

Collaborative Management Taskforce Peel-Harvey Estuary (Strategic Implementation)

Draft at 16 March 2020

Issue

The Peel-Harvey Estuary, Rivers and waterways are in very poor health and research is showing that without a transformational approach to their management, further reduction in rainfall and streamflow will see the system collapse, taking with it an estimated \$3.35 billion of economic value to the Region. Actions identified for the management of the waterways in the Strategic Assessment for Perth and Peel and the pending Peel-Harvey Estuary Protection Plan, need to be implemented now, including legislative changes putting the restoration of the health of the system as a Regional priority. The establishment of a Collaborative Management Taskforce to oversee the Strategic Implementation of actions to protect the health of the Peel-Harvey Estuary is a critical step to the protection of this vital economic asset.

Economic Value of the Peel-Harvey Waterways - \$3.35 billion + p.a.

Preserving the health of the Peel-Harvey waterways is central to local community values and will retain significant economic benefits currently supported through local tourism, commercial fisheries and recreational activities. The following values are reliant on the condition of the waterways:

- \$217 million in annual expenditure on recreational fishing activities
- \$40 million in annual expenditure on boat maintenance and operations in the Peel
- \$1.8 million in annual revenue generated through storing boats in PYS Marinas
- Between \$0.9 million and \$1.7 million in annual catch from commercial fishing
- \$318.2 million in annual tourism expenditure spent in Mandurah
- \$3.15 million derived from the value of 9 commercial fishing licenses

The total monetary value of ecosystem services derived from Peel-Harvey's coastal and inland wetland ecosystems was quantified in 2013 to be approximately \$3.35 billion (2007 prices)[1]. By comparison, the Peel's Gross Regional Product at the time was estimated at \$5.6 billion.

Estimates do not include real estate values which are estimated to drop in value by ~\$50,000 per property, should the system collapse again (2010, *Peel Estuary and Land Values Near Waterways, an Economic Valuation*)

Research Findings - ARC Linkage Project (2019)

- The estuary has **reduced flushing** due to declining river flows;
- Ecologically, the estuary is showing signs of trouble with condition reverting to pre-Dawesville Channel era (...highest macroalgal growths on record)
- Several '**trouble hot-spots**' have emerged across the estuary, especially poorly flushed areas
- The drying climate projected for 2050 is forecast to **reduce water flows to the estuary by ~50%**, exacerbating the current condition.
- **Nutrient reduction** has been identified as a potential strategy to help adapt to the drying climate.
- **Risk to fish stocks**, e.g. Black Bream (Murray River) have reached maturity in 1 year since 2010.
- Allowing a '**business as usual**' approach to catchment management, as well as agricultural and urban development beyond that proposed in the SAPPR, **is forecast to intensify problems with hypoxia in the rivers and increase nutrient flows to the rivers and parts of the basins.**

[1] Arkwright D, 2013, Peel Development Commission Occasional Paper 2.8: Valuing the Eco-System Services in the Peel Region.

Scope and Principles

The following will guide the work and decision making of the Taskforce:

1. Focus on the overall **health and economic value** of the Peel-Harvey Estuary*
2. Determine a **collaborative approach** (structure) to the management of the Peel-Harvey Estuary across government, community and industry
3. Determine a **framework** that would manage the implementation of funding to improve the health of the Peel- Harvey Estuary
4. Alignment with the enduring strategies and recommendations of the PHCC “Binjareb Boodja Landscapes 2025 – An **NRM Strategy** for the Peel-Harvey and relevant State / regional plans (e.g. - proposed Estuary Protection Plan and Water Quality Improvement Plan).
5. Determine a process to investigate and implement a **Special Control Area*** for the Peel-Harvey
6. Undertake open and honest **discussions** about what is possible and follow with clear actions.
7. A focus on operational **solutions**.
8. Priorities and workflow that is **evidence based** and **achievable**.

Membership

The Taskforce will consist of Director Generals or equivalent of each of the below listed member organisations/agencies. Preference for DG’s or equivalent is to ensure that strategic direction is maintained at a decision making level.

Where a Member is not able to attend a meeting, a proxy may attend in place of the absent Member. The Proxy Representative will have the same rights and responsibilities as the Member being represented. The quorum necessary for decision making or resolution of issues shall be 50% plus 1.

Any relevant/suitable persons may be invited to attend meetings at the discretion of the Chair to address particular agenda items.

The role of members is to actively engage in the conversation about actions to improve the health of the Peel-Harvey Estuary, provide information and advice, support the Regional Implementation Group as appropriate and share the key messages of the group with others within their network.

