



# The Derwent Catchment Project

Increasing Productivity. Restoring Landscapes



## Strategic Plan 2018–23

## **Document justification**

This document sets the direction and strategic actions for the Derwent Catchment Project up to 2023. It is a working document which will evolve as the organisation grows and develops. It explains the Committee's intent to our investors and partners, whom we hope will help us to shape this draft document into a long-term strategy for improving the health of the Derwent Catchment. It has been intentionally kept brief to ensure it can be quickly read and updated as needs demand.

The document was prepared by the Derwent Catchment Project (DCP) facilitator Dr Josie Kelman with assistance from Ouse River Officer Dr Magali Wright, after a workshop/planning session with the Committee on 6 November 2018. Follow-up with members and key stakeholders as to the content and proposed approach was undertaken after the September 2019 AGM.

## Background

The Derwent River Catchment covers approximately 8,900 km<sup>2</sup> of south-eastern and central Tasmania and is one of the largest river basins in the state (Hobart Water 2006). The catchment area of the freshwater portion of the Derwent is estimated to be 7,400 km<sup>2</sup>. The catchment lies predominantly (80%) within the Central Highland Municipality, with the remainder in the Derwent Valley municipality (Andrew 2002). The river originates within the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area at Lake St Clair and flows in a south-easterly direction through a series of dams, power stations and reservoirs until it joins the Derwent Estuary at New Norfolk 190 km downstream (DPIWE 2003).

The catchment of the Derwent River above New Norfolk covers a large area of central Tasmania, approximately 7,800 km<sup>2</sup>. The total catchment area is 8,900 km<sup>2</sup>, or approximately one-fifth of the area of Tasmania. The major tributaries are Nive River, Florentine River, Broad River, River Dee, Ouse/Shannon River, Clyde River, Tyenna River, Styx River, Plenty River and Jordan River.

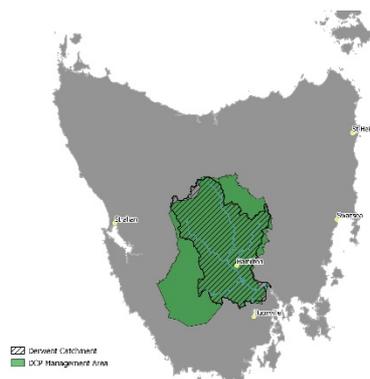


Figure 1. Derwent Catchment map

The Central Highlands and Derwent Valley Municipalities include 657,193 ha of state management protected area and 10,821 ha of private protected area. This high predominance of protected areas means that the catchment is in good ecological condition, with more than 70% of vegetation intact. There are around 396,166 ha of privately-owned land occurring across both municipalities. Approximately 20% of the catchment has been cleared primarily for forestry and agricultural purposes.

The main industries in the catchment are hydro-electricity generation, agriculture, forestry, aquaculture and tourism. The majority of the privately held land in the catchment is utilised for agriculture. Water is taken from a number of rivers and streams for irrigation and stock watering. Agricultural activities in the catchment include grazing of sheep and cattle, crops, orchards and dairies (DPIWE 2003).

## **Key land and water management issues in the region**

### **Land degradation**

Much of the catchment is still vegetated and lies within protected areas. The Derwent Catchment Project's focus has been on private land and this remains the case. Much of the estimated 236,735 ha of cleared land lies within private landholdings. There are large expanses of cleared land in the eastern section of the catchment, particularly in the areas surrounding Bothwell, Hamilton, Ouse and Gretna. This land is predominately grazing land, with sheep being the most common livestock. There are areas of over-grazed land and areas with very low levels of trees in the landscape. This leads to soil erosion issues, low habitat values and consequently low biodiversity and an overall low quality of land condition.

### **Biodiversity**

Tasmania has unique flora and fauna, with many species occurring nowhere else. For example, there are 1,890 known native plant species in Tasmania (not including mosses and lichens), 527 of which are found nowhere else. Many species occurred on mainland Australia but are now only found in Tasmania. Tasmania acts as a refuge for these species. There are more than 600 species of plant and animal which are threatened in Tasmania (DPIWE 2014). Of these threatened species, 302 occur within the Derwent Catchment. There are many threatening processes which impact on Tasmania's native flora and fauna, including:

- clearance of native vegetation
- impacts of pests, weeds and diseases
- degradation of water systems
- inappropriate use of fire
- inappropriate and illegal harvesting
- impacts of stock.

Primary mechanisms recommended by the Tasmanian Threatened Species Strategy to increase protection and outcomes for threatened species are:

- community participation
- working with landowners, land managers and industry
- consideration of social and economic factors
- establishing an adequate knowledge base
- a recognition of threatened ecological communities.

