

Context

The sustainable management of the state's water resources rests with the Department of Water. In 2006 Western Australia signed the *Intergovernmental Agreement on a National Water Initiative* (NWI 2004) and commenced a state wide program of water reform.

The NWI is an agreement between the Commonwealth and all states and territories and recognises the need to increase the productivity and efficiency of Australia's water-use and improve water management across the country. Undertakings as part of the reform agenda include a legislative reform program to enable implementation of the reform measures and the development of statutory based regional water plans.

Government approach to regional water planning

The State Water Plan 2007 articulates the government's vision for water resource management in Western Australia. The document provides the strategic policy and planning framework for the state's water demands to 2030 and is a whole-of-government initiative supported by 11 agencies. Regional water plans are second on the water planning hierarchy after the *State Water Plan* and are designed to focus on issues pertinent to the regions and identify specific water management issues, the strategies to tackle these issues and a set of actions to be implemented in each region.

The Department of Water has nine water planning regions, which closely align with the boundaries of the regional development commissions, and a commitment to produce nine regional water plans by 2012. Of the nine water planning regions only four regional water plans have been developed of which two have been published:

- *The South West Regional Water Plan (2010 – 2030)*, May 2010
- *The Pilbara Regional Water Plan (2010 – 2030)*, June 2010
- *Perth-Peel Regional Water Plan (2010 – 2030)*, draft for comment December 2009
- *Kimberley Regional Water Plan (2010 – 2030)*, draft for comment December 2010

Work is progressing on the draft Perth-Peel Plan with publication due in the next few months. The draft document has been renamed the *Perth-Peel Regional Water Plan 2011 – 2031: Creating water sensitive cities and towns*, as it is now linked to the land planning framework of *Directions 2031 and beyond*. The document also supports the strategic objective of Perth as a water sensitive city with an integrated water system that utilises all its available water resources to include rainwater, groundwater, surface water, wastewater, stormwater and potable water to make it resilient to future change.

Water planning is an important mechanism to assist the government, industry and the community determine water management and allocation decisions to meet economic, environmental and social objectives. Water planning informs strategic planning and future land use decisions and it is imperative that the regional water plans are completed promptly as rezonings and effective provision of land supply are compromised in the absence of the water plans to guide decision making.

Strong population and economic growth in a number of regions across the state means there is pressure for urban land and a resultant expansion of townsites. In the Kimberley, there are competing demands for water from mining and agriculture together with increased residential and industrial demands that require a clear position on key issues and an assessment of the region's water availability to inform strategic planning of the region. Completion of the *Kimberley Regional Water Plan* is a priority so that policy, planning and management can be put in place to guide future development.

POSITION STATEMENT

REGIONAL WATER PLANNING



The *Pilbara Regional Water Plan* pays scant attention to the need for fit-for-purpose water use in the region with DoW's position being that this is managed through the water management objectives of the *Pilbara water in mining guidelines* and the local on-the-ground licensing process.

There is a clear need for cross agency cooperation between Dow and the Environmental Protection Authority to develop an integrated water source plan for the Pilbara that aligns the fit-for-purpose demands of the development and resources sector and to stop the use of potable water for dust suppression. While dust suppression falls under the jurisdiction of the EPA through the *EP Act*, the DoW has expressed support for investigations mining companies are making into more efficient means to meet dust suppression regulations at port handling facilities. This must be translated into a position statement from these agencies to encourage fit-for-purpose water use and water conservation.

Regional drainage

Related to the management of water resources in the state is the contentious issue of drainage management, specifically where drains transition from rural to urban. The Water Corporation assumes responsibility for the state's rural drains and manages about 2 250 kilometres of rural drains and over 800 kilometres of drains in the metropolitan area. The management of the small reticulation drains of Perth's urban drainage network falls to local government with many of the local authority drains connecting into the Water Corporation main drainage catchment area system.

The government must resolve planning responsibility for those drains transitioning from rural to urban. Pressure points are the peri-urban areas of Perth which are undergoing rapid change and extensive residential development. Project timelines may be subject to lengthy delays where there is disagreement between Water Corporation and the local authority regarding which authority has responsibility for drainage. This results in time delays, increased costs and a negative impact on housing affordability.

UDIA policy position

It is the policy of UDIA to:

- Support development of regional water plans to facilitate strategic planning and a consolidated approach to water management and land use decision making across the state;
- Advocate for the inclusion of fit-for-purpose water in regional water plans;
- Advocate for cross agency cooperation between the Department of Water, The Department of Environment and Conservation and the Environment Protection Authority for policy development and regulation where issues cross jurisdictions;
- Advocate for the government to resolve planning responsibility for drains transitioning from rural to urban.

This Position Statement articulates UDIA's current policy position and supersedes any other UDIA policy statement.

Committee Review	Endorsed by Council	Policy Review
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