

Chapter 2

Proposal to Prepare a Draft Pioneer Valley Water Resource Plan amendment

2.1 Amending the Pioneer Valley Water Resource Plan

The *Water Act 2000* provides that the Minister may amend a water resource plan to advance the sustainable management of water. The Minister's decision to amend the Pioneer Valley Water Resource Plan is based on the impacts of current levels of groundwater development and concerns that any further development will in some areas exacerbate those impacts.

Ongoing seawater intrusion that results from current use levels and the potential for the problem to worsen and the need to provide for groundwater dependent ecosystems are key drivers in the decision.

The main stages in preparing or amending a water resource plan and the steps involved are outlined in Figure 2. Three core phases lead to finalisation, followed by implementation through a Resource Operations Plan. Completion of each phase is an important milestone in the process.

Following a *pre-planning phase*, which involves data collection and technical assessments, preliminary community consultation and preparation of an information report, the draft plan *development phase* officially begins when the Minister announces through public notice the intention to prepare a draft water resource plan. Once an information report is released, submissions on the process or issues in the report are invited.

Once the initial submission period closes, the consultation process begins with establishment of a Community Reference Panel (Chapter 4) and draft Plan preparation begins.

During this phase a range of technical studies, including hydrology, environmental, social and economic assessments are undertaken and integrated into the draft plan's development. The technical assessment and consultation processes run in parallel (for more information on the technical process, see Chapter 5).

The draft Plan will be the culmination of a considerable consultation process involving all the information that has been generated. This includes the community consultation outcomes and the technical assessments. By investigating the water resource issues in this way, and discussing how future needs can be accommodated, the draft Plan provides a platform from which solutions for future water needs can be developed.

Water resource planning process:

- *pre-planning phase;*
- *draft plan development phase;*
- *public review phase;*
- *implementation phase.*

