

Ref	Area (NRM region)	Context	Suggested treatment
A.	Adelaide Plains (AMLR)	The AMLR NRM Board committed to the preparation of a new water allocation plan 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 by December 2017.</p> <p>Complete the Central Adelaide existing user licensing process by September 2017.</p> <p>Prepare draft WAP in consultation with community and industry stakeholders, ready for public consultation commencing April 2018.</p> <p>Following public consultation in mid-2018 prepare draft Plan adoption package by December 2018.</p>
B.	Barossa (AMLR)	<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>Prepare draft amended Barossa WAP ready for public consultation in late 2018. Adopt Plan in mid-2020.</p> <p>Greenock Creek Existing User licensing process to be undertaken October 2017 to June 2019.</p>

Ref	Area (NRM region)	Context	Suggested treatment
C.	Western Mount Lofty Ranges (AMLR)	<p>The Water Allocation Plan was adopted in September 2013.</p> <p>All existing user water licenses have been issued with two appeals still open in the Environment, Resources and Development Court.</p>	<p>Co-ordinate roll-out of WAP implementation plan in the period 2016–18.</p> <p>Main tasks include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finalise operational policy and systems</li> <li>• Releasing unallocated water</li> <li>• Establish a monitoring and evaluation framework</li> <li>• Progress securing of low flows.</li> </ul>
D.	Alinytjara Wilurara non-prescribed water resources (AW)	<p>In February 2014 the Alinytjara Wilurara (AW) Natural Resources Management (NRM) Board's Regional NRM Plan was amended.</p> <p>In the first such case in Australia, the Plan gives local traditional owners control over water resources on their lands within the AW region.</p>	<p>There has been good progress to implement the water management policies contained in the AW Regional NRM Plan.</p> <p>These include the regulation of water affecting activities to protect the water resources and related natural assets of the region in order to sustain natural ecosystems, protect cultural values, and ensure the orderly development of water resources for economic activities.</p>
E.	Eyre Peninsula non-prescribed water resources (EP)	<p>Natural Resources Eyre Peninsula are in the process of reviewing and amending the water affecting activity policies for the new Regional NRM Plan. The Board intends to commence statutory consultation in due course.</p>	<p>Formal consultation on the new Regional NRM Plan, including the revised water affecting activity policies is planned for late 2016.</p> <p>Following consultation, the feedback will be reviewed and any subsequent amendments to the documents will be recommended to Minister for approval.</p>

Ref	Area (NRM region)	Context	Suggested treatment
F.	Southern Basins & Musgrave (EP)	<p>The new Water Allocation Plan, which is the first unbundled groundwater plan in the state, was adopted by the Minister on 28 June 2016.</p> <p>The package included the final Monitoring, Evaluation Reporting and Improvement (MERI) Plan and the Implementation Plan.</p>	<p>Co-ordinate roll-out of Water Allocation Plan implementation plan in the period 2016/17. Main tasks include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unbundling of licenses</li> <li>• Governance establishment</li> <li>• Operational policy and systems</li> <li>• Releasing unallocated water</li> <li>• Establish a monitoring and evaluation framework.</li> </ul>
G.	Kangaroo Island non-prescribed water resources (KI)	<p>The KI NRM Board is currently in the process of updating its regional NRM plan, which will include the refinement of the Water Take Limits (WTL) based on new KI specific data. There has been significant DEWNR science and policy support to assist with the development of the plan.</p>	<p>Continue preparation of draft Regional NRM Plan based on feedback received within the public consultation phase by the end of 2016/17.</p> <p>Commence a hydro-ecological assessment and associated ecological monitoring to improve the WTLs.</p>

Ref	Area (NRM region)	Context	Suggested treatment
H.	Baroota	<p>The Baroota PWRA was prescribed on 19 June 2008. Since that time the Water Allocation Plan has been under development but has not been finalised or implemented. The costs vs. benefits, and risk to the resource of implementing / not implementing the Baroota WAP have been discussed at length.</p> <p>The issue now is to decide the best strategy to implement for this resource moving forward.</p>	De-prescription, and management through the water affecting activity policies in the regional NRM Plan is being explored as a possible treatment.
I.	Clare (NY)	The Clare PWRA WAP is coming due for review in the near future.	Undertake review of current Plan by 2019 and continue monitoring activities

