



SIGNIFICANT ISSUES IMPACTING THE AGENCY

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As a result of Machinery of Government changes announced by the state government on 28 April 2017, and implemented on 1 July 2017, the department created a one-stop shop service for industry and developers with the aim of streamlining and simplifying Western Australia's water and environmental regulation.

The government has committed \$1.7 million funding to develop a container deposit scheme in Western Australia. The department is designing the scheme and, following consultation with stakeholders, will be responsible for its implementation. It is anticipated that the scheme will begin in 2020.

In 2018–19, the department will finalise reviews of the waste levy policy and the operation of the Waste Avoidance and Resource Recovery Account.

A series of major initiatives will be implemented from 2018–19 to 2020–21 to support development in the Perth and Peel regions. This includes delivery of a new water allocation plan to support the long-term sustainable use of the Gnangara groundwater system (which makes up nearly half of Perth's scheme water supply), improving the management

of the Peel-Harvey estuary and catchment to support long-term water quality improvements, and identifying and securing key environmental values in the region.

Work will continue through 2018–19 on the development of the Estuary Protection Plan to improve the water quality of the Peel-Harvey estuary. The plan commits to providing comprehensive estuary protection that creates an integrated approach towards catchment management. The majority of actions will be identified through numerical modelling and consultation to revise the Water Quality Improvement Plan. The opportunity is to add a number of estuary-specific actions and the challenge will be to set the policy and planning framework needed to implement the plan.

Given more than 80 per cent of Western Australians live in, or around, estuaries, the department will continue to deliver priority strategic initiatives to improve the health of some of the state's most at-risk estuaries through the \$20 million Regional Estuaries Initiative and the four-year Revitalising Geopraphe Waterways Royalties for Regions projects.

The department will work to ensure that water, waste and environmental issues – and innovative approaches to resolving them – are considered during urban design and planning, including major government infrastructure initiatives such as METRONET.

In 2018–19, the department will begin work on a Fitzroy River water allocation plan, using the outcomes of scientific programs undertaken by local, state and national organisations and working with community, pastoral and Aboriginal stakeholders.

As a result of climate change, the state's south-west is experiencing declining annual rainfall. This trend is creating significant water resource management and supply planning issues, driving reduced dam inflows, lower streamflows, and declining groundwater levels. In response to this, the department is undertaking various actions and measures across government agencies and government trading enterprises to set priorities in this area.

In 2018–19, the department will finalise the Perth Region Confined Aquifer Capacity study and the Royalties for Regions-funded groundwater investigations, and begin a series of investigations in priority areas across the state, including identifying potential water supply options to maintain urban green spaces.

In partnership with the Murujuga Aboriginal Corporation, and with input from industry, technical experts, the community and local governments, the department will finalise a strategy to provide a long-term framework to monitor and analyse changes to the world-class Aboriginal rock art at the Burrup Peninsula, and ensure management responses are in place to address any changes to the rock art.

The department has established the Pilbara Environmental Offsets Fund to combine individual offset payments to enable the delivery of larger and more strategic biodiversity projects in the Pilbara. The department is developing a five-year implementation for the fund, with advice from stakeholders, in 2018–19.

Where possible, projects will build on local conservation programs like those already undertaken by natural resource organisations and Traditional Owner Ranger Groups to maximise conservation benefits and create local jobs.

The department will continue to support the government's lightweight plastic bag ban and investigate further actions to reduce the environmental harm of other single use plastics to create awareness and influence behaviour change with retailers and the broader community. The ban will bring Western Australia into line with other states that already have similar bans in place.

The department is seeking to reduce red tape, and simplify how its stakeholders do business, by progressing a comprehensive digital strategy and investigating enhanced data management capacity options. This work will also provide stakeholders with greater online access to information and services, while ensuring security of information.

Through high-calibre science and strong partnerships across government, industry, water utilities, research and community stakeholders, the department will continue to demonstrate how water in the urban landscape can improve the sustainability, productivity, resilience and liveability of Western Australian communities, while achieving water quality improvements in drainage to rivers and estuaries.