

Mersey Central 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 Mersey Central 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.

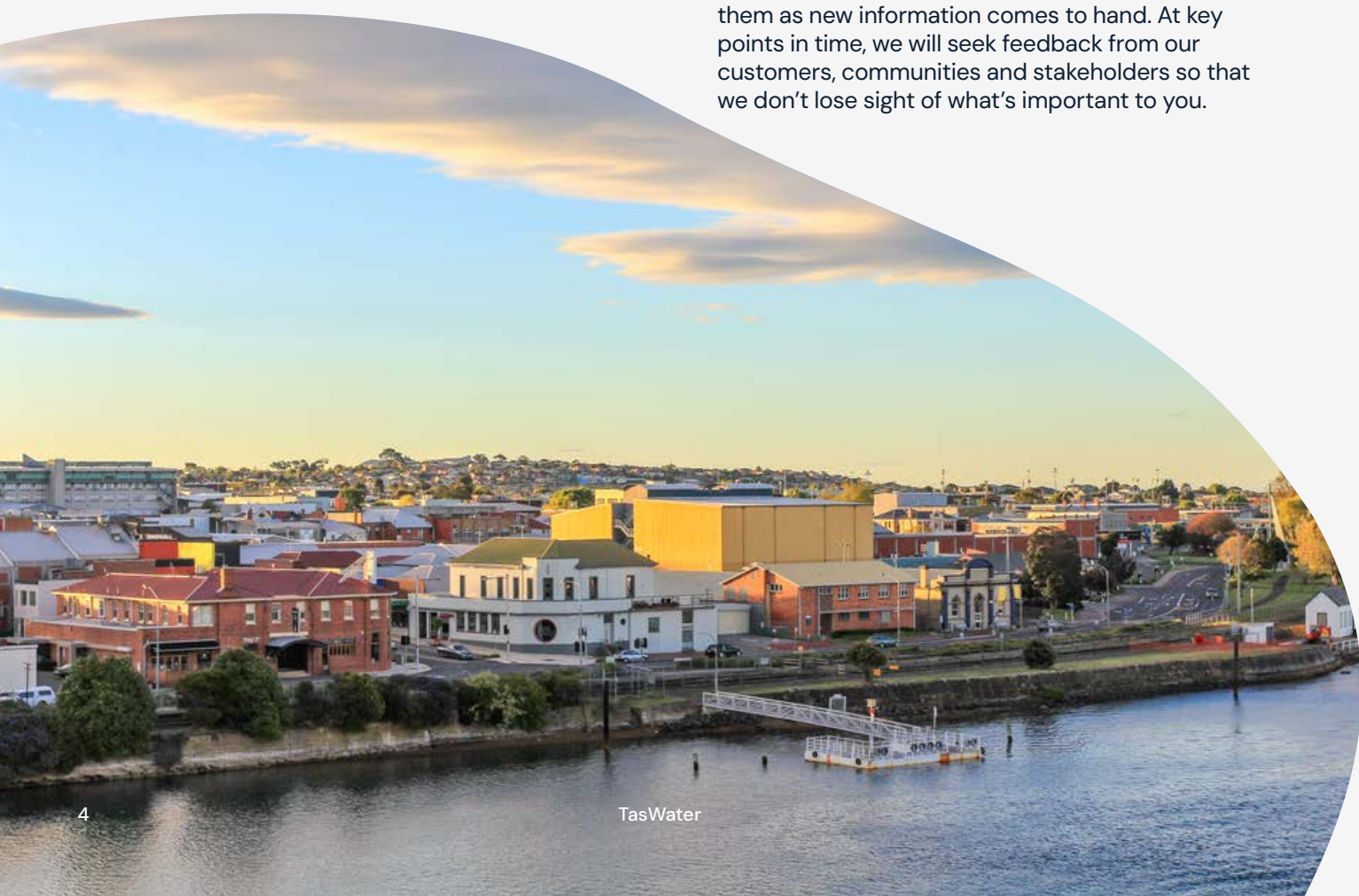
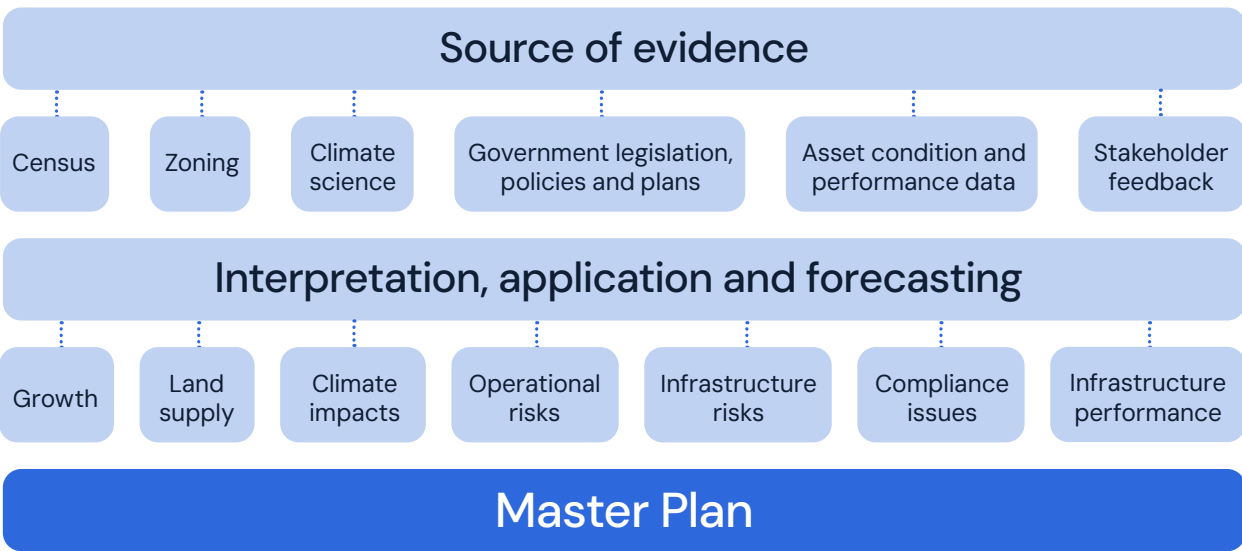
Our process

