



Queensland
Government

Department of Regional Development,
Manufacturing and Water



Annual Compliance Plan 2021-2022

End of year report

1 November 2022

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Our role as a water regulator

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

The Department of Regional Development, Manufacturing and Water's (DRDMW's) role is to ensure that water is managed responsibly, to make best use of our water resources by delivering sustainable, safe, secure, and affordable water to all Queenslanders. Our department engages in multiple activities to accomplish this, including monitoring compliance and performance, responding to drinking water incidents, and building capability amongst service providers.

Our department administers a range of legislation that governs how water resources are accessed and used. This includes:

- *Water Act 2000*
- *Water Regulation 2016*
- *Water Supply (Safety and Reliability) Act 2008.*

Regulatory Strategy

In 2022 the [Regulatory Strategy Water Resource Management 2022 – 2024](#) was published. This strategy sets out our regulatory approach for the delivery of our regulatory functions and activities. The Strategy explains the principles underlying our regulatory approach, the tools we utilise and our compliance and enforcement pathway.

The objectives and principles set out in the Regulatory Strategy sets the foundation for our annual compliance planning.

Annual compliance plan and end of year report

The DRDMW compliance plan 2021 – 2022 is a consolidation of the water division's compliance priorities for that period.







The plan is completed annually to identify the activities that support each business area in DRDMW to implement key aspects of the regulatory strategy, including compliance outcomes, performance measures, focus areas, activities, targets, and measures.

This end-of-year report summarises the outcomes achieved as part of the annual compliance plan for 2021 – 22.

Annual Compliance Plan Outcomes for 2021 - 2022

Our outcomes guide us towards the benefits and changes we are aiming to achieve. They are a part of our regulatory approach and commitment to continual improvement. They support changes to enhance our services and regulatory processes over time.

The following outcomes are what we committed to in 2021-2022. Examples of how our department has worked to achieve each outcome is highlighted below.

-  **Safe, fair, secure, and equitable access to resources and infrastructure.**
-  **Sustainably managed water resources.**
-  **Support for those doing the right thing and addressing those that are not.**
-  **Greater community awareness and confidence in what we do as a regulator and our obligations.**
-  **Evidence based regulatory practices, drawing on data to support decisions and continuous improvement.**
-  **Dam owners have effective dam safety management programs in place to minimise the risk of dam failure and protect life and property.**



Safe, fair, secure, and equitable access to resources and infrastructure

Drinking water service providers are faced with a unique challenge to ensure a safe and secure supply of drinking water to remote Indigenous communities. We often provide support, guidance and direction to these communities and develop strategies to improve drinking water outcomes.

For 17 service providers across the state, an increase in performance was achieved through an increase in engagement, communication, education, and support. By better understanding the needs of the communities, what risks they face, our department was able support them to comply with their regulatory requirements. A number of outcomes include:

- Each community regularly participating in a technical working group
- Participation in a forum run by the Department of Seniors, Disability Services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships
- Development of the Queensland Indigenous Council Water Operator Network (QICWON)
- Assessment of water infrastructure and providing recommendations for safe drinking water practices
- Queensland Health – who is a co-regulator of drinking water quality – was able to provide training opportunities to the indigenous communities

Through gradual improvement and support, we aim to bring all service providers to a position where they are able to demonstrate the ability to comply with their obligations under the *Water Supply (Safety and Reliability) Act 2008*. This is an ongoing program with continuous improvement within departmental processes.

The program has already seen an improvement in compliance within the indigenous communities, and significant engagement in improving performance and quality amongst water operators.



Sustainably managed water resources

During 2021-22 our department conducted a number of proactive audits monitoring water use. Authorised officers conducted 384 audits of water entitlements in priority areas throughout 2021-2022, including 59 property audits in the Queensland Murray Darling Basin. These audits monitor for compliance against entitlement conditions. This proactive monitoring also identifies trends, and areas of high risk that may require continued monitoring. It allows for a responsive and adaptive approach to monitoring, while allowing for consistent and fair management of water take

Additionally, over 6,000 meter readings were reviewed against their associated entitlements. This enables our department to identify cases of excess take in metered entitlement areas and respond to identified non-compliance.



Support for those doing the right thing and addressing those that are not

In June 2022 we hosted a workshop for water bore drillers. Forty water bore drillers attended the workshop to better understand how they can comply with water bore construction standards, updated drill log requirements and an overview of driller requirements per water plan.

At the conclusion of the workshop, drillers who attended appreciated the amount of information provided, explanations on relevant legislation changes, meeting new faces in our department and networking with other water bore drillers.

We also undertook proactive monitoring of water bore construction and desktop audits of water bore drill logs to ensure compliance against bore construction standards. In 2021 – 22, 192 desktop audits of drill logs and 10 field audits of water bores were completed. Eighty-five instances of non-compliance were found and as a result, 24 advisory letters, 10 formal warnings and verbal education in 4 instances were implemented. Thirteen cases remain under active investigation.



