

# EPA Board Communiqué

## July 2020

### Regular Meeting 139, Tuesday 7 July



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#### Policy Register

The Board noted a number of changes to update the Register of policy instruments that guide the Board's decision-making, and approved the revised Register for publication on the EPA web site.

#### Bonds for Mines and Quarries

The Minister for Mines requires a bond from the holders of mining leases to cover the costs of rehabilitation. The Board also has the power to require a financial assurance from Level 2 activities for this purpose. The Board's power has been used infrequently in relation to mines as it would be inefficient, duplicative and messy for two bonds to be required for the same purpose.

However, while EPA Tasmania is consulted about the Minister's bond, the Board has no input as it is often required before the Board considers a development application. The Board agreed that the template for the briefing paper summarising the assessment of a mine or large quarry should be modified to include a statement on the size and adequacy of the bond to cover the rehabilitation conditions recommended to the Board.

#### Presentation on Wastewater re-use in Tasmania

The Board received a presentation from two specialists from Prion Advisory, which provides consulting advice to several Tasmanian companies, on the sustainable irrigation of wastewaters. The beneficial use of wastewater from treatment plants has become more common over the past decade, but requires careful management to ensure it remains sustainable and does not degrade pastures and soils. The presentation explained how sustainable irrigation systems are designed and monitored. The Board found the presentation very informative and useful.

#### Request for Funding – Identifying the Risk to Tasmanian Wedge-tailed Eagles from Wind Energy Developments - A Statewide Model for collision risk

The Board received a presentation on this project from Dr James Pay from the University of Tasmania in March and considered that this work will make a very important contribution to better understanding the risk that future wind farms will represent to eagles. This will improve the Board's ability to assess such proposals.

The Board suggested that Dr Pay may wish to submit an application for funding from the Environment Protection Fund to assist the rollout of the project. The Board considered an application for \$74,420 which will support the GPS tagging and tracking of 5 adult eagles. It was noted that the total cost of the project is a little under \$1.4 million and that funding contributions have been received from at least one wind energy company. The Board agreed to allocate the requested funds from the Environment Protection Fund noting that this grant would be consistent with the purpose of the Fund.

#### Workforce Development Project Update

In May 2019 the Board allocated \$10,000 from the Environment Protection Fund to help fund a project looking at the environmental health workforce in Tasmania and what needs to be done to maintain this into the future. Under the *Environmental Management and Pollution Control Act 1994* (EMPCA) Environmental Health Officers employed by Local government play an important role in environmental management. The Board received an update on progress with the project, noting that the initial findings are that there are insufficient officers employed to meet the statutory obligations of Local government under a variety of legislation, including EMPCA.

## Strategic Issues Workshop

Following its normal meeting the Board held an annual Strategic Issues Workshop and discussed the following issues:

- A report from the Chair on the review of the Board's operation and performance undertaken through a series of interviews with members during March 2020. The report concluded that the Board was generally operating well and meeting its obligations under the Act. The Board is well supported by EPA Tasmania and its managers. Most members considered that, while recognising that its role is defined by legislation, the Board should look for opportunities to be more pro-active.
- The process for updating the Strategic Plan.
- Progress against the commitments contained in the current Statement of Intent.
- The assessment of natural values by the Board. This included a review of why the Board assesses natural values and the legislative basis for this, and an exploration of what the community regards as natural values. It was noted that planning schemes may be structured assuming that the Board will assess natural values for Level 2 activities. The Board noted that the current system does not deal well with cumulative impacts.
- The criteria for the Director to call in non-Level 2 activities for assessment by the Board.
- The Communications Strategy. The Board concluded that this could be adequately dealt with in the update of the Strategic Plan.