

State Environment Protection Policy (Waters)

Implementation Plan

October 2018



Environment
Protection
Authority Victoria



Environment,
Land, Water
and Planning

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Contents

1. Introduction	4
2. Delivery of the implementation plan	5
2.1 Governance	5
2.2 A rolling plan of prioritisations.....	5
2.3 EPA reform.....	5
3. Implementation plan actions	7
3.1 Critical actions - overview.....	7
3.2 Critical action 1 – Setting interim regional targets to rehabilitate priority areas	7
3.3 Critical action 2 – Achieving pollutant load targets	8
3.4 Critical action 3 – Managing urban stormwater and sewerage	10
3.5 Critical action 4 – Managing wastewater discharges	11
3.6 Critical action 5 – Managing onsite domestic wastewater	11
3.7 Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting	13
Appendix A – All implementation actions	15
Appendix B – Approach to prioritising actions	23

1. Introduction

The overarching goal of the State Environment Protection Policy (Waters) (herein “the Policy”) is ‘to protect and improve the quality of Victoria’s waters while providing for economic and social development’. The Policy achieves these goals by setting out:

- the beneficial uses of water environments that Victorians value and want to protect and enhance,
- the levels of environmental quality (objectives) required to protect these beneficial uses, and
- the rules and obligations to be followed to identify, prioritise and control risks to beneficial uses.

This document describes the Policy’s Implementation Plan (the “Implementation Plan”), that will support and drive accountability for the implementation of actions to achieve the goals of the Policy.

This Implementation Plan follows the recommendations of the Statutory Policy Review (SPR (2013)). The SPR recommended that programs and delivery elements that do not need legal definition should be removed from statutory policies and instead incorporated in a non-statutory implementation plan. The SPR suggested that these implementation plans should be published and regularly reported on by government and recommended that implementation plans should:

- identify the highest risks and priority challenges for the segment that the statutory policy relates to;
- address how monitoring and assessment against the environmental quality objectives in the statutory policy will be coordinated across agencies;
- set out a limited number of critical actions (between one and five) that agencies are committing to address these highest risks, priority challenges and community concerns. This is to focus the implementation plan on the successful delivery of a smaller number of actions.

This Implementation Plan focuses on six critical high level implementation actions, which are described in Section 3 below, and consist of sub-actions that will be implemented over the next 10 years. These actions will be publicly evaluated and regularly reported on every 3-5 years by the Department of Environment, Land Water and Planning (DELWP). The implementation actions and sub-actions described in Section 3 will be achieved to the extent that funding and resources are available.

The ‘critical actions’ identified in the Implementation Plan have been selected using a decision-making process that identified the actions that address the highest, and most widespread, risks to beneficial uses, priority challenges and community concerns, and are considered most critical to achieving the environmental quality objectives set out in the Policy. These priorities were also confirmed through the public consultation process when the draft SEPP (Waters) was released. The decision process for determining the five key actions and prioritising sub-actions is described in detail in Appendix B. A plan to co-ordinate the monitoring, evaluation and reporting on the effectiveness of the Policy is included as a further, sixth, action.

2. Delivery of the implementation plan

2.1 Governance

The Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) will be the lead agency responsible for the overarching coordination of the Implementation Plan. The key responsible agencies for the delivery will be the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) and other responsible agencies including DELWP, water corporations, catchment management authorities (CMAs), other government departments and local government who will have a role in delivery of implementation actions. The roles and responsibilities of lead agencies for actioning the different stages, and associated key tasks, of the Implementation Plan are described in Table 2.1.

2.2 A rolling plan of prioritisations

Section 3 describes the process for prioritising actions identified during the review. DELWP as the lead agency, will develop a business plan of actions to be implemented and reported on every 3-5 years. DELWP will look at the business plan on an annual basis, and implementation will be contingent on resourcing (including staff and activities funding) and government priorities, which may change over time. The actions listed in Section 4 provide the priorities that will form the basis of the initial business plan.

2.3 EPA reform

The *Environment Protection Amendment Act 2018* will provide a new framework for the protection of human health and the environment from pollution and waste. When this Act commences, the provisions currently in the Policy will be transitioned to new regulatory instruments. At this time, DELWP and EPA will review the status of this Implementation Plan and the actions identified.

Table 2-1: Implementation Plan responsibilities

Stage	Responsibility	Tasks
Publication	EPA	Publish the Implementation Plan on the EPA website
Delivery	DELWP and responsible agencies	<p>Deliver specific commitments in the Implementation Plan, and ensure that its activities do not jeopardise the achievement of any other Implementation Plan commitments.</p> <p>Support effective transitioning to new program arrangements, including with any affected parties.</p> <p>Ensure that any compliance activities and requirements, including data collection and provision, are clear and unambiguous.</p> <p>Determine and facilitate any training or other support required.</p> <p>Ensure effective ongoing stakeholder information and engagement occurs.</p>
Monitoring	DELWP	Monitor progress against Implementation Plan commitments. Convene meetings with responsible agencies and/or form an Implementation Plan committee. Ensure that the monitoring plan is consistent with the Policy evaluation strategy ¹ .
	Responsible agencies	Report annually to DELWP and any other relevant lead agency on the progress of the delivery of their responsibilities and commitments under the Implementation Plan. To support this, develop their own internal action plans to ensure delivery of their responsibilities under both the Implementation Plan and the Policy.
	DELWP / EPA	In consultation with lead agencies, comment as required on progress against commitments. If required, provide guidance on facilitating commitments being met.
Public reporting	DELWP	<p>Provide an annual 'Summary of Current Status' update for each Implementation Plan action.</p> <p>Provide comprehensive progress reports at the 3-5 yearly conclusion of the Implementation Plan on whether commitments have been achieved.</p>
	Lead & responsible agencies	May also publicly report against the delivery of any commitments they make in an Implementation Plan in their corporate reports, annual reports, stakeholder updates, etc.
	EPA	Publish reports related to implementation of this plan on its website.

¹ Refer to section 2.3, Step 7 in the Victorian Guide to Regulation.

