

Queensland

Good jobs
Better services
Great lifestyle

Queensland Water Strategy

WATER. OUR LIFE RESOURCE.



Queensland
Government

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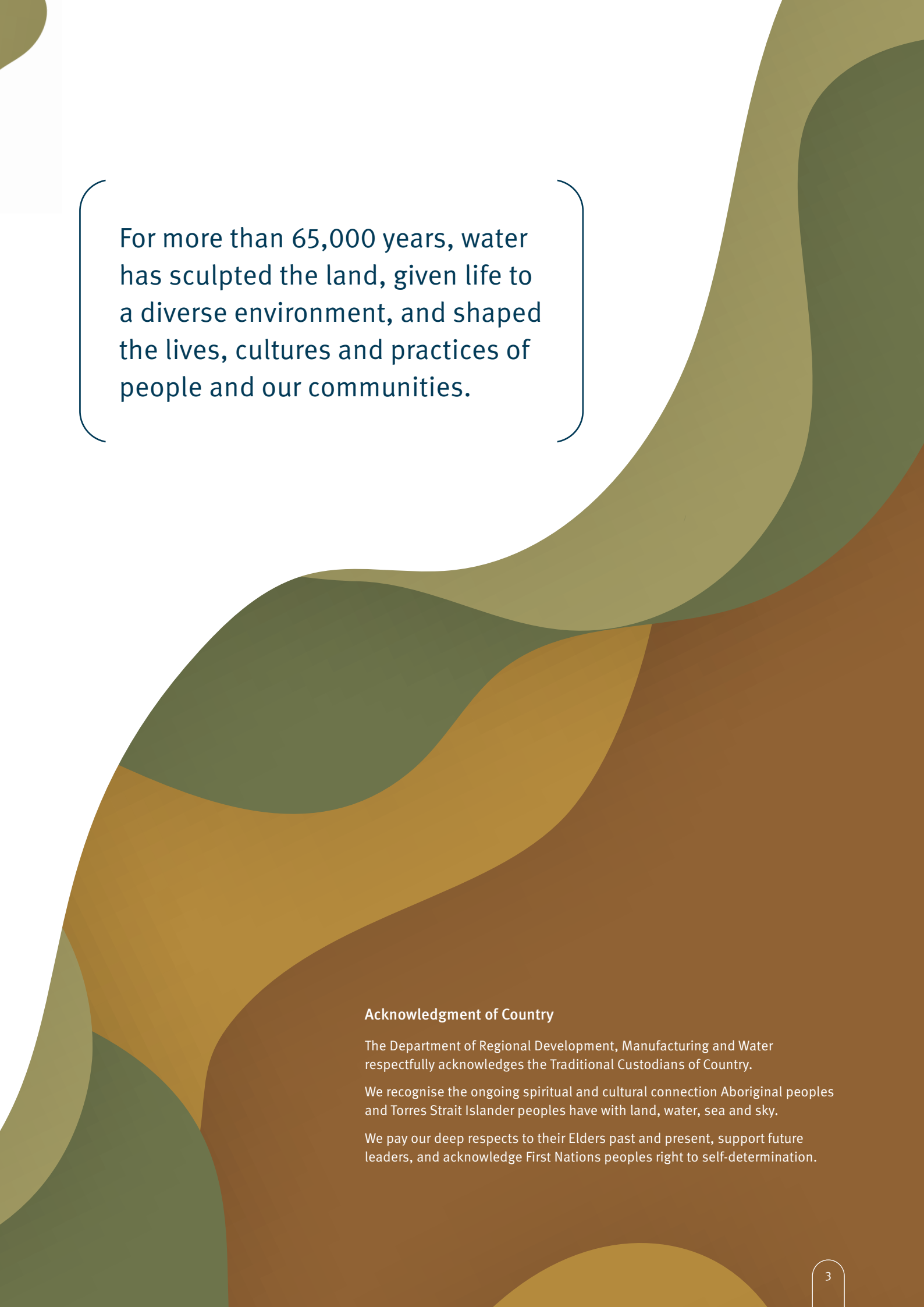
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For more than 65,000 years, water has sculpted the land, given life to a diverse environment, and shaped the lives, cultures and practices of people and our communities.