Ref	Area (NRM region)	Context	Suggested treatment
J.	Northern & Yorke non-prescribed water resources (NY)	The Northern and Yorke NRM Board is developing an update of its regional NRM plan, which includes the opportunity for refinement of its Water Affecting Activity Policy. There is also the need to provide input into the business case for the Baroota, Bundaleer and Betaloo Reservoirs to supply water for irrigation that is being undertaken under the National Water Infrastructure Fund.	<p>Consideration to be given to the application of water affecting activities guidelines or controlled water take program similar to what could be investigated for Baroota.</p> <p>This model could give consistency to the management of non-prescribed water resources in the region.</p>
K.	SA Arid Lands non-prescribed water resources (SAAL)	The SAAL NRM Board has developed an update of its regional NRM plan, which includes the refinement of its water affecting activity policy.	Continue preparation of draft Regional NRM Plan based on feedback received within the public consultation phase by the end of 2016/17.
L.	Far North (SAAL)	In August 2012 the SAAL NRM Board agreed to amend the Far North WAP. However actual development of a new WAP has not yet commenced.	Commence drafting of new WAP in 2017/18 in consultation with key water users and communities of interest.

Ref	Area (NRM region)	Context	Suggested treatment
M.	Eastern Mount Lofty Ranges (SA MDB)	<p>The Water Allocation Plan was adopted in December 2013.</p> <p>Existing user process has been completed and implementation work is continuing.</p>	<p>Co-ordinate roll-out of Water Allocation Plan implementation plan in the period 2016–18.</p> <p>Main tasks include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finalise operational policy and systems</li> <li>• Developing and implementing high demand management strategies</li> <li>• Progress securing low flows</li> <li>• Progressing metering roll out</li> </ul>
N.	Eastern Mount Lofty Ranges (2nd generation) / Marne Saunders (SA MDB)	<p>The development program for the EMLR Water Resource Plan was provided to the MDBA in May 2016 and suggests only minor amendments will be required. Implementation of existing WAP is the main strategy to address outstanding risks</p>	<p>Consider feedback from the MDBA on the development program. Progress minor amendments as part of EMLR WRP development by early 2018. Continue implementation of current EMLR WAP as well as Marne Saunders WAP as outlined above.</p>
O.	Mallee / Peake, Roby & Sherlock / Noora (SA MDB)	<p>SA MDB NRM Board has endorsed minor changes to Mallee WAP and proposed water affecting activity policies as an alternative to the Noora WAP and endorsed commencing the process to revoke prescription of Noora PWA.</p>	<p>Undertake consultation on revoking prescription of Noora and minor amendments to other WAPs in 2016.</p> <p>Proceed with process for s89(2) WAP amendments in February 2017.</p> <p>Proceed with development of regulation to revoke prescription in March 2017.</p>

Ref	Area (NRM region)	Context	Suggested treatment
P.	River Murray (3rd generation) (SA MDB)	Finalisation of the WAP is awaiting a settlement of a revised allocation framework that considered community feedback and outcomes of analysis around utilisation of the Adelaide desalination plant.	<p>Finalise amendments to draft WAP and responses to consultation outcomes.</p> <p>Submit to Minister for adoption.</p> <p>Finalise implementation plan with reissue of licences planned in first half of 2017-2018 water use year.</p>
Q.	River Murray (4th generation) (SA MDB)	<p>River Murray WAP 4 will be part of the development of the Basin Plan compliant Water Resource Plan but also address some specific improvements that have been sought during development of River Murray WAP-3 but could not be incorporated at that point in time.</p> <p>Scoping of all projects and dependencies has commenced.</p>	<p>Finalise scoping in 2016.</p> <p>Finalise planning assumptions for Sustainable Diversion Limit compliance in 2017.</p> <p>Finalise risk assessment and gap analysis for Basin Plan compliance and development plan in early 2017 for submission to the MDBA.</p>