### **Declining water quality**

A recent Derwent Estuary Program water quality report shows that the Ouse and Clyde Rivers are contributing to the decline in water quality in the Derwent River. This is a vital issue for Tasmania as the Derwent River provides most of Hobart's drinking water and there have been increasing issues with drinking water quality.

Willow infestations cause reduced dissolved oxygen levels in these rivers. A serious issue associated with low dissolved oxygen is the release of heavy metals from the sediments in the upper estuary. Sedimentation from river erosion

also contributes to decline in water quality.

Another significant issue linked to willow infestation is water loss through transpiration of these water-hungry plants, with water losses in the Ouse system estimated to be worth \$1.5 million per year in lost hydro-electric power generation revenue.

Nutrient runoff from agricultural and horticultural fertiliser use, stock in waterways, and drainage lines and nutrient release from aquaculture hatcheries have all been implicated in water quality declines through increased nutrient levels.

### **Opportunities for lifting production and economic growth**

The current resurgence and support for agricultural production in Tasmania is providing additional opportunities for the Derwent Catchment. There are opportunities with improved irrigation technology to change crops and increase areas under irrigation to lift profitability. Irrigation in the catchment has seen expansion in dairy, cropping and perennial horticulture in recent years. Increased understanding and planning for nutrient budgeting can reduce fertiliser costs. Increased understanding around grazing systems also means that there is potential to increase pasture utilisation and stocking. There are also increases in visitor numbers to local attractions like Mt Field National Park that provide opportunity for

growth of agricultural and eco-tourism ventures.

### **History of the Derwent Catchment Project**

The Derwent Catchment Project evolved out of the Upper Derwent Landcare Group established in the late 1990s. The group has had many active and successful projects working in collaboration with Central Highlands and Derwent Valley Councils, NRM South, government agencies and local residents. Recent projects include a collaborative weeds program in the Central Highlands and Derwent Valley, Pasture Hub, small grants for weed control, and a sustainable agriculture extension program with farmers in the Bothwell and Hamilton areas.

We also have a focus on riparian restoration, with projects to improve water quality, reduce sedimentation and nutrient runoff, and minimise impacts of extreme flood events. We currently have active projects removing willow and revegetating sections of the Ouse, Tyenna and Lachlan Rivers and reducing nutrient runoff through nutrient budgeting projects like Dairy Cares for the Derwent. We are designing projects to increase fish habitat in rivers, and to restore waterways flowing in and out of Lake Meadowbank.

The Committee has four main interest areas:

1. agriculture best practice
2. weed management
3. conservation projects
4. river restoration.

These interests are at the core of how we address sustainability, land and waterway degradation in the catchment. The group aims to provide a link between environmental sustainability and practical management and production-based systems.

The Committee intends to deliver best-practice land and water management activities to a high standard so that DCP becomes the go-to point in the community. Project delivery will be timely and consistent. A core focus of the group is to work with the community to achieve collective aims. The Committee would like to increase opportunities for community involvement.

We published our first strategic plan in 2014 (2014–20). It was revised two years ahead of schedule due to the completion of the majority of planned actions. There has been considerable progress with new investors, increased membership, large-scale on-ground projects, and increased education and awareness activities. There are new challenges with changes in the model of Australian Government investment in landcare projects under the Regional Landcare Program, with a movement away from funding regional facilitation activities to a focus on project-based funding.

Since the publication of the 2014–20 plan the Derwent Catchment Project capacity has grown, with two part-time facilitators, an on-ground works crew, and a native plant nursery with a part-time horticulturalist growing plants for revegetation projects.

## Mission

We work in the Derwent Valley and Central Highlands to:

- empower and inspire the community to be involved in active management to improve land and waterway condition in the catchment
- facilitate community and industry innovation and investment in best-practice resource management to reverse land and waterway degradation.

## The Committee

The Committee at present comprises:

**President: Jim Allwright** is a commercial farmer at Jones River near Ellendale. Jim is also the Deputy Mayor of the Central Highlands municipality.

**Vice President: John Blyth** is an Ellendale resident who lives on a 25 ha property. John is an experienced landscape gardener and revegetation specialist.

**Secretary: Jen Hancock** is a saffron grower at Ellendale. She moved to the region in 2017 after a decade of working in health in Melbourne.

**Treasurer: Trudy Murphy** lives in Ellendale. She is retired from a career in the banking industry. Trudy has also been an active fundraiser for charities in Sydney and is currently with Rotary.

**General member: Fiona Hume** is a commercial producer of English Leicesters at Macquarie plains on Arundel Farm. Her

family has been farming here since the 1840s.

**General member: Richard Hallett** is a commercial farmer who has been very active in the development of the Southern Highland irrigation scheme. He has a

mixed farming enterprise with fine wool and cropping.