3. Implementation plan actions

3.1 Critical actions - overview

The five critical actions that are the focus of this Implementation Plan are described in this section, have been identified through a decision-making process described in Appendix B. These actions are:

1. setting water quality and management targets to rehabilitate priority waterways (“regional target setting”);
2. achieving pollutant load targets for Victoria’s major marine bays and Gippsland Lakes;
3. managing urban stormwater and sewerage;
4. managing wastewater discharges; and
5. managing on-site domestic wastewater.

The sixth critical action fulfils the SPR recommendation for the implementation plan to address how monitoring and assessment of the effectiveness of the Policy will be co-ordinated.

The sub-actions to achieve the critical implementation actions are presented below in tables that outline:

- the key sub-actions for achieving each critical action;
- the agency responsible for implementation actions;
- any delivery partners without lead responsibility but critical for implementing the actions.

3.2 Critical action 1 – Setting interim regional targets to rehabilitate priority areas

The long term historical impacts from land-use change, run-off and other pollution sources means that, for some waterways, not all beneficial uses will be able to be fully protected, and not all environmental quality objectives will be met, within the lifetime of the Policy. In these cases, there is a need to rehabilitate, and mitigate threats to, environmental quality in priority areas across Victoria.

Clause 18 of the Policy enables the development of interim regional targets to drive the progressive rehabilitation of environmental quality where water quality is a threat to priority reaches, as identified in regional waterway strategies. As part of this, interim environmental objectives must be developed. The interim environmental objectives process must include:

- interim environmental quality objectives;
- a basis for maximising the protection of beneficial uses and the attainment of the Policy’s environmental quality objectives;
- management outcomes that provide measurable and time-bound progress towards the attainment of interim environmental objectives by taking into account regional environmental, social and economic values; and
- a demonstrated and measurable link between implementation of management outcomes and resultant water quality condition.

Driving the rehabilitation of degraded and at risk waterways is a key aim of the Policy, and Regional Target Setting is, thus, considered a critical action for effectively implementing the Policy. The actions listed in Table 3-1 below are critical for effectively implementing regional target setting programs and processes.

Table 3-1 Critical sub-actions for implementing Regional Target Setting.

Note: Actions are listed in order of their priority for implementation.

Critical sub-actions	Details	Responsible agency	Partnership organisations
Action 1.1 Develop guidelines to assist CMAs/Melbourne water to undertake regional target setting.	These guidelines will provide additional environmental quality objectives for different segments in the Policy as well as information about how regional targets are to be set and used	DELWP	EPA
Action 1.2 Regional waterway strategies will include interim regional targets.	Include interim regional targets in the next version of regional waterway strategies. Document a process for EPA to endorse interim regional targets within regional waterway strategies.	DELWP	CMAs Melbourne Water EPA
Action 1.3 Update the prioritisation decision support tool with the Policy's environmental objective data.	Update AVIRA (or new product with new environmental quality objectives)	DELWP	EPA
Action 1.4 Secure funding to assist CMAs undertake interim regional target setting.	Prepare a funding bid to support CMA's undertake interim regional target setting	DELWP	
Action 1.5 Report on regional waterway strategy implementation of interim regional targets.	Report annually to DELWP on regional waterway strategy implementation	CMAs and Melbourne Water	DELWP

3.3 Critical action 2 – Achieving pollutant load targets

Victoria's largest marine bays, Port Phillip Bay, Western Port and Corner Inlet, and the largest estuarine lake system, the Gippsland Lakes, are the receiving environments for large amounts of nutrient and sediment pollution generated from sources in the surrounding catchment and coast. Urban and agricultural runoff, land-clearing, river bank erosion and the discharge of wastes and wastewater are just some of a wide range of activities that cause these pollutants, which are ultimately transported downstream to these major bays and lakes.

A strong body of scientific evidence has identified excessive nutrient and sediment loads entering these major bays and Lake Wellington in the Gippsland Lakes as one of the highest risk to the beneficial uses of these environments. Excessive nutrients and sediments are associated with significant impacts to the marine and estuarine ecosystems of these water bodies, such as the large-scale die-off of aquatic plants (e.g., seagrasses) and increase in harmful algal blooms, which in turn impact a wider range of beneficial uses, including water based recreation, aquaculture and fisheries.

To tackle the problems caused by excessive nutrient and sediment loads from catchment and coastal sources, the Policy sets quantitative pollutant load targets for key pollutants in each of the major bays and Lake Wellington. Successfully reducing nutrient and sediment loads from diffuse sources requires a variety of management actions to reduce catchment inflows, coastal sediment inputs and the resuspension of sediments in marine waters. A combination of direct investment, landholder incentives and regulation is often used to support these actions. Load-based targets for large receiving water bodies (e.g. marine bays) are identified in the ANZECC Guidelines as being one of the most effective ways for driving these kinds of management interventions and investment to reduce pollution from diffuse sources.

The sub-actions and responsibilities listed in Table 3-2 are critical for the effective implementation of management actions to achieve the load targets specified in the Policy.

Table 3-2 Critical sub-actions for achieving pollutant load targets.

Note: Actions are listed in order of their priority for implementation.

