



# 10-year vision for the kanamaluka/Tamar Estuary

Tamar Estuary Management Taskforce







## Acknowledgement to Traditional Custodians

In recognition of this country's deep history and culture, we acknowledge the palawa/pakana people as the traditional owners and ongoing custodians of the land and waters of lutruwita/Tasmania. We pay our respects to Elders past and present and all Tasmanian Aboriginal people who belong to the oldest continuing culture on earth.

The kanamaluka/Tamar Estuary has provided rich food and cultural resources for Aboriginal people for over 40,000 years, and it continues to be a significant cultural landscape today.

We value the expertise and knowledge of Tasmanian Aboriginal people. We commit to listening, learning, and working together to improve the health of our waterways and create a strong and connected community in the future.

## Our story

The kanamaluka/Tamar estuary is an iconic part of the Tasmanian landscape. Stretching over 70km from Low Head to Launceston, it plays an important role in our cultural and natural heritage. It features deep channels, shallow mud flats and spectacular rocky reefs that provide important habitat for a diverse range of marine and bird life.

Over 2,000 generations of Aboriginal people have cared for and lived from the rich resources of the estuary, and it continues to be a valued landscape for Tasmanian Aboriginal people.

The Tamar Estuary Management Taskforce was established to provide options and advice to the Tasmanian Government on how to develop and manage the kanamaluka/Tamar Estuary. As an advisory body, its

members include government departments, agencies, local government authorities and expert bodies with responsibilities or interests in the estuary.

The estuary has long been vulnerable to human impacts. Land modifications and pollution caused by industrial, agricultural and urban use have all affected the estuary's health. The taskforce understands that sustainable management of the estuary must balance the needs of the community and the environment. These needs include public health, ecological health, the local economy, and recreational amenity.

Working with the community, the taskforce is focused on improving the health of the kanamaluka/Tamar Estuary, while creating a world-class destination for locals and visitors alike.

## The vision

The kanamaluka/Tamar Estuary is an inspiring landscape that connects and celebrates our community, environment, culture and history.

The vision is designed to reframe Launceston's relationship to the estuary, recognising and embracing its transformation from an industrial landscape to a focal point for community events and recreation.

It sets the direction for the long-term recreational, community and cultural use of the upper kanamaluka/Tamar Estuary, with scalable options that can be implemented over time.

Based on feedback from the community, the vision is underpinned by three values which help to guide the future direction of the kanamaluka/Tamar Estuary:

1. Creating community spaces to bring people together
2. Enhancing recreational connections around the estuary
3. Preserving natural values for future generations.

# Developing the vision

The taskforce released its draft vision for the kanamaluka/Tamar Estuary in June 2021. The draft vision focused on two priorities to develop the estuary as a focal point for community events and recreation, while supporting its natural ecology to better manage sediment and water quality.

**Priority 1** focused on creating a cultural and recreational precinct. important to them. We've also learned a lot about how people want to see the estuary protected and enhanced.

**Priority 2** focused on the long-term sustainable management of sediment. The consultation confirmed the depth and breadth of public interest in the future of the kanamaluka/Tamar Estuary. Based on the feedback we received and our understanding of the natural estuary processes, we've created a 10-year vision for the estuary.

We carried out community consultation from August to November 2021 and heard from over 550 community members. The consultation took place in two stages and included an online survey, interactive maps and eight community pop-up events. This has helped us to understand what the community values and what's It's a roadmap for how we can create inspiring public spaces and healthy, resilient waterways for current and future generations.



## What we heard

Feedback from the community and targeted stakeholders showed overwhelming support for the future priorities identified in the draft vision.

In particular, the community strongly supported initiatives that would restore the health of the estuary, improve water quality and enhance connectivity along the water's edge.

Natural values were emphasised, such as habitat restoration along with interpretive signage to help to educate visitors about the importance of the intertidal areas. The vision reflects these priorities and incorporates community and stakeholder feedback into the proposed cultural and recreational precinct and options for the sustainable management of sediment.

Sedimentation in the upper estuary is a concern for some people, particularly its impact on rowing, sailing and other on-water activities. Our proposed approach to managing sediment - as part of the overall priority to improve river health – is discussed in Priority 2.

The kanamaluka/Tamar estuary is a significant cultural and historical landscape for Tasmanian Aboriginal people, and we will continue to work with the community to explore how this is acknowledged and celebrated.

# What has changed in the vision

The vision draws on two key inputs to expand on the priorities outlined in the draft vision.

- Community and stakeholder feedback.
- An architectural and design report on the proposed cultural and recreational precinct.
- 3. Space for temporary dining and events at key locations, with a focus on cultural activities.
- 4. Long-term sustainable management of water quality and natural habitats.
- 5. Bringing people closer to the water edge through estuary walkways.

