

# Report on environmental watering coordination and principles – Queensland

Queensland's annual report on implementing the environmental management framework (Schedule 12, Item 10)

## Reporting context

The Basin Plan aims to protect and restore water-dependent ecosystems to support a healthy working Basin. To help achieve this, the Plan makes more water available for the environment and also guides how environmental watering is planned, coordinated and used at a Basin scale.

The processes for planning and delivering environmental water including principles to be applied when watering occurs are set out in the environmental management framework set out in Chapter 8 of the Basin Plan. It includes:

- processes to co-ordinate the planning, prioritisation and use of planned environmental water and held environmental water, under which:
  - the Authority is obliged to prepare a Basin-wide environmental watering strategy
  - each Basin State is obliged to prepare long-term watering plans for water resource plan areas
  - each Basin State is obliged to identify annual environmental watering priorities for water resource plan areas
  - the Authority is obliged to identify Basin annual environmental watering priorities (Division 5)
- the principles to be applied in environmental watering
- a mechanism to enable the Authority to co-ordinate the recovery of additional environmental water

The purpose of this report is to monitor how Basin governments are implementing the environmental management framework. The report is a requirement of Chapter 13 of the Basin Plan and relates to Item 10 of Schedule 12.

## Indicators for measuring success

Implementation of the environmental management framework is evaluated using the following indicators:

- Basin-wide environmental watering strategy, long-term watering plans and annual priorities were prepared as required (**Indicator 10.1**)
- Watering strategies, plans and priorities were prepared as required (**Indicator 10.2**)
- Environmental watering principles were applied (**Indicator 10.3**)

**Indicator 10.1:** Basin-wide environmental watering strategy, long-term watering plans and annual priorities were prepared, with the required content, published, reviewed and updated as obligated under Part 4 of Chapter 8, Divisions 2-5

### Response

No response required from Authority or Basin States. CEWH report only.

**Indicator 10.2:** Watering strategies, plans and priorities are prepared consistently with Part 4 of Chapter 8, in relation to coordinating, consulting and cooperating with other Reporters and the matters to which regard must be had (Chapter 8, Part 4)

### Response

#### Annual Environmental Watering Priorities.

Queensland prepared and submitted its Annual Environmental Watering Priorities 2013-14 to the Authority by 31 May 2013. General consultation and cooperative arrangements are documented in that [report](#).

Under s 8.24 (3) of the Basin Plan possible cooperative arrangements must be identified.

S8.25(2) of the Basin Plan sets out the matters Queensland must have regard to when identifying annual environmental watering priorities. The relevant matters for 2013-14 were:

1. Any register of held environmental water maintained by the Director of Meteorology, (s8.25.2(c)) and
2. Any rules relating to planned environmental water in the water resource plan areas of the Queensland Murray Darling Basin (s8.25.2(e)).

In relation to (1) the held environmental water in the QMDB is all held by the Commonwealth.

In relation to (2) regard was had to the event based rules as explained in the Annual Environmental Watering Priorities 2013-14 document.

#### Long Term Watering Plan

Queensland has not yet been required to prepare a Long Term Watering Plan.

#### CEWO Border Rivers Commonwealth Environmental Water Use

Queensland actively collaborated with CEWO and NSW in discussing options for use of Commonwealth held environmental water in the Border Rivers at the commencement of the water year. The outcome of those discussions was that a release of 4000ML was made of Commonwealth Queensland allocations. This water was released from Pindari Dam in August 2013. Queensland facilitated arrangements for the water order and collaborated with NSW on the accounting required for the water after the release.

