

## **Revision of NWQMS Document 4: Australian and New Zealand Guidelines for Fresh and Marine Water Quality and NWQMS Document 7: Australian Guidelines for Water Quality Monitoring and Reporting**

### **Background**

Australian and New Zealand Environment Ministers have given approval to revise the National Water Quality Management Strategy (NWQMS) *Document 4: Australian and New Zealand Guidelines for Fresh and Marine Water Quality* (the Water Quality Guidelines) and consequential amendments to *Document 7: Australian Guidelines for Water Quality Monitoring and Reporting 2000* (the Monitoring & Reporting Guidelines). These documents are key resources for managing water quality and protecting aquatic ecosystems in Australia and New Zealand.

Since finalising the last revision of the Water Quality Guidelines in 2000, substantial new data and advances in monitoring and assessment methods have become available. The revised Document 4 will incorporate new data on a wide range of toxicants and physical and chemical stressors.

A high-level Joint Steering Committee has been established to oversee the process. The Joint Steering Committee is chaired by Mr Graeme Milligan, from the Queensland Government's Department of Environment and Resource Management and is supported by six Technical Working Groups responsible for specific revision tasks.

### **Scope of Work**

The scope of the revision is to:

- update water quality guideline trigger values for toxicants – based on additional toxicity data published since the last revision
- update trigger values for physico-chemical stressors – based on more comprehensive regional 'reference' water quality data acquired since the last revision
- revise statistical procedures across all elements of the guidelines
- revise the guidelines for Monitoring and Reporting
- make the guidelines easier to understand and use.

The revision is being undertaken in three phases and is expected to take up to three years (completed mid to late 2012):

- Phase 1: A number of high priority and relatively straightforward revisions identified during earlier stakeholder consultations will be undertaken together with definition of activities to be undertaken in Phases 2 and 3. It is anticipated that Phase 1 will be completed within 18 months of commencement, i.e. by April 2011.
- Phase 2: Represents the major revision period. It is anticipated to take a further 18 months to complete, i.e. by October 2012.
- Phase 3: represents a formal mechanism for regular maintenance and updating of the guidelines on an on-going basis, following the current revision, to ensure they remain current and address significant changes in technology, water source management techniques, and end-user requirements as they emerge.

### **Technical Working Groups**

There are six technical Working Groups focussed on particular chapters of Document 4. The technical Working Groups are outlined below:

- Technical Working Group 1 – Introduction and Framework, Chaired by Charles Edlington
- Technical Working Group 2 – Biological Indicators/Assessment, Chaired by Prof. Jenny Davis
- Technical Working Group 3 – Physical and Chemical Stressors, Chaired by Prof. Bill Maher

- Technical Working Group 4 – Toxicants and Sediments, Chaired by Dr Graeme Batley
- Technical Working Group 5 – Chapter 7 & Document 7 Monitoring and Reporting, Chaired by Prof. David Fox
- Technical Working Group 6 – Chapter 4 and 9 Primary Industries, Chaired by Dr Margaret Leonard

Cultural and spiritual environmental values are briefly referenced in the current guidelines. However no guidance is provided to assist in the protection and management of these particular environmental values. As part of this review, indigenous cultural and spiritual environmental values are being discussed and an approach for incorporating these values is being considered.

Regular updates on technical working group progress will be posted on this website <http://www.ephc.gov.au/taxonomy/term/102>.