Critical sub-actions	Details	Responsible agency	Partnership organisations
Action 2.1 Develop a plan to co-ordinate and implement actions across the catchment, coast and bay to achieve the sediment load target for Western Port.	<p>A plan needs to be developed, or an existing planning framework reviewed and updated, that will co-ordinate and implement the actions needed to reduce sediment loads into Western Port.</p> <p>Currently, a revised regional catchment strategy for Western Port which is aligned with Melbourne Water's Healthy Waterway Strategy is considered the most effective means of meeting this action.</p>	DELWP	Melbourne Water Port Phillip and Westernport CMA EPA
Action 2.2 Implement the actions to achieve the load target for Port Phillip Bay that are described in the Port Phillip Bay Environmental Management Plan 2017-27.	The management actions needed to achieve the load target for Port Phillip Bay are described in detail in the Port Phillip Bay Environmental Management Plan 2017-27. The implementation of these actions via existing funding and prioritisation arrangements will be the main means to achieve the Port Phillip Bay load target.	DELWP	Melbourne Water EPA
Action 2.3 Implement the actions to achieve the load target for Corner Inlet described in the Corner Inlet Water Quality Improvement Plan (2013).	<p>Management actions to achieve load targets are described in the Corner Inlet Water Quality Improvement Plan (WGCMA, 2013).</p> <p>These actions will be implemented through the Regional Waterway Strategies, Corner Inlet Ramsar Strategic Plan implementation and other land management programs using existing funding and prioritisation arrangements.</p>	West Gippsland CMA	DELWP, Industry based organisations, Forestry operators, South Gippsland Shire Council, South Gippsland Water, Landcare, Wellington Shire Council, EPA, Parks Victoria
Action 2.4 Jointly develop and implement the Lake Wellington Land and Water Management Plan to reduce nutrients and sediments loads entering Lake Wellington from irrigated land in the surrounding catchment.	The Lake Wellington Land and Water Management plan will describe and co-ordinate actions to achieve phosphorous load targets for irrigated land towards achieving the Lake Wellington Load Target	West Gippsland CMA / Southern Rural Water	
Action 2.5 Develop and implement actions to achieve the phosphorous load target from dryland agriculture and other sources for Lake Wellington through the Gippsland Lakes Ramsar Strategic Plan.	The Gippsland Lake Ramsar Strategic Plan will be the main framework to co-ordinate and implement actions, via existing funding and prioritisation arrangements, to reduce phosphorous loads from dryland agriculture and other sources of diffuse pollution that do not originate from irrigated land.	West Gippsland CMA	

Critical sub-actions	Details	Responsible agency	Partnership organisations
Action 2.6 Review the share of total phosphorous discharge targets from irrigation sources and other catchment source every five years and vary as part of these reviews to minimise overall implementation costs.	The share of total phosphorus discharges from irrigations and other catchment sources needs to be reviewed every five years to determine whether the load targets for irrigation areas vs other catchment sources need to be adjusted to reflect changes in phosphorous sources resulting from management actions	West Gippsland CMA / Southern Rural Water	

3.4 Critical action 3 – Managing urban stormwater and sewerage

Urban stormwater is a significant and widespread source of pollution entering waterways and bays. Over the last ten years, significant management actions have been undertaken to mitigate the effects of urban stormwater and have successfully driven a reduction in nitrogen associated with stormwater runoff from entering waterways and ultimately the bays and inland water bodies around Victoria. However, while significant actions have been implemented to improve stormwater management, there is considerable science that shows that stormwater is not being adequately managed to protect the environment and that continued management is required.

Sewage overflows can also pose serious risks to the beneficial uses of waterways. Untreated sewage discharge to waterways can exert physical, chemical and biological effects on the receiving environment, which can result in human health, environmental and aesthetic impacts that can be both acute and cumulative.

The two previous water SEPPs (*Groundwaters of Victoria* (SEPP (GoV)) and *Waters of Victoria* (SEPP (WoV))) have played an important role in managing the impacts of urban stormwater by providing a regulatory policy statement to guide and enable municipal councils to determine stormwater management obligations and best practice environmental management. Similarly, the water SEPPs have provided important regulatory policy statements to guide management of sewerage infrastructure and risk posed by losses of sewage and overflows from sewerage systems.

The Policy will continue to provide provisions and guidance for the ongoing management of urban stormwater and sewerage management. It is important that the provision in Policy relating to urban stormwater and sewerage management continue to be effectively implemented over the life of the Policy to drive the rehabilitation, and protection, of waterways and bays.

The sub-actions required to implement the provision of Policy relating to the management of urban stormwater and sewerage infrastructure are described in Table 3-3.

Table 3-3 Critical sub-actions for implementing urban stormwater and sewerage management provisions.

Note: Actions are listed in order of their priority for implementation.

Critical sub-actions	Details	Responsible agency	Partnership organisations
Action 3.1 Develop sewerage management guidelines.	These guidelines will provide clarity to water corporations about the expectations for the environmental management of sewerage systems	EPA	
Action 3.2 Work with local government to revise Stormwater Management Planning Guidelines (2007) to develop/review Stormwater Management Plans.	Guidelines have not been update since 2006, and will need to be revised to reflect changes in the Policy	DELWP / EPA	

Critical sub-actions	Details	Responsible agency	Partnership organisations
Action 3.3 Review of the Best Practice Environmental Management Guidelines for Urban Stormwater (1999).	The Urban Stormwater BPEM sets the standards for the management of stormwater and is referenced in the Victoria Planning Provisions to ensure that new residential sub-divisions are developed to manage the adverse impacts of stormwater in the waterways and bays	EPA / DELWP	
Action 3.4 Work with water corporations, local government, industry and communities to prevent wastewater and other types of pollutants entering constructed stormwater assets.	Develop programs to prevent activities impacting stormwater drains. Amongst other things this will include changes to the Victoria Planning Provisions. Commercial and Industrial sites to ensure that 'wastewater' from cleaning work areas does not enter the stormwater system.	DELWP	Melbourne Water / EPA

3.5 Critical action 4 – Managing wastewater discharges

Wastewater discharges are a major source of potential pollutants to waters across Victoria, and contribute to poor water quality in sensitive inland and coastal areas. Unless adequately managed, toxicants, nutrients and sediments can be concentrated in wastewater discharges, leading to significant impacts on receiving waters.

The *Environment Protection Act 1970* enables the EPA to license, monitor and audit wastewater discharges to surface waters. Through works approvals and licences, the EPA sets operating conditions for managing pollution and wastewater impacts at licensed sites. For significant pollution sources, such as from wastewater treatment plants, these licenses typically include site-specific pollutant discharge limits.

The previous water SEPPs have been instrumental in managing licensed wastewater discharges by providing detail about the considerations EPA will take into account when licensing discharges. This includes details on how EPA will set operating conditions for managing pollution and wastewater impacts at licensed sites, and determine discharge limits. The water SEPPs provided details on the information applicants for wastewater discharge would need to provide the EPA, and how EPA would assess such applications. This role is continued through clauses 20 – 26 of the Policy, which describe the rules and obligations for the ongoing management of wastewater.

