STATE WATER PLAN
Draft Water Policy Framework

DISCUSSION PAPER

Government of Western Australia April 2006

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Draft Water Policy Framework

ISBN: 0 7307 0239 1

Disclaimer

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The purpose of this paper is to promote discussion and invite further comments on key matters relevant to the State Water Plan.

Copies are available by phoning 1300 369 809 or visiting **www.statewaterstrategy.wa.gov.au** . Copies are also available at your local library.

Purpose of Discussion Paper

This discussion paper focuses on the draft Water Policy Framework, which will form an integral part of the State Water Plan. The Framework proposes a vision for water resources management in Western Australia and is underpinned by six objectives.

General context is given for each objective focussing on the current status of water resource management in Western Australia. A discussion is provided in relation to the statements within each objective. While most water resource management activities outlined are consistent with current practice, areas where changes are proposed have been highlighted as "What's New".

It is intended that this discussion paper will inform individuals and communities about our management framework for water resources and provide an opportunity for comment.

Water Resources Reform

Water is highly valued by Western Australians. The State Government has given water and the management of our water resources strategic priority. This will continue into the future given climate variability, continuing increases in demand and resource scarcity.

Water is vested in the State Government, that allows the community and individuals to access and use water for a variety of purposes.

The Government is responsible and authorised to ensure the sustainable investigation, allocation, usage and management of water resources and delivery of related services on behalf of the community. Given the importance of water in Western Australia for our natural environment, quality of life and economic development, the Government is undertaking a program of water resources reform.

Background

In response to the drought of 2001-2002, a series of Water Forums were held throughout Western Australia in 2002 culminating in the Government holding a Water Symposium in October of that year, with extensive community involvement.

The outcomes of the Symposium led to the publication of the State Water Strategy in February 2003. The Strategy recognised the importance of modernising water resource management in Western Australia and targeted programs in key areas:

- Improve water use efficiency in all sectors
- Achieve significant advances in water reuse
- Foster innovation and research
- Plan and develop new sources of water in a timely manner
- Protect the value of our water resources.

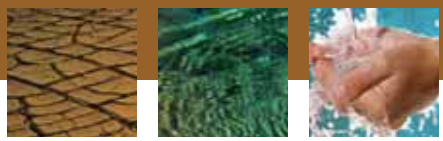
One of the initiatives of the Strategy was a review of irrigation activities throughout the State, coordinated by an independent committee. The Irrigation Review Steering Committee published their findings in May 2005, with nine areas of reform recommended.

The key directions arising from this Review supported the development of strategic water plans, including a State Water Plan.

Governance

A Water Resources portfolio was created in 2005 recognising the strategic importance of water to Western Australia and the need to provide direction across the range of water issues.

The Department of Water was formally established on 1 January 2006 and reports to the Minister for Water Resources, Hon John Kobelke MLA. Minister Kobelke also has responsibility for Busselton Water Board, Aqwest, Water Corporation and the Office of Water Strategy.



Strategic Water Plans

The Government views the formulation of strategic water plans as a high priority action stemming from the recommendations of the Irrigation Review. Accordingly, work is now underway to progressively deliver a State Water Plan and regional water plans.

It is intended that the State Water Plan will progress and, upon completion, replace the State Water Strategy, building on the foundations of this important achievement.

The State Water Plan is being developed at the same time as the first regional water plan, for the South West Region. This was intended to allow the State Water Plan to evolve with feedback from a regional water planning perspective.

There are many benefits sought through the adoption of a strategic approach to water management. One is expected to be an improved understanding of our current water resources and greater community confidence with respect to their quality, availability and use.

Most importantly however, strategic water plans will improve certainty with regard to the outlook for water resources to meet future environmental, social and economic requirements. Communities will also be engaged on issues with respect to planning for service delivery to meet changing needs, particularly in centres experiencing rapid growth.

Water Reform Program

The majority of recommendations made by the Irrigation Review involve detailed policy development in a number of key water resources management areas. This work is referred to as the Water Reform Program.

Although its implications are wide ranging, this Program is centrally concerned with reform of the water entitlements system and the creation of an effective water trading system as a means to improve water management in the State. The environment, water users and the community will benefit from these reforms. The Program will specifically consider water use in relation to groundwater systems, different water qualities and the level of development or knowledge of a water resource.

The Program is also addressing metering of water use, the integration of land and water planning, water use efficiency, options for self-management, water resource management charges and licence administration fees.

A consultation paper on these matters will be released for public comment in mid 2006, which will present options and scenarios for these policy areas. Shortly following the release of this paper, workshops will be held in locations around the State to specifically discuss the draft findings. These workshops and public submission processes will inform the final recommendations to Government, due by late 2006.

The Program will identify transitional arrangements required to implement changes in policy direction. This will be particularly relevant to existing licence arrangements.

The outcomes of the Water Reform Program will inform the review of Western Australia's water legislation.

Legislative Program for Water

The Legislative Program is developing new water resources legislation to consolidate and modernise existing legislation. The intent is to introduce a new Act to Parliament in 2007/08.

The Rights in Water and Irrigation Act 1914 is the dominant piece of water resources legislation. This Act, and other water resource statutes, outlines the various powers and functions relating to water resource management. These statutes will be reviewed and amended, taking into consideration the policy positions adopted by the Government regarding the Water Reform Program and the State water planning process.

