

Interim Regional Target Setting

There are opportunities across Victoria to improve water quality to enhance beneficial uses by setting interim targets to help achieve long term objectives.

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Within the ten-year lifetime of the draft SEPP (Waters), not all beneficial uses will be able to be fully protected and not all environmental quality objectives will be met. Interim regional targets drive the progressive rehabilitation of water quality to achieve longer term environmental benefits.

The draft SEPP (Waters) requires Melbourne Water and catchment management authorities with waterway management responsibilities to develop interim regional targets.

Links to regional waterway strategies

Interim regional targets will be set according to priorities for environmental protection and rehabilitation as determined through the regional waterway strategy review process. Targets will be informed by measurable management actions linked to demonstrated improvement in water quality. The regional waterway strategies are approved by the Minister for Water and the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, on recommendation from the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning.

As targets are met, new ones can be set through ongoing reviews to ensure progressive movement toward environmental quality requirements for identified beneficial uses.

Processes to support interim regional target setting

To support regional target setting, it is proposed that DELWP will:

- commit to work with CMAs and Melbourne Water to establish a process and timelines for development of targets.
- make funding available to CMAs to undertake the interim regional target setting processes in their next round of strategy reviews in 2022/23.
- provide guidance on the setting of regional water quality targets as part of guidelines issued for regional waterway strategies. An action to update these guidelines would be included in the SEPP Implementation Plan.
- update the new prioritisation decision support tool with new SEPP (Waters) environmental quality objectives data for the CMAs to use.

The EPA has developed preliminary guidance material on environmental quality objectives that reflect the different states of waterways that can occur within a segment. These could be used to guide the interim regional targets in waterways. The tiers contained in guidance do not have the same legal weight as the objectives within the draft SEPP (Waters), however they are useful to assist determine what interim objectives could be attained within the life of the policy, when management interventions are known.

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