Managing wastewater discharges is considered a high priority implementation activity because the critical role the water SEPPs have played in managing the risk of point source discharges. The widespread and high level of risk that point source discharges pose if they are not managed appropriately means it is important that this is continued through the implementation of the Policy.

One sub-action has been identified as critical for implementing clauses 20-26, and is described in Table 3-4.

Table 3-4 Critical sub-action for managing wastewater discharges.

Critical sub-actions	Details	Responsible agency	Partnership organisations
Action 4.1 Develop guidance to explain how offsets for wastewater discharges should be developed and how they will be assessed.	Guidance is required to explain how applications for works approval or licence amendments can be developed to include offset measures and how these will be assessed by EPA	EPA	

3.6 Critical action 5 – Managing onsite domestic wastewater

Poorly designed and managed onsite domestic wastewater management (ODWM) systems contribute to poor water quality in sensitive inland and coastal areas through the transport of pollutants and pathogens into surface waters and

groundwater. Poorly treated sewage can contain pathogenic (disease causing) micro-organisms and chemicals that pose risks to public or environmental health, and this has been associated with incidences of infectious diseases in urban communities. The water SEPPs were the legislative instrument that defines responsibilities for ODWM planning and the management requirements for mitigating these risks.

Since the 1970's, there have been ongoing efforts to address legacy issues resulting from poor ODWM, which have significantly reduced risks and impacts in high priority areas. Nevertheless, the remaining legacy issues need to be kept under review as the population of Victoria continues to grow and relocate. There is an ongoing need to maintain regulatory controls to prevent new developments from causing a new set of wastewater management problems that would impose substantial costs on water corporations, their customer base and government to rectify.

Clauses 28-31 of the Policy continues the role of the water SEPPs for defining the rules and obligations around the planning and management of ODWM systems. The priority sub-actions for implementing these requirements are described in Table 3-5 and in Appendix A.

Table 3-5 Critical sub-actions for managing onsite domestic wastewater.

Note: Actions are listed in order of their priority for implementation.

Critical sub-actions	Details	Responsible agency	Partnership organisations
Action 5.1 Set up a local government/water corporation working group to scope the revision of current guidance/code.	<p>Scoping to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of the Land Capability Assessment Framework; • Review of the Code of Practice – Onsite Domestic Wastewater Management 2016 (areas for review include community schemes; standard permitting conditions; feasibility of a generic technique for determining where septic have failed); • Development of a risk assessment framework for both land capability and landholder capacity; • Development of a best practice model for maintenance of onsite domestic wastewater management systems • Review of the Ministerial guidance: planning permit applications in open, potable water supply catchment areas • Review of the 2006 MAV DWMP guidance • Development of EPA guidance on the process to conduct audits for DWMPs • Consider developing a service agreement between local government and water corporations to clarify arrangements for the use of existing powers to require a property owner to connect to a sewerage system 	DELWP / EPA	Municipal Association of Victoria / local government / water corporations
Action 5.2 Update the VPP 'Particular Provisions' clause 56.07 -3.	VPPs will need to be amended to reflect new clauses in Policy	DELWP	

Critical sub-actions	Details	Responsible agency	Partnership organisations
Action 5.3 Work with local government to identify support material required to assist with onsite domestic wastewater management. Develop materials to assist local government inform rate payers about septic systems and the need to manage.	Local government requested support for materials for ratepayers, this would involve facilitation of sharing info between local government as opposed to developing new material.	DELWP	EPA / local government / water corporations
Action 5.4 Work with local government to determine the feasibility of developing a system to accredit Land Capability Assessment providers (to ensure the standard of LCA).	<i>2006 VAGO report recommended the establishment of a suitable mechanism to assure the quality of land capability assessments. The working group in action 5.1 could scope this task.</i>	DELWP / EPA	local government / water corporations
Action 5.5 Work with local government to facilitate information exchange on alternative solutions to reticulated sewerage (e.g. Park Orchards trial), including preparation of a variety of case studies to highlight how current and legacy issues have been dealt with.	Set up forums to discuss what new and innovative pilot projects are underway to share information and build confidence in alternative systems	DELWP	EPA / local government / water corporations
Action 5.6 Work with water corporations and local government to determine options for where sewerage cannot be provided.	Use existing water corporation forums to develop a shared understanding of when the provision of sewerage services is possible practicable and share this with local government.	DELWP	EPA / local government / water corporations
Action 5.7 Secure funding to assist local government to undertake domestic wastewater management planning.	Prepare a funding bid to support local government to undertake domestic wastewater management planning	DELWP	
Action 5.8 Establish a Land Capability Assessment (LCA) Review Panel.	Expert panel to assess LCA provider accreditation and provide advice on development of LCAs.	DELWP / EPA	

3.7 Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting

The Policy is supported by an evaluation strategy that has been designed to measure the effectiveness of the policy in achieving its purpose of protecting beneficial uses through the protection and improvement of environmental quality and compliance with obligations and decision rules it sets out. The evaluation strategy will primarily be implemented by a monitoring, evaluation and reporting (MER) plan. The MER plan is a companion document to the Policy that describes in detail the evaluation framework and requirements for effectively meeting the objectives of the evaluation strategy. Implementation of the MER plan is the responsibility of DELWP and EPA.

The critical implementation activities for enabling the monitoring, evaluation and reporting of the effectiveness of the Policy are described in table 2.6.

Table 3-6 Critical sub-action for co-ordinating the monitoring, evaluation and reporting of the effectiveness of the Policy

Critical sub-action	Details	Responsible agency	Partnership organisations
Action 6.1 Implement the Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting plan for the Policy	<p>The Policy will be supported by a detailed Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting plan that will establish the framework for monitoring, evaluating and reporting whether the Policy is achieving its goals, beneficial uses are being protected and the Policy is being complied with. The MER plan will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate whether beneficial uses have been protected through the protection and improvement of environmental quality and compliance with obligations and decision rules set out in the Policy; • Evaluate the effectiveness of implementation activities in contributing to the Policy’s objectives; • Support prioritisation of MER activities • Test assumptions about how the rules and obligations set in the Policy will drive intended outcomes; • Contribute, through internal reporting and adaptive management, to accountability and the effective implementation of the Policy. 	DELWP / EPA	CMAs Melbourne Water

Appendix A – All implementation actions

The review process identified a significant number of implementation actions which will need to be implemented over the life of the Policy. All these actions were evaluated through the decision-making process (see Appendix A) to determine the critical actions.