State Water Plan

The development of a State Water Plan as previously noted is a high priority for Government. The Plan will outline Government's commitment to strategically and effectively manage our limited and vital water resources. It will describe the linkages with other important values such as health, lifestyle, land use planning, prosperous communities, a healthy environment and regional and sustainable development. Importantly, the State Water Plan will adopt a whole of water cycle approach.

The planning horizon will be to 2030 to integrate with land and source development timetables where possible.

In essence, it will provide a framework for the community, water users and other stakeholders to understand, engage and assess progress towards the strategic management of water in Western Australia.

The State Water Plan will include three major components -

1. Water Policy Framework
2. Water Planning Framework
3. Water balances around the State.

The Water Policy Framework has been drafted and is the focus of this discussion paper.

The Water Planning Framework and water balances will be presented with the Water Policy Framework in the draft State Water Plan to be released for public comment by September 2006. It is anticipated that the State Water Plan will be finalised and released by Government by March 2007.

Water Planning Framework

The Water Planning Framework will provide the basis for the development of strategic and statutory water plans. The Framework will depict the different levels of water plans, discuss the integration of water and land planning processes and legislative requirements to support their development and application.

The Framework will be released for public comment by September 2006 as part of the draft State Water Plan.

A key component of the Water Planning Framework is the development of regional water plans to support the State Water Plan. The first regional water plan is being developed for the South West.

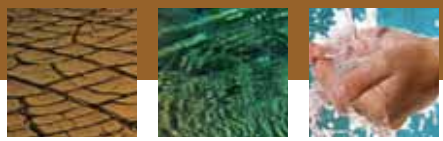
Regional water plans will consolidate available water information and current activities in a local context. They will identify activities that need to be undertaken to meet the objectives of the Water Policy Framework established in the State Water Plan. Regional water plans will be both informative and action oriented. Linkages will be made with respect to work underway by Natural Resource Management regions that benefit water resources and their management.

The regional plans are strategic in nature. They will not make final decisions with respect to any specific water allocation or approval for the development of a new water source. Existing approval processes will continue to apply to these decisions, although they are expected to align with the direction of a regional water plan.

Water Balances

To provide context for the management of water resources, the State Water Plan will show all groundwater and surface water systems including available information on water quality and sustainable yields.

Current water usage by sector (agriculture, mining, industry, domestic) will be summarised together with projected demand to 2030. The State Water Plan will discuss issues regarding water use in each sector and highlight programs underway and proposed, to support sustainable water management in these major sectors.



Water Policy Framework

One of the major outcomes of the State Water Plan for Western Australia will be the development of a strategic Water Policy Framework to guide water resource management in this State. The role of the strategic Water Policy Framework is to:

- Provide strategic rationale for detailed policies, action plans and strategies
- Test key concepts regarding proposed changes to water resource management
- Improve the understanding of water resource management and issues
- Ensure regional water plans address local issues in the context of shared whole of State objectives
- Ensure consistency of approach to water policy matters over time
- Build a shared understanding with communities and water users of water resource management.

The draft Water Policy Framework outlined in this document contains a vision for water resources management in Western Australia underpinned by six overarching objectives. The objectives build on the foundations of the State Water Strategy, to improve water resource security and certainty for users, the community and the environment.

Some objectives may be enshrined in the proposed new water resources management legislation.

Development Process

The objectives of the draft Water Policy Framework have been influenced by the findings of the Water Symposium in 2002 and the summary document from this forum entitled "The Way Forward".

The Water Policy Framework vision taken from the Symposium is a shared community and Government vision: "*Our water resources are precious and need to be managed so as to maintain our natural environment, maintain and enhance our quality of life and support broad scale economic development*."

In addition to the Symposium, the objectives and supporting outcomes have been sourced from other frameworks including the national water framework agreed to by State and Federal Governments in 1994, best practice nationally and internationally and the Irrigation Review.

The Water Policy Framework has been developed in consultation with government agencies and key stakeholders. A workshop was held with some key stakeholders in January 2006. In addition to this workshop, stakeholders and Government agencies have been consulted on an individual basis throughout the development process.

The Framework was also reviewed by an external expert Review Panel including representation from the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO), the University of Western Australia, Edith Cowan University and the South West Yarragadee Sustainability Assessment Panel.

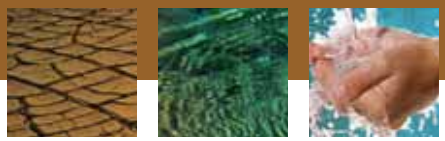
Consultation

Community involvement and participation in the development of the State Water Plan and ongoing management of our water resources is crucial.

Individuals and communities will have the opportunity to comment on the draft Water Policy Framework through this discussion paper and again in the draft State Water Plan. There will also be a series of community workshops held in major regional centres around the State in May and June 2006 to facilitate engagement, debate and shared understandings.

