



Media Release
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TASMANIAN WATER AND SEWERAGE STATE OF THE INDUSTRY REPORT 2015-16

Tasmania's independent Economic Regulator today released its latest annual review of the State's urban water and sewerage industry. The 2015-16 Report covers TasWater's third year of operation as a single entity.

Mr Joe Dimasi, the Tasmanian Economic Regulator, said the Report provides "a detailed review of the industry's performance and provides consumers and stakeholders with an insight into the issues and challenges that persist today, eight years after major industry reform."

It is evident that despite significant investment in terms of both expenditure and effort, drinking water quality and environmental compliance are not at the levels expected or required for contemporary water and sewerage networks.

Increased investment in water infrastructure in recent years has increased the percentage of the Tasmanian population receiving water that met drinking water quality guidelines to approximately 99 per cent. However, in 2015-16, 23 towns across the State were receiving non-compliant drinking water. Six drinking water systems were found to contain metal concentrations above safe limits on at least one occasion. In August 2016, TasWater undertook to remove all permanent boil water alerts by August 2018.

Compliance with sewage effluent discharge limits remained below minimum standards and expectations in 2015-16 with 24 out of 79 sewage treatment plants reporting compliance above 90 per cent. While TasWater is working with industry regulators to prioritise its regulatory challenges, it is evident that despite significant capital investment, TasWater's sewerage assets continue to not meet environmental standards.

During 2015-16, TasWater continued to receive a high number of complaints, reporting a rate of 14 complaints per 1 000 properties, which is well above the relevant service standard. Water quality concerns remain the largest source of complaints received by TasWater (38 per cent of complaints) followed by billing and accounts (21 per cent).

TasWater responded quickly to high priority bursts and leaks, with attendance times within the approved service standards. An average of 167 in 1 000 customers experienced an interruption to their water service throughout the year, which lasted, on average, 199 minutes.

Mr Dimasi noted that "TasWater has made some significant improvements to its systems and processes to better understand its infrastructure and operations. However, performance outcomes will need to improve markedly to achieve the required regulatory standards, particularly in relation to sewerage."

Mr Dimasi also noted that "Since 2015-16, TasWater has improved its engagement with customers and industry stakeholders and is developing a long term strategic plan."

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The State of the Industry Report 2015-16 is
available at:
www.economicregulator.tas.gov.au
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