

NELR recent developments

Plan has a long-term view to 2030 and identifies priority actions for implementation over the next five years.

The Plan addresses water use, water availability, future trends in water usage, potential sources and the Pilbara's water future. Existing water uses in the area for consumptive purposes include mining operations, pastoral use, use by towns and port facilities, use in fly in/fly out camps and in remote Aboriginal communities. The report emphasises the fact that rapid economic development in the area is likely over the next 20 years and growth in the mining sector has led to increased demand for water at mine sites.

There are currently no water allocation plans for the Pilbara, so plans will be developed for all areas where there are likely to be multiple interests seeking to use water from the same resource. Coastal alluvial aquifers will be the first priority areas.

These water allocation plans will define limits on the abstraction of water from a particular water resource, and specify where and how water entitlements will coexist within the plan area. Objectives outlined in the Plan will be reflected in the Department of Water's water licensing and water allocation planning process.

The Plan will have an inception review one year after it is finalised, a mid-term review and update in five years and be fully revised in 10 years time.

State government announces feed-in tariff scheme

The WA Government has announced that it will provide \$23 m to introduce a residential net feed-in tariff scheme from 1 August 2010. The tariff will be paid per unit of net electricity exported to the electricity grid from eligible systems.

The scheme will provide a subsidy to households with new and existing photovoltaic, wind and micro-hydro systems. The subsidy is only available for residential installations which are owned by the home owner, however a feasibility study is being undertaken into a similar scheme for businesses.

Payments will be made for electricity exported into the South West Interconnected System (SWIS) and regional grids. The price has been set at 40 cents per kilowatt hour (c/kWh) and will be paid in addition to the price paid under the Renewable Energy Buyback Scheme, allowing householders to receive a minimum of 47c/kWh. The tariff rate is applied whenever electricity generation exceeds household consumption during the day and not just the balance at the end of a household's billing cycle.

The scheme will be administered by electricity retailers Synergy and Horizon Power and will be reviewed every 3 years or 10MW of new generation, to assess the ongoing level of support required in light of changing economies and technologies.

TASMANIA

Tom Baxter

Ralphs Bay canal estate rejected by the Tasmanian Planning Commission and Government

The Tasmanian Planning Commission's 'Final Impact Assessment Report' recommending refusal of Walker Corporation's proposed canal estate at Ralphs Bay is the most nationally significant environmental law development arising from Tasmania recently.

The Commission's damning Final Impact Assessment Report created waves beyond Ralphs Bay. It convinced the State Government to reject not only Walker Corporation's proposal, but also to promise a ban on any future canal estates elsewhere

in Tasmania. The Commission's comprehensive report contains much material which may also be relevant to canal estates beyond Tasmania's shores.

Notice of the Governor's order that the project not proceed appeared in the Tasmanian Government Gazette of 4 August 2010. Walker Corporation did not appeal.

See the article by Jane MacDonald and Jess Feehely, 'Ralphs Bay Saved – A Tasmanian Story', later in this issue.