

Water Resource Management

Annual Compliance Plan Areas of focus 2023–2024



Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners

We respectfully acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of this Country – the lands and seas on which we meet, live, learn, work and play. We acknowledge those of the past, the Ancestors whose strength has nurtured this land and its people, and we recognise their connection to land, sea and community. We pay our respects to them, their culture and to their Elders past and present.

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Cunnamulla, Qld

Foreword – our role as a regulator

Queensland’s water resources are vital for our economic, social, environmental, and cultural wellbeing and drive economic growth and job opportunities for our regional communities.

The water sector in Queensland serves diverse and widespread communities across the state, taking into account their unique cultural and environmental values.

The Department of Regional Development, Manufacturing and Water (DRDMW) role is to ensure that water is managed equitably and responsibly, to make the best use of our water resources by delivering sustainable, safe, secure and affordable water to all Queenslanders.

DRDMW is responsible for Queensland’s water management laws and regulates activities under the *Water Act 2000*, *Water Supply (Safety and Reliability) Act 2008* and the *Planning Act 2016*.

Under these laws, the department has a range of regulatory responsibilities across its water resource management functions (as depicted by Figure 1.).

These responsibilities fall under our three regulatory functions:

1. sustainable water management
2. public health
3. safety.

As a sustainable water manager we need to ensure the sustainable management of our rivers, streams and groundwater systems. This includes monitoring the take of water from these systems to make sure people are not taking more than they are entitled to. It also includes monitoring the extraction of gravel and materials from our river systems, so they are not over extracted and unsustainable. As well as ensuring the protection of riverine systems. We also oversee the bore drilling industry for water bores to ensure bores are drilled to a standard and people are getting a high-quality product.

Our public health regulator responsibilities involve overseeing drinking water and sewage service providers such as local governments and other bodies. Our regulations ensure these operators provide high quality drinking water that is safe for the community.

Our dam safety unit fulfills DRDMW’s safety regulator responsibilities by ensuring referable water dams across the state are built to the appropriate engineering standards and maintained by the dam owners.

How we deliver on these regulatory responsibilities is outlined in our [Water Resource Management Regulatory Strategy 2022–2024](#). This strategy sets out our approach for the delivery of our regulatory functions and activities. Informed and directed by DRDMW’s strategic plan, this strategy explains the principles underlying our regulatory approach, the tools we use and our compliance and enforcement pathway.

Our compliance plan developed each year is a consolidation of the Water Resource Management division’s compliance priorities, and areas of focus that require proactive attention and a planned approach.