Details of the consultation program and workshops can be accessed on the website **www.statewaterstrategy.wa.gov.au**

Draft Water Policy Framework



Water Cycle


RAINFALL
WETLAND
AGRICULTURE
DESALINATION
RIVER
WATER TREATMENT PLANT
CATCHMENT
RECREATIONAL
RESIDENTIAL
DRAINAGE
GROUNDWATER
INDUSTRY
WATER RECYCLING
MINING
WASTEWATER TREATMENT PLANT

Water Cycle

The draft Water Policy Framework takes a whole of water cycle approach to the management of water resources. This includes all elements of the natural and built environments. The water cycle diagram on the previous page depicts different uses of water, supply options and the processes used for treating water resources. The different elements of the water cycle are described below.

Rainfall filters through land and soil formations to groundwater systems. It also flows into surface water systems through run-off from the land. Surface water systems include wetlands, streams, **rivers** and dams. The area of land where the run-off from rainfall flows into a dam, wetland or river is called a **catchment**. Catchments occur naturally or are man-made. Tree plantations can use significant amounts of water through rainfall and run-off.

Water located below the ground is usually in an aquifer - a rock or soil formation that stores water below the surface and generally allows water to flow through it. Generally, **groundwater** is replenished through rainfall and leakage from surface water systems, such as wetlands.

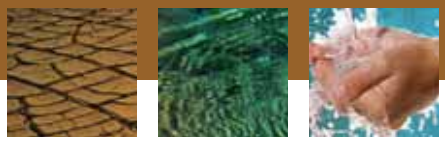
A **wetland** is an inland body of water that is shallow, permanent or temporary, fresh or salty. It includes lagoons, swamps and marshes all of which support water dependent ecosystems. This means they rely on groundwater for the survival of flora and fauna species that inhabit the area.

The quality of water extracted from groundwater or a catchment varies from high quality through to very salty or polluted. Given the importance of drinking water, water is treated through a **water treatment plant** so that it is suitable for drinking. Water is piped from the water treatment plant to mining, industry, residential, recreational and agricultural areas through public or private infrastructure. Water is also treated for other uses including industry and mining.

Water is used in **residential** areas by households for drinking water, food preparation, washing, sanitation and outdoor use such as watering gardens and swimming pools. The water is generally piped through the scheme water supply. Some households use bores that extract water from groundwater systems for watering gardens. Rainwater tanks can replace scheme water for some household uses.

Recreational areas including parks, golf courses and ovals are usually managed by local governments or private enterprise. They may use a combination of scheme, groundwater and/or recycled water.

Drainage systems in rural and urban areas remove excess water in the landscape. In urban and residential areas these systems are used for stormwater and flood management and generally discharge into waterways. In rural zones, drainage systems may be used to drain waterlogged agricultural soils, for salinity management or flood control. Drainage needs to be carefully managed to protect the heath of waterways and wetlands and facilitate land use changes for development. Drainage can also provide a water source.



Agricultural areas use water for domestic purposes, stock watering and producing crops such as grains, fruit, vegetables and wine grapes. This water may be obtained from various sources including rainwater tanks, farm dams, and surface or groundwater systems. Some farms use irrigation systems for crop watering.

Water used by **industry** is predominantly sourced from groundwater systems and also the scheme water supply. The water is increasingly recycled with significant water efficiency programs in operation.

Mining operations use water for mineral exploration, extraction and processing. Most mine sites in Western Australia are in regional or remote areas where there are limited surface water resources. This means that the majority of water used is extracted from groundwater systems. The water used by mines is often of poor (i.e. salty) quality and not fit for other purposes. Mining has invested in a number of efficiency measures, including the recycling of water.

Wastewater includes sewerage from residential areas and water from industry. The water may include impurities, solids and chemicals. Wastewater is treated through a **wastewater treatment plant**. The water is treated, disposed and reused according to strict regulations to manage health and environmental impacts.

Water that has been treated through a wastewater treatment plant can be recycled and reused for industrial, recreational and other uses. **Water recycling** is an important feature of water resources management, recognising the scarcity of water and providing an innovative alternative to the development of surface and groundwater sources.

The increase in demand for water and limited amount of water in surface and groundwater systems, together with a drying climate in the South West of the State, have meant that new water sources are being developed including water recycling and **desalination**. A desalination plant removes salts from water so that it becomes suitable for drinking water and other uses.

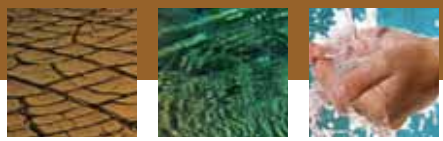
Volumes of water are measured in litres. Different volumes of water are referred to in this document.

One litre	1 litre	1 **litre**
One thousand litres	1,000 litres	1 **kilolitre**
One million litres	1,000,000 litres	1 **megalitre**
One thousand million litres	1,000,000,000 litres	1 **gigalitre**

Objective

PLAN AND MANAGE WATER RESOURCES SUSTAINABLY

SUSTAINABILITY	Our water resources and services are managed to maintain our natural environment, our quality of life and support economic development.
CURRENT AND FUTURE GENERATIONS	Water is managed to meet the needs of and create value for current and future generations.
COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT	Community involvement is essential to achieve the best outcomes in the management of water resources.
WATER CYCLE	Water resource management recognises the interdependence of the natural and built elements of the water cycle, including the connectivity between surface and groundwater resources.
ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT	Management approaches will be modified as knowledge improves and circumstances change, including climatic and atmospheric variation.
WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT, STATEWIDE	All ground and surface water areas are managed through a risk-based approach and priority is given to high value water resources, particularly where there is competition for the resource.
WATER PLANNING	Water plans are developed at state, regional and local levels and progressively integrated with land planning and other natural resource management activities.
INTERESTS OF INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES	The interests of Indigenous communities are specifically considered in water resource management.
FAIR AND TRANSPARENT PROCESSES	Water governance processes are fair, transparent and timely.



