

Water Resource Management

Annual Compliance Plan 2022–2023

End of year report



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.

This publication has been compiled by Strategic Compliance, Intelligence and Investigations of Water Operations and Systems, Department of Regional Development, Manufacturing and Water.

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Awoonga Dam

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.

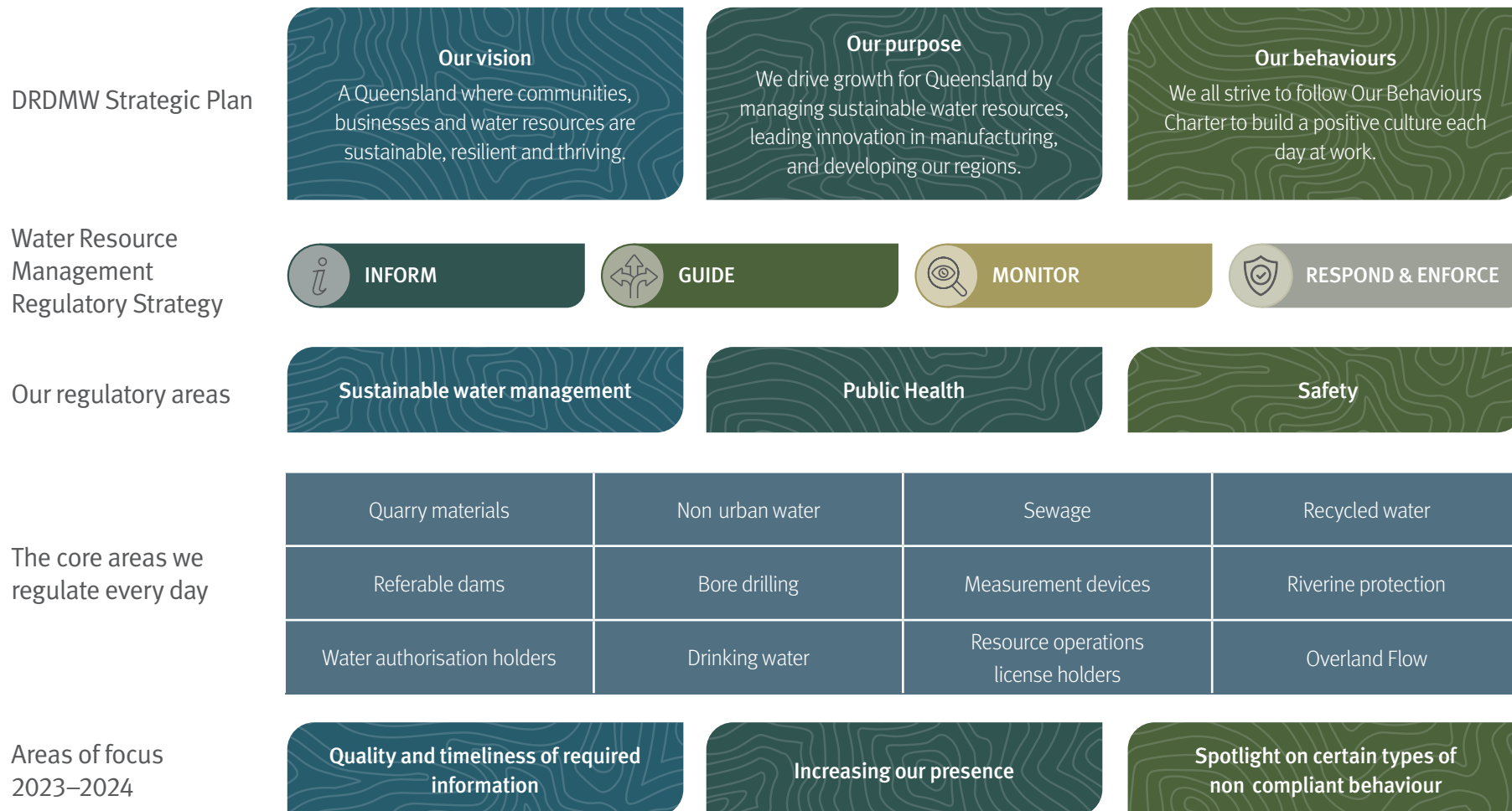


Figure 1: DRDMW’s regulatory responsibilities



Talgai

Annual Compliance Plan 2022–2023: End of year report

The DRDMW Annual Compliance Plan 2022–23 outlined the Water Resource Management division’s compliance priorities.

The activities identified in the plan aimed to support DRDMW to implement the [Water Resource Management Regulatory Strategy 2022–2024](#).

Over 2022–2023, DRDMW:

- › continued engagement with the regulated community to ensure regulatory obligations are understood
- › worked with service providers to deliver drinking water that meets Australian Drinking Water Guideline requirements

- › connected with dam owners to help them understand dam safety requirements
- › proactively monitored for non-compliance across all regulatory areas
- › responded to received allegations of potential non-compliances
- › addressed identified non-compliances in accordance with the Regulatory Strategy and escalation pathway.