This team represents a broad range of skills and interests which are well matched to the organisation’s mission and aim of improving land condition in the Derwent Catchment.

### SWOT of the Derwent Catchment Project

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| <p><b>Strengths:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Our Committee and staff have a diversity of knowledge, broad skill base, diverse networks, strong technical expertise and professional delivery</li> <li>• We are nimble and responsive, and are local people making changes locally</li> <li>• We have good local relationships including with Central Highland Council</li> <li>• We have growing capacity for income generation e.g. works crew and nursery</li> <li>• We have a commitment to continuing to improve on-ground and community outcomes</li> <li>• We have a good track record with large projects</li> <li>• The whole team is involved in promotion of our work</li> <li>• We have a focus on improving productivity in unison with improving land and waterway condition and can make the big environmental gains that are available to working commercial farmers</li> <li>• We have an on-ground works kit that is fit for purpose and in good repair</li> <li>• We have passion for what we do!</li> </ul> | <p><b>Weaknesses:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Long-term nature of projects – vulnerable to lack of follow-up and people wondering what you can show for the work in its absence</li> <li>• Without investment the on-ground equipment will have reduced condition</li> <li>• We currently have poor brand recognition</li> <li>• We have no funding or time budgeted for communication activities*</li> <li>• We need to increase our public profile to help attract funding</li> <li>• The potential for our facilitators to burn out while trying to do too much</li> <li>• It is still early days with our current level of increased output and delivery</li> <li>• Need more focus on succession planning – our systems, processes and data management allow for change in staff but much of our resources is in the value of our local relationships which require planned handover</li> <li>• We currently only have one Committee member from the Derwent Valley</li> </ul> <p>* Part-time comms person appointed April 2020</p> |
| <p><b>Opportunities:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We can offer commercial services e.g. revegetation and weed control</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | <p><b>Threats:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The lack of follow-up that can occur with inconsistent, short term funding</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are local promotional opportunities we are yet to take advantage of e.g. Derwent Valley hobby farmer Facebook group, projects with local schools, presenting our water quality improvement work to Hobartians, who are increasingly noticing a decline in drinking water quality</li> <li>• Further investigate funding through agricultural funding programs e.g. MLA, industry levy groups and collaborations with TIA researchers</li> <li>• Become the point of contact for the Derwent Catchment community on weed control, revegetation and other land and water management issues</li> <li>• Investigate the Noosa Landcare funding/income model with profit from services reinvested in achieving the DCP mission. Noosa Landcare source their income thus: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 30% from project grants</li> <li>○ 30% from fee for on-ground services e.g. weed control or revegetation</li> <li>○ 30% from consultancy services e.g. farm planning and strategic planning.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• We now have the membership required to apply for DGR status</li> <li>• We could investigate investment from industry looking to improve their standing as corporate citizens</li> <li>• We could investigate relationships and projects with Wildcare groups</li> <li>• There is an increasing recognition of a need to adapt to climate change – we can provide a supporting role</li> <li>• We live and work in an amazing part of Tasmania, where there is a lot of change i.e. land use, agricultural production and other land and water-based businesses such as tourism</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of political will to build landscape resilience and improve land and waterway condition</li> <li>• Low level of interest among landholders to undertake follow-up once funded project finished without facilitation to remind, encourage and support</li> <li>• We need to be aware of and manage any conflicts of interest that emerge through development of commercial services while receiving public funds</li> <li>• The risk of injury or bad press related to poor follow-up or something going wrong with a project</li> <li>• Getting lost in the sea of environment groups through poor brand recognition</li> <li>• Other groups dominating certain funding opportunities – these can be hard to break into without a higher profile</li> <li>• Change in land use, demographics and land ownership</li> </ul> |
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## Where do we want to be in five years?

The Derwent Catchment Project plans to change the landscape of our catchment through:

- restoring rivers, with removal of weeds and revegetation with native riparian species
- connecting wildlife corridors in remanent vegetation
- establishing shelter belts on farms
- establishing forage shrubs on north-facing slopes.

It will be clear that these changes have been achieved through DCP facilitation of

community and industry projects through signage and well communicated promotion.

The Derwent Catchment Project will grow to include:

- a CEO position, to be held by Josie Kelman
- a crew of 10 staff – a facilitation group of 4, 4 on-ground works crew and 2 horticulturalists working full time in the nursery.

We will achieve this growth by building slowly and continuing to under promise and over deliver on our commitments.