**Indicator 10.3:** Environmental watering principles are applied as set out in Division 6 of Chapter 8, Part 4

Response	
Principle	Description
<b>Principle 1:</b> Basin annual environmental watering priorities	<p>There were two priorities relevant to the QMDB in 2013-14.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Connecting rivers and floodplains: Waterbirds in the Northern Basin, Narran Lakes. Unsupplemented Held Environmental Water in the Lower Balonne was left in the river to support this priority. However the available volumes of both planned and held environmental water was not sufficient to enable any material bird breeding activity to occur.</li> <li>2. Barwon Darling Unsupplemented Held Environmental Water in the Moonie, Warrego, Border Rivers and Lower Balonne was left in the river to support this priority. Flow Event Management rules based Planned Environmental Water in the Border Rivers and Lower Balonne was also left in the river. The release of 4000ML of supplemented Held Environmental Water from Pindari Dam in the Border Rivers was consistent with this priority.</li> </ol>
<b>Principle 2:</b> Consistency with the objectives for water-dependent ecosystems	The majority of environmental water in the QMDB is unsupplemented water left to run in the river during natural flows. The flow event management rules which are built in to the state water plans are built around the maintenance of flow regimes around the natural sequences.
<b>Principle 3:</b> Maximising environmental benefits	The majority of environmental water in the QMDB is unsupplemented water left to run in the river during natural flows. The decisions by the CEWH to primarily enable Commonwealth held environmental water to augment the natural flow regimes provided by the state water plan water access provisions enhances environmental benefit.
<b>Principle 4:</b> Risks	<p>Environmental watering is to be undertaken having regard to</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) Potential risks, including downstream risks, that may result from applying environmental water and measures that may be taken to minimise the risks, and</li> <li>(b) Risks arising from impediments to the delivery of water to water-dependent ecosystems, including risks of extraction of that water for other uses, and inadequate accounting of water flows.</li> </ol> <p>In relation to (a), Queensland was involved in the release of environmental water from Pindari Dam in August 2013 to the Border Rivers system. The NSW Office of Water issued a press release to warn landholders to take all necessary actions to protect property and stock from estimated river rises.</p> <p>In relation to (b) Queensland protects planned environmental water from extraction for other uses by delaying the announcement allowing the commencement of a water harvesting period to allow the planned environmental water (under event based rules in the Resource Operations Plans) to flow through the system first. Queensland accounts for water adequately via metering and gauge readings.</p>
<b>Principle 5:</b> Cost of environmental watering	The primary costs associated with environmental watering across the QMDB are embedded in the already established flow event management practices of the river manager. This may change in time to the extent that the CEWH may wish to implement different arrangements to more actively manage its held water portfolio.
<b>Principle 6:</b> Apply the precautionary principle	Flow event management was carried out in accordance with the rules prescribed in the state water plans and related resource operations plans. The environmental flow baselines provided by these management regimes are being enhanced as water recoveries are made in accordance with Basin Plan requirements. This is all being supported by an increasing body of scientific knowledge and understanding.
<b>Principle 7:</b> Working effectively with local communities	Information provision and consultation is an established part of managing flow events across the QMDB to ensure that there is improving understanding of how water is shared across the consumptive and non-consumptive environments.
<b>Principle 8:</b> Adaptive management	Antecedent based adaptive flow management water sharing arrangements exist in the Condamine Balonne and Warrego water plan areas however the extreme dry conditions have not enabled them to be triggered.
<b>Principle 9:</b> Relevant international agreements	The majority of environmental water in the QMDB is unsupplemented water left to run in the river during natural flows.
<b>Principle 10:</b> Other management and operational practices	River management and operational practices in the Warrego Paroo Nebine WRP area underwent review in 2013/14 as part of the statutory review of this water plan. Similar reviews for the Moonie, Border and Condamine Balonne have been programmed for delivery in the lead up to 2019 as part of the Basin Plan WRP accreditation requirements. .
<b>Principle 11:</b> Management of water for consumptive use	Management of water for consumptive use across the QMDB valleys is controlled by the water access rules outlined in each state water plan. These water access rules have been developed to deliver ecological outcomes consistent with maintaining healthy riverine environments, floodplains and wetlands.
<b>Case study</b> (if available)	