The information in this report provides further detail about the progress made against the Annual Compliance Plan 2022–2023.



Dam safety

| Performance measure | Focus area | 2022 2023 activities | End of year outcomes |
|--|--------------------------------|--|--|
| Improved outcomes as a result of engagement with dam owners. | Engagement with dam owners. | Engagement with dam owners about their regulatory obligations, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › workshops › forums › newsletters › courses. | Various engagement activities occurred with dam owners over 2022–2023, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › 12 emergency action plan workshops › a dam safety course in May 2023 › 4 e-newsletters. <p>Overall, feedback received from the workshop attendees fell within the ‘very good’ to ‘excellent’ range, with positive comments about the relevance of the content provided.</p> |
| Dam owners understand the dam failure impact assessment process. | Dam failure impact assessment. | Finalise the review of the ‘Guideline for failure impact assessment of water dams’. | The ‘Guideline for failure impact assessment of water dams’ has been drafted and reviewed. Consultation on this guideline has been extended to 30 April 2024 to allow further engagement and consultation on technical components of the draft guideline. |
| Dam owners understand dam safety management. | Dam safety management. | Finalise the review of the ‘Queensland dam safety management guidelines’. | To allow for further technical and scientific peer review, consultation on the review of the ‘Queensland dam safety management guidelines’ was extended. The consultation period ended in December and the guideline will be finalised and published in February 2024. |
| Continued monitoring of small dams to ensure referable dams are identified. | Monitoring of small dams. | Proactive field audits of small dams and issue of referable dam notices of those with confirmed persons at risk. | Proactive monitoring of small dams was undertaken this year as part of the annual compliance plan. This work included the following actions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › All enquiries received about small dams were responded to within 30 business days. › All referable dam notices received were issued within the dam safety referable dam notice process. An overview of this process can be found on the Business Queensland website. › 10 small dam site visits were completed to ensure they met the ‘potential referable dam’ requirements under the <i>Water Supply (Safety and Reliability) Act 2008</i>. |

| Performance measure | Focus area | 2022 2023 activities | End of year outcomes |
|--|--|---|---|
| An increase in dam safety compliance. | Monitoring dam safety compliance and taking enforcement action when needed in accordance with the department's Regulatory Strategy . | <p>Site audits of dams to ensure compliance with regulatory requirements, including to check:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › shortfalls in dam owners dam safety management program › areas of non-compliance, including against dam safety conditions. | <p>Twelve site audits were conducted to check for compliance against dam safety conditions and check for any shortfalls in the dam owner dam safety management program.</p> <p>As a result, five audits had compliant outcomes, while seven audits had non-compliant outcomes. Identified non-compliance has been managed through ongoing engagement with the relevant dam owner, as well as receiving compliance management plans.</p> |
| | | <p>Review and assessment of emergency action plans and ensure they are submitted within the below timeframes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › 10 business days for amendments by agreement › 30 business days for new assessments. | <p>All emergency action plans received were reviewed and submitted within the required timeframes. This year, only four dams were non-compliant in submitting their initial emergency action within the required timeframes. These cases were escalated as per the Regulatory Strategy.</p> |
| | | <p>Review and assessment of dam owners wet season preparedness compliance requirements.</p> | <p>All dam owners submitted an annual safety statement as a requirement under the <i>Water Supply (Safety and Reliability) Act 2008</i> to support wet season preparedness. Four were investigated further for non-compliance and escalated as per the Regulatory Strategy.</p> |
| | | <p>Monitoring of dam owner compliance with dam safety conditions.</p> | <p>All identified non-compliant dams have been investigated and escalated as required. There were three non-compliant dams and compliance management plans are in place with these dam owners.</p> |
| | | <p>Issue updated dam safety conditions to all dam owners.</p> | <p>All dam owners were issued with updated dam safety conditions by 1 October 2022.</p> |

