

Report on how local communities influenced Basin Plan implementation - Queensland

Queensland's annual report on using local knowledge and solutions (Schedule 12, Item 6)

Reporting context

The success of the Basin Plan and associated water reforms depends on working closely with communities and stakeholders who can provide the necessary local knowledge and solutions to effectively implement the Plan.

The Basin Plan requires Basin States, the Authority and the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder to draw on local knowledge and solutions across a range of Basin Plan activities including long-term watering plans, annual environmental watering priorities and water resource plans.

It also requires that the best available knowledge (including scientific, local and cultural knowledge), evidence and analysis be used where practicable to ensure credibility, transparency and usefulness of monitoring and evaluation findings.

The purpose of this report is to monitor the extent to which local knowledge and solutions have influenced implementation of the Basin Plan during 2013-14. The report is a requirement of Chapter 13 of the Basin Plan and relates to Item 6 of Schedule 12.

Indicators for measuring success

The use of local knowledge to inform Basin Plan implementation is evaluated using the following indicators:

- Processes used to identify stakeholders from local communities, peak bodies and individuals (**Indicator 6.1**)
 - How stakeholders were engaged (**Indicator 6.2**)
 - How engagement influenced Basin Plan implementation (**Indicator 6.3**)
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Indicator 6.1: Processes used to identify stakeholders from local communities, peak bodies and individuals

Response

A number of processes have been developed to engage with key stakeholder interests across the Queensland part of the Murray Darling Basin (QMDB).

At the "whole of QMDB" level Queensland continues to engage with the Strategic Consultative Committee membership it established in 2009. This key stakeholder forum was originally formed to inform Queensland's interests in the development of the Basin Plan and related water reform initiatives.

The membership of the QMDB Strategic Consultative Committee comprises

Response

representatives of the :

- Lower Balonne irrigators
- Basin Community Committee
- AgForce Queensland
- Queensland Farmers Federation
- Environment representative
- Smart Rivers (Lower Balonne irrigators group)
- Border Rivers Food and Fibre
- Central Downs Irrigators Limited
- Goondiwindi Regional Council
- Macintyre Brook Irrigators Association.
- Balonne Shire Council
- Northern Basin Aboriginal Nations
- Regional Groups Collective (Queensland group representing Natural Resource Management Bodies).
- Cotton Australia

Each member of the Strategic Consultative Committee is expected to seek the views of other people in their respective organisations/sectors/networks in considering and providing advice. Members are encouraged to take a whole of QMDB/community approach.

Queensland also engages with several catchment based stakeholder groups about both surface and ground water planning and management. These are the

- Lower Balonne Water Network,
- Lower Balonne Working Group (which exists to support the Northern Basin review projects as they apply to that region)
- Border Rivers Food and Fibre,
- Border Rivers Environmental Water Network,
- the Gowrie Oakey Creek Irrigators Association
- Central Downs Irrigators (Central Condamine Alluvium)
- Oakey Groundwater Management Area Committee
- Dalrymple Groundwater Management Area Committee (Warwick/Allora)
- Upper Hodgson Creek Groundwater Management Area Committee (Toowoomba) and
- Border Rivers Groundwater Management Area Committee

When engagement is required with indigenous stakeholders Queensland considers advice from the Northern Basin Aboriginal Nations (NBAN) on who to consult with.

The Northern Basin Advisory Committee (NBAC) process has emerged in 2013/14 as the most active and comprehensive key stakeholder reference forum for engaging on matters associated with implementation of the Basin Plan and the efficacy of associated water recovery activities.

Indicator 6.2: How stakeholders were engaged

Response

Response

Queensland employs a mix of targeted meetings and public community consultation processes.

Joint consultation meetings with Commonwealth.

Queensland has participated in community engagement processes led by the Authority, which included representatives from the Department of the Environment and CEWO, during 2013-14. Meetings were held in Dirranbandi, St George and Goondiwindi. Issues covered included the SDL adjustment process, water recovery – buyback and Healthy Headwaters Water Use Efficiency Program, Northern Basin review, Northern Basin Workplan, the in-catchment reduction in diversions for the Lower Balonne and the shared reduction for the Barwon Darling.

Queensland has supported CEWO meetings regarding groundwater recovery from the Condamine Alluvium.

Other groups

Queensland has attended stakeholder meetings throughout the year with groups listed in 6.1 and assisted in discussion of Basin Plan matters as they affect those particular stakeholders.

Indicator 6.3: How engagement influenced Basin Plan implementation

Response

Response

Queensland has commenced implementing the Basin Plan through the development of the Annual Environmental Watering Priorities 2013-14. Key stakeholder groups were consulted as this document was developed. However due to the unregulated nature of the majority of the rivers in the Queensland Murray Darling Basin there are very limited options to actively manage environmental watering. Therefore the consultation was predominately an information sharing exercise.

A key outcome of conversation in the Lower Balonne about smarter and better use of environmental water during 2013/14 has been to get government, and in particular the CEWO, to commit to having an earnest look at the scope for more actively managing its large and growing portfolio of Held Environmental Water (HEW) in the Condamine Balonne.

At the NBAC engagement level Queensland, working along with New South Wales and the Authority, took on board a raft of advice from that key stakeholder forum in the working up of the nine main projects that make up the Northern Basin work plan. Successful and timely outcomes from this work will inform the 2015 northern Basin review.

In addition the formation of the Lower Balonne Working Group in 2013/14 as a further key engagement and advice forum is adding to the profile and credibility of the projects which have particular relevance to the Lower Balonne.

Queensland has also commenced development of a revised Water Resource Plan (about to be relabelled as a Statutory Water Plan) for the western rivers of the QMDB, i.e. the Paroo, Nebine and Warrego rivers. During the preparation phase of the key draft instruments (the Water Resource Plan and the Healthy Waters Management Plan (HWMP)) consultation with western communities occurred in relation to the issues to be covered in these draft instruments. The engagement carried out in 2013/14 included indigenous consultation with Traditional Owners and was facilitated by South West Natural Resource Management Regional Body.

More consultation will occur commencing in October 2014 on the draft Warrego Paroo Bulloo Nebine Water Resource Plan and draft Resource Operations Plan which were released on 25 September 2014.