

East Coast Region

Water and Sewerage Master Plan

2025



Since creation, the Palawa have lived in Lutruwita – Tasmania. More than 2,000 generations of Aboriginal families have cared for this Country, looking after its lands, seas, skies and waterways.

In the spirit of respect and gratitude, TasWater acknowledges the Tasmanian Aboriginal community as the traditional and ongoing custodians. We pay our respects to them, their culture and to elders past and present.

TasWater commits to working collaboratively and respectfully with the Tasmanian Aboriginal community to protect and sustain the precious resources on this ancient land for future generations.

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This is Version 1.0 of the East Coast Master Plan which will be updated following community and stakeholder feedback. The latest versions of all nine Master Plans will be published at www.taswater.com.au where ongoing submissions and comments are welcome.

Planning for the region

TasWater has created nine regional Master Plans to share our 50-year vision for infrastructure investment in water, sewerage and recycled water.

The boundaries of the nine regions consider council areas, population, availability of water, the existing network, economic growth and industry investment potential.

These plans are based on a detailed review of how well our current infrastructure and operations meet minimum service standards. We considered issues like how our regions are growing, how well our systems are performing, and climate change.

We then explored different options to make sure we can meet communities' current needs and long-term expectations – all in line with our Corporate Plan. Our aim is to invest in the right infrastructure, in the right places, at the right times to provide the most benefit to Tasmanians and our environment.

Our Master Plans are flexible, and we will adjust them as new information comes to hand. At key points in time, we will seek feedback from our customers, communities and stakeholders so that we don't lose sight of what's important to you.