Context

Western Australia has a diverse range of surface and groundwater resources. Unlike many other States, which rely on a small number of large water resources, Western Australia relies on a large number of relatively small resources.

In particular, Western Australia will increasingly rely on groundwater resources and new technologies to provide water for consumptive use.

The availability of our water resources is significantly impacted by changes in climate, land use and demand. The South West has been experiencing substantial reductions in streamflows over the past 30 years. Groundwater levels have also declined in some areas due to reduced rainfall.

At the same time, the demand for water across the State is growing. There is currently about 2,300 gigalitres of water allocated across the State and the amount allocated is growing at a rate of about 100 gigalitres a year.

This significant increase in water demand coupled with declining streamflows and groundwater levels means that more of our water resources are approaching their sustainable yield.

A focus on water resources management policy will complement the implementation of the State Water Strategy by Government and the community over the past five years.

Discussion

The Government recognises its responsibility to manage and protect our water resources for current and future generations. This accountability will be met through transparent and open decision making processes.

Community involvement and partnership in water resource management at all levels will ensure the interests of Western Australians are understood and accounted for in the decision making process.

Water resource management in Western Australia has long sought to integrate economic, social and environmental values. The sustainability of our water resources is dependent on proper planning and management and is critical to maintaining our way of life.

The vast size, climatic variation and diversity of water resources in Western Australia means that an adaptive management approach provides a sound basis for managing in an environment of incomplete knowledge, climate change and changes in water use patterns.

What's New

Strategic water planning will provide context for allocation and source planning, drainage, source protection and the delivery of services including wastewater treatment and disposal. It will also provide for better integration with land use planning at State, regional and local levels. In addition to the State Water Plan, strategic water planning will be completed for all regions in Western Australia, with community participation.

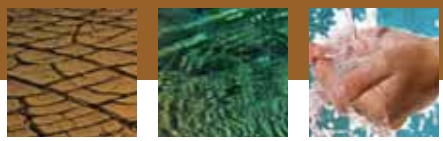
The interests of Indigenous communities need to be specifically considered in water resource management in Western Australia, including appropriate mechanisms for consultation.

Currently, not all of the State's water resources are managed through licences in proclaimed areas. Government will progressively manage all water resources with priority given to high value water resources (recognised by environmental, social or consumptive demand) as identified in regional water plans.

Objective

PROTECT WATER RESOURCES TO CONSERVE OUR ENVIRONMENT

PLANNING FOR THE ENVIRONMENT	Water resource planning at state, regional and local levels will identify direct and indirect ecosystem benefits that underpin the health and viability of our river systems, groundwater basins, wetlands and quality of life.
ECOLOGICAL CONSERVATION	High value, water dependent ecosystems are a priority for protection.
WATER QUALITY	Government, water users and the community share a responsibility to protect water quality and biodiversity in natural systems and where possible, restore them.
WATER AND ENVIRONMENTAL OUTCOMES	Environmental outcomes will be determined through a transparent process that specifically considers climatic variability and social and economic interests.
WATER AND THE ENVIRONMENT	Water allocated to the environment will be determined on the best available scientific knowledge to achieve agreed environmental outcomes.



Context

Western Australia is extremely fortunate to have diverse and high value ecosystems. These include World Heritage areas, wetlands of national and international significance, ancient forests, wild rivers and cave ecosystems.

Water is critical to preserving the health of these ecosystems.

In Western Australia, there has been a decline in ecosystem diversity, particularly in the South West. This has been caused by a combination of factors including a drying climate, extensive land clearing, subsequent land salinity and an increasing demand for water resources.

More than one-third of the South West's previously divertible surface water resources have become brackish or saline. A further 16 per cent are of marginal quality.

Currently, Western Australia has 12 wetlands listed as wetlands of international importance (Ramsar Convention) and 120 wetlands included in the Directory of Important Wetlands in Australia.

Water quality is critically dependent on the compatibility of land uses with nearby water resources and the health of water systems. Clearing of land and the introduction of a wide range of new land uses including agriculture, horticulture, urban and industrial development can significantly impact water quality and availability.

Discussion

Our rivers, wetlands, estuaries and groundwater systems have intrinsic value and their health needs to be protected. Where there are threats of serious or irreversible environmental damage, lack of full scientific certainty should not be used as a reason for postponing measures to prevent environmental degradation.

Through ecosystem protection, the importance of the environment and its interconnection with social and economic uses is valued and given high priority.

Water systems that have been over allocated or deemed stressed will be enhanced and the health of the systems restored where possible. Work is already underway in this regard including projects in the Denmark and Collie Rivers.

Government, as manager of our water resources has a responsibility in partnership with landowners and industry, to manage our natural resources for the protection and conservation of our environment.

As noted under the previous objective, community involvement is vital to protect and conserve our environment.