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

The Mersey Central Coast region is a diverse urban, farming and tourism area in Tasmania's central north.

It covers coastal centres like the City of Devonport and City of Ulverstone, rural towns along river valleys, and the iconic Cradle Valley tourism destination.

The region has four water and eight sewerage systems, as well as recycled water schemes to support the region's residents, businesses and farms.

Some systems along the coast are connected while in more remote areas they stand alone. Connection of systems can be helpful, including in dry periods when resources can be shared. This happens for the Gawler/Ulverstone water system which is often topped up from the Forth system.

Ulverstone and Devonport are also the base for large industrial businesses which are both major water users and producers of high volumes of trade waste.

Much of the region's water and sewerage infrastructure began as part of small, localised systems that were once fit for purpose. However, over 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 Ulverstone, we have already completed a major upgrade of the sewage treatment plant to boost its capacity and environmental performance. We know that many 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 Mersey Central Coast region is expected to grow fairly steadily. We have identified a possible 21,500 lots of land in our service areas which could be developed if zoning allows. Future growth areas are likely to be in and around Devonport, Ulverstone, Port Sorell and Latrobe.

However, there are a range of scenarios which make forecasting growth difficult. For example, if land releases in the Devonport area do not keep pace with demand, there may be unexpected growth in outer towns where there is greater availability of land.

In Forth and Ulverstone, industrial customers are major water users and their level of demand may change as their operations evolve. Tourism developments in Cradle Valley may add to the demand for water and sewerage services in future.