The six critical actions described in Section 3 are those actions that DELWP and partner agencies are making a commitment to publicly report on within the first three years of the Policy being gazetted.

Table B1 below contains actions that were identified during the review, that are important to ensure the successful implementation of the Policy. In some cases, these actions will be implemented through business as usual activities, while others have been identified as being less critical because they address more specific or localised problems than the “critical actions”, which address widespread high risk problems.

Future reviews of the Implementation Plan may lead to the reprioritisation of implementation actions, and some of the actions listed below may become high priority depending on changes in risk to the environment, resourcing and government priority.

Table B1. Additional actions for implementing the Policy’s clauses.

Note: Actions are NOT listed in order of their priority for implementation.

Implementation Plan action	Details of implementation action	Implementation Responsibilities	Related Policy Clause
B1.1 - Develop new guidelines	New guidelines needed to be developed to clarify and explain how to comply with the Policy. The list of new guidance that needs to be developed is shown in Table B2	EPA / DELWP	General - see Table B2
B1.2 - Revise existing guidelines	Existing guidelines need to be revised to clarify and explain changes, or new provisions, to clauses in the Policy. The list of existing guidance that needs to be revised is shown in Table B2	EPA / DELWP	General - see Table B2
B1.3 - Administrative amendments to existing guidelines	Existing guidelines require administrative amendments to ensure they appropriately reference the Policy and reflect changes in clause numbers/names. A list of guidance that requires administrative updates is shown in Table B2	EPA / DELWP	General - see Table B2
B1.4 - Undertake a detailed assessment to determine if Regulations are required for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> wastewater management basement/groundwater dewatering managing urban stormwater managing on-site domestic wastewater to prevent the discharge of sewage from vessels to address vessels and hull biofouling 	Understand the scale of environmental issues related to activities listed to determine if regulations are required/better suited to address impacts	DELWP / EPA	51. Wastes and wastewaters from ports, marinas and vessels 20 - 27. Managing wastewater discharges 34. Managing urban stormwater 28-31. Managing onsite domestic wastewater 52. Aquatic Pests

Implementation Plan action	Details of implementation action	Implementation Responsibilities	Related Policy Clause
B1.5 - Develop a simple notification system for failing septic tanks, from local government to water corporations / EPA/ Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS).	Develop a one-page notification process and distribute to local government, water corporations, DHHS and EPA outlining how the notification process will work	DELWP	31. Connection to sewerage
B1.6 - Work with water corporations and local government to clarify what is meant by where sewerage is 'provided', whether this means a connection is available or there is a pipe in ground.	Use existing water corporation forums to develop a shared understanding of what water corporations mean by 'sewer is available'	DELWP	31. Connection to sewerage
B1.7 - Investigate feasibility of hardship grants for connections.	Hardship grants were once offered by government. Consider whether they are a feasible option to use to assist with connection rates	DELWP	31. Connection to sewerage
B1.8 - Work with Victorian Catchment Management Council (VCMC) to include in the Regional Catchment Strategies renewal guidance, reference to the protection of beneficial uses of all waters	VCMA provide guidance to CMAs on Regional Catchment Strategy revisions, this action will ensure groundwater and other beneficial uses are covered off in guidance	DELWP	No clause in the Policy, formerly Clause 23 of SEPP (WoV)
B1.9 - Work with DELWP planning to develop practice notes for planners to assist with implementing the Policy	DELWP will work with local government planners to scope the extent of practice notes required to support use of the Policy	DELWP	32. Planning schemes and permits
B1.10 - Work with the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) and local government to implement stormwater management plans	Consider developing pilot projects, in consultation with local government, to develop further guidance about the ways stormwater management plans can play a useful role in local government's stormwater management. Dissemination of innovations and good case studies about ways local government can value and utilise stormwater as an asset to invest in would also be worthwhile.	EPA / DELWP / MAV	34. Managing urban Stormwater
B1.11 - Water corporations will report to DELWP - Sustainable Irrigation Program (via CMAs) on how: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> they ensure compliance with licences to use water for irrigation or take and use licences, as in accordance with relevant regional irrigation development guidelines. they manage groundwater pumps and irrigation drains in accordance with relevant land and water management plans. 	Business as usual: Water corporations currently report to DELWP on land and water management plan implementation	Water corporations, with reporting to DELWP through the CMA processes	35. Management of saline discharges

