



Media Release

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Whose poo is this? A new project to track the source of faecal bacteria in the Tamar

A new project investigating the source of faecal bacteria in the upper Tamar estuary will assist with identifying and managing the risks of water contact for recreational users.

The Faecal Source Tracking Pilot Project started in January and is funded through NRM North's Tamar Estuary and Esk Rivers (TEER) Program, with additional funding from the City of Launceston and the West Tamar Council.

The project is an initiative of the TEER Program and will be supported by a working group which includes representatives from TasWater, Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment, City of Launceston and the West Tamar Council.

TEER Program Scientific and Technical Coordinator, Dr Toni Furlonge, said the project aimed to detect whether the *Enterococci* bacteria found in water samples taken monthly from key sites in the estuary, has come from cattle, horses, sheep, septic tank systems or sewage treatment plants at Ti Tree Bend, Riverside, Newnham and Legana.

"By the end of June, we will have some preliminary results of the sources of *Enterococci* bacteria from key locations in the upper Tamar estuary, telling us whether the bacteria has come from livestock or humans," Ms Furlonge said.

"This information will help inform decisions to target infrastructure investment and catchment management to improve the health of the Tamar estuary."

NRM North has engaged consultant John Adulcikas to analyse water samples taken by TEER staff from eight sites in the upper Tamar from Launceston to Hillwood. The City of Launceston is having an additional four sites analysed from water flowing into the upper Tamar from the Launceston CBD.

Mr Adulcikas collects the *Enterococci* bacteria from the laboratory after the presence or absence of bacteria has been tested.

"From here, I grow the bacteria using a range of sugars with results providing a fingerprint of the type of bacteria, and when results are matched to known types of bacteria, the source may be identified," Mr Adulcikas said.

Once all the results are collated, the working group will release the information to the public to assist with understanding the risks associated with water contact in the upper estuary.

This project will complement the TEER Program's Water Quality Improvement Plan (WQIP) released in 2015, which has targets for lowering the levels of bacteria in the Tamar estuary over the next few years.

By knowing the source of the bacteria in the water, NRM North and TEER Program partners will be able to target on ground activities and investment in infrastructure improvements throughout the larger catchments and around Launceston, to decrease the amount of bacteria moving into the Tamar estuary.

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