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



Mersey Central Coast region key statistics



 CASE STUDY

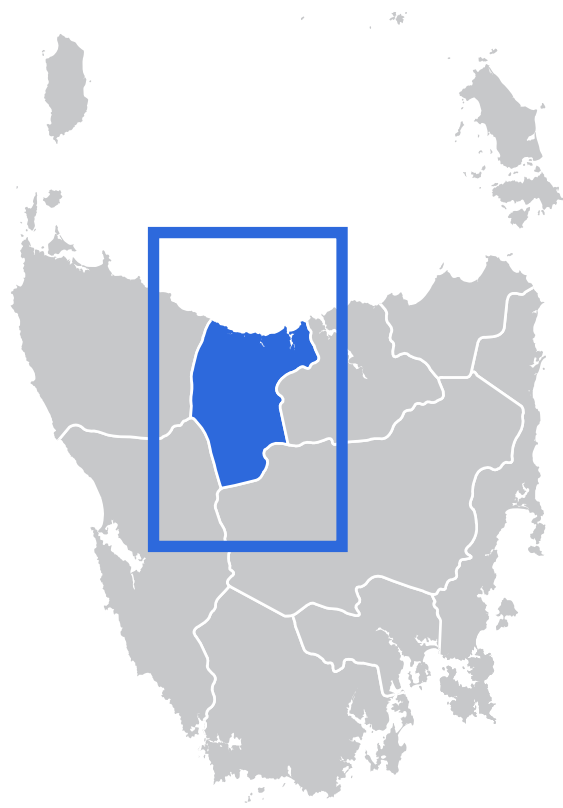
Celebrating our region through art

Our award-winning Asset Art Program has turned some prominent Mersey Central Coast infrastructure into vibrant expressions of community spirit. The initiative brings together artists and youth to create murals that celebrate the unique aspects of the region.

From the prehistoric ‘Dinosaurs’ mural on an Ulverstone water storage to the coastal-themed ‘The Coast’ at Coles Beach Pump Station in Devonport, each artwork adds character and charm to the local area. The program’s success across Tasmania demonstrates the importance of art in building stronger, more connected 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 future, as well as ones that are unique to the Mersey Central 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



Inadequate water allocations in our licenses



Infrastructure approaching capacity and ageing



Opportunity to connect and rationalise infrastructure



Inundation of infrastructure as the climate warms and sea levels rise



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, rising sea levels and more storms and floods put treatment plants and pump stations, like those in parts of Ulverstone, Turners Beach and Port Sorell, 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.

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 and groundwater levels 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. We have 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 won't have the capacity to keep up.



CASE STUDY

Upgrade enables sustainable growth

Completed in 2025, the two-year upgrade of Ulverstone Sewage Treatment Plant (STP) has enhanced its environmental performance, safety and capacity to support residential and industrial growth in Ulverstone, Gawler and Penguin.

The \$18 million project completed by TasWater and 14 local contractors has transformed critical parts of the 1983-built plant. A new clarifier, two biosolids (sewage sludge) dewatering units, flow meters, pumps and electrical equipment were installed to make the plant operate more efficiently. These improvements also make the plant safer and easier to access for our staff.



The upgrade reinforces our commitment to delivering sustainable infrastructure that benefits communities and the environment.

Our infrastructure is also ageing, with some of it approaching the end of its intended operating life.

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, unserviced communities may be connected to water and sewerage systems to support new development, address climate change or environmental impacts, or enhance water reliability or sewage treatment in smaller towns. Service introductions are only considered when there is community support, and if servicing costs can be recovered.

Water where it belongs

Around 34 per cent of the water we produce in the Mersey Central Coast region doesn't end up reaching our customers. We call this 'non-revenue water' and we are working to cut our 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, we are 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 Mersey Central Coast region, we have been renewing ageing water mains in Devonport, Ulverstone, Penguin and other towns in recent years.

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.

Our Master Plan is based on what we know today – it’s a guide only. The location, timing and cost of new and upgraded infrastructure are not set in stone and we will remain flexible and adapt as our 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 Mersey Central Coast Region Master Plan. The total cost could be around \$262 million for sewerage infrastructure and \$617 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



Raw water entitlements, system monitoring and tankering infrastructure Under investigation



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. There are expected to be additional costs allocated to raw water entitlements, system investigations and monitoring infrastructure after technical assessments are completed.