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.

Partnering to deliver a bold future

As our communities have grown, rapid changes in the way we access and use water have brought great prosperity and opportunity as well as new pressures for our oceans, rivers, natural wonders, groundwater systems and wildlife. In response, we must consider the whole water cycle to strike the fine balance required for the future of water management, leading to more resilient catchments and communities.

Water supports our lives, our lifestyle and our livelihoods

This strategy highlights the collective effort and initiatives that communities, government and industry are all undertaking. It seeks to encourage continuing collective action towards long-term water security and efficient use of water as central to our future sustainability and the legacy we pass on to the next generation.

How the strategy began

Stakeholder feedback helped to form this strategy. Consultation with industry and the community identified a need for a water strategy that goes beyond infrastructure and bulk water supply matters. This strategy provides a broader, sector-wide lens on our water challenges and opportunities.

The strategy also grew from a review of the Queensland Bulk Water Opportunities Statement (QBWOS). The QBWOS review aligned with the release of the State Infrastructure Strategy 2022 (SIS). The SIS outlines the Queensland Government's infrastructure requirements over the next two decades.

In line with the SIS, the Department of Regional Development, Manufacturing and Water (DRDMW) has begun developing a Strategic Water Infrastructure Plan (SWIP) and pipeline of projects that will identify, assess and prioritise water infrastructure projects across Queensland for the next 10 to 15 years. The SWIP will establish development priorities for bulk water infrastructure in Queensland and will lead to capital projects to meet dam safety upgrade and water supply requirements across the State.

The SWIP sits alongside the newly developed Queensland Water Strategy. Together, they will replace QBWOS.

Changing the future together

The Queensland Water Strategy aims to safeguard the social, cultural and economic wellbeing of communities and the health of our natural environments across our vast state as we meet our net zero emissions commitments.

To nurture Queensland's unique waters and future, we must continue to partner to rapidly respond and adapt to the urgent signals of our changing climate. Together, we can ensure the sustainability of Queensland's waters across the entire water life cycle to benefit today's and future generations.

Our future requires a combination of skills and knowledge from all areas—community, government and industry—to drive action and sound decisions so we can enjoy a healthy environment and regional development, and maximise our long-term sustainability.

Strategy vision

Sustainable and secure water resources are central to Queensland’s economic transformation and the legacy we pass on to future generations.

Priorities



Value precious water resources through efficient use and re-use alongside effective water planning and management



Increase First Nations’ access to and ownership of water, and greater inclusion of cultural values and traditional knowledge in water decisions



Invest wisely in water infrastructure



Maintain safe and secure water supplies



Look after the Reef, waterways, ecosystem health and groundwater, and improve water quality



Build thriving, resilient and sustainable regions with long-term water security in the face of a changing climate and natural disasters



Support innovation, science and continuous improvement through industry engagement



Tackle development challenges, invest in regional skills and share expertise



Secure water for growth and key industries such as agriculture, manufacturing, resources and renewables



Ease cost of living pressures and support water-wise communities



Healthy waterways, rivers, aquifers and sustainable water management



First Nations partnerships, access and ownership



Water for regional economic prosperity



Safe and secure water supply

Working together delivers better outcomes

The Queensland Government ensures water is made available to consumers and managed sustainably to fulfill state and national obligations for the environment, and urban, rural and remote water needs.

Investments in water infrastructure are guided by a detailed assessment process and must stack up against sustainability criteria. They are often part of a wider stakeholder engagement or co-funding partnership with the Australian Government.