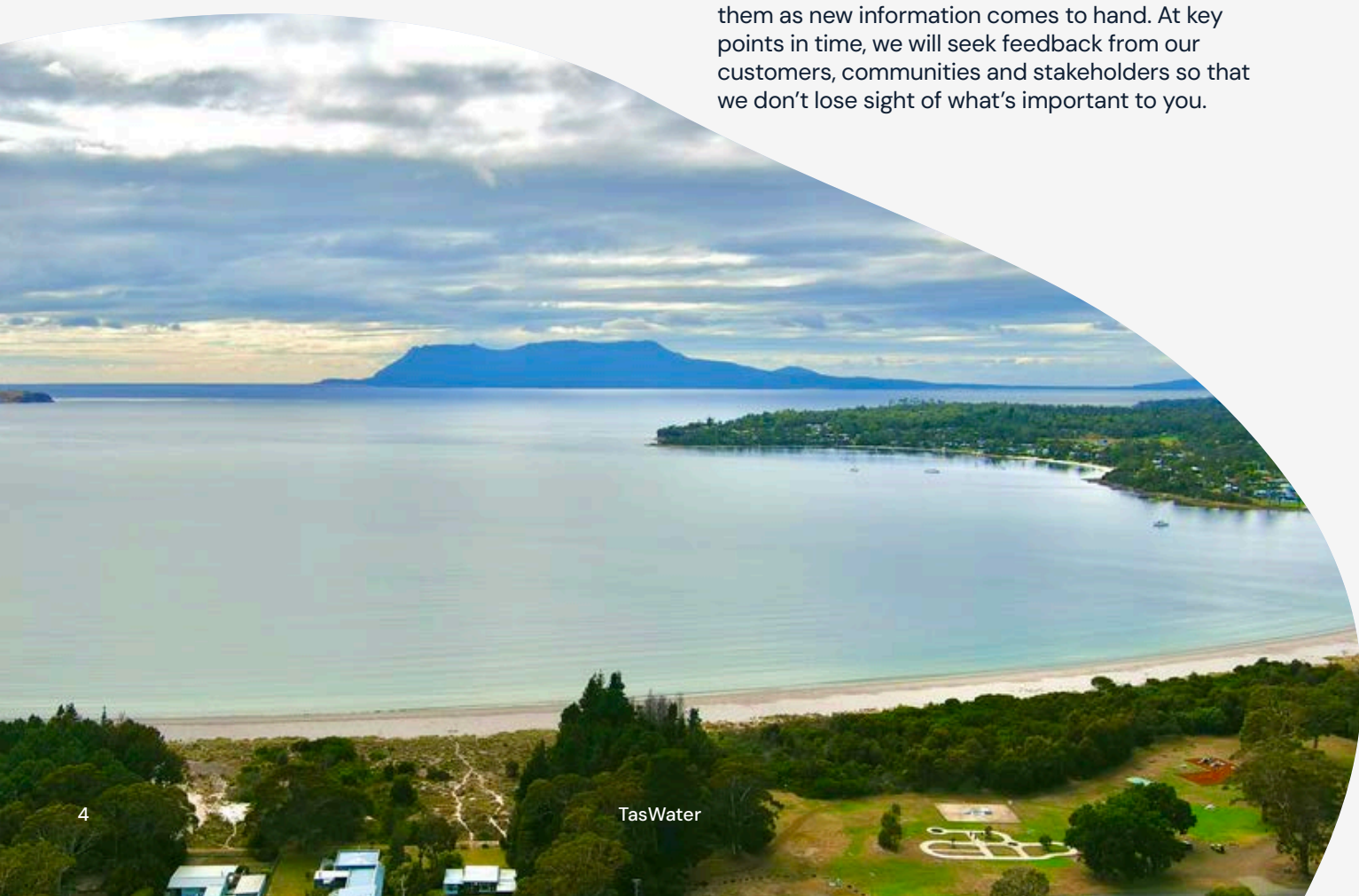
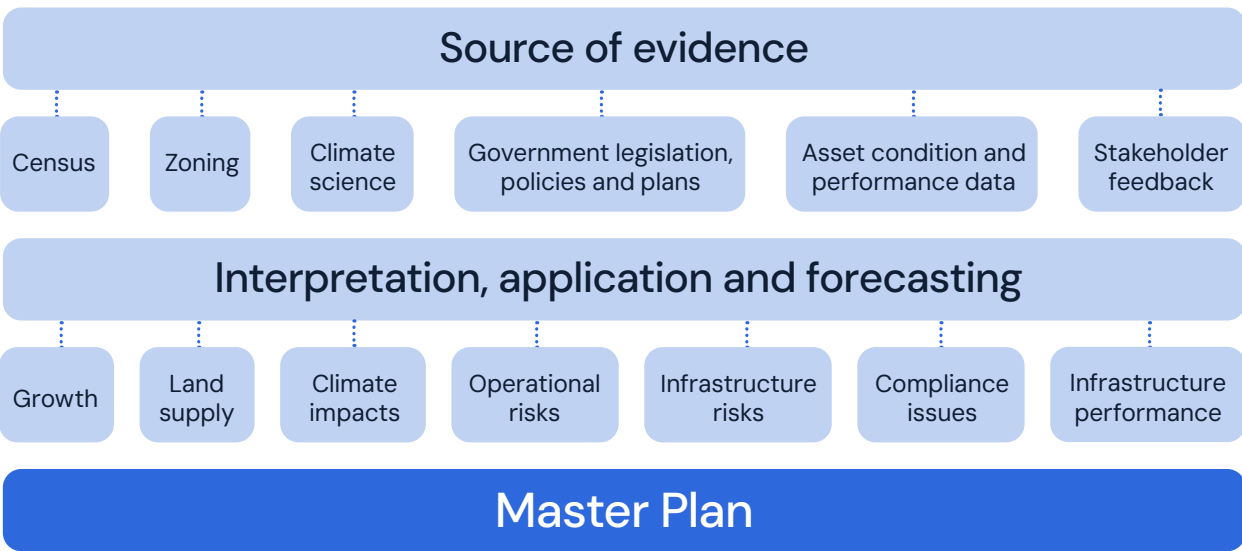
Our process

At TasWater, our infrastructure planning begins with gathering reliable data – including census figures, zoning, climate science, government policies, asset performance, and stakeholder feedback. This helps us understand current conditions and identify future needs. We then forecast growth, land supply, climate impacts, and infrastructure risks.

These insights guide our master planning, where we assess options and plan for future infrastructure upgrades or new assets. The process will be continually refined over decades as conditions change, ensuring our plans remain

responsive and aligned with community needs, environmental goals, and regulatory requirements.