Our water plan

Area	The situation	What we plan to do	Outcomes
Gawler / Ulverstone system	There is not enough raw water to meet demand and the water supply is often topped up from the connected Forth River system. Low dam volumes, inadequate water allocations in our licences and a treatment plant working beyond capacity add to the challenge, and can affect our water quality. There are concerns about flooding of infrastructure now and in future as the climate changes.	To address raw water shortfalls, a new centralised water treatment plant is proposed at Forth with a trunk pipeline from Paloona Dam. We could then close the existing Forth, Turners Beach, Gawler and Whitehills (Penguin) Water Treatment Plants. Additional water allocations would also be secured, and water losses from the systems investigated. At Lake Barrington Water Treatment Plant, UV water treatment would be added to enhance water quality. Consolidation of the water systems including a new treatment plant at Forth and closure of four existing plants is required by 2035. Installation of UV treatment equipment at Lake Barrington Water Treatment Plant is likely to occur when the facility is next upgraded.	 Water security
Penguin system	Availability of water from the Leven River is decreasing as dry conditions continue, and we do not have enough water allocations under our licences. We also experience unauthorised water extractions upstream. Water quality can be an issue in this system at times.		 Capacity for growth
Forth River system	This system is prone to flooding from the Forth River, with the treatment plant difficult to access and operate at these times. Climate change will only increase the likelihood and severity of floods. Raw water availability is constrained by inadequate allocations under our licenses, and the capacity of the treatment plant to receive water. Water quality can also be an issue.		 System efficiency and reliability
Lake Barrington system	The system is generally stable and the treatment plant has capacity for growth. However, water quality issues occur from time-to-time.		 Enhanced water quality

Mersey Central Coast water

1 Forth

- Construct a water treatment plant (WTP) on a greenfield site and decommission the existing Forth WTP as the existing Forth WTP is at risk of flooding and saltwater ingress. The new WTP at a higher elevation will eliminate these risks and improve water quality.
- Construct a new pipeline from Palooma Dam to the new Forth WTP to ensure a reliable raw water supply and improve water quality by relocating the intake to Palooma Dam.
- Decommission the Turners Beach Pump Station. Rationalised system operation with the new Forth WTP.
- Construct a new pipeline from the new Forth WTP to Girdlestones to facilitate the delivery of treated water from the new Forth WTP to the Girdlestones Reservoir.
- Construct a new pipeline from the new Forth WTP to Forthside Reservoir to ensure efficient water transfer and distribution.

- Construct new pump stations at Palooma Dam, new Forth WTP, and along the pipelines to Girdlestones Reservoir and Forthside Reservoir to support the new water treatment and distribution system and ensure efficient water transfer.

- Install flow meters at key locations, including Palooma Dam Raw Water discharge, Ulverstone Supply Zone, Penguin Water Supply Zone, and Devonport Water Supply Zone to enable accurate measurement of water transfers and support decision-making processes.

2 Ulverstone

- Decommission the Gawler WTP and connect to the new Forth WTP. The Forth WTP will provide a more reliable and compliant water supply.
- Construct a new pipeline from the Forth WTP to Girdlestones Reservoir and from Girdlestones Reservoir to Gawler Treated Water Storage (TWS), to facilitate the delivery of treated water from the new Forth WTP to the Ulverstone system.
- Install flow meters in the Ulverstone Supply Zone to accurately measure water transfers and identify potential losses.

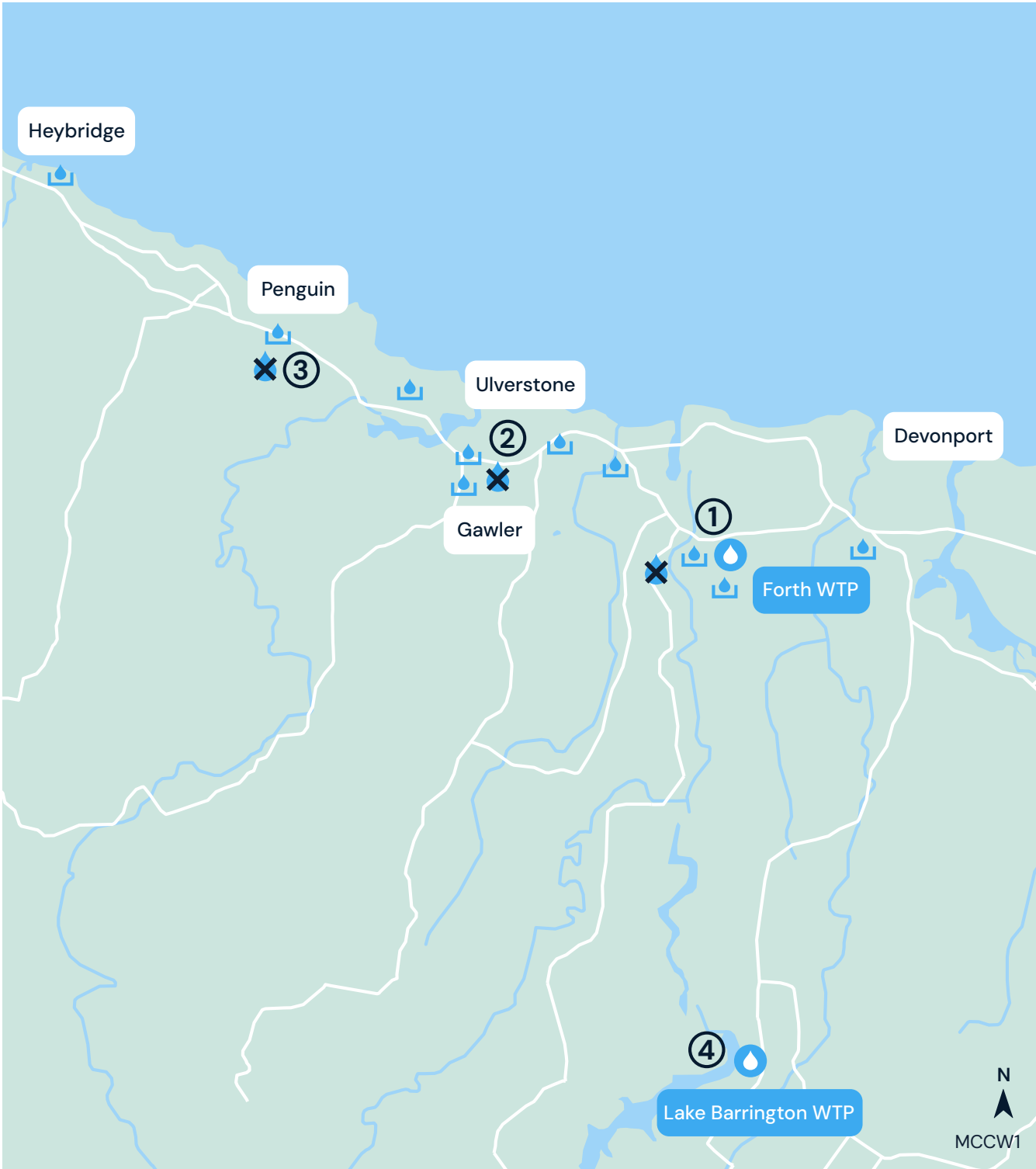
3 Penguin

- Decommission the Whitehills WTP and connect to the new Forth WTP. The new Forth WTP will provide a more reliable and compliant water supply.
- Construct a new pipeline from Gawler to Leven (between Hearps Reservoir and White Hills TWS) to facilitate the delivery of treated water from the Forth WTP to the Penguin system.
- Install flow meters in the Penguin Water Supply Zone to accurately measure water transfers and identify potential losses.

4 Lake Barrington

- Procure additional water licence. There is a projected shortfall in meeting demand by 2039, attributed to constraints by the current water licence.
- Lake Barrington WTP – UV installation during any future plant upgrade.

- 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
- Ulverstone
- Serviced community

Our sewerage plan

Area	The situation	What we plan to do	Outcomes
Central Coast including these systems: - Ulverstone - Turners Beach	Ulverstone Sewage Treatment Plant is set up to handle growth but treated water discharges from the plant pose a high risk to the receiving environment. There is no suitable land near the treatment plant for a recycled water scheme which would help manage this risk. In Turners Beach, the Sewage Treatment Plant is already operating beyond capacity and its treated water discharge is considered a high risk to the Forth River.	To improve environmental outcomes and system efficiency in the longer term, we propose to close the Turners Beach Sewage Treatment Plant and transfer flows to Ulverstone. In the interim, some upgrades of the Turners Beach Sewage Treatment Plant would be needed. Ulverstone Sewage Treatment Plant and its connected pumps and pipes will continue to be upgraded and expanded over time. Closure of Turners Beach Sewage Treatment Plant and upgrades of Ulverstone Sewage Treatment Plant are required in the medium-term, after 2035. Service introductions may occur if there is enough local growth, community support and if they are financially viable.	 More sustainable infrastructure  Environmental compliance  Capacity for growth  System efficiency and reliability
Mersey including these systems: - Port Sorell - Pardoe - Latrobe - Railton - Sheffield	Developments in Latrobe and Port Sorell are putting pressure on the sewerage systems and upgrades are needed to enhance performance. There are constraints at the treatment plant sites which make improvements difficult. Treated water discharges from the Port Sorell and Sheffield Sewage Treatment Plants pose high risks to the receiving environments.	Our approach to improving the capacity, efficiency and environmental performance of all systems is to implement the Mersey Sewer Transformation (MST) project. This involves closing Latrobe, Port Sorell, Railton and Sheffield Sewage Treatment Plants and transferring flows to a centralised, upgraded plant at Pardoe. Until this is possible, Railton and Sheffield Sewage Treatment Plants will remain in operation and be upgraded as needed. Upgrading of the Railton and Sheffield Sewage Treatment Plants is required in the short to medium-term, with the full MST a long-term strategy. Water recycling schemes and service introductions may occur if there is enough local growth, community support they are financially viable.	
Cradle Valley system	The Cradle Valley Sewage Treatment Plant is performing well and has capacity for growth. However, this does not account for any unexpected jump in the number of tourism developments in the area. There is already pipework installed at tourism developments for a future high quality recycled water scheme.	If growth accelerates beyond our forecasts, changes will need to be made to Cradle Valley Sewage Treatment Plant to increase its capacity. There is the potential to activate a high quality recycled water scheme when there are enough customers and costs can be recovered. Growth will be monitored and upgrades made in the longer-term if needed.	

Mersey Central Coast sewage

① Port Sorell STP

- Decommission Port Sorell STP and transfer to Pardoe STP.

② Latrobe STP

- Retain and continue discharge of effluent via Pardoe outfall.
- Decommission STP and transfer sewage to Pardoe STP. An alternative pipeline following the Bass Highway will also be considered.

③ Pardoe STP

- In the long-term, upgrade of Pardoe STP is likely to be required as the site currently only provides primary treatment.
- If opportunities arise, investigate opportunities for agricultural or industrial reuse around the airport and Wesley Vale.

④ Railton Recycled Water Scheme (RWS)

- Expand the Railton RWS to accept Sheffield and Railton flows.

⑤ Sheffield STP

- Pipe the discharge to Dodder Rivulet to reduce public health risk and reduce livestock access.
- Transfer to Railton. Initially, transfer of treated effluent may be undertaken for reuse at an expanded recycled water scheme to remove the environmental discharge at Sheffield. In the longer-term Sheffield STP will be decommissioned.
- If recycled water customers can be identified between Sheffield and Railton then the full transfer may not be required, instead establishing a Sheffield RWS.

⑥ Railton STP

- Decommissioning of Railton STP and transfer to Latrobe (and on to Pardoe) would be pursued in favour of a local STP upgrade if continued discharge to irrigation with the current treatment is no longer viable.

