

HARVEY RIVER RESTORATION TASKFORCE



PROGRAMME REVIEW  
2003-2017





# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



## Purpose

This document presents the findings of an internal programme review undertaken by the Harvey River Restoration Taskforce (HRRT). The main intent of the review and this document is to:

- Report on progress of the initial investment and objectives of the Harvey River Restoration Taskforce.
- Document lessons learned;
- Evaluate programme performance;
- Provide recommendations for future programme development & improvement.



## Background

Establishment of the Harvey River Restoration Trust was recommended in a document by the Waters and Rivers Commission (1998) 'Proposed Harvey Basin Surface Water Allocation Plan,' as a way to compensate for ecological values lost or degraded during the construction of the Harvey Dam. As part of the formal Environmental Review & Management process for the Stirling-Harvey Redevelopment Scheme a number of Ministerial conditions were required to be met by the Water Corporation, as the project proponent, prior to commencement of work. Condition P14 of Ministerial Statement 0525 outlined a financial offset of \$750,000 be committed by the proponent to the HRRT to compensate for 188 hectares of riparian land, estimated to be lost to inundation, to implement river restoration work elsewhere within the Basin.

Justification for the HRRT resulted from concern expressed by the local community regarding the loss of water resource values upstream of the Harvey Dam; and the outcome of several Environmental Water Provision studies that indicated a substantial increase in flow from the natural regime in stream channels on the coastal plain, due to agricultural expansion & clearing. (WRC 1999) This served to substantiate the need for river rehabilitation work downstream of the dam to reduce the presumed trend of channel widening.

The 'Harvey Basin Stream Restoration Trust: a proposal for funding stream restoration work in the Harvey Basin (Water and Rivers Commission Report WRP 14)', outlined a framework for investment of the offset funds of \$750,000 in on ground works, to be implemented in line with a broader catchment management strategy, overseen by a community panel. The recommended major outcome of the Trust was to provide co-ordinated on-the-ground river restoration works, on both public and private lands in a way that would represent maximum return for the investment. (WRC, 1999)

The Water Corporation of Western Australia received formal sign-off for completion of commitment P14 in 2003 after making the fifth and final payment of \$150,000 to the HRRT. However, there was no formal requirement placed on the HRRT to provide a final performance review or report of its programme of work. Thus to date the HRRT has continued to implement projects outlined in its Strategic Directions Document and Operational Plan (2002). To date \$1,061,439.95 including the initial investment of \$750,000 has been invested by the HRRT.



## MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR



Over the past 17 years the HRRT has undertaken considerable work in the Harvey River catchment and has shown what can be achieved by committed individuals passionate about the region in which they live.

I have had the pleasure of being a part of the Community Panel since 2003, and in that time have taken an active role in the planning and implementation of on-ground work. The work undertaken has required our group to work in partnership with other organisations, resulting in better on-ground outcomes. Without such a collaborative approach we would not have achieved the extent of work we have to date.

In hindsight, the scope of work described in WRP 14 and the HRRT Strategy was possibly unrealistic for a small community group to achieve (i.e. should it be the responsibility of a small community group to demonstrate an improvement in water quality within the catchment?) without the clear support and written commitment of key stakeholders.

One of our greatest challenges over the years has been implementing work within the gazetted drainage districts of Harvey and Waroona. I see part of the issue being an oversight in the initial programme planning stages to identify and agree upon the type of work suitable for implementation within these areas (i.e. written agreement between the Environment Protection Authority, Waters & Rivers Commission & the Water Corporation as to the type of work to undertake and the process required to obtain relevant approval).

The Water Corporation, as the government agency responsible for drainage conveyance, is required to maintain drainage as per the *'Water Services Licencing Act (1995): Operating Licence No 32'* which has only one operational requirement namely to *"operate and maintain its rural drainage infrastructure so the period of inundation to land abutting a drain that forms part of the system shall be a maximum of 72 hours"*. Thus the emphasis is purely on maintaining conveyance without consideration of the impact of downstream water quantity or quality (DoW, 2009), or other ecological values of the waterways.

It is also of interest to note that the process of rural drainage reform wasn't initiated until 2006 when the Department of Water was created and attributed responsibility for drainage governance & planning reform for urban, coastal and inland drainage. (DoW, 2009) Interestingly within the Department of Water document (2009) *'Coastal drainage discussion paper'* the following issues were highlighted:

- Water quality indicators that should be applied to rural drainage have not been identified or agreed;
- There is no structured framework for the planning and assessment of drainage works on a catchment or sub-catchment scale;
- The natural and man-made/modified drainage systems are currently managed independently;
- It is not well understood what information drives changes in best management practice or how to promote it;
- There is not a well-developed coordinated approach for marketing drainage reform.