What's New

It is recognised that the drying climate is causing changes to ecosystems, independent of consumptive use. These changes should be reflected in water allocated to the environment, for other public purposes and for consumptive use.

The first step to conserve our environment is to ensure that high value assets based on social, economic and environmental values are identified and documented.

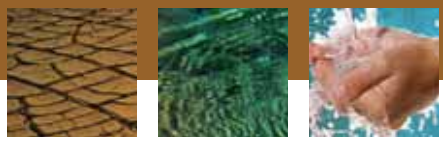
High value ecosystems will be listed in the regional water plans.

Water users and the community share a responsibility with Government to protect the quality of our water resources. Improving our understanding and practices relating to nutrient, pesticide and land use, particularly in the agricultural sector, is vital.

Objective

BUILD KNOWLEDGE AND CAPACITY THROUGH SCIENCE AND INNOVATION

SOUND SCIENCE	Water resource management is underpinned by sound science and development of a knowledge base, which includes the physical, biological, economic and social sciences.
RESOURCE INVESTIGATION AND ASSESSMENT	The State is responsible for coordinating resource investigation and assessment in partnership with water users.
WATER RESOURCE ACCOUNTING	All surface and groundwater resources are accounted for, with priority given to high value resources.
WATER RESOURCES INFORMATION	Information on water resources is accurate, maintained, publicly available and accessible.
PERFORMANCE MONITORING	Performance indicators are developed and monitored for water resource management and service provision.
INNOVATION AND RESEARCH	Research and development is coordinated to develop our knowledge base and investigate innovative ways to manage our water resources.
CAPACITY BUILDING AND PUBLIC EDUCATION	Water expertise and understanding is developed in partnerships across the public and private sectors and the community.



Context

Increased demand for water resources means there is growing value in the availability of accurate and accessible information about our water resources.

Due to relatively low historic demand in many parts of the State, detailed knowledge and understanding of our water resources is limited, particularly in undeveloped groundwater and surface water systems. Water users currently undertake a significant amount of resource investigation. This particularly applies to the mining industry and water service providers.

Investigation and assessment of surface water resources generally occurs over a extended period, allowing for variation in climate and land use. Groundwater resources can be investigated through concentrated drilling and pump testing, which requires a shorter timeframe, though is more resource intensive.

Discussion

An understanding of our water resources is essential to their protection, informed planning, development, allocation and sustainable use.

The State Government is committed to an ongoing resource investigation and assessment program. New resource investigation programs are scheduled for Gingin with drilling already underway in Cowaramup, building on previous programs.

Some water users contribute significantly to this knowledge base through undertaking more detailed investigation of water resources.

Accountability for our water resources and sustainable levels of use needs to be underpinned by sound science, resource investigation and assessment. An understanding of social, environmental and economic values is essential to this knowledge base. Without this knowledge base the State is at risk of unacceptable environmental harm, losing potential development opportunities and the security of existing users may be compromised.

The identification of knowledge gaps will continue to be addressed through research and development and increased capacity in all sectors of the community to understand and engage in water resource management issues.

In 2004 the Premier's Water Foundation awarded $2.6 million in funding to eight projects. These projects investigate new ways of conserving water and maximising reuse of wastewater. Applications for the second round of funding are currently being considered.

A number of community education programs focussing on climate change, water use efficiency and other critical water issues are a part of the Government's ongoing commitment in this area.

What's New

The Government is proposing to upgrade the water resources knowledge base and make it more accessible to water users and the community.

In accounting for water resources, it is expected that significant abstractions from licensed water users will be increasingly metered. This will build the knowledge base, assist in the provision of more secure entitlements, promote compliance, improve water use efficiency and create opportunities for trading.

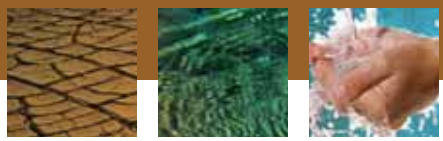
An understanding of land use impacts such as farm dams and tree plantations will also be developed to assist in the overall management of water resources.

Information on water quality, water allocated to the environment, climatic changes, interactions between ground and surface water systems, registers of licensed water allocations, conditions, usage, compliance, trades and allocation limits will be progressively made publicly available and accessible.

Objective

DEVELOP WATER RESOURCES TO SUPPORT A DIVERSE AND VIBRANT ECONOMY

WATER USE EFFICIENCY	Government, water users and the community share a responsibility to use water resources efficiently in periods of abundance and scarcity.
SUSTAINABILITY ASSESSMENT	A range of demand and supply options will be evaluated through a sustainability assessment prior to the development of a water resource, taking into consideration social, economic and environmental benefits.
FIT FOR PURPOSE	Water use is matched with an appropriate water quality, taking particular care with high quality water.
RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT	New resources are planned for and developed in a timely manner to support regional and economic development.
WATER SENSITIVE DESIGN	Water sensitive design principles are incorporated in planning for new development.



Context

Growth in the resource sector is creating demand for water resources. Additional water resources are required to support State development, particularly along the Pilbara Coast and in the Mid West where iron ore production is expected to increase significantly.

In addition, the population of Western Australia is expected to increase by an estimated 60 per cent over the next 25 years. A combination of demand management and source development will be required to meet this growth.