We will continue to update our planning as new information becomes available, including through ongoing engagement with councils and stakeholders. The process is iterative, with a full review undertaken every four years as part of our Price and Service Plan development. This ensures infrastructure priorities are aligned with both our annual budgeting and long-term capital planning, helping us deliver infrastructure that is timely, cost-effective, and responsive to community needs.



About the region

Tasmania’s East Coast region combines fertile agricultural valleys, natural areas, and fishing towns, with the region well known for iconic tourist destinations.

There are many small towns along the coast which attract residents and holiday makers including Bicheno, Orford and St Helens.

The region has seven water and 11 sewerage systems as well as recycled water schemes to support the region’s residents, businesses and farms. In addition to the TasWater systems, Tasmania Parks and Wildlife Service and some Councils own and operate several small sewerage schemes.

During holiday periods, East Coast region towns are busy and the demand for TasWater services is high. This contrasts to other periods when many homes are unoccupied.

Much of the region’s water and sewerage infrastructure began as part of small, localised systems that were once fit for purpose. However, over a long time there has been underinvestment in our infrastructure as well as changing community expectations about how we manage growth and operate sustainably.

That’s why in areas like Bicheno, we replaced a vital but ageing sewer pipeline which carries about 75 per cent of the town’s sewage and is right beside a penguin rookery. We know that many other smaller towns also need investment in projects to reduce our environmental impact and support growth. This is part of our plan.

Growth areas

Over the next 50 years, the East Coast region’s population is expected to grow steadily. We have identified a possible 9,200 lots of land in our service areas which could be developed if zoning allows. Future growth areas are likely to be around St Helens, Bicheno, Swansea and Orford.

However, there are a range of scenarios which make forecasting growth difficult. For example, coastal towns surrounded by plenty of available land may become attractive to developers and grow faster than expected. In smaller systems, one or two major tourism developments could have a great impact on the size of a town, and the demand for TasWater services.

While we can’t know for sure when and where development will occur, TasWater will continue to monitor data that informs our Master Plan and be ready to adjust our strategy as needed.



East Coast region key statistics



CASE STUDY

Subsea pipeline to improve water reliability

In a technically challenging project, TasWater has replaced the subsea pipeline that carries water between Triabunna and Orford after a series of failures.

The pipeline, which was built across Spring Bay in 1950, had started leaking at pipe joints and was causing outages. Investigations showed that underwater anchors that held the pipeline in place had corroded, making it vulnerable to movement from tides and currents. As the pipeline sits on the seabed, it was also difficult to access and repair, often requiring professional divers to conduct works and leading to longer-than-usual water outages.

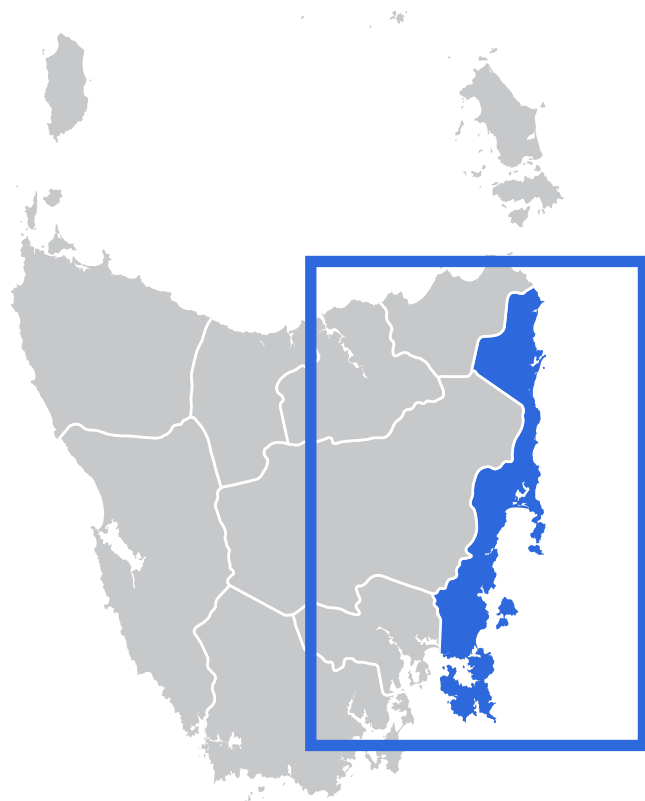
To fix this, TasWater installed a new 885m pipeline in 2025, complete with concrete anchors every 10m along the seabed. This upgrade is now helping protect the pipeline from movement and is ensuring a more reliable, long-term supply of quality water for the region.

