



Mersey-Forth Water Management Review

FACT SHEET

Mersey River Water Quality Assessment Study

A collaborative approach to assessing and addressing water quality in the Lower Mersey River



Mersey River at Latrobe.

In the stakeholder consultation stage of the Mersey-Forth Water Management Review water quality was identified as a significant issue of concern in the lower Mersey River having a negative impact on recreational and tourist activities, and on the environment. To address this concern the Mersey River Water Quality Assessment Study was initiated by Hydro Tasmania.

Aim of Study

The aim of the study was to engage with stakeholders to assess and cooperatively address the perceived poor water quality in the lower Mersey River, and work towards achieving a more sustainable future for the river.

The objectives of the study were to:

- Clarify roles and responsibilities with State Government Agencies with regard to monitoring and management of water quality; and
- Initiate collaboration with Mersey River Catchment local council and key stakeholders to address water quality concerns and improve the process to deal with water quality issues in the Mersey River.

Process

To achieve the study objectives the following actions were undertaken:

- Hydro Tasmania collaborated with State Government Agencies, local Councils and stakeholders from Natural Resource Management and other organisations within the catchment; and
- Stakeholder meetings led to a number of outcomes.

Outcomes

The outcomes from the study were:

- The Environment Protection Authority (EPA) undertook a desktop assessment and determined that there are point and diffuse point sources of pollution in the catchment that could potentially impact upon water quality. It was concluded that more work is required to gain a better understanding of water quality issues in the Lower Mersey River;
- The Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment (DPIPWE) upgraded its in-situ water quality monitoring equipment at Latrobe to continuously monitor temperature, conductivity and turbidity;
- Stakeholders alerted the EPA to a “black water event” and the event was monitored. The results showed elevated turbidity and suspended particulate material during the high flow event. It was evident from the monitoring of this one event that without more consolidation of data and information, and critical assessment, it is not possible to get a clear picture of water quality conditions or develop appropriate water quality management strategies. Further investigation was recommended;
- Interested stakeholders, informally known as the Mersey River Water Quality Group, considered that the solution to the water quality problems in the Mersey River requires further investigation and a collaborative effort. As the process unfolded it became clear, and it was agreed, that resolution requires a systematic and participatory process of collective stakeholders. A collaborative approach, with clear leadership and commitment, where all parties participate and contribute, in kind or with resources, is essential for conditions in the Mersey River to be improved and sustained. Stakeholders from the broader catchment need to be involved. The integrated catchment management approach as used by NRM North and supported by Cradle Coast NRM should be considered. An action plan for the Mersey Catchment should be developed to ensure more effective management of the river and minimise the risk of conditions deteriorating. In this way it is envisaged that the Mersey River will be able to support social, economic and environmental benefits, and enhanced values, into the future;



DPIPWE water quality monitoring site on the Mersey River at Latrobe.

- Stakeholders have been advised that their involvement in notifying the EPA of pollution incidents is essential. In the event of poor water quality conditions, such as black or highly turbid water, or dead fish in the Mersey River, stakeholders should contact the EPA on the *Incident Response Number: 1800 005 171* or at <http://epa.tas.gov.au/epa>; and
- A technical report has been prepared for this study.

Commitment

Hydro Tasmania remains committed to sustainable management of the water resources and will support, where possible, the development and implementation of an action plan for the Mersey River in collaboration with stakeholders.

For More Information

The technical report for this study is available at

www.hydro.com.au/MFWMR-studies.

To see all the Mersey-Forth Water Management Review technical and social studies go to

www.hydro.com.au/MFWMR-studies.

Find out more about the Mersey-Forth Water Management Review at

www.hydro.com.au/MFWMR.

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