Queensland has a highly regarded, evidence-based planning and policy framework. This framework guides best practice decision-making in managing water resources—a system that is complex, adaptive and highly technical, with intersecting and competing interests.

Holistic water planning and effective management of water assets is critical for healthy catchments, demand management, and water efficiency and markets.

As the lead agency and champion for water resources, supporting regional development and manufacturing industries, DRDMW places a high value on sharing knowledge and engaging with local communities to develop policies and deliver initiatives.

Strengthening First Nations engagement—as well as growing partnerships with communities, industry and other stakeholders—is key to building the department’s capability.

The Queensland Government has a strong track record of investing in monitoring, science and modelling programs to underpin its decisions. This includes a long-term science partnership within government as well as innovating science and modelling tools through the Queensland Water Modelling Network.

The Queensland Government works collaboratively with Australian Government and interstate partners to deliver national water reforms and better outcomes in the Murray–Darling Basin.

To successfully meet the challenges ahead, clear action, collective stewardship and strong relationships will deliver the social, cultural and environmental values we all want to maintain.

Water is the vital force that sustains our lives, our lifestyle, our landscapes and our livelihoods.

Now, more than ever before, Queensland is prepared for a sustainable and secure water future, ready to propel our State’s prosperity as we move to net zero emissions. Water powers our people, planet and economy.

Partnering for greatest impact—
community, government and industry all
working together to deliver a sustainable
secure water future for Queensland.



Rookwood Weir has won multiple awards including Infrastructure Sustainability Council excellence awards for design and sustainability, and an excellence award from the Concrete Institute of Australia.

Decision-making principles

The department is committed to these guiding principles when making decisions about the State's water resources, including when to engage and consult with stakeholders to inform decisions.

- Communicate clearly, openly and accessibly.
- Engage and consult with stakeholders respectfully, inclusively and purposefully with cultural sensitivity.
- Embrace innovation and adapt when developing options to address challenges or bring new opportunities to life.
- Assess options on the basis of social, cultural, environmental and economic factors to deliver sustainable and fair outcomes.
- Base decisions on best available science and knowledge, applying a considered and balanced view, even in the absence of absolute certainty.
- Develop relationships that value, respect and support the aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples deep cultural connection to land and waters.
- Maintain transparent and fit-for-purpose processes.
- Foster an understanding of the water cycle and a systems approach to creating sustainable water outcomes.
- Leverage the strengths of partners and colleagues (across all spheres of community, industry and government) to deliver best outcomes for all Queenslanders.
- Monitor performance and track outcomes to actively seek out opportunities for improvement and learning.
- Recognise the benefits of a healthy and diverse society and economy to the work we undertake with communities to enhancing or safeguarding social, environmental and cultural values.



Current landscape

This strategy considers the critical issues affecting Queensland’s water-related priorities. Addressing these will lead the way to more sustainable water outcomes for all Queenslanders over the next five years, and beyond.

The Queensland Government is progressing along a Path to Treaty and improving approaches to more deeply understand Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples interests. However, there is still substantial work to do in closing the gap.

Queensland’s regulatory systems and sound environmental practice frameworks are well regarded. They provide a great base upon which the private sector can keep building its environmental, social and governance credentials.

Societies are confronting the realities of more intense weather extremes and climate impacts.

