

# Latrobe Valley Regional Rehabilitation Strategy

*Submission from Section 51 Licence Holders within the Latrobe Valley system.*

## Overview

The purpose of this submission is to provide the department with consolidated feedback from Section 51 Licence Holders within the Latrobe Valley system.

## Background

A meeting was held with DELWP on Tuesday 21 January 2020 at Southern Rural Water, Maffra Office where Section 51 Licence holders discussed the draft strategy with DELWP and DJPR representatives. As a collective, the group wish to submit the following concerns for consideration when finalising the strategy.

## General/overall comments

In attendance at the meeting: Frankie Mills, Jim Dean, Alan Paulet, Angus Zilm and Ross Ingram (Ross farms in the Lindenow Valley and attended as the chair of the SRW Groundwater and Rivers Customer Forum as well as representing broader interests in the groundwater resources outside the Latrobe Valley).

**FACT:** Pit lakes are being considered to stabilise the mine voids and to manage fire and landslide risks. It was noted that large volumes of water would be required to fill all three voids. (Approximately 3000 GL for full pit lakes).

The group submits that:

- Any work plans put forward by the mine operators for consideration would need to explain how the water would be moved to the pits.
- Consideration needs to be given as to what time of year the water would be taken out of the river to fill the pits.
- Consideration needs to be given as to whether filling the pits with fresh water is the best economic option and suggest that the pits could be filled with sea water or desalinated water as an alternative option.
- Water has valuable uses other than mine rehabilitation, particularly for local irrigators – 10GL extra could be used straight away for irrigation and another possible 25GL for future development of the region (allowing irrigation of up to an additional 7,000 ha).
- The level of development in the Lower Latrobe is restricted by water, there is significant areas in addition to the potential development from 35 GL that could be developed further, benefiting the whole community.
- DELWP need to look at and complete economic studies on water use/availability
- The value of water needs to be indexed, and mines need to pay a commercial rate.
- There may be options that if the ground water continues to be pumped, to consider whether this could be sold – income stream to pay to stabilise the mine pits
- There could also be the offer of additional licenses in the aquifer in the surrounding area to take water from the aquifer to assist with reducing the pressure by managing across the region rather than just at the mine site. – this could maximize the water volume for productive uses.
- Consider other rehabilitation options to stabilise the pits or address the issues;
  - o Use overburden to stabilise the sides of the pits
  - o Fill the pits with sea water or desalinated water
  - o Consider whether the pits would need to be filled completely with water or could they be partially filled and achieve stability
  - o Continue to pump the water to maintain stability and sell the water to fund alternative rehabilitation measures
  - o Find alternative uses for the resource (ie. a coal-to-hydrogen project, removing the need for rehabilitation).