### Our priorities are:

1. Continuous pedestrian and cycle links along the water's edge that are accessible and easy to navigate.
2. Opportunities for telling the story of our history and natural values.

## How the vision benefits the community

Around the world, urban waterways are being recognised for their potential to bring communities together, create unique tourism opportunities and enhance the natural values of the regions that surround them.

Just like these waterways, the kanamaluka/Tamar Estuary and its tributaries around Launceston are central to the city's identity.

Our vision is for a revitalised estuary that will inspire locals and visitors alike to connect to the waterways. All along the water's edge, we want to see more people enjoying more features of the estuary, more often.

We want the estuary to become one of Tasmania's premiere destinations for recreation, entertainment, community connections, natural values, and cultural and creative events.

To do that, we will support more opportunities for business and tourism, provide better connections between key areas of the city and the regions beyond, invest in improved estuary health and water quality, develop a greater variety of recreational and community experiences, and create opportunities to connect with our environment, history and culture through storytelling and interactive learning.

Above all, we want to recognise and celebrate Launceston as a great waterfront city.





# River health

We know that water quality in the kanamaluka/Tamar Estuary is one of the top areas of concern for the community. The health of the estuary has been impacted over many decades by commercial and industrial uses such as urban development, mining, shipping, agriculture and forestry.

Even though Launceston is no longer an industrial port, pathogens and other pollutants continue to enter the waterways from a range of sources. These sources include overflows from Launceston’s combined stormwater and sewerage system; other wastewater and stormwater sources; and stock grazing and dairy farming in the catchment.

To combat two of these major contributors to poor waterway health, the River Health Action Plan was developed in December 2017 and continues to target key areas affecting water quality.

A total of \$140.7 million is being invested by the Australian and Tasmanian governments, the City of Launceston and TasWater to reduce pathogen levels and improve the long-term health of the estuary: \$129.2 million for infrastructure upgrades to the combined stormwater and sewerage system and \$11.5 million for catchment management initiatives such as improving

urban stormwater, on-farm revegetation, improving dairy effluent management, and keeping stock out of waterways.

Significant progress has already been made on both programs, including planning and design of major infrastructure upgrades to the combined stormwater and sewerage system, addressing urban stormwater quality. Specific improvement works are underway to reduce untreated sewage entering the waterway. Extensive fencing and effluent improvement systems on grazing and dairy farms are being installed.

This important work will continue to be delivered for the benefit of the whole region. Over time, these programs will decrease the pollutant loads ending up in the estuary, leading to big improvements in water quality.

Find out more by visiting our website at: [tamarestuary.com.au/programs/water\\_quality](http://tamarestuary.com.au/programs/water_quality)



Image credit: Sam Jack

# Priority 1: Creating a cultural and recreational precinct

Creating a cultural and recreational precinct that draws people to the foreshore and promotes Launceston’s strengths as an estuarine city.

The waterfront precinct of the upper estuary extends from Tailrace Park in Riverside to Invermay Road on the North Esk. It also includes the area round Yacht Basin and the head of the South Esk.

In August 2021, Cox Architecture and Arup Design were engaged to expand upon the options outlined in the draft vision.

To aid with planning, the precinct has been divided into seven interconnected areas. Each area has unique opportunities and constraints, requiring a targeted approach to development, restoration, and conservation.

## A. Kings Wharf to Riverbend Park

Our vision for this area features experiences that celebrate Launceston’s industrial, manufacturing and maritime history. It will combine new public spaces with existing parkland, while maintaining and enhancing the natural values of the area. Pop-up spaces for events will encourage families and people of all ages to visit.

New interpretive trails will celebrate the cultural and industrial history of the area. A new walkway will bring people closer to the water and enhance connectivity along the waterway.

## B. Connection between the bridges

Restoring the natural values along the northern bank of the North Esk will open up the public spaces between Seaport Marina and QVMAG. As this is a flood prone-area, interventions here require a light touch. Flood-durable pathways will create safe walkways suitable for families and people of all ages.

Better connectivity between existing pathways will encourage people to explore the area on foot or bike, while native revegetation will improve waterway health and enhance natural habitats.

## C. Seaport Marina

This popular area is well-loved by locals and tourists alike. Our vision here focuses on improving the amenity of the commercial precinct and increasing its appeal for locals and visitors.

Existing access points will continue to be maintained, while new estuary walkways and lookouts could be considered.

Other interventions, such as Priority 2 and the River Health Action Plan, focus on improving estuary health and appearance, opening up possibilities for enhanced on-water recreation.

