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Onus on us to use our water wisely

Tasmania must take a long-term approach to its water management, writes **Guy Barnett**

WATER is one of the great natural advantages of Tasmania.

Our state is 1 per cent of Australia's land mass but we receive 12 per cent of Australia's rainfall and have 27 per cent of the nation's water in storages.

With such a precious resource, we must take a sustainable and long-term approach to its management.

After 18 months of research and collaboration, I released the rural water use strategy to support the wise use of water this year.

A key outcome is to ensure Tasmania's environmental values and river health are protected, while delivering sustainable outcomes for irrigators and renewable energy developments.

To implement the 29 actions outlined in the

Tasmanian Irrigation is about using water wisely.

We develop schemes which store water in winter when it is abundant and make it available during summer when it is scarce.

The argument against using water from hydro energy generation also doesn't stack up – water in the Northern Midlands and Cressy schemes, for example, has been through the Poatina power station, and the same happens in the Derwent Valley while also maintaining environmental flows.

Thanks to the Australian government's recent \$20m investment in Tasmanian water infrastructure, we are now reusing and repurposing more water than any previous time, with projects such as the Penna recycled water scheme and South Arm recycled water

strategy, we formed the rural water roundtable made up of expert water managers.

We have now established a river health advisory project and increased resources by investing an additional \$1.5m.

To help manage the implementation of the strategy and establish the river health advisory project, the Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania is recruiting three new positions – a river health scientist, a river health engagement officer and a project manager to implement the rural water use strategy.

Assertions that our rivers are being drained for irrigation are completely wrong.

And they stem from a fundamental lack of understanding.

pipeline, which both treat effluent water and provide it to farmers for irrigation.

Estimates indicate between 28-35 gigalitres of water runs off Tasmania into the ocean each year, which means, on average, 77 million litres runs out to sea daily – which highlights that we can make wiser use of our water.

The 2021-22 state budget is investing more than \$30m to continue delivering our nation-leading Pipeline to Prosperity irrigation projects across our state.

We understand that the sustainable development of our water resources has the potential to greatly increase opportunities in irrigated agriculture which creates investment and jobs in regional communities.

Guy Barnett is Minister for Primary Industries and Water