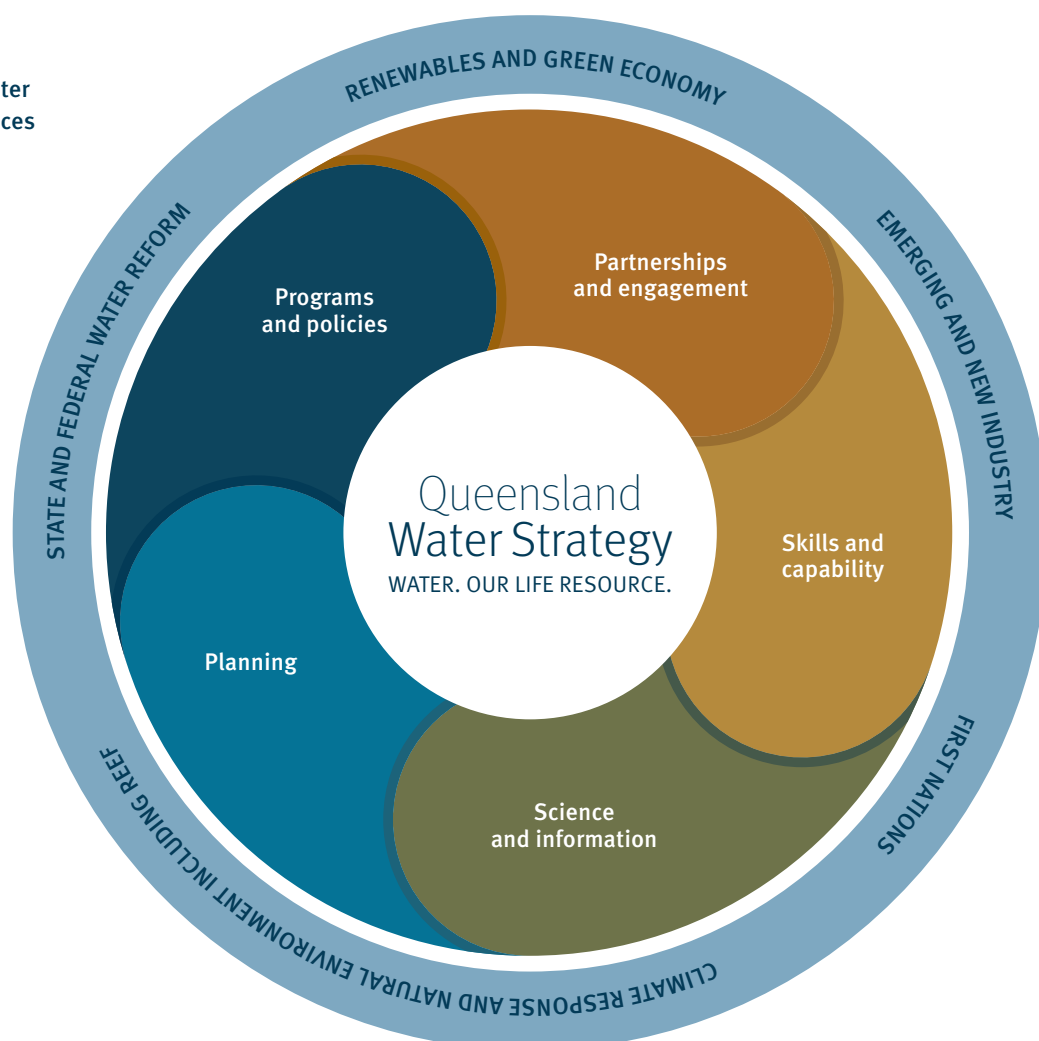
Innovation and technological solutions to reduce carbon pollution, use resources more efficiently, spur on effective methods for adaptation, and shore up food, energy and water security, are also priorities.

Water is the vital thread running through all of these plans and programs, supporting communities and industries at a time of rapid change and cost of living pressures.

The department manages water resources in Queensland with the support of the sector, including:

- **bulk water entities** (Seqwater, Sunwater, Gladstone Water Area Board and Mount Isa Water Board)
- **two distributor–retailers** (Unitywater and Urban Utilities) and **three local governments** (City of Gold Coast, Logan City Council and Redland City Council) in South East Queensland
- **a further 67 local governments** outside South East Queensland.

By building on established frameworks and planning carefully, the Queensland Water Strategy is holistic and balances competing priorities.



Emerging and future needs

How ready are we for the challenges and future opportunities that we will soon face?

As well as new industries beginning and our communities adapting to a changing climate and more frequent severe weather events, our population is ageing and more people are moving to Queensland.

These are just some of the pressures facing our water sector. Can we evolve our planning quickly enough to make the best use of water in the future?

With the Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games ahead, Queensland is already poised to become a renewable energy powerhouse with the added benefit of a record investment in new infrastructure.

Place-based planning—working closely with industry stakeholders and local communities to leverage experience and knowledge to solve problems collaboratively—will become increasingly important for businesses and governments.

Strategies and plans will need to be more flexible than ever before, while providing clarity and certainty from government for leadership and innovation to take hold.

Future success for our sector—and for this strategy—will look like:

- the right mix of skills across all of the service delivery chain and water cycle, with industry able to attract, train and retain the right people
- better integration across all of the water cycle to enable and drive sustainability outcomes
- a positive, enduring legacy of water sustainability for the community following the Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games
- greater community understanding and local participation in decisions about water resourcing, efficiency and sustainability
- increased application of smart technology, research and innovation throughout the water cycle
- meaningful dialogue built on trust and respect with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to improve cultural, social and economic outcomes, and future water management.

There are opportunities for the water sector to use system-wide approaches to resources by shifting focus from a linear economic model of 'take-make-waste' to circular economy principles.

Queensland is well-positioned to gain a commercial advantage in a circular economy, and to address long-term sustainability of water systems and projected water demand.

Already, projects and initiatives that demonstrate the benefits of regenerative solutions are under way.

Delivery focus areas



Healthy waterways, rivers, aquifers and sustainable water management

Respond swiftly to climate change, using the best available science to maximise our water resources and sustain healthy, more resilient catchments



First Nations partnerships, access and ownership

Partner with First Nations peoples and develop sustainable practices that build on traditional wisdom and provide opportunities for social and economic development



Water for regional economic prosperity

Build state water infrastructure to boost established industries and jobs underpinned by long-term water security



Safe and secure water supply

Ensure every community across Queensland has safe and secure water, alongside support for boosting resilience and contingency plans even in times of severe drought or floods



Enoggera Dam, Seqwater

Water is the heart of what we do

From food bowls to grazing lands and coastal catchments to channel country: the planning, infrastructure, science and innovation involved in moving water to homes, farms and businesses is a vital and often unseen service. Securing water for diverse regions and the environment relies on expertise, effective water management plans, and partnerships across our vast State.

9.2M

Population projection by 2073

\$5.2B

Water infrastructure invested since 2015

Water plans for Queensland

- | | |
|--------------------------|--|
| Baffle Creek Basin | Gold Coast |
| Barron | Great Artesian Basin and other regional aquifers |
| Border Rivers and Moonie | Gulf |
| Boyne River Basin | Logan Basin |
| Burdekin Basin | Mary Basin |
| Burnett Basin | Mitchell |
| Calliope River | Moreton |
| Cape York | Pioneer Valley |
| Condamine and Balonne | Warrego, Paroo, Bulloo and Nebine |
| Cooper Creek | Wet Tropics |
| Fitzroy Basin | Whitsunday |
| Georgina and Diamantina | |

Regional water assessments areas

- Tablelands
- Burdekin
- Bundaberg and Burnett
- Southern and Darling Downs



KEY

- ▲ Dam improvement project
- City or town
- Bore capping rehab boundary
- ▲ Project site
- Great Artesian Basin
- Regional water assessment areas

Working in partnership with the Australian Government and other states to manage the Murray–Darling Basin

FOR MORE DETAILED MAPPING GO TO WWW.RDMW.QLD.GOV.AU

Water fast facts

Maximising the value of our infrastructure and availability of water resources is key

10M ML

Including 7M ML already allocated and 3M ML held for future opportunities

850+

water trades
FY 2022/2023

218,777ML

GAB bore capping water saved annually

41,600

water entitlements in
Queensland as of 2023

Urban water supply—partnership model in action

Water service providers play an important role in supporting our economy, lifestyle and environment

75 water service providers

45,000 km of water mains

2.09M connected properties

36,000 km of sewerage mains

259 sewage treatment plants

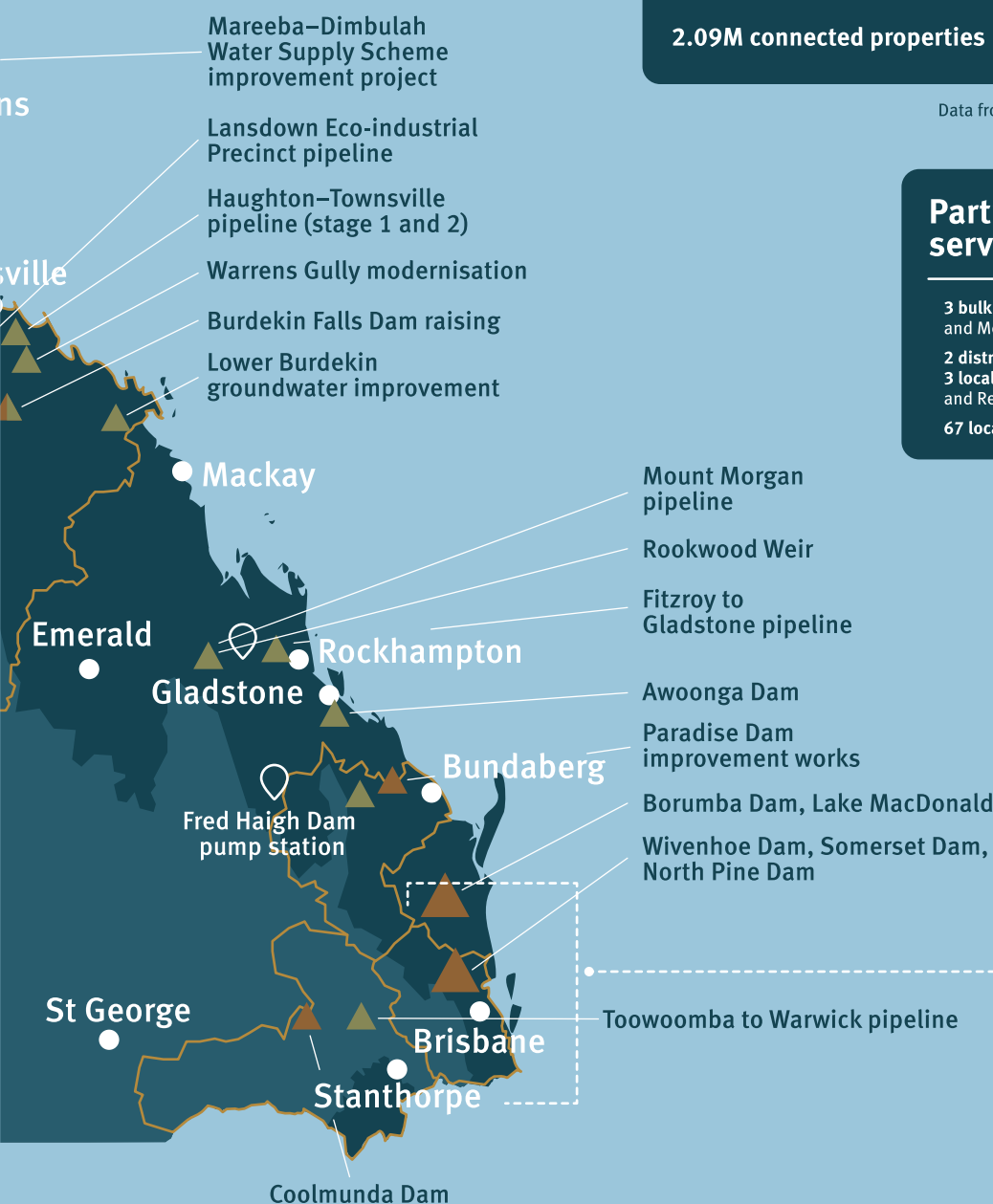
Data from the Queensland's Urban Water Explorer 2022 snapshot

Partners provide urban water services to communities

3 bulk water entities (Seqwater, Gladstone Area Water Board and Mount Isa Water Board)

2 distributor-retailers (Unitywater and Urban Utilities) and 3 local governments (City of Gold Coast, Logan City Council and Redland City Council) in South East Queensland

67 local governments outside South East Queensland



SEQ Water Grid

Building Queensland's future —our delivery focus



Healthy waterways, rivers, aquifers and sustainable water management

Respond swiftly to climate change, using the best available science to maximise our water resources and sustain healthy, more resilient catchments

- Meeting or exceeding our goals to keep rivers, wetlands and aquifers healthy and support better outcomes for the Great Barrier Reef
- Reviewing 23 water plans across the State to finely balance the share of water for the environment, cultural values and other water uses
- Using climate science and innovation to:
 - » understand and manage risks to water resources
 - » build mitigation into management
 - » strengthen resilience
- Actively monitoring waterways and groundwater levels to improve catchment health
- Delivering compliance plans, audits and effective regulation of the water sector
- Transforming rural water management through smarter metering and optimising water markets
- Boosting and leveraging partnerships with councils, National Resource Management (NRM) organisations, community groups, and industry to build innovation and capacity into decision making
- Delivering Great Artesian Basin bore-capping program to reduce water wastage
- Support recreational and commercial fisheries, as well as Queensland's strong tourism economy which all rely on healthy aquatic environments



First Nations partnerships, access and ownership

Partner with First Nations peoples and develop sustainable practices that build on traditional wisdom and provide opportunities for social and economic development

- Forging partnerships to open up more opportunities for First Nations communities to own and access water
- Working closely with First Nations peoples to build cultural values into water planning, as well as share knowledge and grow economic and social benefits
- Ensuring water plans and management systems consider climate change impacts on water availability and incorporate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples cultural needs and values
- Respecting and recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island peoples as traditional custodians who have cared for rivers, country, sea and sky for more than 60,000 years
- Respecting the sensitivity and intellectual property of traditional knowledge and acknowledging the willingness of First Nations peoples to help share future water management



Water for regional economic prosperity

Build water infrastructure to boost established and newer industries, jobs and long-term water security

- Building and investing in dams, weirs and pipelines with \$5.2B invested since 2015
- Supporting industries, including agriculture and mining, as well as critical minerals and the Queensland Energy and Jobs Plan
- Implementing the Bradfield expert review panel's recommendations
- Delivering the Strategic Water Infrastructure Plan (SWIP)
- Expanding water security, supply and contingency options in South East Queensland
- Implementing regional water supply projects
- Planning for the future pipeline of projects across Queensland through state water infrastructure plans
- Releasing unallocated water to support new and expanding regional economic opportunities
- Continuing to identify and deliver actions to improve the effective and efficient operation of Queensland's water market



Safe and secure water supply

Ensure every community across Queensland has safe and secure water, alongside support to boost resilience and contingency plans even in times of severe drought or floods

- Ensuring no-one runs out of water in at-risk communities and planning for resilience even during times of drought or other natural disasters
- Planning for future water security alongside urban communities and councils including promoting water demand and household waterwise practices
- Engaging community and industry Waterwise initiatives to drive behaviour change and sustainable water use
- Easing cost of living pressure with rebates, incentives, subsidies and grants for local government infrastructure
- Improving dam safety to make sure they're well regulated, safe and secure against climate change and extreme weather
- Delivering the Urban Water Explorer web platform to present data from water and sewerage service providers. This will allow them to monitor water security, demand management, infrastructure and maintenance
- Using climate science and modelling to understand climate change effects on our water resources and to tailor our response

A strategy shaped by stakeholders

There is significant work under way to drive water sector innovation in Queensland, across all spheres of government, academia, First Nations peoples, communities and peak industry bodies.

