



Vasse Taskforce

March 2018 | Meeting 12

The twelfth Vasse Taskforce meeting was held in Busselton on 23 March 2018. Dr Sally Talbot (MLC South West Region) noted that 2018 will be a very busy year as many projects are finalised and investment planning commences.

1 Toby Inlet water quality

Drone footage of Toby Inlet taken in March 2018 provided the Taskforce with an aerial view of water clarity. The City of Busselton opened the Toby Inlet sand bar to the ocean on 11 December 2017 to increase tidal flushing and reduce the likelihood of algal blooms. Monitoring and modelling work undertaken by the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation indicated that maximising tidal exchange with the ocean was the most cost effective action to improve water quality in the Toby Inlet over summer months. More work is also occurring to reduce nutrients entering the Inlet with the Water Corporation undertaking infill sewerage works in Quindalup between June and November 2018. This will enable over 100 homeowners to connect to sewer and do their bit to improve the water quality of Toby Inlet. The Taskforce will work to encourage homeowners to connect to sewer at their earliest convenience.

2 Vasse estuary channel – collective action

Residents adjacent to Vasse Estuary Channel were provided with an update on the collective action Taskforce partners are undertaking to improve water quality and reduce fish kills in the channel. Actions have included removal of sediments and algal buildup in front of the Vasse surge barrier by the Water Corporation, trialing an oxygenation plant to reduce the risk of fish kills and trialing different approaches to seawater inflow and wetland water levels to reduce toxic algal blooms. This all came together as a success over the 17/18 summer with greatly improved water quality in the channel that was appreciated by local residents. Toxic algae concentrations were much lower over the summer than previous years with dissolved oxygen levels staying above critical levels. More detailed analysis is underway to understand the broader impact of the seawater trial on fish movement and the functioning of the wetland system.

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3 Water management plans

Our partners are progressing the development of draft plans and the Taskforce continues to receive briefings from a number of completed projects that will guide future management for Toby Inlet, Lower Vasse River and Vasse Wonnerup wetlands. This included reconnecting rivers, oxygenation, sedimentation investigation and the clay trial in the Lower Vasse River. Importantly some of the this science has been turned into action with opening of Toby Inlet sandbar, planning to include extra culverts on the Vasse Diversion Drain and sediment removal at the Vasse Surge Gates. The Taskforce will be receiving briefings on the three water management plans later this year and they will be released for public comment.

4 Water Corporation – collaborative program of works

Water Corporation through its Drainage and Liveable Communities Branch now delivers a program that addresses drainage, the environment and community needs. Since 2014 the Water Corporation has worked in partnership with the Vasse Taskforce to better align its works program to Revitalising Geographe Waterways. Achievements to date include sediment and algae removal at the Vasse Surge Gates, investigations into the benefits of using soil amendment in drains and planned upgrades to Vasse Diversion Drain. 2018 will see works commence on infill sewerage in Quindalup and Water Corporation will support Department of Water and Environmental Regulation in progressing the Optimising Drainage project.

6 A vision for the future

The current funding for the Revitalising Geographe Waterways program is due for completion in June 2019. The Vasse Taskforce has commenced preparation of a sustainability plan to continue the Revitalising Geographe Waterways program and seek opportunities for future investment. The sustainability plan will determine what needs to be done in the future, who will do it and how it could be funded. The investment plan will review findings from current projects and determine the next priority projects. We will be discussing issues and ideas with stakeholders to make sure the plans have strong support across the community.

7 Upcoming events for the community

May 2018 Revitalising Geographe Waterways Annual Update and 2017 Annual Report to the Community.

The new Revitalising Geographe Waterways website went live in January 2018 and information can now found at:

www.rgw.dwer.wa.gov.au

www.geocatch.asn.au