Ref	Area (NRM region)	Context	Suggested treatment
R.	SA Murray Region (SA MDB, SE, SAAL)	<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 2016/17 and (indicatively) beyond.</p>	<p>Communicate changes to the draft Regional NRM plan with the MDBA and the public during November /December 2016 across the three regions.</p> <p>SA MDB and SE amendments are s89(2) amendments which will be finalised in early 2017.</p> <p>SAAL water affecting activity policies are part of a full amendment of the NRM Plan.</p>
S.	Lower Limestone Coast (SE)	<p>This WAP was adopted in November 2013.</p> <p>The issuing of licences to all existing commercial plantations and the conversion of area based water licences to volumetric allocations was completed in 2015/16. The process was finalised after the application process for delivery supplement and specialised production requirements allocations was re-opened.</p> <p>The first of a series of scheduled reductions has been undertaken as scheduled in July 2016.</p> <p>Volumetric conversion has resulted in allocations exceeding Permissible Annual Volumes specified for the Designated area under the Border Groundwater Agreement.</p>	<p>Implement reductions in the high risk management areas contained in the Water Allocation Plan.</p> <p>Development of a monitoring and evaluation plan to support the effective implementation and evaluation of the effectiveness of the Water Allocation Plan.</p> <p>Natural Resources SE and central DEWNR to work with the Border Groundwater Agreement Committee to ensure the management settings in the designated area support the sustainable management of the groundwater resource.</p> <p>Establishment of a Victorian and South Australian policy and technical working group to progress the technical review of Province 1 and Province 2.</p>



Ref	Area (NRM region)	Context	Suggested treatment
T.	South East regional surface water (including drainage system) (SE)	<p>South East Drainage and Wetlands Strategy is being developed to help better control the management surface water the SE NRM region. This strategy will sit under the SE Regional NRM Plan in its planning hierarchy and is being developed collaboratively with the South Eastern Water Conservation and Drainage Board and the SE NRM Board.</p> <p>Regional NRM Plan water affecting activity policy: the region will continue the review of current water affecting activity (WAA) policies commenced in 2015/16 as part of the preparation of the SE NRM Plan. It is planned to have draft NRM Plan WAA Policies prepared in June 2017.</p> <p>Note the NRM Plan WAA Policy review is a separate process from the shorter run process of NRM WAA policy amendment meeting Basin Plan requirements</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"> <li>• Design and implementation of a risk assessment framework</li> <li>• Definition of management boundaries and objectives for drainage and wetland management.</li> </ul> <p>Continue the review of water affecting activity permit policies for the revision of the South East Regional NRM Plan. This work includes technical support from SMK to review and update the rainfall run off information and management boundaries for the purposes of WAA Dam policy.</p> <p>Tasks to ensure WAA Policy Basin Plan compliance include informing the community about the changes to the SE NRM Plan Permit policies as a result of the need to modify water affecting activity policy for dam development to comply with Basin Plan requirements.</p>
U.	Tatiara, Padthaway, Tintinara (SE)	<p>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.</p> <p>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).</p> <p>The SE NRM Board is considering including the Tintinara-Coonalpyn Water Allocation Plan in the review</p>	<p>Commence review of the Tatiara, Padthaway and Tintinara Coonalpyn Water Allocation Plans in November 2016 as part of the community engagement process being undertaken to support decision making about the potential to develop a combined WAP for Tintinara-Coonalpyn, Tatiara and Padthaway. Seeking community input to the review of each of the three plans as the same time is expected to achieve some efficiencies for review of the Plans regardless of what decision is made in relation to the preparation of an amalgamated water allocation plan.</p> <p>As part of the review process an update and expansion of the Tatiara Groundwater model is being undertaken to enable analysis of the impact on the resource of a range of extraction scenarios.</p> <p>Establishment of a Victorian and South Australian policy and technical working group to progress the technical review of Province 1 and Province 2.</p>

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		<p>of the Padthaway and Tatiara Plans with a proposal to combine the three plans into a single plan.</p> <p>Volumetric conversion in the Tatiara WAP has resulted in allocations exceeding Permissible Annual Volumes specified for the Designated area under the Border Groundwater Agreement.</p>	





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