Water supply regulation

| Performance measure | Focus area | 2022 2023 activities | End of year outcomes |
|---|--|---|--|
| Service providers achieve fit for purpose drinking water supply. | Work with service providers to track progress on business improvement requirements. | <p>Continued monitoring and tracking of adherence to conditions of Drinking Water Quality Management Plans (DWQMPs).</p> <p>For small service providers, monitor progress towards implementing safe drinking water recommendations.</p> <p>Engage with inter-agency government partners to ensure access to funding for infrastructure (fit for purpose).</p> | <p>All service providers were contacted to provide updates on implementation of their DWQMP's. This was also an opportunity to discuss regulatory requirements, obtain technical and service updates and aid in incident management.</p> <p>In addition, three safe drinking water assessments were undertaken in Wujal Wujal, Hope Vale and the Northern Peninsula Area Regional Council area. Recommendations were made and will be monitored for improvement.</p> <p>The department also completed a number of engagement activities to support understanding and share knowledge of service provider requirements. This year it included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › four meetings with Queensland Health › 13 technical working group meetings for Indigenous councils › engagement with the Queensland Water Directorate. |
| Service providers understand their regulatory obligations. | <p>Service providers understand their responsibility to build and maintain capability and capacity on site.</p> <p>Building knowledge and skills within the water service provider industry about regulatory requirements.</p> | <p>Provide information, regular updates, and education about regulatory requirements.</p> <p>Targeted messaging to increase understanding of statutory obligations.</p> <p>Advocate for specific practical skills development initiatives and competency-based training for industry and individual service providers.</p> | <p>To help build an understanding of service providers' regulatory obligations, the department held five workshops in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Brisbane (two) › Mt Isa › Cairns › Barcaldine. <p>Survey findings showed that service providers claimed to have a higher level of understanding of their regulatory responsibilities following the workshops.</p> <p>The department also:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › sent out six eAlerts › visited 15 service providers to discuss compliance requirements › developed a strategy to assess medium sized councils ability to deliver drinking water services to the required standards. |

| Performance measure | Focus area | 2022-2023 activities | End of year outcomes |
|--|---|--|--|
| <p>Service providers deliver the required services within statutory requirements.</p> | <p>Compliance and enforcement actions are responsive and proportionate to the offence and done in accordance with the department's Regulatory Strategy.</p> | <p>Continued monitoring and tracking of compliance performance. Assess capability of service providers to comply with the Act. Investigate and address non-compliance.</p> | <p>This year, five on site targeted compliance inspections were completed at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Cherbourg › McKinley › Flinders › Palm Island › Cherbourg. <p>In 2022-2023, 86 non-compliances were identified in total, this resulted in enforcement action being undertaken across the range of tools identified under the Regulatory Strategy. Service providers were subsequently followed up to clarify and reinforce expectations and to explain requirements.</p> |



Texas

Water services

| Performance measure | Focus area | 2022 2023 activities | End of year outcomes |
|---|---|---|--|
| <p>Transparent resolution to cases of alleged non-compliance.</p> | <p>Responding to alleged non-compliance and taking enforcement action when needed in accordance with the department's Regulatory Strategy.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Increased reporting on compliance activities and actions. | <p>This year the department continued to strengthen the level of response to members of the public who raise concerns regarding alleged legislative breaches. Of 25 complaints on potential non-compliance received, complainants in more than 75% of completed investigations were updated about the outcomes as at 30 June 2023, with a small number still under investigation as at that date.</p> <p>The department also commenced specific compliance-focused engagement through social media platforms and other media channels, including outcomes of some non-compliant cases. Communication products were also developed to support this engagement. Specific communication outcomes included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › multiple social media posts published on a range of topics including meter readings, meter validations and field audits in the Lower Balonne › materials, including clear and concise letters, factsheets and FAQ's regarding meters and metering policy › staff spotlight profiles highlighting the work authorised officers do in the department. |
| <p>Targeted engagement with metered entitlement holders on areas for improved understanding or compliance.</p> <p>Increase monitoring tools to identify non-compliance.</p> | <p>Metered entitlements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Obligations regarding faulty meters. › Engagement with metered entitlement holders. › Engagement with entitlement holders, industry groups and certified meter validators. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Engagement with metered entitlement holders and meter validators on their regulatory obligations. › Evaluation of compliance engagement activities and outcomes in prioritised areas. › Improved measurement, monitoring and compliance of water take. › Improved visibility of the department as a regulator. | <p>As outlined above, this year saw an increase in the volume and type of engagement with metered entitlement holders and their obligations in the form of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › increased social media presence and messages on a range of topics including meter readings, meter validations, field audits in the Lower Balonne and staff spotlights › face-to-face meetings and discussions with the public on new metered entitlement areas and revalidation requirements for metered entitlement holders. <p>This work will be expanded in 2023–2024 to include a quarterly newsletter to stakeholders that contains regulatory news from the department.</p> <p>Aligned with the department's Rural Water Futures program, a number of projects are currently underway to support new ways of monitoring to identify non-compliance and strengthen measurement. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › regulatory changes to support increased measurement › communication material to support entitlement holders to meet their obligations › technology to improve detection of water storages through remote sensing and analytics to support our future proactive monitoring › a new tool to enable detection of meter read anomalies across the state, to support early intervention and follow up with entitlement holders. |

