

Bradfield Report implementation

Delivering for Queensland
January 2024



Acknowledgment of Country

The Department of Regional Development, Manufacturing and Water respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Country. We recognise the ongoing spiritual and cultural connection Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples have with land, water, sea and sky. We pay our deep respects to their Elders past and present, support future leaders, and acknowledge First Nations Peoples' right to self-determination.

Department of Regional Development, Manufacturing and Water

Copyright

This publication is protected by the *Copyright Act 1968*.



Licence

This work is licensed by the Queensland Government under a Creative Commons Attribution-Non-Commercial-No Derivative Works (CC BY-NC-ND) 4.0 Australia licence. To view a copy of this licence, visit: <http://creativecommons.org.au/by/3.0/au>

You are free to copy, communicate and adapt this publication, as long as you attribute it as follows:
© Department of Regional Development, Manufacturing and Water, 2023. CS10499 2/23



The Queensland Government is committed to providing accessible services to Queenslanders of all cultural and linguistic backgrounds. If you have difficulty understanding this publication and need a translator, please call the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National) on telephone 131 450 and ask them to contact the Queensland Department of Regional Development, Manufacturing and Water on (07) 3328 4811.

Disclaimer

While every care has been taken in preparing this publication, the State of Queensland accepts no responsibility for decisions or actions taken as a result of any data, information, statement or advice, expressed or implied, contained within. To the best of our knowledge, the content was correct at the time of publishing.

Photography courtesy of the Department of Regional Development, Manufacturing and Water.

Copies of this publication are available on our website at www.rdmw.qld.gov.au and further copies are available upon request to:

Department of Regional Development, Manufacturing and Water
GPO Box 2247, Brisbane 4001

Phone: 13QGOV (13 74 68)
Email: info@rdmw.qld.gov.au
Web: www.rdmw.qld.gov.au

General acknowledgments

The Queensland Government would like to thank and acknowledge the Queenslanders who took part in the review process which assisted with the development of the panel's report and its implementation.

Introduction

Water is vital for thriving regional communities and the environment. How we meet the water needs of growing communities in a changing climate is both a challenge and an opportunity. To build long-term sustainability and resilience, we need to continue to apply place-based catchment planning and responsive water management.

One of the ways our department is leading this work is through the government's response to the [Bradfield Regional Assessment and Development Panel report](#).

Since its release the panel's report has informed multiple work programs already underway and new initiatives such as the Queensland Water Strategy and the development of a Strategic Water Infrastructure Plan.

This document provides an update on the government's response to the panel's report and how we are implementing the panel's recommendations to track our progress.

The Bradfield Regional Assessment and Development Panel

In 2021, the Queensland Government established an independent expert panel to investigate the feasibility of a Bradfield scheme.

The scheme, and variants of it, proposed transferring huge volumes of water from north Queensland's coastal food producing catchments to 'irrigate land outback' in western Queensland. It was first suggested by engineer Dr John Bradfield in 1938.

The panel was lead by Professor Ross Garnaut and included Professor Allan Dale and Dr Georgina Davis.

In developing its advice to government, the panel considered engineering, agronomy, environment impacts, hydrology, economic impacts and social and cultural impacts, including those specific to First Nations people.

The Bradfield Regional Assessment and Development Panel Report is the most detailed assessment undertaken in nearly 15 years. It was released on 8 December 2022, along with the government's response.

The assessment found the scheme was not viable and recommended that the Bradfield, or similar schemes, should not proceed. It concluded the schemes faltered at the first hurdle – the consistent availability of water – and were unfeasible on economic, environmental, social and cultural heritage grounds.

The panel concluded that if current sustainable water management frameworks were abandoned to favour a Bradfield Scheme, the over-allocation problems experienced in the Murray-Darling would eventually occur on the rivers, industries and ecosystems of central and northern Queensland, particularly in the Burdekin.

The report findings align with the Australian Government's report prepared by the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO), [An assessment of contemporary variations of the Bradfield Scheme](#).



Water is vital for thriving regional communities and the environment.

Recommendations

The panel made 8 recommendations, which the Queensland Government accepted, or accepted in principle.

Several recommendations focus on maximising sustainable water development and water security to support regional development. The panel recommended maximising the use of water closer to its source, through regional 'mini'-water grids and effective local use of water resources. It recommended investigating linkages between regional water systems to help to mitigate local supply issues and accelerate economic development.

It considered climate change and its impacts on rainfall, farming and industry practices, and supports the Queensland Government's current approach to consider climate change in all water plan reviews.

You can read the full report and recommendations along with a summary and the government's response on our website www.rdmw.qld.gov.au

Implementation reporting

The government is addressing the panel's recommendations through multiple work programs across four groups of activities including:

- a. Placed-based planning and assessment of water infrastructure proposals
- b. Investing in water infrastructure
- c. Optimising the use of available water
- d. Water pricing review and support measures

The report's implementation is captured in the roadmap of initiatives for the [Queensland Water Strategy](#). The Strategy will be complemented by the Strategic Water Infrastructure Plan currently in development.

Bradfield Regional Assessment and Development Panel recommendations

1

The panel recommends against proceeding with any of the Bradfield or Bradfield-like proposals.

