



Tasmanian Greens Party Policy 2014

Water

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Water is one of our most precious natural resources. Our actions regarding it require a precautionary approach that guarantees access to potable drinking water as a fundamental human right, and its availability on a sustainable level for non-domestic uses, in perpetuity.

Plentiful, clean water is crucial to the future of Tasmania, its people and its ecosystems. Some water bodies in Tasmania suffer from contamination of ground and surface water by chemical pollution through the use of agricultural and forestry fertilisers, herbicides, insecticides and poisons, as well as bacterial and viral contamination from inadequate sewage treatment and direct deposition of animal faeces.

Catchment capacity is seriously compromised by over-allocation for irrigation, uncontrolled interceptions and catchment damage, inefficient water use and storage, and by depletion of ground water resources.

Areas of Tasmania are being affected by climate change with serious consequences for rainfall and water availability, and the risk of salination of agricultural land is increasing.

Industrial scale forestry operations and the substitution of native forest by plantations are major contributors to catchment damage. Inadequate controls on land clearance and improper irrigation practices have exacerbated this problem.

Water is an issue crossing environmental, social, political and economic boundaries. It is essential that an understanding of water precipitation, catchments and use, informs all other policy areas.

Governments have fundamentally and consistently failed to understand the capacity and sustainability of our water systems and neglected to legislate adequately for their protection. The Greens recognise the urgency of turning around previous failures and mismanagement and will take decisive action to improve water quality and quantity for our communities, ecosystems, and economy into the foreseeable future.

Measures

Access

The Tasmanian Greens will work to:

1. ensure that Tasmanians have access to adequate, safe and secure water supplies;
2. mandate high drinking water standards;
3. prioritise ensuring town water supplies are clean and safe and no longer require 'boil water' notices except in unforeseen circumstances and emergencies.

Catchments

The Tasmanian Greens will work to:

4. introduce a comprehensive catchment auditing regime to enable water managers to quantify total catchment yields and make decisions on water allocation that safeguard the health of catchments and the water resources they provide;
5. protect and restore water catchments compromised by land clearance;

6. return the capacity of catchments to store, purify and release water as close as practicable to their naturally occurring levels;
7. encourage, through education and incentives, the establishment of fenced riparian zones protecting the banks of streams and rivers from erosion, disturbance, agricultural run-off and stock effluent;
8. work with interested parties to ensure that base environmental flows are established, and maintained for river systems.

Freshwater Ecosystems

The Tasmanian Greens will work to:

9. address the under-representation of freshwater areas in the reserve system;
10. implement the priorities identified through the Conservation of Freshwater Ecosystem Values Project.

Efficiency

The Tasmanian Greens will work to:

11. ensure that all water users are encouraged, through incentives, education, regulation, metering and pricing of the resource to conserve usage and maximise recycling;
12. introduce incentives for the more intelligent use and re-use of urban water, including rain water tanks, and encourage the appropriate use of grey water.

Chemicals

The Tasmanian Greens will work to:

13. fund a comprehensive, ongoing audit of chemicals used in Tasmania's catchments;
14. increase the frequency and thoroughness of monitoring of waterways for chemical contamination and widely publish the results;
15. enact chemical trespass legislation.

Industrial Pollution

The Tasmanian Greens will work to:

16. implement comprehensive emission standards;
17. encourage closed-loop and recycled water systems for new and existing industry through strengthened provisions in the relevant acts.

Cloud Seeding

The Tasmanian Greens will work to:

18. instigate a rigorous assessment of cloud seeding;
19. introduce an application and approval process which requires a demonstration of the likely effects and benefits in specific areas.