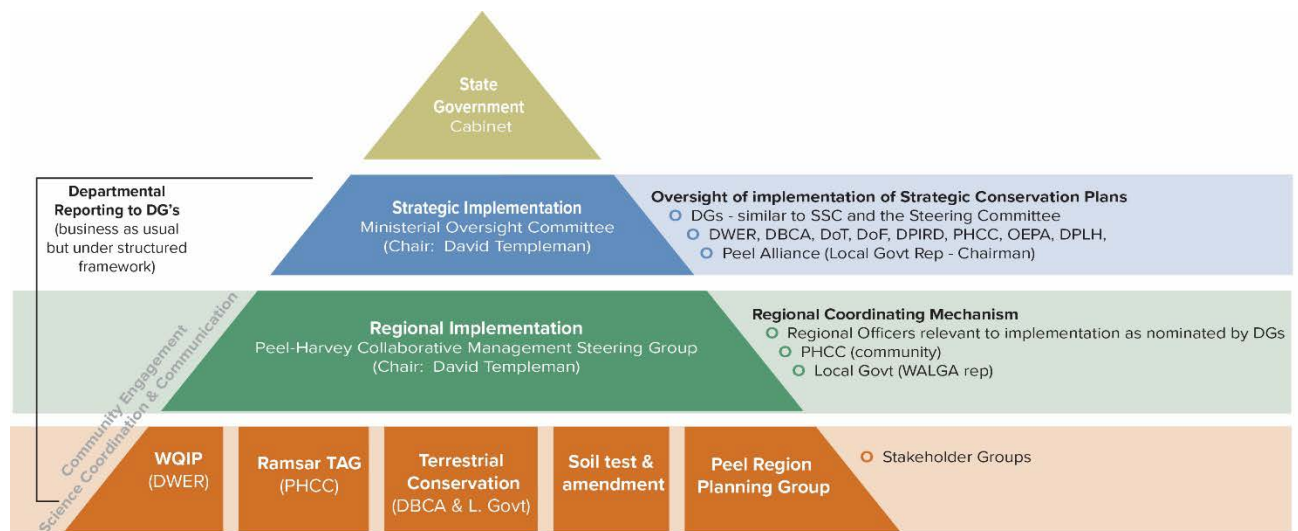
Strategic Implementation – Director Generals (or equivalent)

Organisation/Agency
Local Member of Parliament
Department of Premier and Cabinet Peel Development Commission
Department of Water and Environmental Regulation
Department of Biodiversity Conservation and Attractions
Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development
Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage
Peel Alliance (Chairman)
Peel-Harvey Catchment Council (Inc)

Regional Implementation - Working Groups

Actions from the Taskforce will feed into the Regional Technical Collaborative Group made up of Senior Officers of the represented organisations/agencies.

Structure



Frequency of meetings

Initially the Taskforce meetings will be required monthly. As the Taskforce establishes the framework for delivery/actions, meeting frequency will reduce to a quarterly basis.

Confidentiality and professional behaviour

Taskforce members are obliged to:

1. Never disclose any information about the initiatives that is not already in the public domain without the proper authority to do so;
2. Respect confidentiality on Taskforce matters;
3. Maintain the privacy of Taskforce members and never release information to third parties unless permission has been given;
4. Only provide public comment on Taskforce initiatives when called upon and authorised to do so;
5. If a member has a direct or indirect pecuniary or non-pecuniary interest in any matter, this interest must be declared during the Statement of Disclosure at the opening of each meeting, or, as soon as possible after the relevant facts have become known. The Chair will determine the appropriate method for management of the conflict of interest.

Communications

The Local Member will take the lead role in all communications in relation to the Taskforce. When responding to media enquiries received directly, agencies/organisations are to work cooperatively with members to formulate agreed upon responses.

The Local Member will coordinate and liaise with State departments and Ministerial offices as appropriate in regard to State communications / media.

Resourcing the Taskforce

Chair

The Local Member for Mandurah will Chair the Taskforce. Functions to include:

- Providing direction to the Executive support to develop a suitable agenda
- Inviting representatives of other agencies / organisations to attend meetings to provide technical or other advice and assistance, if and when required
- Guiding the meeting according to the agenda and time available
- When required, ensuring all discussion items end with a decision, action or outcome
- Reviewing and approving the draft minutes before distribution

Executive Support

Executive support to the Taskforce. Functions to include:

- Scheduling and notifying of meetings
- Preparation and distribution of agendas and other materials as required for meetings under the direction of the Chair
- Take notes of proceedings and prepare minutes of the meetings
- Ensure the Chair has checked and accepted draft minutes as a true and accurate record of meetings
- Distribute minutes to all members

Project Support

A high level of project support and resource is required to ensure the objectives of the Taskforce can be achieved. PHCC can deliver project support, subject to being adequately resourced by the State.

This support will vary depending upon the focus and stage of initiatives and may include:

- Collate information from technical and working groups
- Provide Status Report/s
- Engage and support technical groups
- Gap analysis and work priorities
- Data analysis
- Stakeholder and consumer consultation
- Facilitation
- Research
- Developing funding applications
- Communication plan and responses

ENDS

**Estuary – while we have used the term Estuary, reference is to the whole of the Peel-Harvey Surface Water Catchment, with a focus on the Peel Region and the Peel-Yalgorup Ramsar System (Ramsar 482)*

**Special Control Area – A planning zone that can apply in addition to requirements of underlying planning requirements – to provide a hierarchy to protect the health of the Peel-Harvey Estuary*