Key stakeholders with broad interests in the water sector helped shape this strategy as part of a review that considered our success to date, the current policy landscape, and risks and opportunities ahead. During the development of this strategy, stakeholders provided a deeper understanding of the challenges, opportunities and priorities for Queensland's water resources portfolio.

Generally, stakeholders supported an holistic approach to sustainable resource management.

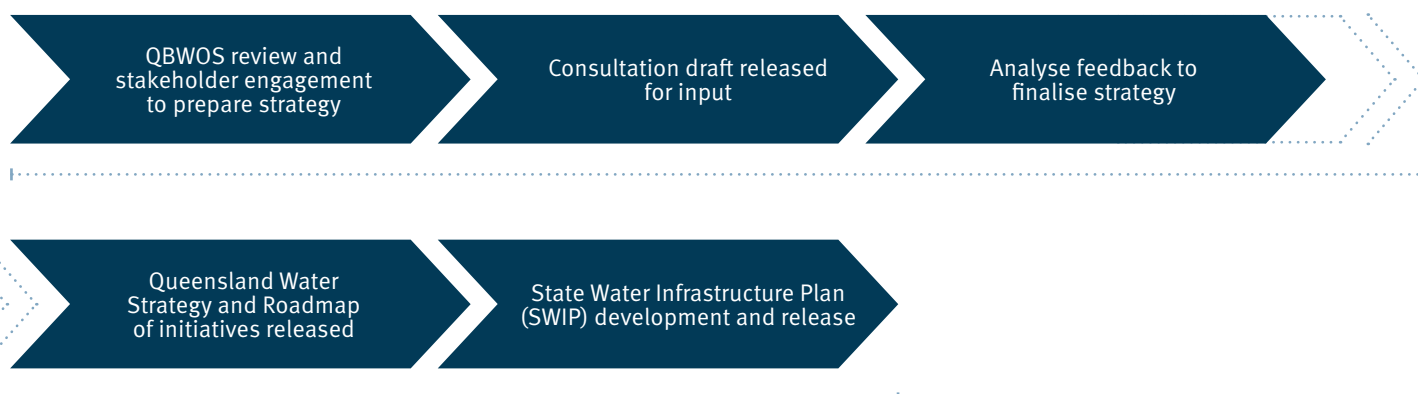
The department also took its first steps towards seeking the views of First Nations peoples with future engagement to come through a stand-alone First Nations Water Strategy.

“Water Engagement Forum members acknowledge the quality, openness, and continuity of this important consultation process. We have appreciated the genuine opportunity to engage and to provide feedback.”

—WATER ENGAGEMENT FORUM

Roadmap of initiatives

A roadmap accompanies the strategy to help track annual progress and outcomes.



How will we measure success along the way?

We plan to track our progress and share stories of success in achieving the strategy's vision, priorities and delivery focus.

The department will review progress through active engagement with stakeholders and partner agencies over the life of the strategy.

Thanks to our stakeholders

- AgForce
- Association of Mining and Exploration Companies (AMEC)
- Business Chamber Queensland
- Engineers Australia
- Griffith University
- International WaterCentre (IWC)
- Irrigation Australia
- Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ)
- NRM Regions Queensland
- Planning Institute of Australia (PIA)
- Queensland Conservation Council (QCC)
- Queensland Farmers' Federation (QFF)
- Queensland Fruit & Vegetable Growers (QFVG)
- Queensland Resources Council (QRC)
- Queensland Water Directorate (qldwater)
- Seqwater
- Sunwater
- University of Queensland (UQ)
- Urban Development Institute of Australia (UDIA)

Find out more

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