Spring Bay Subsea Pipeline

Improving water supply reliability for East Coast communities.

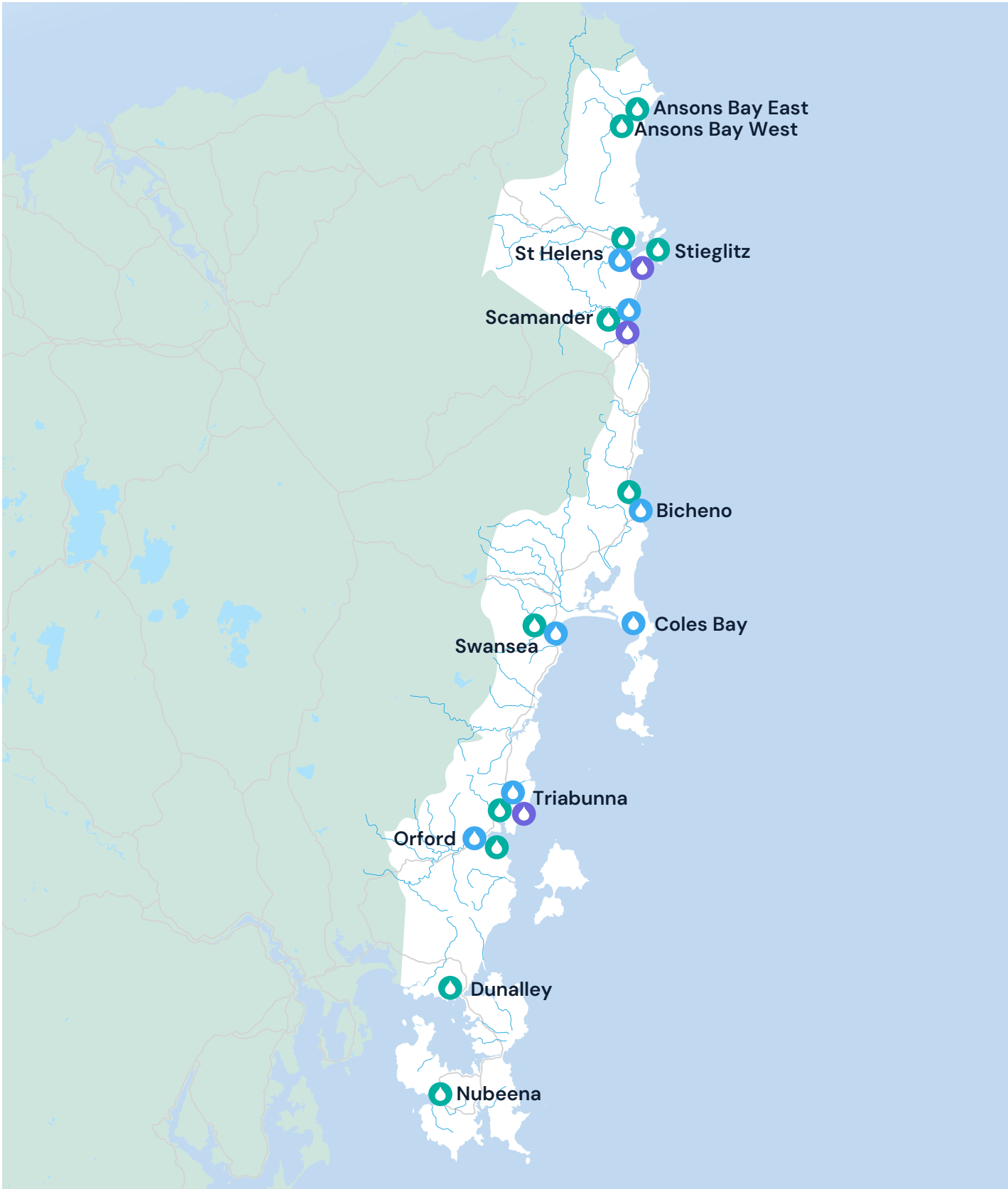


How we service the region today



Legend – infrastructure

- Water treatment plant
- Sewage treatment plant
- Recycled water scheme



Challenges and opportunities

In developing our Master Plans, we have considered challenges that our state will face in the future, as well as ones that are unique to the East Coast region. We also thought about the flip side – what opportunities are there for us to better support local people, our environment, cultural heritage and the economy?

The big issues



Lack of reliable water sources



High levels of stormwater getting into our sewers, causing overflows



Inundation of coastal assets as the climate warms and sea levels rise



Ageing infrastructure, with many assets in poor condition



High risk discharges from some sewage treatment plants



Opportunity to produce more recycled water

Climate change

Based on past trends and climate modelling, Tasmania is expected to keep getting warmer and we may face rising sea levels and more droughts, bushfires and intense weather.

A warmer climate affects how much water we have, its quality and how much our customers need to use. This puts extra pressure on our water supply.

Changes to the seasons – like shorter winters and longer, hotter summers – can also affect water quality. When there are algal blooms and low oxygen levels in our rivers and dams, water can be harder to treat and there can be changes in taste, smell and appearance.

For our sewerage systems, like those in St Helens, Stieglitz, Orford, Dunalley and Nubeena, rising sea levels and more storms and floods put treatment plants and pump stations at risk of inundation. This also increases the likelihood of sewage overflows when stormwater gets into our pipes.

Climate change could mean we need to build new infrastructure, operate our systems differently or find other ways to manage water.

Water security

Our drinking water comes from dams, rivers and groundwater bores around the region before it's treated and delivered to our customers.

Already, many rivers that supply our water treatment plants have periods of low flow and the licensed water allocations we receive are not enough to keep up with demand.

If we continue to see drier conditions, river flows could drop further – making it harder to meet unrestricted water demand.

