

# Terms of Reference

## Bradfield Regional Assessment and Development Panel

### Introduction

The Bradfield Regional Assessment and Development Panel (the Panel) is an independent assessment panel made up of respected experts. The Panel will report a set of recommendations to the Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy, for consideration by the Queensland Government. The final report will embody the independent assessments of the Panel.

The Panel has been established to support the government in assessing the viability of opportunities that a Bradfield Scheme concept present. This may not be of the same magnitude or scale as what was originally envisioned by Dr John Bradfield, or subsequent advocates of the scheme; however, the Palaszczuk Government is willing to progress water infrastructure projects that deliver for irrigators and Queenslanders.

The Queensland Government is ready to have a conversation with the Australian Government and its new National Water Grid Authority on a range of water infrastructure proposals, including the opportunity for increasing regional connectivity where it makes sense.

### Purpose

The purpose of the Panel is to present a report to the Minister, outlining the results of an assessment of the financial, economic, environmental, social and technical viability of a Bradfield Scheme, or “Bradfield like” concepts, as well as a set of recommendations for any further assessment.

The final report will consider the Queensland Government’s requirements for the strategic assessment of infrastructure projects as outlined in the Project Assessment Framework and Building Queensland Business Case Development Framework. The Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy will supply the panel members supporting information relating to these frameworks.

The final report is due to the Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy 12 months from engagement of the Panel.

While there is no defined project area, the *project area* that the Panel will focus on is the geographic area that allows for the diversion of flows from the Wet Tropics to the Burdekin and as far south as the Queensland Murray-Darling Basin.

The recommendations provided to the Minister will address each key theme (as outlined below) and will be included as part of the overall report. The Panel’s expertise, local knowledge, experience and insights will inform the recommendations provided to the Minister and will be valuable in informing the overall strategy.

#### *Theme 1: Analysis of the Bradfield Scheme to date*

- Consider Bradfield and Bradfield-like assessments (e.g. harvesting, transfer and storage concepts and proposals that connect different subregions/areas) completed to date and their

limitations at the time, as well as the growth in infrastructure within the project area since the original Bradfield proposal.

*Theme 2: Economic benefits to regional communities and agricultural production*

- Consider the economic benefits to regional communities and agricultural production within the project area; especially through the lens of re-energising the economy following the COVID-19 pandemic and the current economic recession.

*Theme 3: Analysis of the project area and its current infrastructure*

- Scan and analyse existing bulk water infrastructure, current water demand and whether supply is meeting demand within the project area.

*Theme 4: Identified opportunities leveraging current infrastructure within the project area*

- Assess and provide recommendations concerning where existing bulk water infrastructure can be expanded and connected to support drought-prone regions within the project area.

*Theme 5: New opportunities within the project area*

- Make recommendations concerning new opportunities, where infrastructure does not yet exist.
- Advise on appropriate staging of opportunities to maximise return on investment to the Queensland community and economy, as well as estimated costings.
- Further, consider opportunities to leverage complementary infrastructure, e.g. hydrogen and hydroelectricity generation that may also benefit the Queensland community.
- Consider within the context of opportunities associated with the Queensland Government's Hydrogen Industry Strategy 2019-2024. By 2030, the Queensland Government's vision is to be at the forefront of renewable hydrogen production in Australia, supplying an established domestic market and export partners with a safe, sustainable and reliable supply of hydrogen.
- Consider opportunities to integrate with the CopperString Project

*Theme 6: Neighbouring opportunities outside of the project area.*

- Identify potential bulk water supply infrastructure opportunities that neighbour the project area.

In developing their advice, the Panel will be required to explore and consider a wide range of disciplines including, but not limited to economic and financial assessment, engineering, cost estimation, agronomy, market assessment, environment impacts, hydrology, social and cultural impacts, specific to Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The Panel is an advisory body only and not a decision making body.

The Panel will not undertake any public consultation during the process, but will engage with key stakeholders. The Panel will consult with regional councils to understand their needs and potential benefits to their local communities.

## Principles

The Panel will be guided by the Queensland Government's objectives for bulk water supply, which are:

- Ensure the safety and reliability of dams and urban water supplies.
- Use existing water resources more efficiently.
- Support development of bulk water infrastructure that provides a commercial return to bulk water providers, and
- Consider projects that will provide regional economic benefits.

The Panel will also complete their assessments with consideration to the State's strategic statement and principles for bulk water supply.

When assessing and comparing concepts or proposals, the Panel will also consider such things including, but not limited to:

- The impact with regards to climate change, e.g. improving water security for entitlement holders/communities under a scarce water future, as well as the impact on natural ecosystems having water diverted away from them.
- The impact on the health of the Great Barrier Reef from diverting natural flows as well as, reef dependent economies, e.g. fisheries and tourism.
- Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples' connection to water, including physical spatial impacts of proposed infrastructure as well as cultural connection.

Traditionally, the State only provides recommendations that align the need for bulk water infrastructure clearly with the State's strategies for regional economic development. The Panel is provided with freedoms to not only do this, but also go beyond and provide a vision of what future bulk water supply may look like in northern and western Queensland.

## Membership

The Panel's membership is comprised of:

- Prof. Ross Garnaut (CHAIR)
- Dr. Georgina Davis
- Prof. Allan Dale

Any change in membership requires approval by the Minister.

## Meetings

Virtual meetings are to be used in the first-instance. Technology to support virtual meetings will be approved and made available by the Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy (Department). Face-to-face meetings may be arranged where appropriate and as agreed by the Panel Chair and Department.

## COVID-19

Face-to-face meetings will be held consistent with COVID-19 safety requirements to ensure the safe operation of the Panel. A Health Plan will be developed to support this.

## Panel members

The Panel will meet as required online (or in person) at a time determined by the Chair. Any member of the Panel may also request that a meeting be held. Meetings will be conducted on a formal basis and be minuted. A quorum consists of all members being in attendance.

## Proxy

The use of proxies is not allowed within these terms of reference.

## Observers

Proposals for an Observer to attend meetings with a Panel member need to be made to the Chair two days prior to the meeting. The Chair will decide if an observer may participate in discussion.

## Urgent business

The Chair may decide that members may be consulted in writing (including by email) outside formal meeting arrangements, when business arises external to a meeting.

## Disclosure of interests

Actual, perceived or potential conflicts of interest need to be identified, disclosed and managed in an open and transparent way. Panel members must declare any interests that they or their immediate family may hold which may impact on their duties as a member of the Panel:

- at the time of being invited to sit on a Panel meeting
- in the meeting, should any additional interests emerge
- at any time when requested by the Department.

The Department is responsible for assessing if an actual, perceived or potential conflict of interest exists. Such matters are treated in the strictest confidence.

Management strategies for Panel members where a conflict of interest will be determined, as way of example this might include, where an interest is identified by a selected member related to a matter under consideration at a Panel meeting, that member will be excused from the meeting for any discussion about the particular submission or application.

## Confidentiality & media

All matters brought before the Panel are to be treated as confidential. In addition, the Panel must not discuss matters relevant to its business with the media, except with prior written endorsement of the Chair and the Department.