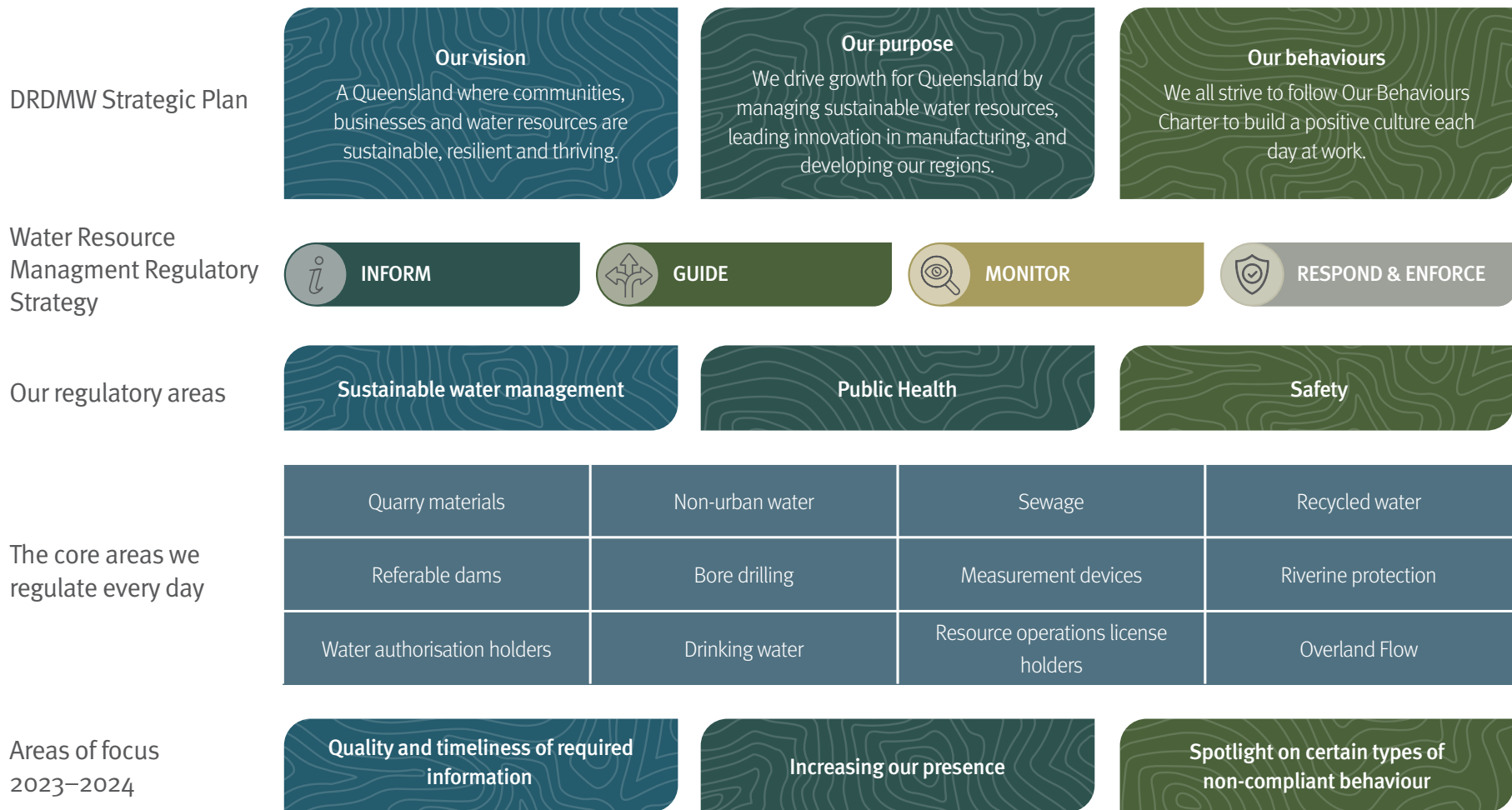


Figure 1: DRDMW’s regulatory responsibilities

Setting our focus areas

Whilst we work across all regulatory responsibilities, identifying our areas of focus helps us to prioritise our proactive effort on what is most important. It also helps the community and stakeholders understand what we consider to be a priority.

We use a data and intelligence driven approach to develop our Annual Compliance Plan, and ensure we focus our resources on the most significant risks and priorities.

We do this by:

- ✓ Collecting and analysing data
- ✓ Identifying new and emerging trends
- ✓ Understanding behavioural changes and drivers
- ✓ Understanding implementation requirements for any recent or upcoming policy changes
- ✓ Finding opportunities for improvement

- ✓ Conducting research on best practice approaches
- ✓ Consulting with internal and external stakeholders
- ✓ Working with our regulatory partners

In undertaking this process, we have identified a number of driving factors, opportunities and challenges that either continue to impact on, or would strengthen the sustainable, safe and secure management of our water resources.

These have formed the key areas of focus and priorities in the [Annual Compliance Plan 2023–2024](#).



Water Officer Jamie Norgrove



Macintyre River, Goondiwindi

Focus area 1:

Focus on the quality and timeliness of required information to the department



Improve return on compliance information.

It is a requirement to provide accurate and timely information to the department. This information is critical to underpin the protection of the environment, public health, safety and the long-term sustainable management of Queensland's water resource.

Accurate and timely data ensures compliance and builds trust, fostering a reliable and compliant regulatory system.

In some areas, the department has seen improvement on the timely return of required information over the last few years, such as the requirement to provide a meter read on or before the due date. In other areas we have seen little to no improvement in the timeliness, quality and accuracy of information required to be provided across all regulatory areas.