Discussion

There is an ongoing need to develop new sources in time to meet demand. All developers of water resources, including service providers, mining companies, local government and the agricultural sector have a responsibility to develop new water sources in a sustainable manner.

The first responsibility is to ensure that existing water use is efficient and that we innovate to reuse and recycle existing supplies.

Irrigated agriculture and the resource sector respectively account for about 40 per cent and 25 per cent of all water use in Western Australia.

The mining and agricultural sectors are taking steps to improve their water use efficiency. For example approximately 30 per cent of water on mine sites is recycled at least once before disposal. Improvements in irrigation technology and practices are also being implemented.

Residential water users account for about 15 per cent of all water use. Since 2001, water restrictions have been in place in Perth and an estimated 45 gigalitres a year has been saved. This has been achieved by reducing watering days to two days per week, together with other water use efficiency programs. The social and economic benefits of managing through this period without a total sprinkler ban are significant.

Care is being taken to match water resources with use. The mining industry conducts almost all of its resource investigation and assessment for new sources, which are typically of a quality not suitable for drinking water or agriculture.

Traditionally, surface and groundwater resources have been the most accessible and well understood supply options. While some reuse and recycling options can be more costly, they can also be the most sustainable.

Some surface water development will continue to play a part in securing our water future. It is expected that the majority of new source development from traditional resources will be from groundwater resources. In 2005, groundwater represented about 60 per cent of the State's total water use.

What's New

Significant investments in water resource management and service delivery should be increasingly subject to transparent sustainability assessment. This should consider environmental, social and economic benefits. The level of assessment should correspond to the level of resource development and investment.

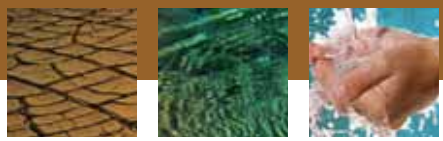
Increasingly, a diverse range of demand and supply options will be explored. These include water conservation, recycling, trading, rainwater tanks, desalination, reuse of drainage and stormwater and other water treatments.

Water sensitive design will assist in the efficient use of water resources in urban, industrial and rural communities. Promoting water use efficiency and benchmarking water use will improve efficiency and provide a sound basis for measurement and reporting on industry performance.

Objective

ENHANCE THE SECURITY AND CERTAINTY OF WATER RESOURCES

ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL WATER REQUIREMENTS	Water required to meet agreed environmental and social values has equivalent security as allocations for consumptive use.
RESERVATION OF ALLOCATIONS	The Government may set aside allocations for public water supply and other high value uses, recognising its scarcity.
WATER ALLOCATIONS, LICENCES	Significant consumptive water use is licensed.
SPECULATION IN WATER ALLOCATIONS	Prior to a resource becoming fully allocated, water allocation licences are supported by planning for productive economic use to discourage speculation.
WATER ALLOCATION AND PLANNING	Water allocations are consistent with water plans and conditions to preserve the values of the water resource.
SEPARATION OF WATER ALLOCATION FROM LAND	Water allocations are separated from access to land or title.
WATER ALLOCATIONS, UNDEVELOPED RESOURCE	Entitlement to a water allocation is granted as a fixed amount for a period that matches its expected efficient productive use, where a resource is relatively undeveloped.
WATER ALLOCATIONS, DEVELOPED RESOURCE	Entitlement to a water allocation is granted as a share of a consumptive pool on a rolling long-term basis, where a resource is substantially developed.
RISK ASSIGNMENT	Changes to the consumptive pool arising from climatic variation are equitably shared by all water uses and the environment.
WATER MARKETS AND TRADING	Market rules for an efficient water trading market will be developed to promote a healthy economy and reduce the risk of over-allocation.
WATER TRANSFERS	After consideration of local needs and impacts, water may be transferred within or between surface and ground water systems.
COST RECOVERY FOR RESOURCE MANAGEMENT	The basis for any cost recovery mechanism for water resource management is transparent and will consider the contribution of water users to resource investigation and assessment.



Context

There are competing needs for water for the environment, social and recreational purposes, and for consumptive use. Providing a policy framework to integrate these competing needs in a sustainable manner is one of the most significant water resource management challenges.

The Government proposes significant changes in this area.

Discussion

The retention of water in the environment is essential to the maintenance of ecosystem health. In addition, water has many social values including recreation, relaxation, cultural and aesthetic appeal.

The demand for public water supplies is increasing due to population growth, although per person demand is reducing. Government is committed to meet the future need for safe drinking water to service communities.

Water allocation plans support allocation decisions and can specify conditions to preserve water quality and other values.

Water allocations are currently held separately to land title, although access to the land is required before an allocation can be made or traded. The trading of water entitlements has occurred in a limited sense since 2001, demonstrating some improvement in market efficiency.

What's New

It is proposed that water required to meet agreed environmental and social values will be provided the same degree of security as water for consumptive use.

Significant uses (say, over 1,500 kilolitres a year), in all surface and groundwater systems could be progressively licensed to enhance the management of the resource. Licence conditions should be applied equitably to all sectors.

Note that residential use (generally 150 - 500 kilolitres a year) and most small rural stock and domestic uses would be less than this threshold.

It is proposed that water allocations be separated from access to land or title. This will enhance security and facilitate trading.