Greater community awareness and confidence in what we do as a regulator and our obligations

By engaging more directly with the regulated community, our department ensures the community is aware of our responsibilities and confident in our ability to do our job as a regulator.

We undertook a number of activities to engage with dam owners about the safety of their dams including workshops, forums, newsletters and courses for dam operators. The workshops consisted of two mid-year sessions with over 100 dam owners attending. The information included updated standardised conditions for all referable dams and the requirement for dam owners to annually submit a safety statement. This engagement not only informs the community of their obligations but provides an opportunity to explain to dam owners what happens when they do not comply with those obligations.



Evidence based regulatory practices, drawing on data to support decisions and continuous improvement

Our department is dedicated to incorporating new and innovative programs to allow the use of evidence-based methods to guide regulatory functions. A trial program commenced in 2021-2022 which focused on improving how we monitor quarry extraction. It combined the use of spatial technologies, such as satellite imagery, drones, and field data collection apps, with enhanced reporting to streamline the auditing process and regulate non-compliance.

The use of drone imagery was found to be significantly beneficial towards continual improvement in evidence based regulatory practices, due to the ability to capture high resolution imagery during field audits. The field data collection apps were also found to improve evidence-based decisions and regulatory practices as important data was able to be collected in a format that is easily storable and accessible.

We are now evaluating the process further to see if this information and data collection can continue to be used post-trial.



Dam owners have effective dam safety management programs in place to minimise the risk of dam failure and protect life and property

Our department is committed to the safe operation of dams in all communities and of all sizes. To ensure the protection of life and property, we work to constantly improve dam management programs and systems to ensure dams are managed effectively.

To help assess our dam safety systems and procedures, an audit was completed by the Queensland Audit Office (QAO) from December 2020 to June 2021 which published its report and recommendations in August 2021. This audit identified issues and ways to improve our documentation and processes when it comes to Dam Safety.

Several activities were conducted to implement the recommendations, one of which being the update of the Acceptable Flood Capacity guideline. As part of the update, the Dam Safety team engaged in extensive consultation with stakeholders and altered the guideline to become the new Guidelines on Safety Assessment for Referrable Dams. The guideline now includes requirements for dam owners to provide annual reports on dam upgrades, enabling the department to formally track progress on those dams due to be upgraded now and into the future.

Other recommendations included adjusting audit priorities such that 25% of dam owners are audited each year, review compliance with all dam safety conditions, revise work processes to improve compliance monitoring through the submission of regular reports by dam operators, and ensure an appropriate escalation pathway is present to address non-compliance. These activities all contribute to ensure our department has sufficient regulatory oversight, knowledge of the current state of compliance, and an efficient process to respond to non-compliance. The Department has implemented all of the recommendations made by the QAO.

Plan targets

Table 1: Dam Safety outcomes

Focus area	Activity	2021 -22 target	Result
Education and engagement	Undertake dam owner and stakeholder engagement activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10 emergency action plan workshops held with dam owners. Host the 2022 Annual Dam Owners Forum. Host the 2022 Dam Operators course. Distribute a minimum of four Dam Safety Regulator e-newsletters. Facilitate a workshop with each local government who have their first referable dam in their jurisdictional area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 12 in-person workshops held in 21-22. Dam owners forum held virtually with six sessions, all were well attended. Dam safety e-newsletters provided to dam owners in September, December 2021 and in April, June 2022 Dam operators course held in September 2022.
An increase in dam safety compliance.	Regulatory tools.	Finalise the review of the Acceptable Flood Capacity Guidelines.	The ' Guidelines on safety assessments for referable dams ' was published December 2021.
Increased awareness of small dam owners regarding regulatory obligations.	Compliance	Undertake field audits of small dams identified and issue referable dam notices for those with confirmed persons at risk.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 100% of all small dam enquiries received were resolved within 30 business days. 14 small dam site verifications were completed.
An increase in dam safety compliance.	Monitoring compliance	Undertake site audits to ensure compliance with regulatory requirements through identification of any shortfalls in the dam owner's dam safety management programs and areas of non-compliance with specific legislative requirements including dam safety conditions.	Seven site audits conducted. Of the seven site audits, four had their audit reports completed within the specified timeframes. Three were submitted after the specified timeframe.
		Review and assess emergency action plans submitted to the regulator within legislative timeframes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 100% of submitted emergency actions plans were reviewed within the required timeframes. 100% of referable dams have an approved emergency action plan
		Review and assess dam owners wet season preparedness compliance requirements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 99% Annual Safety Statements were submitted within 14 days of 1 October 100% received by 30 October
		Monitor dam owners' compliance with Dam Safety Conditions.	100% of non-compliant dams had an agreed compliance management plan in place
		Issue updated Dam Safety Conditions to all dam owners.	All referable Dam Owners received updated Dam Safety Conditions by 1 October 2021.