We will proactively focus on those required to provide information to the department by:

- > targeting communication to encourage improved compliance behaviour
- > auditing information received to ensure accuracy
- > escalating non-compliance in accordance with the Regulatory Strategy 2022–24.

This also links with the proactive priorities in focus areas 2 and 3

Regulatory Strategy alignment





Jack Taylor Weir, St George



Moonie River, Nindigully

Focus area 2:

Increasing our regulatory presence



Continue to increase our presence and communicate through broader channels, getting our message out to the regulated community and those that rely on us to deliver our regulatory role.

In 2022–2023 the department improved communication with regulated entities and the broader community. It is also one of the key principles of the Regulatory Strategy 2022–24– “we are timely in how we communicate about compliance and in responding to non-compliance”.

This year, the department will continue to strengthen the way we communicate with the regulatory community, and the broader public, about our compliance activities and actions. This includes all of the regulatory work the department undertakes across its water resource management functions.

We will also continue to engage with the regulated community with information to support understanding and improved compliance with the regulatory obligations they are required to meet.

Regulatory Strategy alignment



Focus area 3:

Spotlight on certain types of non-compliant behaviour



Provide support for those doing the right thing by addressing those that don't.

This year's focus will be on strengthening the way we monitor, respond to and enforce non-compliance. We also aim to better understand the drivers, motivations and reasons for the non-compliant behaviour to inform our approach moving forward.

In accordance with our regulatory strategy, we will continue to escalate our compliance responses and actions based on the risk and the seriousness of the offence identified. Of particular focus is:

- › those that continue to re-offend
- › those that are commercially/financially motivated to commit offences or not meet regulatory responsibilities
- › those that provide false and misleading information which undermines public trust in the regulatory system.

In addition, we will take a deeper look at:

- › breaches that are not easily discovered through traditional monitoring methods
- › testing unknown risks
- › increasing our detection capabilities and focus for unauthorised activities.

Regulatory Strategy alignment



MONITOR



RESPOND & ENFORCE



Storm King Dam, Stanthorpe

Our areas of regulatory responsibility

DRDMW is committed to continual improvement of our regulatory approach. We also plan, carry out and measure the effectiveness of our approaches to ensure they result in better regulatory outcomes.

In addition to our focus areas this year, we have ongoing regulatory priorities and responsibilities to carry out. These are outlined in our Regulatory Strategy 2022–24 and is supported by:

- › responding to third party notifications of alleged non-compliance (reactive compliance)
- › responding to non-compliances found through proactive monitoring
- › identifying and delivering projects that investigate new ways of monitoring and trialling new compliance monitoring tools
- › strengthening the way we analyse and use data and information to help understand potential risks for future focus
- › undertaking targeted communication and engagement on common issues to encourage compliant behaviour.

A snapshot of <i>Water Act 2000</i> and the <i>Water Supply (Safety and Reliability) Act 2008</i> regulatory areas the department monitors		
Audit of all meter readings from entitlement holders regarding non-urban water take, to ensure they are received on time and are accurate.	Ensure that water bores are constructed to the required standard.	Monitoring of small dams to ensure referable dams are identified.
Audit water entitlement holders, ROL/DOL holders to ensure that the take, reporting and management of water is in accordance with authorities and water plans.	Ensure drillers are licensed appropriately, and that provision of drill logs are timely and accurate.	Implementation of and compliance with drinking water quality management plans, conditions, and reporting requirements.
Monitor measurement devices to ensure they are working to the required standard.	Monitor riverine activities including extraction of quarry material and riverine protection permits.	Water and sewerage service providers and performance reporting.
Monitor building of works or infrastructure that actively or passively takes overland flow.	Dam owner compliance with dam safety conditions and standards.	Recycled water providers performance and recycled water management plan conditions.



DRDMW is responsible for ensuring Queensland's water resources are managed in way that delivers sustainable, safe, secure and affordable water now and into the future.

Leslie Dam, Warwick

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