As the development and use of a water resource increases, so to does the knowledge base of that resource. This allows for increasing certainty with respect to sustainable use.

Where there is detailed knowledge of a resource, it is proposed that an allocation as a share of water available for consumptive use will be made on the basis of a rolling long-term entitlement. Where there is limited knowledge, fixed allocations could be granted for a specified period to allow for further investigation.

As part of the risk assignment model, all water users (including water allocated for social and environmental purposes) should share the risk of changes resulting from climate variation.

Efficient water trading markets are facilitated by ease of access to water markets, shared catchments, aquifers or infrastructure, higher value uses, minimal transaction costs and the publication of relevant information. Demonstrated efficiency gains could be available to trade.

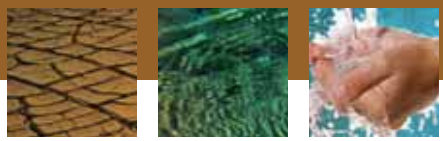
In considering transfers, local needs and impacts should be assessed taking into account social, environmental and economic values and benefits.

There are currently no administrative or volumetric fees paid by the majority of consumptive water users. It is proposed that any future consideration of fees should provide a transparent fee structure. Any volumetric charges should consider resource investigation costs borne by proponents.

Objective

DELIVER SERVICES TO BUILD STRONG AND HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

WATER SERVICES AND PUBLIC HEALTH	Essential, scheme water services underpin our public health and economic systems, by providing safe drinking water and sanitation.
WATER SERVICES TO COMMUNITIES	All Western Australians, living in remote communities, towns and cities, have access to sustainable water services as a foundation for regional and community development.
SOURCE PROTECTION AND CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT	Current and future public drinking water sources are protected and catchments managed to support the provision of safe drinking water.
WATER SERVICE LICENSING	Water service providers are licensed to promote certainty for the community and the providers.
SERVICES TO NEW DEVELOPMENTS	The water service provider responsible for servicing new developments is determined in a timely manner to allow for the orderly provision of infrastructure and related services.
ASSET MANAGEMENT AND FINANCIAL CAPACITY	Service providers are technically competent, invest in sound asset management systems and possess the financial capacity to service communities now, and in the future.
FUNDING FOR WATER SERVICES	Funding for public water services is provided through infrastructure charges, user charges and Government subsidies.
AFFORDABILITY	Where cost reflective pricing renders essential water services unaffordable, the Government may develop alternative tariff structures or provide a transparent subsidy.
DISPUTE RESOLUTION	Consumers of essential service providers have access to an independent dispute resolution process.



Context

In Western Australia, there are 31 licensed water service providers. The Water Corporation provides water to about 95 per cent of all properties serviced in Western Australia. Other service providers include the co-operatives for the Ord, Harvey, Carnarvon and Preston Valley irrigation districts, Aqwest (Bunbury Water Board), the City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder and the Busselton Water Board. Other service providers include some local Government sewerage services, a mining company and a privately owned community scheme.

Water service providers deliver a range of services to the 2 million people living in Western Australia including drinking water, sewerage and drainage.

Discussion

The provision of safe drinking water is a fundamental human right and critical to maintaining public health. Safe drinking water is provided within a range of water qualities, specified by the health authorities and the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines.

There is a challenge to provide safe drinking water and sewerage services to all communities in Western Australia. Sustainable water services need to be provided to all communities. Reticulated services are not necessarily sustainable in all communities and alternative services can be developed.

Water resources fit for drinking water are limited in most areas of the State. Water and land use planning is used to ensure the provision of safe drinking water while balancing social and recreational needs. Drinking water source protection plans are being developed for public drinking water source areas in the State.

The licensing of all water service providers facilitates the delivery of efficient and effective services to a high standard and protects investment in water services infrastructure.

Operating licences generally specify agreed levels of service to customers together with requirements to maintain an adequate asset management system. An asset management system optimises the planning, design, construction, operation and refurbishment of infrastructure to service communities.

Developers contribute to water infrastructure costs in new residential, industrial and mining developments. The process for determining contributions should be transparent, with accountability for how the funding is expended.

The cost of scheme water services reflects the economic, social and environmental cost of service provision. A subsidy may be provided to service providers or water users where cost reflective pricing renders essential services unaffordable.

Consumers have access to an independent dispute resolution process, where they are unable to settle matters with a service provider, directly.

What's New

It is proposed that operating licences for service providers include a requirement to maintain financial capacity. This will ensure the ability to maintain infrastructure and adequately fund operations to meet current and future needs.

Subject to compliance, licence tenure should be ongoing. Assessment of a service provider's competency to provide safe drinking water is fundamental to compliance. Reports on compliance with licence conditions should be publicly available.

Service providers for new developments should be determined with minimum lead times of five to ten years. This allows adequate time to consult with the community, plan water resources, evaluate options for service delivery and construct infrastructure.

How to Comment

We welcome your comments on the State Water Plan: Draft Water Policy Framework.

There are two ways to send us your comments.

Fill out the **feedback form** on the next page and email or post it to the address below;

OR

Provide a **formal written submission** and email or post it to the address below.

Your feedback form or written submission can be sent:

By email to: statewaterplan@dpc.wa.gov.au

OR

By mail to: State Water Plan
PO Box 8440
PERTH BC 6849

Submissions must be received by close of business on 16 June 2006. All formal submissions will be published on the website.

