

Rural water management in Queensland

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Murray-Darling Basin Authority knew of allegations of water theft a year before ABC report

Exclusive: Evidence showed that billions of litres was taken from the Barwon river but federal agency rejected it as flawed



SA water minister accuses NSW of water theft 'cover up' as Basin states trade blows

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ABC Rural By Marty McCarthy

NEWS LOCATION: Brisbane, Qld

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Murray-Darling Basin plan a 'failure', farmers claim water backed up in Queensland

Lateline By Kerry Brewster Updated 1 Sep 2017, 6:12am



NEWS

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Murray-Darling Basin Plan: Taxpayer-purchased water intended for rivers harvested by irrigators

NEWS LOCATION: Brisbane, Qld

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Murray-Darling Basin: Goondiwindi cotton farm raided over alleged misuse of Commonwealth funding

Lateline By Kerry Brewster Updated 26 Oct 2017, 11:04am



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Murray-Darling Basin: 'Striking variations' in compliance as review criticises NSW and Qld

By Malcolm Sutton Updated 25 Nov 2017, 10:45pm



Reviews initiated



- Federal MDB water compliance review Nov 2017
- NSW Independent investigation of water management and compliance (Ken Matthews) Nov 2017
- NSW Ombudsman investigation into water compliance and enforcement March 2018
- Queensland audit announced August 2017
 - Independent Expert Panel review provided to Minister March 2018
 - Actions reported on and MDB Compliance Compact agreed at MDB Ministerial Council 8 June 2018
- South Australian MDB Royal Commission to report by 1 Feb 2019

The Qld Audit process

- Independent Panel
- Process involved information and data requests, providing documents, meetings with staff, panel field trips
- Interim report issued **Nov 2017**
- Final report to Minister **Mar 2018**

“The independent panel think it is worthy of special mention to you, Minister, that we have received maximum cooperation from the DNRME staff and have been highly impressed by their efforts to assist our review”

Independent Audit - findings





Independent Audit - findings

Governance, culture and transparency

- Water planning framework is a strength
- Governance arrangements lack robustness, completeness, transparency
- Lack of management systems and documentation, inconsistencies in practices
- Lack of transparency hindering info sharing & development of strong compliance culture within DNRME & with entitlement holders



Independent Audit - findings

Governance, culture and transparency

- Compliance challenged from capacity & resourcing standpoint
- Leadership of DNRME is required to drive stronger culture towards enforcement and empower staff to achieve water management and compliance objectives
- Need to separate operational and compliance activities



Independent Audit - findings

Measurement and reporting

- Hydrometric network is managed to international standard, ISO 9001 accredited – this good work could be extended to metering
- Some stakeholders suggest more gauging stations needed
- Opportunities exist to modernise systems and the meter fleet and to conduct more frequent and reliable data gathering



Independent Audit - findings

Measurement and reporting

- Strong progress in overland flow measurement in Lower Balonne – currently not possible in other parts of the state.
- Opportunities to better use technology
- Queensland's existing meter policy meets AS4747 but issues with installation & validation



Independent Audit – findings continued

Water Information Systems

- Inadequate information systems & resourcing to support metering compliance
- No effective water accounting system
- DNRME requires investment in management information systems and resource adjustment
- Issues with record-keeping and data system capability to report critical info



Independent Audit – findings continued

Recognition of staff dedication

- Issues identified are largely systemic, not limited to Qld
- DNRME officers have upheld their responsibilities; proactively identified issues & shown diligence in difficult circumstances
- Outstanding commitment to achieving work and audit objectives
- Responsive and capable people who will respond to decisive leadership to address areas of concern

Qld Audit recommendations



- 15 recommendations with 8 key recommendations relating to:
 - Governance
 - Compliance actions and culture
 - Transparency
 - Meter policy and ownership
 - Information systems and resourcing
 - Water plans and regulation
- Three critical areas
 - Introduce robust measurement and compliance governance
 - Implement a new policy for water metering
 - Systems and resourcing require urgent attention

Queensland Government Response

- Rural Water Management Program developed to address the audit
- New Division of the Agency to drive RWMP
- Strong commitment to industry consultation
- Agreed timetable with Cabinet for further consideration
- Focus on MDBA initially
- Program to deliver Qld Commitments under MDBA Compact

RWMP - Focus areas (2018-2020)

Regulatory frameworks

Review legislation & policy

Measurements & monitoring requirements

Formalise/document overarching water resource management & regulatory framework

Strengthen metering

Renew focus on implementing current policy

Develop new/revised metering policy considering standards etc.