2

There is a strong case for planning and investing in the use of water closer to where it falls to accelerate regional development in central and northern Queensland, including in the Gulf of Carpentaria and Lake Eyre Basin areas.

3

Within this development framework, explore the feasibility of 4 'Mini-Bradfield Grids'

- › Tablelands–Cairns Regional Water Grid
 - › Burdekin–Townsville Regional Water Grid
 - › Fitzroy–Rockhampton–Gladstone Regional Water Grid
 - › Burnett–Bundaberg Regional Water Grid
-

4

Explore and, where viable, build links between these Regional Water Grids so a temporary abundance of water in one grid can be used to balance a temporary dearth in another.

5

Make available water work better within individual catchments in northern and central Queensland outside the Regional Water Grids.

6

Increase public funding for research into the value of the use of water and land for agriculture, carbon sequestration and biomass for industry.

7

Review all matters affecting pricing of inputs into, and the use of, infrastructure. The review particularly needs to examine opportunities for expanding innovation in the role of water markets.

8

Move promptly to establish these proposed new approaches to water development planning.

Progress report and actions | Timeline December 2022 to December 2023

Grouping	Key projects or action taken	Recommendations addressed	Status
Group A	Release panel's report and Government response for implementation	All	Complete
	Develop and launch Queensland Water Strategy	1, 2, 3, 5	Complete
	Complete detailed business case for raising of Burdekin Falls Dam and commence Environmental Impact Statement	2, 3	Complete, Commenced
	Commence investigations on inter-basin pipelines including feasibility options for regional mini-water grids through Burdekin Water Plan review, detailed assessment of Bowen Pipeline and complete Houghton Pipeline Stage 2 works	2, 3	Commenced, In progress
	Complete assessment and business case for construction of Fitzroy to Gladstone Pipeline	2, 3	Complete
	Deliver program to complete Regional Water Assessments for Tablelands, Bundaberg/Burnett, Southern and Darling Downs, Burdekin and Central Queensland	2, 3	In progress
	Support assessment of water security options for Dawson Valley (including Paranui Weir) under the National Water Grid Fund (NWGF)	2, 3	Complete
	Develop Strategic Water Infrastructure Plan and associated pipeline of projects	2, 8	In progress
	Support water security assessment options for Nogoia-Mackenzie, under the NWGF	2, 3	In progress
	Support the NWGF detailed assessment of Bowen Pipeline project	2, 3	Complete
	Support the National Water Infrastructure Development Fund (NWIDF) detailed business case assessment for Lakelands Irrigation Project	2, 3, 5	Complete
	Support NWIDF funded assessment of the Hughenden Irrigation project	2, 4, 5	Complete
	Support assessment of Burdekin-Houghton Water Supply Scheme Modernisation Project under NWGF	2, 3	Complete
	Progress the review and replacement of water plans for Burdekin Basin, Fitzroy, Pioneer Valley and other scheduled reviews	2, 3, 4, 5, 8	In progress

Grouping	Key projects or action taken	Recommendations addressed	Status
Group B	Construct Rookwood Weir	2, 3	Complete
	Commence pre-construction works for the building of Big Rocks Weir	2, 3	In progress
	Complete essential works on Paradise Dam and commence next phase of work for rebuilding project	2, 3	Complete, Commenced
	Invest in the construction of Isisford Weir upgrade	2, 4, 5	Complete
	Continue to invest in the Great Artesian Basin (GAB) rehabilitation capping and piping program together with the Australian Government	2, 4, 5	Ongoing
	Invest in urban water security and water quality improvements through the Building our Regions 6 Program	2	Ongoing
	Continue support and investment in urban water service improvements through ongoing funding of the Queensland Water Regional Alliance Program	2	Ongoing
	Construct Mareebah-Dimbulah Water Supply Scheme Modernisation project	2, 3	Complete
	Jointly fund with Australian Government and Rockhampton Council the Mount Morgan Pipeline project delivering long-term water security for the community	2, 3	In progress

Grouping	Key projects or action taken	Recommendations addressed	Status
Group C	Continue delivery of water reform efforts through the Rural Water Futures program including enhanced telemetry within Queensland Murray-Darling Basin and strengthen measurement tools	5, 7	In progress
	Continue implementation of the Queensland Water Markets Optimisation Action Plan to support water trading market opportunities	5, 7	In progress
	Deliver planned unallocated water releases	2, 5	Ongoing
	Establish a stakeholder advisory group to consult on how an appropriate balance of environmental and economic considerations can be achieved in the Lake Eyre Basin and release stage 1 consultation regulatory impact statement	5	Complete
	Set criteria for price per megalitre for prices that are still below the cost-recovery level	7	Complete
	Absorb irrigators' share of the costs of dam safety upgrades	7	Complete
	Continue agreed discount for Sunwater and Seqwater irrigation prices for horticulture crops and all other irrigation over three years from 1 July 2021	7	Commenced

Department of Regional Development,
Manufacturing and Water
GPO Box 2247, Brisbane, Queensland 4001
13 QGOV (13 74 68)
info@rdmw.qld.gov.au
rdmw.qld.gov.au



Queensland
Government