To help us avoid water restrictions, we will need to continue to make sure we have enough water to go around and encourage our customers to value and conserve water at home and work. TasWater has a [Water Security Strategy](#) in place to guide our long-term water management.

Keeping up with growth

If the region's population grows as expected over the next 50 years, our pipes, pump stations, reservoirs and treatment plants might not have the capacity to keep up. Our infrastructure is ageing, with some of it approaching the end of its intended operating life.

CASE STUDY

Upgrade protects and celebrates Orford's environment

Orford's sewerage system was originally built for a much smaller town, with all sewage pumped through a 'daisy chain' of pipes and pump stations to the Orford Sewage Treatment Plant.

In recent years, the system has not coped well. In wet weather, stormwater has been getting into the system and overwhelming it, causing overflows into the environment. While some stormwater is from defects like cracked pipes, most of it appears to come from incorrect private property plumbing connections to the sewer.

To help take pressure off the system, TasWater has redesigned it; splitting it in two so that flows can be better managed. Improvements have included a new pipeline along Walpole Street and Rheban Road to the treatment plant and five pump station upgrades. The pump stations now include underground emergency storage tanks to help contain stormwater in wet weather.

Construction was undertaken from 2024 to 2025 with the finished project now helping to reduce the frequency, volume and impact of sewage overflows on the Orford community and environment.

As a visible reminder of the project, Tasmanian artist Bec Adamczewski has transformed Our Park Sewage Pump Station's switch room into a masterpiece celebrating the local landscape and animals.

Looking ahead, TasWater will work with the Orford community to investigate and address sources of stormwater inflow and infiltration affecting the sewerage system.



We will need to upgrade or replace many of our assets so we can continue to deliver safe, reliable services. This comes at a high cost, so improvements will have to be prioritised based on criteria like development timing, community benefit and compliance with laws and performance targets.