For enquiries please phone 1 300 369 809 or email statewaterplan@dpc.wa.gov.au

Guidelines for Submissions

The following guidelines may assist in preparing your submission. Submissions should:

- include your name, address, phone number;
- provide additional information of relevance to the Framework to support a change;
- indicate omissions, inaccuracies or areas that lack clarity; or
- suggest alternative or additional concepts that have not been adequately addressed.

STATE WATER PLAN
Draft Water Policy Framework

DISCUSSION PAPER

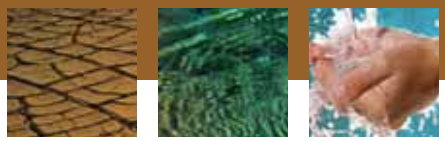
PUBLIC COMMENT FEEDBACK FORM

STATE WATER PLAN
DRAFT WATER POLICY FRAMEWORK

PUBLIC FEEDBACK FORM

To assist us in considering your comments about the draft Water Policy Framework, you can respond to the questions below. Your form can be emailed or posted to the address listed at the end of this form. An electronic copy of this form is available on the website **www.statewaterstrategy.wa.gov.au** if you wish to submit it electronically.

Please ensure you print clearly so your comments can be read easily. These submissions will not be published on the website.



QUESTION 1

Objective: Plan and manage water resources sustainably

To what extent do you support the statements made in this objective? (Please tick the box)

☐ Fully support ☐ Partially support ☐ Do not support

If you ticked "**partially support**" or "**do not support**", please fill out the Table 1 below.

If you ticked "**fully support**", please move to Question 2.

Table 1: Please list the statements you do not support, why and what changes you would make.

Statement not supported	Reason for not supporting	Recommended change

QUESTION 2

Objective: Protect water resources to conserve our environment

To what extent do you support the statements made in this objective? (Please tick the box)

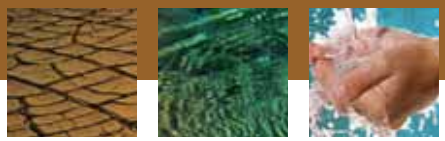
☐ Fully support ☐ Partially support ☐ Do not support

If you ticked "**partially support**" or "**do not support**", please fill out the Table 2 below.

If you ticked "**fully support**", please move to Question 3.

Table 2: Please list the statements you do not support, state why and what changes you would make.

Statement not supported	Reason for not supporting	Recommended change



QUESTION 3

Objective: Build knowledge and capacity through science and innovation

To what extent do you support the statements made in this objective? (Please tick the box)

☐ Fully support ☐ Partially support ☐ Do not support

If you ticked "**partially support**" or "**do not support**", please fill out the Table 3 below.

If you ticked "**fully support**", please move to Question 4.

Table 3: Please list the statements you do not support, state why and what changes you would make.

Statement not supported	Reason for not supporting	Recommended change

QUESTION 4

Objective: Develop water resources to support a diverse and vibrant economy

To what extent do you support the statements made in this objective? (Please tick the box)

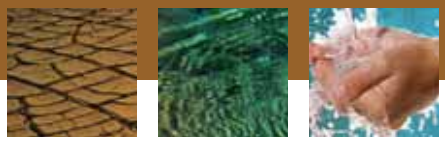
☐ Fully support ☐ Partially support ☐ Do not support

If you ticked "**partially support**" or "**do not support**", please fill out the Table 4 below.

If you ticked "**fully support**", please move to Question 5.

Table 4: Please list the statements you do not support, state why and what changes you would make.

Statement not supported	Reason for not supporting	Recommended change



QUESTION 5

Objective: Enhance the security and certainty of water resources

To what extent do you support the statements made in this objective? (Please tick the box)

☐ Fully support ☐ Partially support ☐ Do not support

If you ticked "**partially support**" or "**do not support**", please fill out the Table 5 below.

If you ticked "**fully support**", please move to Question 6.

Table 5: Please list the statements you do not support, state why and what changes you would make.

Statement not supported	Reason for not supporting	Recommended change

QUESTION 6

Objective: Deliver services to build strong and healthy communities

To what extent do you support the statements made in this objective? (Please tick the box)

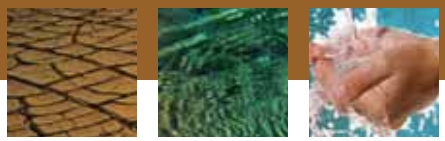
☐ Fully support ☐ Partially support ☐ Do not support

If you ticked "**partially support**" or "**do not support**", please fill out the Table 6 below.

If you ticked "**fully support**", please move to Question 7.

Table 6: Please list the statements you do not support, state why and what changes you would make.

Statement not supported	Reason for not supporting	Recommended change



QUESTION 7

Do you have any other comments to make?

SUBMISSION DETAILS

Your name

Address

Telephone number

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COMMENTS

Please return this feedback form:

By email to: statewaterplan@dpc.wa.gov.au

OR

By mail to: State Water Plan
PO Box 8440
PERTH BC 6849

Submissions must be received by close of business on 16 June 2006.

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Notes

STATE WATER PLAN

Draft Water Policy Framework

DISCUSSION PAPER

Government of Western Australia April 2006