Implementation Plan action	Details of implementation action	Implementation Responsibilities	Related Policy Clause
B1.12 - Ensure that land and water management plans and irrigation development guidelines are maintained, implemented, reviewed and periodically renewed for each relevant CMA region.	Business as usual: DELWP to use current process to implement this action	DELWP	35. Management of saline discharges
B1.13 - Work with landholders to develop and implement effective agricultural management practices where the need for such practices has been identified as a priority in a regional catchment strategy and/or regional waterway strategy. The effectiveness of those practices can then be monitored using the existing monitoring programs outlined in the relevant regional catchment strategy and or regional waterway strategy.	Business as usual: CMAs will continue to work with industry in priority areas - government will assist with Environmental Contribution funding	CMAs / DELWP / Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources (DEDJTR)	39. Minimising runoff of pollutants from agricultural activities
B1.14 - Maintain the Groundwater Quality Restricted Use Zone (GQRUZ) map and ensure that it continues to be uploaded to appropriate publicly available spatial systems (ongoing)	EPA maintains a map of GQRUZ's that is made publicly available. This activity needs to continue.	EPA	58. Groundwater quality restricted use zone
B1.15 - Develop education materials for Agvet chemical users	Develop education and communication materials to assist chemical users in understanding the risks to the environment and implementing appropriate controls in accordance with label requirements	EPA DEDJTR	41. Storage and handling of fuels and potentially polluting chemicals
B1.16 - Provide training materials on appropriate Agvet chemical use	Provide training materials to appropriate Agvet chemical use training providers and publicise changes to the Agvet sector	DEDJTR	41. Storage and handling of fuels and potentially polluting chemicals
B1.17 - Provide training on the revised bunding guidelines	Training should be provided to Environment Protection Officers and other parties that refer to the Bunding Guidelines – e.g. local government planners.	EPA	41. Storage and handling of fuels and potentially polluting chemicals
B1.18 - Pursue the regulation of works by CMAs and Melbourne Water through Section 67 licences, rather than the existing by-laws, to ensure that ongoing conditions can be provided.	Regulation of works through Section 67 licenses can be implemented when the opportunity is presented. This was proposed for the last Water Bill amendment and work to justify change has been completed	DELWP	40. Works affecting water dependant ecosystems and species.
B1.19 – Consider the feasibility of a state-wide Environmentally Sustainable Development Policy	This policy would allow for local variations to strengthen delivery of this commitment	EPA	44. Commitment to water conservation
B1.20 - Assess the level of risk from the discharge of sewage from vessels and, if required, develop and implement a compliance strategy to	Assess complaints and information from EPA records that assist with understanding the scale of the issue related to	EPA Parks Victoria	51. Wastes and wastewaters from ports, marinas and vessels

Implementation Plan action	Details of implementation action	Implementation Responsibilities	Related Policy Clause
address the issue of sewage and waste discharge from vessels.	vessels discharging sewage waste to waters		
B1.21 - Consider the adoption of the International Clean Marina program and, if supported, EPA to work with the Marina Industries Association to promote the Clean Marina Program and encourage marina operators to seek accreditation	Understand the scale of the environmental problem that marina management contributes too, and consider adoption of Cleaner Marina association to mitigate impacts if appropriate	EPA	51. Wastes and wastewaters from ports, marinas and vessels
B1.22 - Ensure Ministerial Guidelines for preparation of a Safety and Environment Management Plan (SEMP), reference updated Policy	The Ministerial Guidelines: Port SEMP assist individual port managers in developing detailed environmental management plans for ports. They currently reference sections of Policy and this will need to be updated.	DELWP / DEDJTR	51. Wastes and wastewaters from ports, marinas and vessels
B1.23 - Continue to manage aquaculture licences so that aquaculture operators implement effective environmental management practices and appropriate environmental monitoring systems	Business as Usual - government needs to continue to work with aquaculture operators as required to implement effective environmental management practices	EPA / Victorian Fisheries Authority (VFA)	No clause in the Policy, formerly Clause 48 of SEPP (WoV)
B1.24 - Develop implementation measures to minimise risks of the introduction/spread of aquatic pests	Develop and implement measures to minimise the risks of the introduction of aquatic pests	DELWP / EPA / DEDJTR	52. Aquatic pests
B1.25 - Continue to implement strategies and programs for the control and management of the impacts of marine and freshwater pests.	Existing strategies and programs that manage the impacts of marine and freshwater pests need to be continued to mitigate risk to beneficial uses	DELWP / EPA	52. Aquatic pests
B1.26 - Work with road managers who undertake planning to identify/implement priorities for clause implementation	Workshops with road managers to understand prioritisation processes for implementing measures to prevent erosion and runoff and maintain roads. Clarify current best practice relevant to the management of roads, including the application of the notion of 'reasonably practicable'	DELWP / EPA	47. Management of roads
B1.27 - Engage Traditional Owners to develop site specific environmental quality indicators and objectives for the protection of Traditional Owner cultural values	Traditional owners should be engaged (through local management and planning processes for waterways and catchments) to develop environmental indicators and objectives for the protection of this beneficial use, where existing indicators for other beneficial uses are not providing adequate protection.	DELWP / EPA	14. Beneficial uses of all waters 15. Beneficial uses of groundwater 16. Beneficial uses of surface water 17. Environmental quality indicators and objectives
B1.28 - DELWP will Gazette incorporated documents	Incorporated documents in the Policy need to be gazetted	DELWP	General

Implementation Plan action	Details of implementation action	Implementation Responsibilities	Related Policy Clause
B1.29 – Policy Implementation Plan administrative activities	<p>Develop a Policy Reporting Framework to report on implementation activities</p> <p>Update and align relevant sections of the Victorian Planning Provisions with the Policy.</p> <p>Develop, and support development, of annual business plans to implement the Policy.</p> <p>Develop and maintain spatial layers for segments of the water environment as defined in Schedule 1 of the Policy.</p>	DELWP	General
B1.30 - Encourage animal owners to collect animal wastes from public areas	Provides additional support as most local government's have local laws setting out responsibilities of pet owners to collect animal wastes from public areas.	Local government	No clause in the Policy, formerly Clause 39 of SEPP (WoV)

Table B2 – Guidance to be updated as part of the Policy's Implementation.

Note: Actions are NOT listed in order of their priority for implementation.

Implementation Plan action	Details of required change to guidance	Implementation responsibilities
B2.1 - Develop new guidance	(a) Develop guidance for the use of indicators and objectives for water based recreation. This guidance will assist users of the Policy to understand and apply the new objectives.	EPA
	(b) Develop guidance for the use of the weight of evidence toxicant scoring system. This guidance will assist users of the Policy to understand and apply the new objectives.	EPA
	(c) Develop guidance material for proponents to use when informing EPA of their intent to undertake groundwater remediation activities that involve direct injection of chemicals and or substrates.	EPA
	(d) Develop a new guidance document for groundwater tracers. This will assist to explain how groundwater remediation can be undertaken consistent with Clause 53 in the Policy.	EPA
	(e) Develop guidance for water corporations on what should be in their response to a Domestic Wastewater Management Plan.	DELWP
	(f) Develop guidance in discharging wastewater to surface water to provide water for the environment.	EPA
	(g) Develop guidance on the scope of a Domestic Wastewater Management Plan, including methods to assess cumulative risks and options to manage these.	EPA
	(h) Develop guidance in applying the Schedules in the Policy. This guidance may include worked examples.	EPA

