

RESPONSE TO PETITION

Petition No. 8 of 2024 House of Assembly

We, the undersigned Residents of Tasmania, draw to the attention of the House that climate change and the demand on water catchment uses is growing. Safe water means water free from toxic substances including pesticides and other harmful chemicals that may end up in our food or in our water. TasWater and Public Health must ensure they are aware of all the issues in the Derwent catchment and take appropriate action to address known and potential harmful effects.

Your petitioners request that the House call on the Government to:

1. Recognise that access to clean, safe drinking water is a fundamental human right and ensure the water Tasmanians drink is clean and safe, and that harmful substances are unable to enter our food chains through irrigation water or residues in food from contaminated water.
2. Take steps to ensure community faith that water from the timtumili minanya/Derwent catchment is safe to drink and applies the precautionary principle and:
 - a. Establish a dedicated, coordinated Derwent catchment authority, to reduce pollutants and run-off from industries and activities
 - b. Develop strong water quality standards
 - c. Ensure the Derwent catchment water is regularly tested for harmful elements such as toxins and pollutants.

GOVERNMENT POSITION:

RESPONSE:

1. Tasmania's drinking water is regulated under *the Public Health Act 1997* (the Act), which ensures water safety. Safe public drinking water supplies are managed by TasWater which is responsible for undertaking testing and monitoring in Tasmania.

TasWater agrees that safe drinking water is a fundamental human right and has treatment in place to "ensure the water Tasmanians drink is clean and safe" in line with the Tasmanian Drinking Water Quality Guidelines and the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines (ADWG).

This ensures TasWater follows a risk based monitoring approach and align its treatment processes to ensure safe water is provided.

TasWater routinely monitors catchments and supports the process of the National Health and Medical Council reviews to incorporate the latest science to maintain the supply of high-quality drinking water to Tasmanians.

With investment across the state in drinking water treatment TasWater has seen all permanent boil water alerts lifted, and for six consecutive years has reported 100 per cent microbiological compliance.

All recycled water supplied for irrigation purposes by TasWater follows the Tasmanian EPA Recycled Water Guideline.

- 2 a. The Environment Protection Authority (EPA Tasmania), the City of Hobart, the Department of Health, the Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania (NRE Tas), Hydro Tasmania, Tasmanian Irrigation and TasWater collectively exercise a range of statutory powers in relation to the River Derwent and/or relevant planning schemes.

Given this, the Government does consider it necessary to create stand-alone catchment authority at this time. It is important to ensure that any new governance body does not seek to duplicate existing statutory powers, increase regulatory red tape or provide for inconsistent and ad hoc approaches in different parts of the state.

The Government supports and invests in a number of successful partnership models including the Derwent Estuary Program, the Tamar Estuary and Esk Rivers Program and the Tamar Estuary and Esk Rivers Management Taskforce, which deliver catchment and estuary monitoring programs and provide a vehicle for collaboration and coordination of effort related to improving water quality and river health.

- b. The Australian Drinking Water Guidelines and the Tasmanian Drinking Water Guidelines outlines above provide standards for drinking water.
- c. NRE Tas is progressing implementation of the Rural Water Use Strategy which is the Government's blueprint for water management in Tasmania. The Strategy ensures sustainable outcomes and builds resilience for our rural water users, for our communities and for our environment in a changing climate.



Hon Guy Barnett MP
Treasurer

Date:

9/4/25