



Queensland  
Government

Department of Regional Development,  
Manufacturing and Water



# Regulatory Strategy

Water Resource Management

2022-2024

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

# Introduction

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

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

DRDMW is responsible for Queensland's water management laws and regulations and regulates activities under the *Water Act 2000*, *Water Supply (Safety and Reliability) Act 2008*, *River Improvement Trust Act 1940* and the *Planning Act 2016*. Decisions made under the legislation administered by DRDMW are subject to the operation of the *Human Rights Act 2019*.

## Purpose

This strategy sets out our approach for the delivery of our regulatory functions and activities.

Informed and directed by DRDMW's strategic plan 2022-2026, this strategy explains the principles underlying our regulatory approach, the tools we utilise and our compliance and enforcement pathways.

The water sector in Queensland serves diverse and widespread communities across the state, taking into account their unique cultural and environmental values. This strategy will inform how the department will balance state-wide consistency with local and regional priorities.

By describing how we will undertake our regulatory responsibilities, this strategy aims to increase community awareness of the importance of managing the safety, security, reliability and sustainability of our water resources. The strategy also aims to provide the community with confidence about what to expect from us as Queensland's water resource management regulator.

## Our principles of regulatory practice

Our principles lie at the core of our regulatory approach and clearly outline what the community can expect from DRDMW:

- **Consistent and fair:** we have a consistent and fair approach to how we achieve compliance.
- **Accountable and transparent:** we do what we say we are going to do, are transparent in our decision making and talk openly about priorities, activities and the results of our work.
- **Safe and well:** we support the safety and wellbeing of our staff and communities.
- **Outcomes and risk-based:** we use a proactive, outcomes-focused, targeted, risk-based approach for our compliance activities.
- **Responsive:** we are timely in how we communicate about compliance and in responding to non-compliance.
- **Supportive:** we encourage the community to do the right thing and empower staff to make decisions within our regulatory and governance framework.
- **Adaptive:** we monitor our progress and adjust our actions as needed.

As a modern best-practice regulator, DRDMW is committed to continual improvement of our regulatory approach and we will make changes to improve our services and regulatory processes over time. We will also plan, carry out and measure the effectiveness of improvements we make to ensure they result in better regulatory outcomes.

# How we regulate

As the State’s primary water resource management regulator, our job is to ensure that the functions required under our legislation are executed, and 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.



To ensure the objectives of our Acts are met, we undertake range of activities to promote voluntary compliance. Specifically, we:

- monitor and assess potential impacts of certain activities to determine if those impacts are acceptable. For example, we monitor and assess bore construction activities and removal of quarry materials from watercourses
- monitor and assess the take of water from the state’s water resources to ensure they are sustainable now and into the future
- ensure drinking water supplies are safe and secure to protect human health and the environment
- ensure dam owners have effective dam safety management programs in place to minimise the risk of dam failure and protect life and property
- provide quality-assured water monitoring data and technical advice into the water planning process to ensure environmental and water resource outcomes are achieved
- hold alleged offenders to account, to be the effective, strong, consistent and evidence-based regulator Queenslanders expect
- respond quickly to emerging water and health and safety risks and issues.

Where compliance is not achieved, we take a risk-based approach to decide how best to respond, which includes taking enforcement action when needed.

## Regulatory Tools and Activities

DRDMW use a range of regulatory tools and activities to implement our strategy and support our compliance and enforcement pathway.

Regulatory Tool	Key Objective	Related Activities
 <b>INFORM</b>	<p>Ensure our regulated communities are <b>informed</b> and aware of their obligations and how we undertake our regulatory role.</p> <p>Ensure our regulatory activities and areas of risk or concern are transparently communicated.</p>	<p>Issue licences, permits, authorisations, etc. that provide clear expectations and requirements.</p> <p>Publish a regulatory strategy and annual compliance plan, reporting regularly on performance.</p> <p>Communicate and share information about our compliance and enforcement activities and actions.</p>
 <b>GUIDE</b>	<p><b>Guide</b> and educate the community, helping them to understand their statutory obligations, including the consequences of non-compliance and the likely impacts on the wider community.</p>	<p>Provide resources and tools to be clear about the obligation to comply with the law.</p> <p>Provide accurate and timely advice, and easily accessible guidelines, information and targeted community engagement activities.</p>



MONITOR

Ensure compliance across our regulatory activities by **monitoring** risks and impacts to water resources, the environment and communities.