## D. Royal Park to west estuary walk

The focus of this area is on enhanced use of existing spaces and better connectivity. Improved wayfinding will be possible through new signage and purpose-built paths that ‘join-the-dots’ between the east and west banks.

Support for active public events spaces will draw people to the area, while a focus on maintenance and weed control will allow the natural beauty of the parklands to shine.





## E. West estuary walk

Our vision for this area is all about access and improved amenity. Native revegetation will help to improve the health of the waterway and restore natural habitats.

Popular gravel paths will be maintained for recreation and upgraded to enhance flood durability. New bins and seats will be provided to keep the area beautiful and accessible.

An exciting new walkway will meander over the water, bringing people closer to the estuary and providing a unique perspective on its natural values.

## F. West estuary walking trail

Shared pathways are a focus of this area, with wider pathways and improved lines of sight through the control of non-native and invasive plant species.

Native plant rehabilitation will complement the natural look and feel of the area, and an ongoing maintenance program will create a safer environment for recreation.

## G. Tailrace Park

This well-loved area is a focal point for the community.

A new shared pathway will improve connectivity along the waterway for recreational users, while interpretive signs will capture the imagination of visitors.

Opportunities for playful, interactive experiences abound, with sculptural trails and community artwork all on the cards.

Future opportunities to connect pathways with attractions like the Tamar Wetlands to the north and along the length of the estuary are also being considered.





## Priority 2: Long-term sustainable management of sediment

Our consultations with the community have shown us that most people understand that sediment is a natural part of the estuary, and that human interventions have had a big impact on the way the estuary functions.

Overwhelmingly, we found strong community support for managing sediment within the broader context of whole-of-estuary health.

Concern about sedimentation in the kanamaluka/Tamar Estuary is part of our history. However, much of this concern stemmed from a time when Launceston was a busy seaport with few other ways to transport goods or passengers.

In the absence of intervention, sedimentation follows a natural rhythm of build-up and erosion determined by tidal movements and river flows. Over time, a ‘dynamic equilibrium’ is established, where channel depth remains reasonably constant between large flood events.

Scientific modelling tells us that increasing the amount of water that can move upstream with the tides may have an impact on reducing sediment in the upper estuary. One way this might be achieved is to regenerate areas of wetland on the North Esk River. Over time, this could reduce the visible mudflats and improve recreational access at low tide.

In addition, we know that wetland regeneration can:

- improve water quality downstream by acting as a filtering system
- protect banks from erosion
- reduce flood risk by spreading out and slowing the volume of storm water
- sequester and store carbon dioxide in plant-life and soils
- provide important habitat for resident and migratory species.

The community has told us that these benefits are also extremely important to them.

We’re currently investigating the best way to increase tidal prism on the North Esk River so that these interventions provide broad environmental benefits, while potentially reducing the size of the mudflats we see in the upper estuary.

We recognise that these interventions will not address the concerns of some stakeholders. In addition to the proposed long-term management strategy, the Tasmanian Government has committed to site specific dredging at key access points. This work is being progressed separately by the Department of State Growth.

## Realising the vision

We are providing our 10-year vision to the Tasmanian and Australian governments and local councils, recommending that they use it to guide future planning and decision-making for the estuary.

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We recognise that implementing the vision will require funding commitments and support from all three levels of government and that the merit of the proposals will need to be considered in the context of other regional priorities. All elements of the vision have been designed so that they can be planned and implemented in stages, which can be scaled according to the level of funding available, and as new priorities emerge.

The vision has been designed to reflect community values. By focusing on important priority areas, we can begin to see immediate changes in the health and amenity of the estuary.

While the vision is initially focussed on the upper estuary, there is the potential to expand it to the broader kanamaluka/Tamar Estuary in the future.

Our recommended short-term priorities are:

- Continue to work with key organisations to improve water quality and overall estuary health through the River Health Action Plan.
- Identify and commence native revegetation projects at key locations in the upper estuary.
- Identify gaps in signage and connectivity along the water’s edge and commence project planning for key upgrades.
- Identify sites where additional rubbish bins and seating could be added and initiate a works program to establish these.

A draft implementation plan that focuses on next steps can be found at the end of the vision.

Before the larger estuary boardwalk and sediment management priorities can progress, we are recommending that further technical investigations and a competitive design process be undertaken in the 2022 calendar year. Once this has been completed, it can be used to develop a more detailed implementation plan for works commencing in 2023.

We recognise that some of the changes being proposed are long-term in nature. It may take some time before the full benefits of our interventions are seen, but they will continue to evolve for current and future generations.





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Tamar Estuary Management Taskforce partners:

