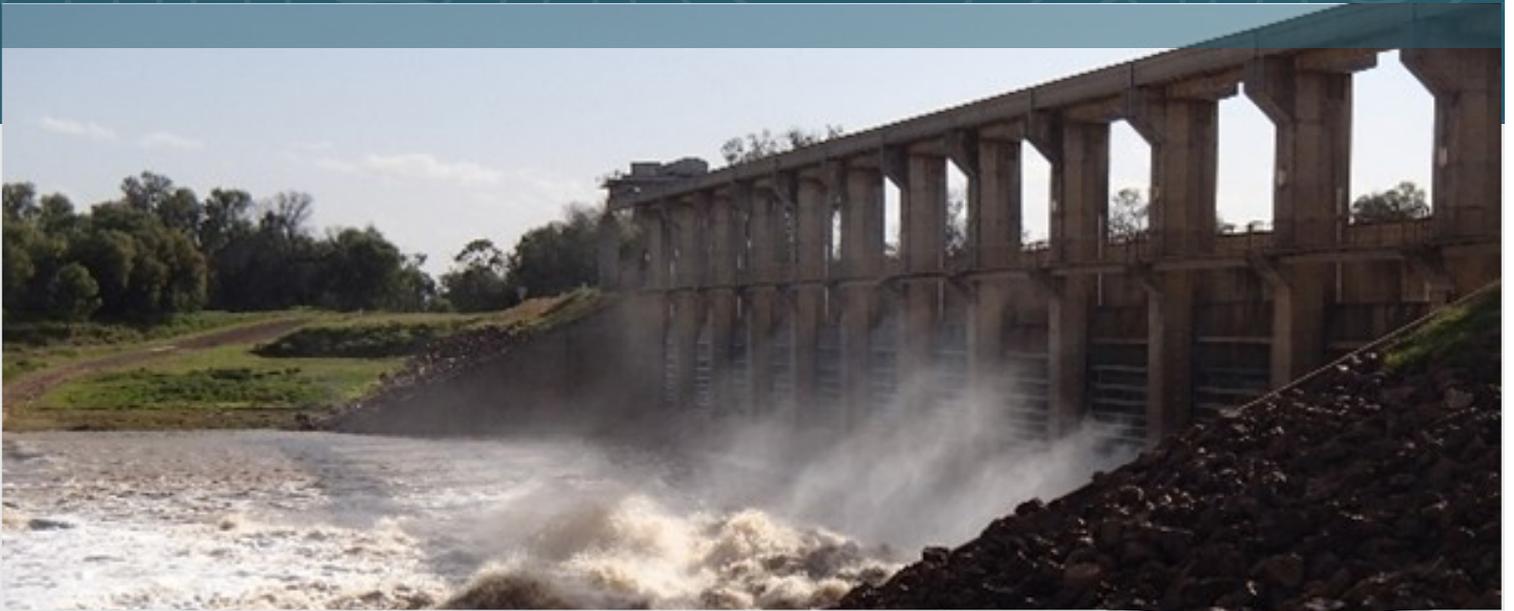




Queensland  
Government

Department of Regional Development,  
Manufacturing and Water



# Queensland Murray-Darling Basin

Compliance and enforcement actions report 2021-2022

[rdmw.qld.gov.au](http://rdmw.qld.gov.au)

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

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## Acknowledgement of Country

The Department of Regional Development, Manufacturing and Water (DRDMW) acknowledges the Country and people of Queensland's First Nations. We pay our respect to Elders past, present and emerging.

We acknowledge the continuous living culture of First Nations Queenslanders – their diverse languages, customs and traditions, knowledge and systems. We acknowledge the deep relationship, connection and responsibility to land, sea, sky and Country as an integral element of First Nations identity and culture.

This Country is sacred. Everything on the land has meaning and all people are one with it. We acknowledge First Nations peoples' sacred connection as central to culture and being. We acknowledge the stories, traditions and living cultures of First Nations peoples and commit to shaping our state's future together. DRDMW recognises the contribution of First Nations peoples and communities to the State of Queensland and how this continues to enrich our society more broadly.

# Our regulatory role in the Queensland Murray-Darling Basin

As the State's primary water resource management regulator, our job is to ensure that the obligations and rules outlined in our legislation are understood and met to enable the sustainable, safe, and secure management of water in Queensland.

We use a range of regulatory tools including informing, guiding, monitoring, and enforcing and responding. When compliance is not achieved, we take a risk-based approach to decide how to best respond, which includes taking enforcement action when needed. Further details on the department's role as a water regulator and our compliance approach and principles are published on our [website](#).

This report outlines the compliance and enforcement activities undertaken in the Queensland Murray Darling Basin during the 2021 – 2022 year.

## 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 described in the Regulatory Strategy sets the foundation for our annual compliance planning.

## Compliance activities in the Queensland Murray-Darling Basin

Valuing our principles of transparency and communication to the public, the Queensland Government publicly reports on compliance and enforcement actions undertaken in the Queensland Murray-Darling Basin area. This report details the actions taken during the financial year including auditing activities, incidents investigated, compliance actions undertaken and timeliness of investigations.

Further information about our proactive compliance activities across the state can be found in our [Annual Compliance Plan](#).

## Proactive monitoring and investigations

The map in Figure 1 below shows the number of property audits conducted, and the number of compliance cases investigated by the department between 1 July 2021 and 30 June 2022 in the three Murray–Darling Basin water plan areas. Adverse weather events greatly impacted Queensland catchments of the Murray Darling Basin over 2021 – 22. Due to this, the number of audits planned were not able to be completed due to the inaccessibility properties. Instead, alternate measures were utilised such as satellite monitoring during flow events to identify any water being taken. Additionally, monitoring methods continued including meter readings and education about compliance was undertaken following flow events.

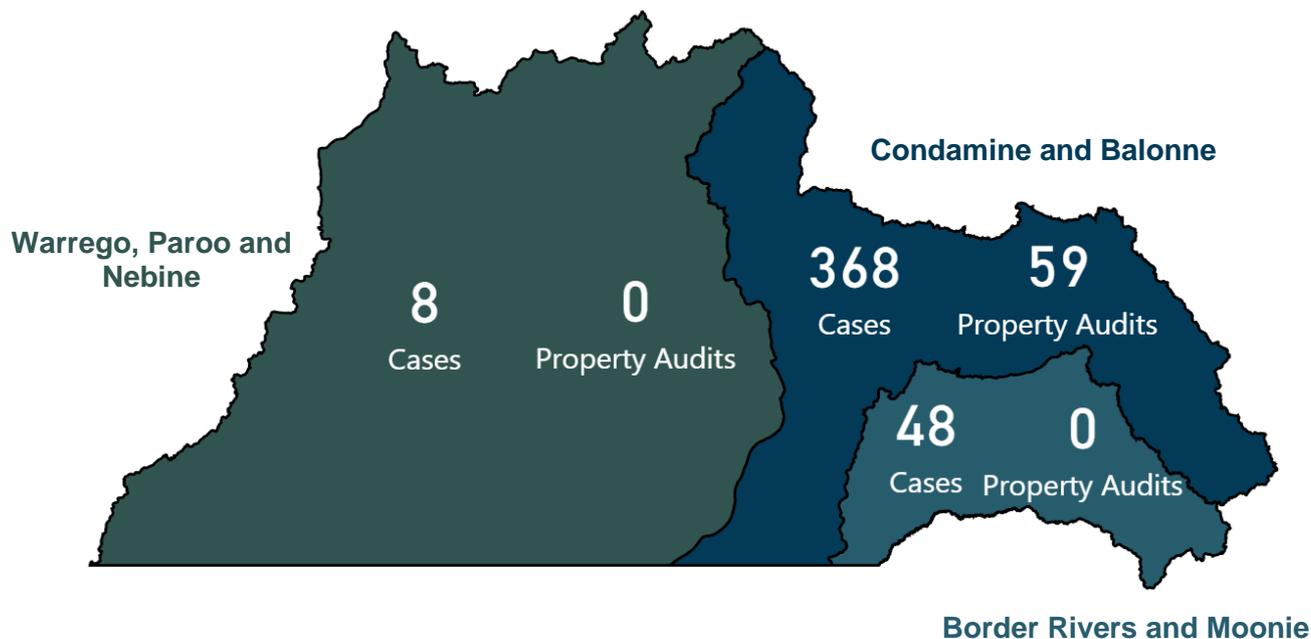


Figure 1: Number of audits and incidents investigated in 2021-22 in the three Queensland Murray-Darling Basin water plans

## Compliance and enforcement actions

The department uses a range of regulatory tools and activities to implement our strategy and support our compliance and enforcement activities. We proactively monitor in high risk areas, such as the Queensland Murray Darling Basin for potential issues so we can address them early. Our day to day compliance work also includes responding to third party allegations of non-compliance.

In the Warrego, Paroo and Nebine, the department utilises satellite imagery and desktop auditing of reported use from metered entitlement holders to monitor compliance. Where a possible non-compliance is found in the Queensland Murray-Darling Basin, the department conducts further investigation (which may include a property audit). This allows a targeted and prioritised approach to monitoring compliance.

Table 1 details the number of audits undertaken in each water plan between 1 July 2021 and 30 June 2022.

Table 1: Audits that the department undertook between 1 July 2021 and 30 June 2022 in the Queensland Murray Darling Basin

Compliance actions	Condamine and Balonne Water Plan	Border Rivers and Moonie Water Plan	Warrego, Paroo, and Nebine Water Plan
Property audits	59	0	0
Self-read audits against entitlements	1,553	159	12
Total audits by Water Plan area	1,612	159	12
Total number of audits	1,783		

When non-compliance is detected, the department considers a range of factors in determining the severity of a non-compliance to inform the most appropriate response.

Table 2 details the number and types of responses that the department undertook between 1 July 2021 and 30 June 2022. The data includes metering, take in excess of entitlement, unauthorised interference with water, contravention of authorisation conditions, water bore and drilling-related offences. Some cases involved multiple compliance actions that are recorded separately.

Table 3 outlines the reasons found for no further action where an incident was investigated, and no enforcement was undertaken.

**Table 2: Enforcement actions that the department undertook between 1 July 2021 and 30 June 2022 in the Queensland Murray Darling Basin**

Compliance Actions	Condamine and Balonne Water Plan	Border Rivers and Moonie Water Plan	Warrego, Paroo, and Nebine Water Plan
Verbal education	3	0	0
Advisory letter	40	11	6
Warning notices	27	5	3
Penalty infringement notices	17	4	0
Compliance notices	0	0	0
Prosecution	0	0	0
<b>Total actions taken in Water Plan</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Total actions taken in the MDB</b>		<b>116</b>	

**Table 3: Reasons found for no further action during compliance investigations during 1 July 2021 and 30 June 2022 in the Queensland Murray Darling Basin**

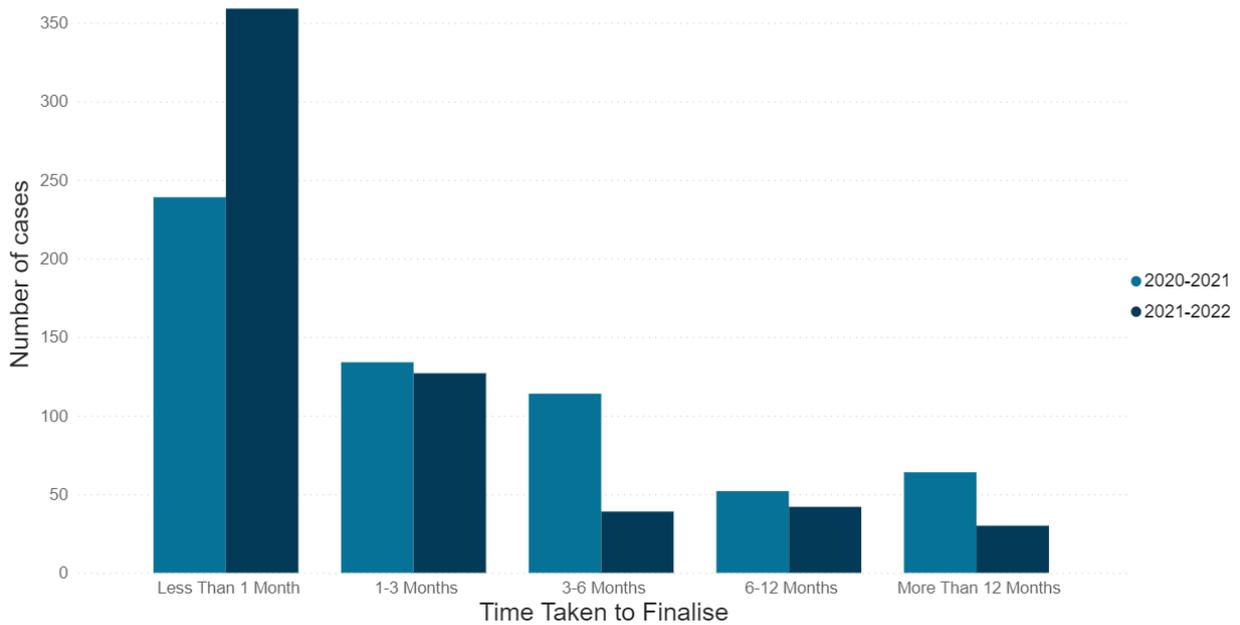
Reasons for no Action	Condamine and Balonne Water Plan	Border Rivers and Moonie Water Plan	Warrego, Paroo, and Nebine Water Plan
Applicable exemption exists	8	1	0
No offence found after further investigation	104	13	1
Insufficient evidence	8	4	0
Limitation period expired	1	1	0
Authorisation produced/sighted	12	0	0
<b>Total actions taken in Water Plan</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Total actions taken in the MDB</b>		<b>153</b>	

# Timeliness of investigations

Key principles of the department’s regulatory approach are to ensure we are timely in how we respond and communicate about non-compliance.

Figure 2 compares the time taken to complete investigations for the periods of July 2020 – 30 June 2021 and 1 July 2021 – 30 June 2022. As seen in Figure 2, compared to last year, the department has significantly improved timeliness in responding to alleged non-compliance

During 2020-21, over 200 cases took less than 1 month to investigate and respond. Most of the remaining cases took between 1-6 months to investigate and respond. A small number of complex cases required a significant amount of engagement and consequently took longer to resolve.



**Figure 2: Timeframe of compliance investigations in all QMBD Water Plans during 2020-2021 and 2021-2022**

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