## How will we get there?

### Table of actions

|   | Strategic direction and actions                                                                                                                                                              | Responsibility                                          | Start | Finish |
|---|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|-------|--------|
| 1 | Continue to engage with investors, maintain relationships and deliver on contracted deliverables with a focus on diversifying funding base                                                   | Committee and facilitators                              | 2018  | 2023   |
| 2 | Develop a communications plan, with consideration of the issues outlined in Appendix 1                                                                                                       | Facilitators and Committee communications sub-committee | 2018  | 2019   |
| 3 | Develop a long-term financial plan with a focus on diversifying funding base and planning the achievement of desired growth by 2023, with consideration of the issues outlined in Appendix 2 | Facilitators and Committee financial sub-committee      | 2018  | 2019   |
| 4 | Develop a professional services package which includes planning support through to on-ground works including plant propagation for all revegetation projects                                 | Facilitators and Committee                              | 2018  | 2020   |
| 5 | Diversify our funding base to improve funding for follow-up and facilitation activities through:                                                                                             | Facilitators and Committee                              | 2018  | 2020   |

|    | Strategic direction and actions                                                                                                                                                                              | Responsibility                                                              | Start | Finish |
|----|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|--------|
|    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• helping corporates to become better corporate citizens</li> <li>• investing reserves in term deposits or other secure investments</li> </ul>                        |                                                                             |       |        |
| 6  | Continue to build our brand through implementation of the communications plan by DCP as a whole – staff committee and our members                                                                            | Facilitators, Committee, works crew, nursery, project staff and DCP members | 2019  | 2023   |
| 7  | Increase Committee membership from the Derwent Valley, ideally attracting a new member from Derwent Valley Council. We should have alternate Committee meetings in the Derwent Valley – not all at Hamilton. | Facilitators and Committee                                                  | 2018  | 2023   |
| 8  | Develop a succession plan including a handover plan for local relationships and mentor potential committee members                                                                                           | Committee                                                                   | 2018  | 2019   |
| 9  | Increase education and outreach activities                                                                                                                                                                   | Facilitators                                                                | 2018  | 2023   |
| 10 | Advertise where our works crew and facilitators will be working a week in advance to allow for local consultation and advice on land management problems – in Tas Country, local newspapers and social media | Committee and Facilitators                                                  | 2019  | 2023   |
| 11 | Work with more farmers to establish a ‘model’ farm – more demonstration sites and sustainable farm systems                                                                                                   | Facilitators                                                                | 2018  | 2023   |
| 12 | Maintain current Central Highlands and Derwent Valley weeds programs                                                                                                                                         | Facilitators and Committee                                                  | 2018  | 2023   |
| 13 | Assist facilitators to delegate more tasks to other staff and Committee                                                                                                                                      | Committee, works crew, nursery and project staff                            | 2018  | 2023   |
| 14 | Build the staff to at least 10 FTEs                                                                                                                                                                          | Committee                                                                   | 2018  | 2023   |

## References

- Andrew, J 2002, *Derwent Catchment natural resource management plan*. Derwent Catchment NRM Steering Committee, Hamilton Tasmania.
- Department of Primary Industries, Water and Environment 2003, *Environmental Management Goals for Tasmanian Waters – Derwent River Catchment*.
- Department of Primary Industries, Water and Environment 2014, *Threatened Species Strategy 2000 Nature Conservation Branch*.
- Hobart Water 2006, *Draft Derwent River Drinking Water Catchment Management Background Paper*.

## Appendices

### Appendix 1 – Communications plan development

The development of the communications plan will involve the following considerations workshopped by the committee:

- Build our profile to get into government agency thinking
- Build a business service profile
- Develop consistent communications messages and promotion across the whole team – our mission, the services we provide and how we differ from other environmental groups and our funders e.g. council  
Develop simple messages to communicate with people unfamiliar with best-practice resource management
- Implement the communications plan with involvement from the whole team; communications products will include car bumper stickers and improved signage for project sites
- Improve use and impact of time investment in communications channels – social media, local newspapers, advertising articles in Tas Country, regular voice on the country hour
- Promote our on-ground achievements among our members and government agency contacts more often
- Work on attracting more members

### Appendix 2 – Financial plan development

The development of the long-term financial plan will involve the following considerations workshopped by the committee:

- Diversify funding base by investigating:
  - income generation from a professional services package – planning, on-ground, nursery
  - corporate investment from provision of services to help business and industry become better corporate citizens

- investing reserves and/or grant funds held for future expenditure in term deposits or other secure investments
  - whether the Noosa landcare model might work for us, or is another model more appropriate for the contribution of income from a professional services package in the Derwent Catchment (e.g. lower than 60% of total funding)?
- Discuss the Committee decision about avoiding accumulation of a reserve, with a preference to re-invest any profits, donations or project funding savings into on-ground works. We could fill the current funding gap if we had a reserve, so reconsidering this discussion is timely under current circumstances.
- Invest in on-ground kit maintenance to maintain working condition.
- Grow the size of DCP staffing and capacity in line with the five-year vision