Work towards consistency across systems

Regulatory changes

Transparent water information

Develop new water information systems

Incorporate a water accounting system

Enable & enhance transparency

Customer focussed

Integrate with SunWater/Seqwater systems

Robust compliance

Assurance separate from operation

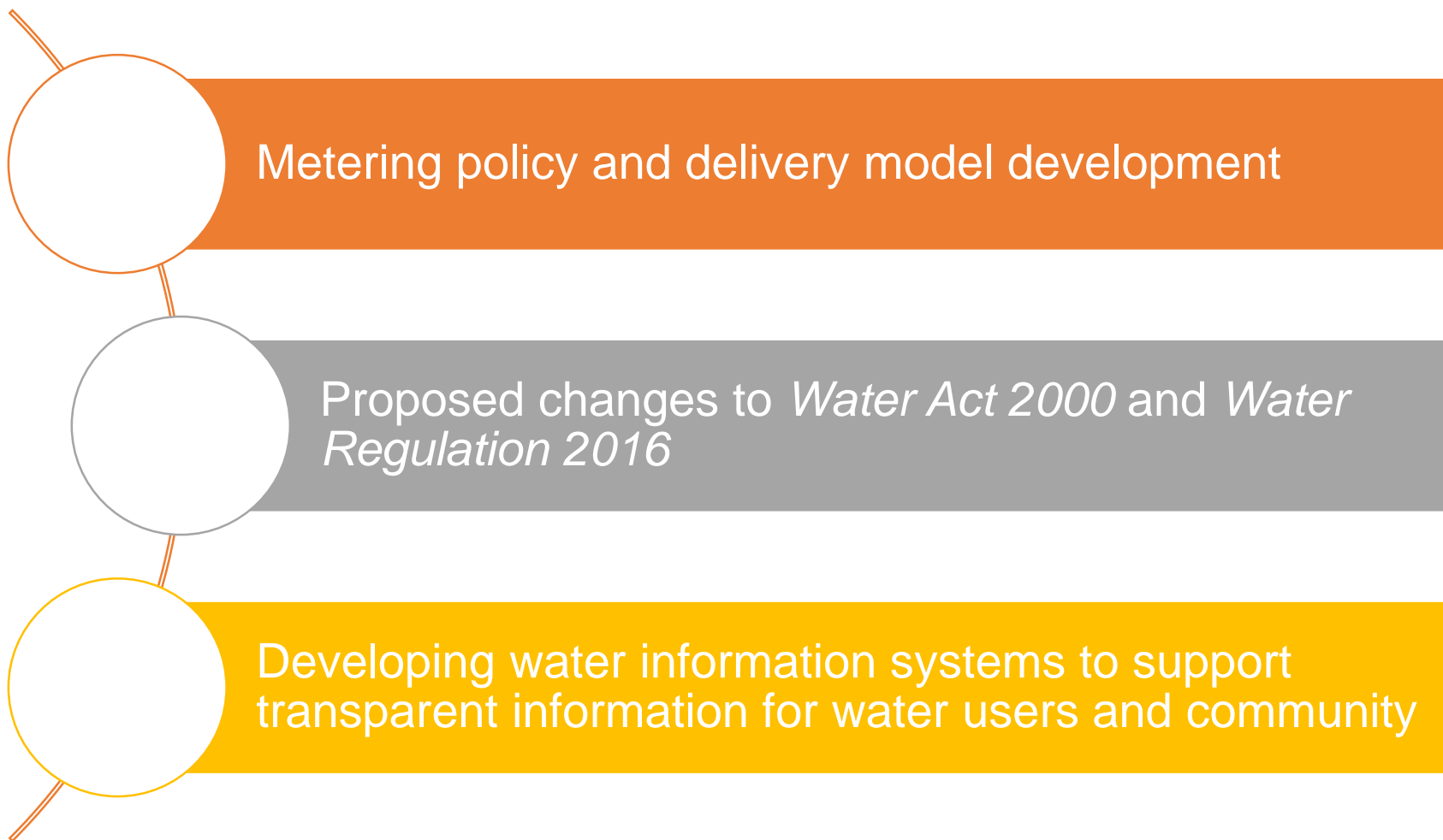
Publish annual review of regulatory activities & future strategies

Improve governance, procedures & guidelines, prioritisation & technical training

Immediate focus on existing metered entitlements in priority areas

Align approach across natural resources

Stakeholder engagement



Water markets and trading



- Optimising the value of unallocated water and underutilised existing entitlements
- Support more active and expanded water trading
- Working more closely with SunWater and ROL holders to actively seek customers
- Leading options/solutions for customers on complex issues