In some areas there may be a need to connect unserved communities to water and sewerage systems for the first time. This may be to support new development, address climate change or environmental impacts, or enhance water reliability or sewage treatment in smaller towns. As outlined in our Service Introduction Charges Policy, service introductions are only considered when there is community support, and if servicing costs can be recovered.

Water where it belongs

Around 23 per cent of the water we produce in the East Coast region doesn't end up reaching our customers. We call this 'non-revenue water' and we are working to cut these losses. Non-revenue water is from pipe leaks, theft, metering errors or uses like firefighting or system flushing.

We are also working to reduce the amount of stormwater that gets into our sewerage systems and can cause overflows. This infiltration can come from leaks, breaks and incorrect private plumbing connections.

If we reduce these problems, we may be able to delay costly infrastructure upgrades. This means we can provide services to more people using the same infrastructure for longer.

Achieving compliance

Like all water utilities, TasWater is subject to a range of environmental and health-based laws and targets.

Health-based targets help us to assess the quality of the water we supply to customers while environmental licenses set limits on any discharges from our infrastructure into the surrounding environment.

We know that due to age and underinvestment in our treatment plants, pumps and pipes over a long period, some of our infrastructure does not meet compliance targets. We are working to close the gaps and have made great progress in areas like water quality and reliability. In the East Coast region, we have installed ultraviolet (UV) water disinfection equipment at the St Helens, Orford and Swansea Water Treatment Plants in recent years to add additional layers of protection for our customers.

Our 50-year vision for the region

After looking at a range of options to guide our long-term investment in water and sewerage infrastructure, our preferred approach balances climate resilience, water security, customer expectations, environmental and health compliance, and cost.

This Master Plan is based on what we know today – it’s a guide only. The location, timing and cost of new and upgraded infrastructure is not set in stone and we will remain flexible and adapt as the region continues to evolve.

Our plans for the region’s water and sewerage systems are outlined in the following pages. We have provided a summary of the current situation, the initiatives we propose to address key challenges, when works may occur and the outcomes we hope to achieve.

We are excited about the potential to build on what we have now to protect and enhance the Tasmanian way of life.

You are welcome to let us know what you think. Visit the TasWater website and look for the [Your Say](#) page.

What will it cost?

Initial estimates have been developed to help understand what it will cost to roll out improvements identified in the East Coast Region Master Plan. The total cost could be around \$175.9 million for sewerage infrastructure and \$127 million for water infrastructure over the next 50 years.

We will continue to work with our stakeholders and customers to make sure any spending is on the right things at the right times. We believe our approach represents a wise investment in the region’s future because it:



Tackles the most urgent issues right away



Delays major spending until later, helping manage budgets and adapt to future changes



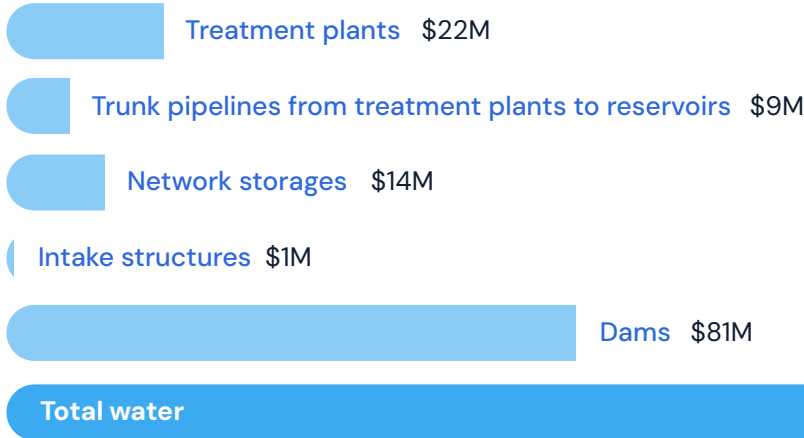
Reduces the need for, and number of, complex projects like new dams, treatment plants and long pipelines



Has a lower long-term cost (net present value) and development cost (capital cost) when compared with other options considered.

Estimated cost (\$million over 50 years)

Water



Sewerage



Note: Costs shown are 2025 budget estimates for major infrastructure projects and programs, and are subject to change. They do not include allowances for maintenance, renewal or replacement of ageing assets, or general infrastructure operating costs.