Implementation Plan action	Details of required change to guidance	Implementation responsibilities
B2.2 - Review and update existing guidance	(a) Update the <i>Guidelines for Risk Assessment of Wastewater Discharges to Waterways</i> (EPA Publication 1287) with potential revision to <i>Guideline for Environmental Management: Risk-based Assessment of Ecosystem Protection in Ambient Waters</i> (EPA Publication 961). The purpose of this revision will be to include a chapter on assessing human health risks, as well as providing more contemporary case studies.	EPA
	(b) <i>Guideline for Environmental Management: Rapid Bioassessment Methodology for Rivers and Streams</i> (EPA Publication 604.1) will require updated chapter on use of environmental quality objectives in the Policy to assess waterway condition.	EPA
	(c) The <i>Bundling</i> guidelines (EPA Publication 347.1) will be updated include information on how to manage risks through appropriate site design and management, contingency planning, staff training, implementing a hierarchy of controls, including chemical selection, emergency holding and clean up measures, methods for disposal of spilled chemicals and contaminated materials.	EPA
	(d) The <i>Best Practice Environmental Management Guidelines for Dredging</i> (EPA Publication 691) will be updated, with consideration given to the relevant sections of the 2009 National Guidelines. This review could include and/or consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desilting of drains and waterways • Artificial estuary opening • Desilting of water storages; and • Dredging impacts on groundwater. 	EPA
	(e) The <i>Ministerial Guidelines for Groundwater Licensing and the Protection of High Value Groundwater Dependent Ecosystems 2015</i> will be reviewed to consider how the environment is considered by licensing decisions.	DELWP
	(f) The <i>Cleaner Marinas: EPA Guidelines for Protection Victoria's Marinas</i> (EPA Publication 624) will be reviewed and updated to ensure contemporary information on environmental management expectations is clear.	EPA
	(g) EPA to review external guidelines to assess if the following documents are still representative of best practice: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Ministerial Guidelines: Port Safety and Environment Management Plans (2012) • IMO MEPC.1/Circ.834 Consolidated guidance for port reception facility providers and users (2014) • Best Practice Guidelines for Waste Reception Facilities at Ports Marinas and Boat Harbours in Australia and New Zealand (1997) • International clean marina program accreditation guidebook 	EPA

Implementation Plan action	Details of required change to guidance	Implementation responsibilities
	<p>(h) Update relevant guidance to identify the most appropriate method and information required to determine the groundwater segments in the Policy. Including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hydrological Assessment (Groundwater Quality) Guidelines (EPA Publication 668); • Groundwater Sampling Guidelines (EPA Publication 669); • Groundwater Quality Restricted Use Zone (EPA publication 862) 	EPA
B2.3 - Administrative updates to existing guidance	<p>(i) Update relevant guidance to reflect best practice for construction activities, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Environmental Guidelines for Major Construction Sites</i> (EPA Publication 480) - including guidance on site dewatering; • <i>Construction Techniques for Sediment Pollution Control</i> (EPA Publication 275); • <i>Doing it Right on Subdivisions: Temporary Environment Protection Measures for Subdivision Construction Sites</i> (EPA Publication 950) <p>(a) Minor administrative changes will be required to the following publications to ensure consistency with the Policy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Works Approval Application Guidelines (EPA Publication 1658) • <i>Guidance for the determination and assessment of mixing zones</i> (EPA Publication 1344) • Groundwater Quality Restricted Use Zone (EPA Publication 862); • <i>The cleanup and management of polluted groundwater</i> (EPA Publication 840) • <i>Groundwater Attenuation Zones</i> (EPA publication 841) • <i>Environmental Auditor (Contaminated Land): Guidelines for Issue of Certificates and Statements of Environmental Audit</i> (EPA Publication 759) • <i>Guidance on underground petroleum storage systems</i> (EPA Publication 888) • <i>Siting, design, operation and rehabilitation of landfill</i> (EPA Publication 788) • <i>Guidelines for the monitoring and assessment of coastal point source discharges</i> (EPA Publication 677) • Guidelines for <i>Licence Management</i> (EPA Publication 1322) • <i>Disinfection of treated wastewater</i> (EPA Publication 730). • <i>Code of practice for small wastewater treatment plants</i> (EPA Publication 500) • Guidelines for <i>Dual pipe water recycling schemes – Health and environmental risk management</i> (EPA Publication 1015) • <i>Guidelines for managed aquifer recharge – health and environmental risk management</i> (EPA Publication 1290) • <i>Construction techniques for sediment pollution control</i> (EPA Publication 275) 	EPA

Implementation Plan
action

Details of required change to guidance

Implementation
responsibilities

- *Guidelines for environmental management – use of reclaimed water* (EPA Publication 202)
 - *Environmental guidelines for the dairy processing industry* (EPA Publication 570)
 - *Water quality objectives for marine and estuarine waters – ecosystem protection* (EPA Publication 794)
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Appendix B – Approach to prioritising actions

To determine the critical actions that are the focus of the Implementation Plan, the highest priority actions for implementation were identified and selected using a five-step decision making approach (Step 1- 5 below). The critical actions of the Implementation Plan are based on clauses in the Policy which were identified of particular importance to stakeholders. The Implementation Plan was also revised based on stakeholder feedback received as part of consultation on the draft SEPP (Waters).

The decision-making process used to identify high priority implementation actions consisted of the following criteria:

- 1. Addressing known high priority threats to water beneficial uses** – This criterion ranked actions based on whether clause provisions address one or more threats to water beneficial uses that were identified as high priority (Table 3.1). While all the clause provisions and associated actions are included in the Policy because they address activities, or threats, that can pose a high risk to the beneficial uses of water, there have been several recent assessments of the risks to values provided by waters in Victoria that have consistently identified the same high priority threats to waters.