The drainage reform process stalled but it is clear from our perspective that to successfully implement ecologically based works within the rural drainage districts of Harvey & Waroona it is imperative that an overarching framework be developed and agreed upon in writing by the necessary government and non-government bodies responsible for water management within the State.

This will enable a programme of works, such as that proposed in WRP 14 and the HRRT Strategy, to be implemented across the landscape, without many of the barriers the community panel were confronted with over the years.

However, despite the difficulties faced with some components of our larger programme of works the HRRT has been able to achieve an enormous body of work and I believe has lived up to our Mission Statement of *"acting as a catalyst both within and beyond the Basin for restoration and protection of in-stream and riparian values."*

We hope that through this review process we can learn from our experience over the years, share our learnings with other similar organisations, and plan strategically for future work within the Harvey River Basin.



## OUTPUTS & ACHIEVEMENTS 2003-2017



- 188 hectares of remnant vegetation protected
- 33 km of fencing erected
- 31 community projects supported
- Over 200,000 mixed species native seedlings planted
- 60 hectares of invasive weed control in remnant riparian reserves
- 75 hectares of feral animal control in remnant riparian reserves
- 5 km of discontinuous bank stabilisation (erosion control matting and coarse woody debris)
- 5 rock riffles installed
- 3 rock protected floodway inlets installed to enable floodplain reconnection
- 50 km of foreshore condition surveys undertaken



- 7 km of ecological corridor established in partnership with Greening Australia and Alcoa of Australia
- 6000 hours of volunteer time
- \$1,061,439.95 in external grants (individually and in partnership with other groups) for operational support and on-ground work
- 2009 winner of the Bush, Land and Waterway category at the Western Australian Landcare Awards in partnership with Alcoa and Greening Australia for the 'Nells Block' project
- 2012 finalist in the Bush, Land and Waterway category at the Western Australian Landcare Awards for the lower Harvey River demonstration project. A partnership project with the Shire of Waroona, Main Roads WA, Peel-Harvey Catchment Council, South West Catchment Council, Water Corporation and Department of Water
- 2014 winner of the Natural Environment and Conservation Category of Tidy Towns Award with the Shire of Harvey
- Partner in ARC Linkage Research project 'Farming in a biodiversity hotspot, harnessing native plants to reduce deleterious off-site phosphorus flows
- Partner in Edith Cowan University Collaboration Scheme project 'Designing water quality protocols in catchments after severe wildfires: the 2016 Harvey River Basin case study





## KEY LESSONS LEARNED



- Development of the Strategic Plan took longer than anticipated (3 years rather than 1 year as originally planned) which led to a loss of interest from some landholders in the early years. (Wilke & Steele, 2006)
- Establishing the Community Panel was not as easy as first anticipated. Conflicts with work or other commitments meant that Community Panel meetings were at times inquorate and could not effectively transact business. (Wilke & Steele, 2006)
- The need for a Project Officer was not identified for several years. However, once the Strategic Plan was adopted, it became evident that it could not be implemented by the Community Panel alone. (Wilke & Steele, 2006)
- Effective programme management requires the adoption of a pre-defined suite of tools, processes and governance to ensure consistency of delivery over the life of the programme.
- Key stakeholder consensus is imperative prior to implementation of a programme of work (i.e. written agreement between the Water Corporation, Waters & Rivers Commission, and the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) in regard to the type of work to be implemented within the gazetted drainage district, including a pre-defined process for obtaining relevant agency approval, may have enabled more efficient and timely programme delivery).

- On-going maintenance of project work requires investment, careful planning & agreement between stakeholders prior to implementation of work.
- Greater transparency between government, industry, and community, in relation to current & future management and allocation of surface and groundwater within the Harvey River Basin, would enable more effective management decisions to be made in terms of rehabilitation.
- Management of Unallocated Crown Land (UCL) is not clearly defined and is an ongoing issue for landholders/managers adjoining these areas.

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Engage an officer to facilitate management of program strategy & provide executive support to HRRT community panel tasked with program governance.
- Implement a programme management system with a pre-defined suite of tools, processes and governance to ensure consistency of programme delivery over the life of the programme. This may include processes to identify and manage programme risk, stakeholder management, a process to manage change in scope, and quality management processes to ensure project beneficiaries are in agreement as to the programme of works to be implemented and the quality standards to which they need to be undertaken.
- If further investment is considered, develop an overarching framework between key stakeholders to guide works and simplify processes.
- Encourage continued reform of drainage management to ensure multiple objectives are met for this critical community infrastructure.
- Drainage planning be undertaken in a holistic manner recognising a system approach and whole of water cycle management process.
- Lobby for development of a Harvey River Basin surface and groundwater allocation plan to ensure security of investment decisions & maintenance of river health into the future.