Table 2: Water Supply Regulation

Focus area	Activity	2021 -22 target	Result
Service provider support	Engagement and building capability of service providers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 industry workshops. • 3 Queensland Health inter-agency forums. • 5 E-alerts out to all service providers. • 1 survey conducted about service providers understanding of regulatory obligations. • Review and publish an updated Drinking Water Quality Management Plan Guideline. • 10 service provider onsite support visits. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Four workshops • Five Queensland Health inter-agency forums • Six e-alerts sent out to services providers • Annual survey conducted in May 2022 • Drinking Water Quality Management Plan guideline published Oct 2022 • 14 visits to service providers to communicate, build relationships and capability amongst operators.
Safe drinking water assessments.	Monitor service provider performance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 onsite compliance assessments. • 3 Safe Drinking Water Project assessments. • Provide reports to service providers with recommendations following site assessments. • Follow up on actions taken by at least 10 service providers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only 3 onsite compliance assessments were completed due to increased incidents and support visit • Follow-up occurred with service providers to ensure report recommendations are implemented.
Drinking water incidents.	Assessment of drinking water incidents.	100% drinking water incidents are assessed in accordance with the 'Water quality and reporting guideline for a drinking water service'.	All drinking water incidents were responded to and action within 24 hours.
Service providers key performance indicator reporting.	Performance reporting data.	Service providers provide the required data by the 1 October 2021.	All service providers provided data by the first business day after 1 October 2021.

Table 3: Water Services

Focus area	Activity	2021 -22 target	Result
Reporting conditions on water entitlements	Audit resource operation licence holder annual reports.	10 annual reports audited against licence provisions.	24 annual reports audited against licence provisions across the state.
	Monitoring of entitlement holders with a condition to report.	Five associated water and dewatering licences audited against entitlement conditions.	Five associated water and dewatering licences audited
	Audit water harvesting in the Lower Balonne.	40 authorisations in the Lower Balonne audited against entitlement conditions.	Adverse weather events greatly impacted Queensland catchments of the Murray Darling Basin over 2021 – 22. Due to this, the number of field audits planned were not able to be completed due to the inaccessibility properties. Alternate measures such as satellite monitoring during flow event and review of meter readings continued.
	Audit authorisations in high priority areas, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Un-metered entitlements • Nil take users • Announced entitlements and water sharing rules. 	250 audits in priority areas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 384 audits completed. These audits were completed in the Burdekin Basin, Condamine, Pioneer, Burnett, Fitzroy and Moreton, with additional audits in the Mary Basin, Cape York, Barron and Wet Tropics. 59 of these were in the Queensland Murray Darling Basin area. • Out of all the audits conducted, 77 were identified as non-compliant. Of these <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 38 were due to non-compliant meters or infrastructure ○ 34 identified water use that was not in accordance with their authorisation
Metered entitlements	Desktop audits conducted of self-read meter readings.	100% of meter readings received are audited for compliance against authorised water take.	All meter readings received (6374) were audited for compliance against authorised take
Business improvement	Remote sensing – project to assess the viability of remote sensing to support compliance activities.	Assessment of the viability of the tool is completed by 30 June 2022.	An assessment of the viability of the tool was completed. This will continue to be built on in 2022 - 23
Entitlement holders	Engagement with water entitlement holders in priority areas.	Send correspondence in the fourth quarter of the water year communicating the work that has happened over the year including summary of enforcement actions taken.	Education letters were sent to metered entitlement holders in December 2021 Fact sheet sent to communicate identified non-compliances and actions taken.
Water bore drilling	Undertake audits of the construction of water bores by water bore drillers.	25 field audits of the physical construction of water bores by either inspection during or after construction.	10 audits of water bore construction undertaken.
	Desktop audits of drill logs with a focus on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compliance with the minimum construction standards. • Water authorisation and development permit requirements. 	250 desktop drill log audits.	250 desktop audits of drill logs were audited

Focus area	Activity	2021 -22 target	Result
Licenced drillers	Engagement with licenced drillers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One field day held. • One driller workshop conducted to meet industry requirements • Survey conducted post field day and workshop to ascertain driller understanding of their regulatory obligations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The department conducted a water bore drillers field day and workshop in June 2022 in Toowoomba with approximately 40 drillers. • Post field day and workshop survey completed. Findings indicated interest in bore construction technology and practical demonstrations.
Riverine Quarry	Explore technology opportunities to monitor quarry material allocation notice requirements more effectively	Assessment of new tools is completed by 30 June 2022.	A trial commenced in 2021-2022 which focused on improving Quarry Material Allocation monitoring. The program combined the use of spatial technologies, such as satellite imagery, drones, and field data collection apps, with enhanced reporting to streamline the auditing process and regulate non-compliance. The assessment of the trial is currently ongoing into 2022 -23.
	Field audits in prioritised areas	40 field audits of quarry material allocation holders against notice conditions.	37 audits were completed across the state. Severe weather events restricted officers to undertake the last three audits.
	Monthly return audits	100% quarry material allocation notice holders are audited for compliance with monthly returns, once a year	235 desktop audits of quarry material monthly returns were completed which includes every quarry material allocation holder at least once.

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