These high priority threats were identified using standard risk assessment processes that considered both likelihood of occurrence and the consequences to beneficial uses and values. These were largely identified as high risk as they are almost certain to occur (or are currently occurring). Other risks were identified but were considered lower priority because they are either considered to be rare/unlikely or the consequences are less severe due to their highly-localised impacts.

The Policy applies state-wide and needs to consider the impacts to water quality across freshwater, marine and groundwater systems. If the action did not address a high priority risk area, then it was considered a low priority and excluded from the rest of the process. If the action related to a high risk, then it progressed to steps 2 to 5.

- 2. Widespread** – This criterion ranked actions based on whether the clause provisions addressed a threat/activity that was localised or widespread (Table 3.2). The highest priority was given to those activities that were the most widespread across the state.
- 3. Time-bound** – This criterion ranked actions based on whether the clause provisions addressed an activity that was discrete and time-bound with impacts that only require management when the activity is occurring (or for a short time before or after) or an activity that requires ongoing, long term and active management (Table 3.3). The highest priority was given to activities that require long-term ongoing management to reduce their impacts (i.e., chronic impacts).
- 4. Controls** – This criterion ranked actions based on whether the clause provisions already have in place effective regulatory controls (e.g., licensing, works approval, or planning regulations) that mean the clause can be implemented through existing regulatory mechanisms that specifically address that activity/provision, or, whether the clause has very limited or no regulatory controls (Table 3.4). The highest priority was given to those activities with no or very limited regulatory controls.
- 5. Risk to beneficial uses** – this criterion ranked actions based on the risks to beneficial uses of water associated with **not** implementing the action/clause provisions described in the Policy. Likelihood and consequence tables are provided together with a scoring matrix in Tables 3.5, 3.6 and 3.7. This identifies the actions that will most effectively address high risks.

Each of the actions were scored against these criteria with the 5 critical actions selected that ranked most highly in terms of addressing high priority threats to beneficial uses, having the most wide-spread and long term impacts, not having strong existing regulatory controls and likely to pose a high risk to multiple segments of the environment if they are not implemented.

When actions are assessed through business planning processes, further consideration will be required to evaluate the costs of the actions proposed. Priority should be given to the most cost-effective actions that provide the greatest benefit proportional to costs and those that can be implemented with available resources.

Table A-1: High priority risks to beneficial values provided by Victorian waters.

Risk (threatening activities and associated stressors)	Relevant Policy segments
Catchment inflows from diffuse sources (nutrients, sediments and toxicants)	All
Stormwater discharges (nutrients, sediments, toxicants)	All
Wastewater discharges (nutrients, toxicants, pathogens)	Port Phillip Bay, localised inland waters, some open coast locations, groundwater
Water resource use (altered water regimes, salinity, algal blooms)	Inland waters, estuaries, groundwater
Climate change exacerbating the above risks	All

Table A-2: Widespread – criteria to prioritise an activity based on whether it has widespread or local impacts

Local impacts	Mostly Localised Impacts, Very Common Activity	Moderately Widespread Impacts	Very Widespread Impacts
Action influences an activity that only has mostly localised impacts and is only moderately widespread/common	Action influences an activity that has localised impacts on one to two water types but does not have a strong influence on remote segments. Activities are common so have a cumulative impact	Action influences common and widespread activity that impacts only one water type but all segments of that water type are likely to be impacted, and with significant impacts on remote segments	Action influences common and widespread activity that affects multiple water types (e.g., a combination of two or more of inland waters, estuarine waters marine waters, groundwater, and segments) AND activity has significant effects on remote segments (e.g. activity occurs in waterways but impacts marine segments)

Table A-3: Time-bound – criteria to prioritise an activity based on whether managing its impacts is required during discrete time periods and requires long term management.

Discrete/Infrequent	Discrete/Frequent	Mostly discrete with occasional long term management required	Long term ongoing
Actions to mitigate and manage impacts are only required in a discrete time-period when the activity is occurring, but the activity occurs infrequently	Actions to mitigate and manage impacts are only required in a discrete time-period when the activity is occurring, but the activity occurs frequently	Action to mitigate and manage impacts are required in a discrete time-period when activities are occurring, but occasionally longer term management is required	Action to mitigate and manage impacts/threat requires ongoing long term actions to be implemented

Table A-4: Regulatory controls – criteria to prioritise actions based on whether there are strong existing regulatory controls (e.g., the activity the clause addresses is licensed or subject to works approval or planning regulations)

No	Partial	Yes
There are no, or only very limited, established controls to achieve the actions specified in this clause	There are some controls to regulate aspects of the activity, but others are known to be lacking	There are extensive well established regulatory controls that are typically BAU activities (e.g., established approval and licensing frameworks)

Table A-5: Likelihood table. Assessed as: “how likely it is that the action will have an effect on a high risk?”. For example, an action that will address the risk over all segments in most situations would be assessed as “almost certain” while an action that will only address the risk on a localised area or under certain circumstances would be assessed as “possible”.

Almost certain	Likely	Possible	Unlikely	Rare
The action is expected to address the threat / risk in most circumstances	The action will probably address the threat most circumstances	The action should address the threat / risk in some locations / situations	The action could address the threat / risk, but is doubtful	The action would only address the threat / risk in exceptional circumstances

Table A-6: Consequence level table (assessed as “in the absence of this action”).

Insignificant	Minor	Moderate	Major	Severe
In the absence of the action, no impacts to beneficial uses	In the absence of the action occasional impacts to beneficial uses, but localised and not persisting for more than a week.	In the absence of the action, frequent impacts to beneficial uses would be expected, but localised and persisting for weeks to months.	In the absence of the action frequent impacts to beneficial uses are expected, persisting for up to one year. Recovery within two years.	In the absence of the action waters would be unsuitable for beneficial uses, persisting for more than one year with recovery likely to take more than 2 years if at all.

Table A-7: Scoring matrix for Tables 5 & 6.

Likelihood	Consequence				
	Insignificant	Minor	Moderate	Major	Severe
Almost certain	5	10	15	20	25
Likely	4	8	12	16	20
Possible	3	6	9	12	15
Unlikely	2	4	6	8	10
Rare	1	2	3	4	5