Our water plan

Area	The situation	What we plan to do	Outcomes
Break O'Day including these systems: - Scamander - St Helens	With the Scamander River ceasing to flow for the first time in recorded history in 2019/20 and no large raw storage available, the Break O'Day area is vulnerable to water restrictions. Climate change and regional growth are expected to exacerbate the situation. Our water infrastructure mostly has the capacity to meet future demand but is ageing. In particular, the weir on the George River is in poor condition and critical assets at the St Helens Water Treatment Plant (WTP) are ageing and require renewals.	To increase water security, we plan to investigate additional water sources such as groundwater bores at Scamander or the transfer of water from St Helens to Scamander via a pipeline or water carting by 2035. We propose to reconstruct the George River weir and replace critical assets at the St Helens WTP. We also propose to increase the capacity of storage systems to cater for growth and increasing demand.	 Enhanced water quality  Water security
Glamorgan Spring Bay including these systems: - Bicheno - Coles Bay - Orford - Swansea - Triabunna	Ongoing low rainfall affects the levels of rivers and dams supplying our water treatment plants, making our water supply unreliable. Peak tourism seasons also contribute to demand, and there have been regular water restrictions. Without system improvements, restrictions could continue. Many assets are in poor condition and we are reviewing the integrity of the Upper and Lower Prosser Dams.	To manage raw water shortfalls in medium term, we propose combining the Orford and Triabunna systems, with a single water treatment plant built at Orford. In the meantime, likely by 2035, improvements at Bradys Creek Dam could enhance the quality of water supplied to the Triabunna Water Treatment Plant. A new dam to replace the Upper Prosser River Dam and upgrading of the Lower Prosser River Dam will be investigated. An alternative strategy is a new desalination plant. In Bicheno, a new water storage and filling station are required, while the Swansea and Coles Bay Water Treatment Plants may also require upgrades. Additional water from Federals Dam could be used to provide more security for the Coles Bay system.	 System efficiency and reliability  Capacity for growth

East Coast water

① St Helens

- Reconstruct the George River weir, which supplies raw water to St Helens. The weir is in unsatisfactory condition and during low flow periods water passes through the structure.
- The St Helens WTP is approaching end of life and will require complete renewal in the medium term. Refurbishment works to the Dissolved Air Flotation and Filtration (DAFF) tanks may extend the remaining useful life.

② Scamander

- Explore supplementary water sources. Drill groundwater bores to supplement the Scamander WTP, helping prevent supply shortfalls when the river is low.

③ Bicheno

- Improve network storage. Install a new high-level network reservoir to supply Bicheno. The current network storage volume in Bicheno is undersized and properties at high elevations do not receive minimum standard pressure.
- Install a new water filling station as the existing site is not suitable from a safety or operational perspective.

④ Swansea

- Upgrade the hydraulic capacity of the Swansea WTP when growth trigger occurs.

⑤ Coles Bay

- Supplement Coles Bay WTP with water from Federals Dam to seek alignment with water restriction frequency targets in TasWater's Water Security Strategy.
- Improve WTP waste disposal process at Coles Bay WTP by installing sludge thickener and geobags.

⑥ Orford and Triabunna

- Build a new Orford WTP and decommission Triabunna.
- Build a new raw water storage dam on the Prosser River to supply a combined Orford and Triabunna system. Decommission existing Upper Prosser Dam and upgrade Lower Prosser Dam. Further investigation is required to support this option or a desalination plant.
- Improve the raw water quality in Bradys Creek Dam, which supplies Triabunna, to improve WTP operations until the combined system is built.