The Water Resource Planning Process

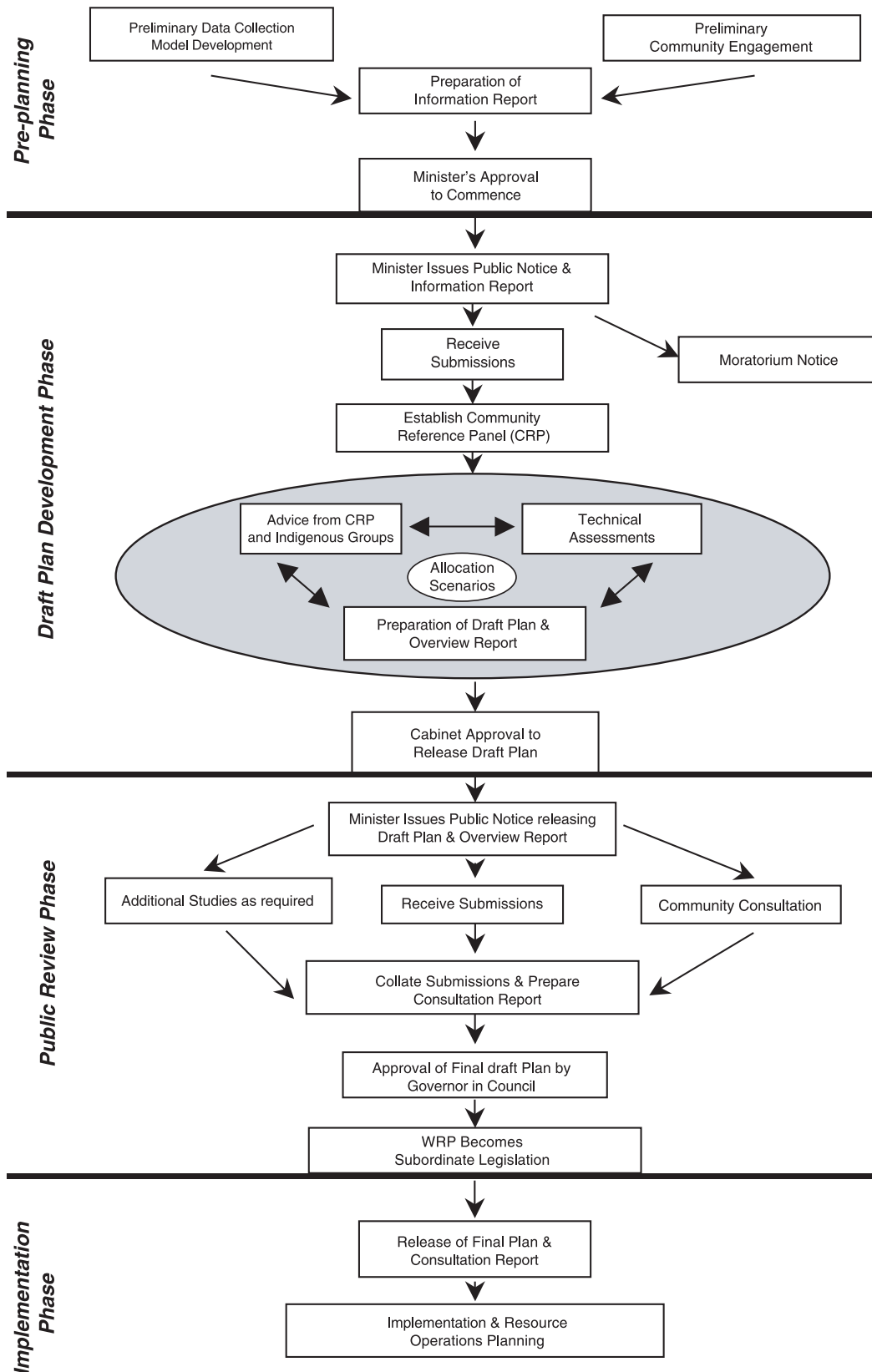


Figure 2: Stages in developing a Water Resource Plan amendment

An overview report, which summarises the results of the technical assessments and consultation process, is released in conjunction with the draft Plan.

On release of the draft Plan, a *public review phase* begins. This phase allows the community to weigh information contained in the draft Plan and overview report, and through submissions communicate to the Minister their views on the best outcome. This phase will also help identify areas where additional assessments or other work are necessary.

In deciding on the final amended Plan, the Minister will adopt a management strategy after considering the feedback received during the consultation period.

Following approval by Governor-in-Council, the Plan becomes subordinate legislation to the *Water Act 2000* and enters the implementation phase. This will occur principally through development of a resource operations plan, through which the day-to-day rules for managing the water will be established.

2.2 Public Notice

The *Water Act 2000* requires the Minister to publish a notice of his intention to prepare a draft amendment for an existing water resource plan. The notice must say why the Plan is being prepared, state the proposed Plan area and the water to which it is intended the Plan will apply, identify where copies of the Information Report may be obtained and where submissions by anyone may be made.

Notification of the Minister's intention to amend the Plan has been published and submissions have been invited. A copy of the notice is appended (Appendix A).

2.3 Moratorium

As part of the process for developing a draft amended water resource plan, it is generally necessary to place a hold, or moratorium, on applications to take or interfere with water in the Plan area. The intent of a moratorium is to maintain the water entitlement and development status quo while the Plan or amendment is being developed. This will allow planning to proceed on a stable water use base so that any future development can be managed in accordance with planning outcomes.

The Minister has published a moratorium notice on applications related to the water covered by the proposed amendment. The

A Public Notice is published to notify the community that a draft Water Resource Plan is being prepared for the proposed Plan area.

The purpose of a Moratorium Notice is to maintain the status quo on water use while the draft Water Resource Plan is being developed.

moratorium is expected to apply until the planning processes associated with the proposed amendment have been finalised. A copy of the Moratorium Notice is included at Appendix A.

2.4 Timeframe for preparation of the Pioneer Valley Water Resource Plan

Release of a draft Plan is anticipated to occur in mid to late 2004. Finalisation is anticipated in 2005. However, this will depend on community consultation and comment received on the draft Water Resource Plan amendment as well as relevant government and statutory processes.