

Vasse Taskforce

August 2024 | Meeting 31

The thirty first Vasse Taskforce meeting was held in Busselton on 16 August 2024 Chaired by Hon. Pierre Yang (MLC). The following key issues were discussed:

1. Management of Vasse Wonnerup wetlands

The Vasse Taskforce discussed the seasonal conditions that influenced management of the Vasse Wonnerup wetlands over summer and autumn, including:

- A long dry summer for the Vasse Wonnerup wetlands made for a challenging season.
- Salinities were higher than usual early in the summer season due to the lack of spring rainfall and flow.
- Managers complied with the s40 requirements under the Biodiversity Conservation Act, which places conditions on how much seawater can be let through the Vasse surge barrier to manage water quality in the estuary.
- Hydraulic separation between the Vasse Estuary and Lower Vasse River was maintained.
- Despite the difficult conditions, water quality was reasonable over the warmer months.



Photo: sampling the Vasse estuary in March 2024

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2. Lower Vasse River update

- The City of Busselton provided an update on the proposed stage 3 sediment removal project in the Lower Vasse River. The City has issued a tender looking at both current and alternative approaches to sediment removal for different conditions in summer and winter.
- The City provided an update on the new Waterways management committee, who will be meeting twice before the end of 2024.
- The City expressed their interest in prioritising the Busselton LIA for future sewerage infill due to the contribution of septic tanks to nutrients in the Lower Vasse River. The Taskforce expressed their support for infill sewerage for both the LIA and for Estuary View Drive.

3. Sediment removal in the Vasse Estuary

- The Estuary View Drive sediment removal project is now complete.
- The project used a vacuum sucker attached to an excavator arm to remove and transport sediment to the Busselton Wastewater Treatment Plant for drying.
- Work ran from 16 April to 1 May 2024, removing approximately 787 m³ of sludge (48 tonnes dry matter).
- Water quality monitoring occurred twice weekly throughout the work and no negative impacts were recorded on the surrounding estuary.
- Residents were on-site throughout the work and were hopeful of improved conditions this summer.
- The project was a partnership between Water Corporation, DWER and City of Busselton.



Photo: Vacuum sucker at Estuary View Drive, Wonnerup

4. Ten Years of Vasse Taskforce

2024 marks ten years since the commencement of the Vasse Taskforce. Dr Kath Lynch provided a reflection of the ten year period, noting the following achievements of the Taskforce:

- Establishing a water quality and waterway governance structure, including interim asset managers for key waterways.
- Ongoing funding for science, monitoring and nutrient reduction programs through Revitalising Geographe Waterways.
- Water quality improvements in Toby Inlet and the Vasse estuary.
- Improved science and understanding of Geographe waterways.



Photo: Vasse Taskforce member August 2024