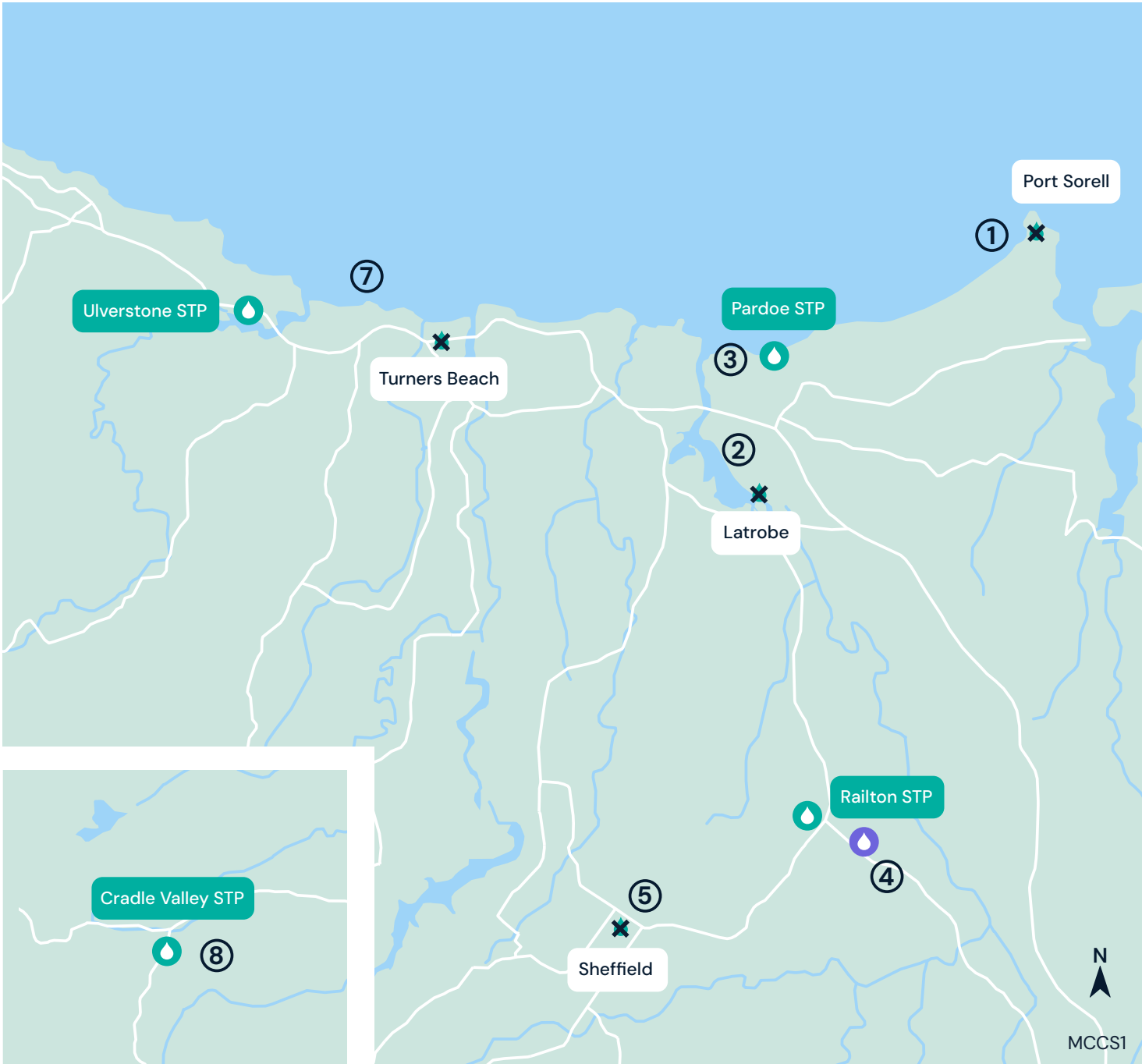
⑦ Turners Beach STP and Ulverstone STP

- Decommission and transfer to Ulverstone STP. Consideration to be given to initially transferring treated effluent to the Ulverstone outfall to remove discharge from Forth River prior to undertaking upgrades at Ulverstone STP.
- There are limited opportunities for recycled water irrigation or industrial reuse around Ulverstone. However, if opportunities arise in future these will be investigated.

⑧ Cradle Valley STP

- Cradle Valley STP will be retained.
- Customers have installed pipework for a future Class A recycled water scheme which may be established in the future.

- 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



- Sewage treatment plant
- Recycled water scheme
- Decommissioned STP
- Serviced community



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