●

Immediate / short term (by 2035)

●

Medium term (2035 to 2050)

●

Long term (2050 to 2070)

●

Progress at any time if/when the opportunity or need arises

Water treatment plant

Raw water storage

Decommissioned water treatment plant

New bore holes



Our sewerage plan

Area	The situation	What we plan to do	Outcomes
Break O'Day including these systems: - Ansons Bay East - Ansons Bay West - Scamander - St Helens - Stieglitz	Unoccupied homes and holiday letting in this area contribute to highly variable sewage flows and strong summer peaks. Our assets are ageing, with all treatment plants experiencing operational issues due to dated infrastructure and technologies. In particular, Stieglitz Sewage Treatment Plant (STP) operates beyond capacity and is not set up to meet future demand and St Helens Sewage Treatment Plant's treated water discharge poses a medium risk to the receiving environment. Parts of our systems are at risk of future climate change impacts such as coastal storm tide and sea level rises.	We will need to invest in upgrades to enhance the performance of all sewage treatment plants and systems as needed. There may be opportunities to reconfigure or combine the Ansons Bay East and West systems, and the St Helens and Stieglitz systems, to reduce risks from sea level rises and boost capacity and efficiency. Improving the performance of St Helens STP is required in the short term. We may expand or introduce recycled water schemes where this is viable.	 More sustainable infrastructure  Environmental compliance  System efficiency and reliability  Capacity for growth
Glamorgan Spring Bay including these systems: - Bicheno - Orford - Swansea - Triabunna	While there are some large residential developments on the horizon, our systems generally have the capacity to service future demand. However, Swansea STP is already operating near capacity and cannot meet projected growth. The Bicheno and Triabunna Sewage Treatment Plants' treated discharge pose a high risk to the receiving environments with Swansea Sewage Treatment Plant's discharge a medium risk. A major issue for the Orford system is the very high volume of stormwater that gets into our pipes and pump stations in wet weather. This can lead to overflows into the environment.	We propose to expand recycled water schemes where viable to reduce discharges into the environment. If growth supports it, we may build a new sewage treatment plant at a fresh site in Bicheno, and replace the Triabunna and Orford plants with a single facility between the towns. Stormwater inflow and infiltration in the Orford system will require investigation and management with our customers.	
South including these systems: - Dunalley - Nubeena	With low growth expected in the area, our systems have the capacity to meet projected future demand. Stormwater getting into the Dunalley system and causing overflows is a key concern, and the Dunalley and Nubeena Sewage Treatment Plants' treated discharges are considered a medium risk to the receiving environments.	Systems are expected to be retained and possibly expanded as the area grows. The existing Port Arthur sewerage scheme may be transferred to TasWater in future, but will need to be upgraded to our required standards before this can occur. We may also expand or introduce new recycled water schemes where this is viable.	

East Coast sewage

1 Ansons Bay

- The existing Blivet system will require replacement in future. At that time, we will consider the opportunity to relocate the STP closer to the absorption trenches, reconfigure the network to improve resilience to coastal sea level risks, and combine with Ansons Bay East system.

2 St Helens and Stieglitz

- Retain and invest in the current STPs. Expand Stieglitz recycled water irrigation area and seek opportunities for a recycled water scheme at St Helens. Modify wet weather storage at St Helens STP and protect from coastal inundation risks.
- Potential network reconfiguration to divert some flow from Stieglitz to St Helens.
- If a major STP investment is required then reconsider opportunities to combine the two systems to a single STP (location TBD).

3 Scamander

- Retain and invest in the current STP. Expand the irrigation area to cater for growth and/or service introductions.

4 Bicheno

- Retain and invest in the current STP. Establish a full recycled water scheme, invest in the current site to improve treatment outcomes and meet projected capacity requirements.
- Long term growth may exceed our projections and a new STP would be required.

5 Swansea

- Retain and invest in the current STP. Establish a TasWater owned recycled water scheme to ensure long term viability.

6 Triabunna and Orford

- Retain and invest in the current STPs. Expand the current Triabunna recycled water scheme.
- Orford is a low-risk environmental discharge with few opportunities for recycled water use nearby. Continue current environmental discharge but be open to opportunities for recycled water schemes that may arise in future.
- If a new STP or major upgrade is required then consider opportunity to combine these systems to a single STP.

7 Dunalley

- Retain and invest in the current STP, monitor growth. Possible expansion of absorption trenches required to cater for growth, and/or establish a recycled water scheme.

8 Nubeena

- Retain the current STP in the short term.

● Immediate / short term (by 2035)

● Medium term (2035 to 2050)

● Long term (2050 to 2070)

● Progress at any time if/when the opportunity or need arises





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