

# Catchment and Water Supply Protection Policy



## 1 Background

South Gippsland Region Water Corporation (SGW) recognises the critical importance of catchment management for the protection of water quality and quantity.

South Gippsland Water manages ten water supply systems located in the following Declared Water Supply Catchment Areas (WSCA):

- Agnes River Catchment Area;
- Battery Creek Catchment Area (Fish Creek);
- Bellview & Ness Creek (Korumburra);
- Coalition Creek Catchment Area;
- Deep Creek Catchment Area (Foster);
- Lance Creek Catchment Area;
- Little Bass River Catchment Area (Poowong / Loch / Nyora);
- Tarra River Catchment Area;
- Ruby Creek Catchment Area (Leongatha);
- Tarwin River Catchment Area (Meeniyah & Dumbalk).

The Declared Water Supply Catchment Areas are listed in Schedule 5 of the Catchment and Land Protection Act (1994). The WSCA are located across four shire councils:

- South Gippsland Shire Council;
- Wellington Shire Council;
- Bass Coast Shire Council;
- Baw Baw Shire Council.

## 2 Purpose

The objectives of this policy are to ensure land use and development within Declared Water Supply Catchment Areas is appropriately managed and has minimal impact on the water quality and quantity of South Gippsland Water water supply areas.

## 3 Definitions

For the purposes of this policy only, the following shall mean:

**ADWG:** Australian Drinking Water Guidelines.

**DWMS:** Drinking Water Management System is South Gippsland Water's system to manage drinking water supply.

**SGW:** South Gippsland Region Water Corporation.

**WSCA (Water Supply Catchment Area):** a catchment is an area that catches rainfall and directs it to a creek, river, reservoir or (in built-up areas) a gutter. Water supply catchments feed the reservoirs that provide drinking water.

**Precautionary Principle:** the precautionary principle, as defined in the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999, states that 'if there are threats of serious or irreversible environmental damage, lack of full scientific certainty should not be used as a reason for postponing measures to prevent environmental degradation'.

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## 4 Policy

SGW is committed to supplying safe drinking water to its customers. It recognises protecting Water Supply Catchment Areas (and groundwater catchments) is a critical component of managing water supplies. To achieve this objective, catchment management is a significant component of its DWMS.

Whilst SGW does not have direct control over the land use and development in the water supply catchment areas, legislation requires that the Corporation has a responsibility to take certain actions to protect catchment values ensuring that the water supply from both surface and ground waters are protected against contamination.

The ADWG, provides a framework for management of drinking water quality which includes a multiple barrier ('catchment to tap') approach as an effective method of protecting drinking water.

Management of the drinking water source within the catchment is considered the first important barrier. This involves an understanding of the catchment, related hazards and catchment events or activities that can potentially compromise drinking water quality.

Through the implementation of South Gippsland Water's DWMS, the Corporation has developed preventive strategies and operational controls necessary to reduce pollutant risks and ensure minimal impact on raw water supplies (i.e. before treatment).

In making this commitment, the Corporation will apply:

### a) Relevant legislation and guidelines to protect catchment values.

Whilst the Corporation does not have direct control over the land use and development in the catchments, legislation requires that the Corporation take certain actions to protect catchment values, as follows:

- Services provided by SGW are listed as essential services in the Essential Services Act 1958;
- Water Corporation's functions, as listed in the Water Act 1989, include the provision, management, operation and protection of water supply systems, including the collection, storage, treatment, transfer and distribution of water;
- The Safe Drinking Water Act 2003 and the Safe Drinking Water Regulations 2015 require water suppliers and water storage managers to prepare and implement plans to manage risks in relation to drinking water;
- As a referral agency under the Planning and Environment Act 1987, SGW is required to consider every application referred to it in relation to proposed uses or development of land in water supply catchments;
- The Guidelines for Planning Permit Application in Open, Potable Water Storage Catchment Areas (2012) state that incompatible land use activities should be discouraged where the land cannot be sustainably managed to ensure minimum impact upon downstream water quality or flow volumes, and that planning and responsible authorities should ensure that water quality in water supply catchments is protected from possible contamination by domestic, urban, industrial and agricultural land uses;
- The ADWG (2012) state that system management utilises includes understanding the water supply system (i.e. streams and rivers, storage and service reservoirs, treatment and disinfection facilities, trunk and service mains, consumers' plumbing and appliances),

and that the multiple treatment barriers be implemented to minimise entry and the transmission of contaminants.

**b) The precautionary principle to the management of the Water Supply Catchment Areas is a vitally important aspect of leading practice.**

The precautionary principle requires the Corporation to consider the cumulative impacts of diffuse contaminant sources in managing risks to water quality. These contaminant sources may arise in water supply catchments from changing land use and development, increasing densities of dwellings with on-site wastewater/septic tank treatment systems and the intensity of agricultural, commercial, industrial and other human activity.

**c) Risk management that reflects the precautionary principle.**

SGW will balance economic, environmental, social and equity considerations, to protect and preserve benefits to both present and future generations. Excessive risk aversion can undermine development, however excessive risk taking could also compromise public health. The greatest risk to public health from drinking water is contamination due to pathogenic micro-organisms.

**d) Multiple barriers to protect water quality.**

SGW will maintain robust multiple barriers to reduce potential contamination of water supplies. These barriers shall exist at each stage of water collection (from the catchment areas), storage, treatment and distribution.

An initial effective treatment barrier in water supply systems is protecting source waters at the catchment level.

## 5 Responsibilities

**South Gippsland Water:** shall provide a commitment to advocate for sustainable catchment management in all drinking water catchment areas. This includes protection of catchment values and minimisation of adverse water quality impacts as they relate to the provision of safe drinking water.

**General Manager Operations:** is responsible for ensuring that catchment management requirements are incorporated into the management and strategic planning objectives of SGW.

**Water Quality and Treatment Manager:** is responsible for ensuring that identified catchment management programs are maintained and implemented within the DWMS as part of a multiple treatment barrier approach in water supply and quality management.

**River Health / Water Resources Coordinator** is responsible for:

- Ensuring periodic inspections of catchments are conducted;
- The preparation, implementation and review of risk management plans;
- Adhering to reporting requirements on water quality issues;
- Providing assessment and comment on proposals for use and development applications in WSCA's.

**All Staff:** are responsible for the immediate reporting of any indication of degradation of values in the water supply catchments.

## 6 References

Australian Drinking Water Guidelines (2012)  
 Essential Services Act 1958  
 Water Act 1989  
 Safe Drinking Water Act 2003  
 Safe Drinking Water Regulations 2015  
 Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999  
 Planning and Environment Act 1987  
 Victorian Waterway Management Strategy (2013) Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning  
 West Gippsland Regional Catchment Strategy (2013 - 2019) West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority:  
 Guidelines for planning permit application in open, potable water supply catchment areas (2012) Department of Environment and Primary Industry  
 Guidance note for determining dwelling density when assessing planning permit applications (2012) Victoria Water  
 Catchment Monitoring, Assessment and Improvement Programs (2012) South Gippsland Water  
 Reference for Assessing Planning Permit Applications in Water Supply Catchment Areas (2013) South Gippsland Water  
[NWR-025 Water Supply Catchment Development and Land Use Guidelines Information](#)

This document is to be reviewed in **March 2018** or earlier as required.  
 This document must not be released to external parties without approval by the Managing Director.

DOCUMENT APPROVAL		
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