| Performance measure | Focus area | 2022 2023 activities | End of year outcomes |
|---|---|--|---|
| Measure change in water take entitlement holder compliance and undertake evidence-based investigations for priority cases. | <p>Water take entitlements are monitored for compliance against entitlement conditions in priority areas, informed by risk.</p> <p>Compliance and enforcement actions are responsive and proportionate to the offence and done in accordance with the department's Regulatory Strategy.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Proactive monitoring of water take to check entitlement holder compliance against entitlement conditions in priority areas informed by risk, with a particular focus on the Murray Darling Basin. › Proactive audits of water take entitlement compliance in priority areas. › Reactive investigation of third-party notifications/ detections linked with water take entitlement compliance. › improve measurement, monitoring and compliance of water take. | <p>The year the department undertook 277 field audits of water entitlement holders across the State. Of these, 132 audits were located in priority catchments within the Murray Darling Basin subject to the Non-urban water measurement policy.</p> <p>Across the State, 36 of these audits were found non-compliant and were investigated and escalated in accordance with the department's Regulatory Strategy.</p> <p>Various projects have been undertaken to support improved monitoring, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › a new tool to monitor reported faulty meters and identify meter read anomalies across the State to support early intervention and focused monitoring › capability-building in remote sensing to improve detection of water storages including and continued development in data insights and analytics to support future proactive compliance planning. |
| Improved engagement with water entitlement holders on the need for timely applications of seasonal water assignments. | Seasonal water assignments. | Development of targeted information to educate and inform water entitlement holders about when and how to apply for seasonal water assignments. | <p>The department has been increasing communication to water entitlement holders, including timely provision of information to support seasonal water assignments and information about complying with water licence conditions.</p> <p>This year saw an increase in social media presence and messages on a range of topics including meter readings, meter validations and field audits in the Lower Balonne.</p> |
| Improved awareness of water licence conditions. | Engagement with water licence holders. | Engagement with water licence holders about their regulatory obligations. | <p>Face-to-face meetings and discussions were held with the public about new metered entitlement areas and revalidation requirements for metered entitlement holders.</p> <p>This work is being expanded in 2023–2024 which includes a quarterly newsletter to stakeholders that contains regulatory news from the department.</p> |
| Improved engagement with the drilling industry and undertake evidence based investigations for priority cases. | <p>Engagement and monitoring of licenced drillers against water bore drill log requirements and construction standards within Queensland.</p> <p>Compliance and enforcement actions are responsive and proportionate to the offence and done in accordance with the department's Regulatory Strategy.</p> | <p>Engagement with licenced drillers about drill log requirements and minimum construction standards.</p> <p>Monitoring of drill logs for correct information and timeliness of submission.</p> <p>Investigation and response to cases of non-compliance identified through drill log and bore construction audits programs.</p> | <p>This year, to support the drilling industry the department:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › posted social media messaging on capping and piping projects in the Great Artesian Basin › shared information and presented at Drillfest 2023 hosted by the Australian Drilling Association in Toowoomba. <p>A total of 46 proactive field audits were undertaken to check bores for compliance against construction standards. Of these, nine were found to be non-compliant and were investigated and escalated in accordance with the department's Regulatory Strategy.</p> <p>The department also completed 160 desktop audits of water bore drill logs to check that correct information has been provided to the department on time.</p> |

| Performance measure | Focus area | 2022 2023 activities | End of year outcomes |
|--|---|--|---|
| Improve information sharing processes between the department and resource operations licence holders. | Engagement with resource operation licence holders about reporting requirements. | Monitoring of information provided by resource operations licence holders. Communication with resource operation licence holders. | Meetings were held with Resource Operations Licence holders to discuss and streamline compliance responses to address any excess take by water users. This included a clear process for all data requests from the department to Sunwater. Further work continues. |
| Measure change in Quarry Material Allocation Notice (QMAN) holder compliance. | QMAN holder compliance in priority areas Compliance and enforcement actions are responsive and proportionate to the offence and done in accordance with the department's Regulatory Strategy . | Proactive monitoring of compliance with QMAN conditions, monthly returns, and payment of royalties. Investigate and respond to cases of non-compliance identified via QMAN audit programs (desktop and field). Investigate and respond to priority cases of non-compliance with QMAN conditions. | This year, a total of 49 field audits were completed to check for compliance with QMAN conditions. Of these, 10 were found non-compliant and were investigated and escalated in accordance with the department's Regulatory Strategy . In addition, all QMAN holders were subject to quarterly desktop audits to check that monthly returns complied with their conditions. During each desktop audit, all due monthly returns for the previous quarter were checked, to ensure legislative requirements had been met. |
| Improved engagement with Quarry Material Allocation Notice (QMAN) holders. | Engagement with QMAN holders. | Engagement with QMAN holders about their regulatory obligations including monthly returns and payment of royalties. | All QMAN holders audited in 2022–2023 were sent a letter which included a summary of audit outcomes in audit close out letters. Correspondence was also sent out to QMAN holders in July 2023 regarding fee increases. |

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