Use business intelligence from a range of sources such as quality scientific data or spatial tools to determine areas of priority and risk to target effort.

Undertake desktop assessments and field audits.



RESPOND & ENFORCE

Address risks and issues to improve compliance and achieve water resource management outcomes.

Respond to complaints and information.

**Enforce** the laws we administer to address non-compliance.

Ensure our responses are targeted and proportionate by making fair, transparent and evidence-based decisions.

Improve our regulatory approaches, and frameworks to adapt to emerging challenges and opportunities (for example, through the department's Rural Water Futures program).

## Compliance and enforcement pathway

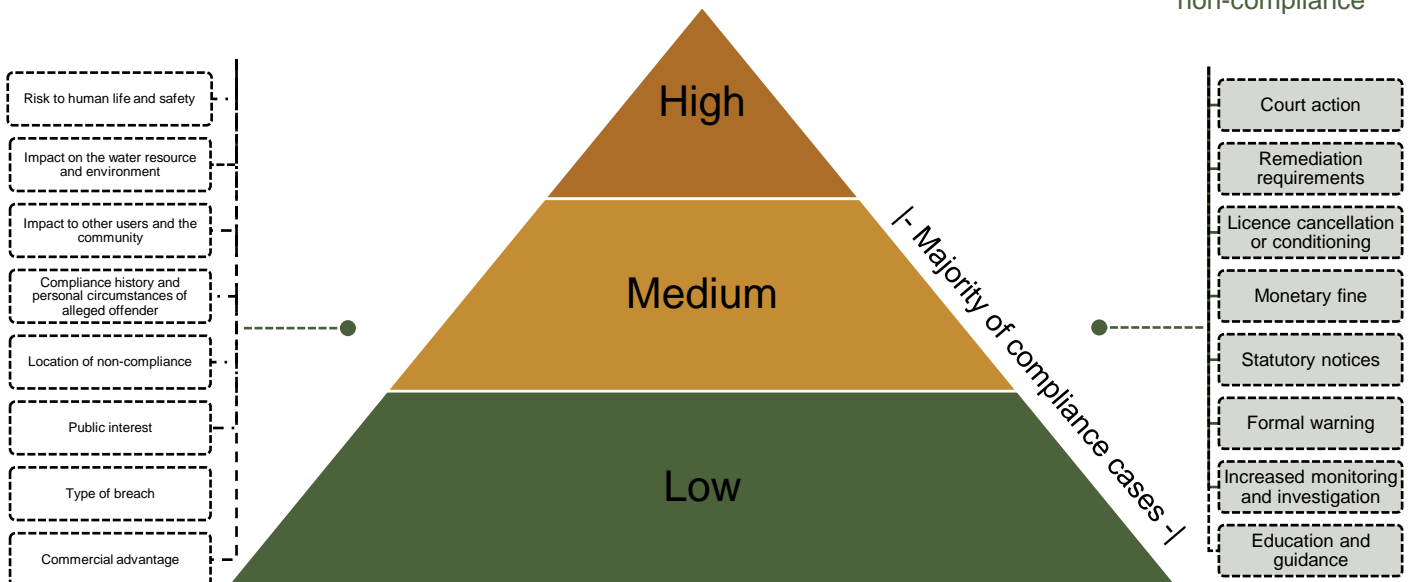
Our compliance and enforcement pathway (Figure 2) allows for a risk-based approach by taking into consideration a range of factors in determining the severity of a non-compliance incident to inform the most appropriate response.

Based on the severity of the non-compliance, the department may take any action, or a combination of actions, to achieve compliant outcomes within the regulated community.

Factors for consideration

Scale of severity of non-compliance

Actions in response to non-compliance



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