

Water Resource Management

Annual Compliance Plan

Areas of focus 2024–25



Cover photo: Storm King Dam, Southern Downs Region

Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners

We respectfully acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of this Country – the lands and seas on which we meet, live, learn, work and play. We acknowledge those of the past, the Ancestors whose strength has nurtured this land and its people, and we recognise their connection to land, sea and community. We pay our respects to them, their culture and to their Elders past and present.

This publication has been compiled by Strategic Compliance, Intelligence and Investigations of Water Operations and Systems, Department of Regional Development, Manufacturing and Water.

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Foreword – our role as a regulator

The role of the Department of Regional Development, Manufacturing and Water (the department) is to manage Queensland's water resources and riverine quarry materials, equitably and sustainably.

We make sure that water is used efficiently. This ensures that access to water is safe, reliable and affordable.

Our goal is to make sure that resources from rivers, streams, lakes, springs and groundwater systems are allocated in a way that supports environmental values, economic growth and the water needs of communities across Queensland. We do this while meeting our state and national commitments.

The department is responsible for Queensland's water management laws 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*.

Under these laws, the department has regulatory responsibilities across various areas and functions (as illustrated in **Figure 1**). We refer to anyone who is responsible for the core areas listed in **Figure 1** as our 'regulated community'.

The department's Water Resource Management Regulatory Strategy describes how we carry out our regulatory functions and activities. It includes information on the principles of our regulatory approach, the tools we use, key objectives and activities.

Each year we develop our Annual Compliance Plan. This plan provides a summary of the key areas the department will focus on. For each area of focus the department has regulatory activities that will be undertaken to manage risk and non-compliant behaviour.

Queensland Water Resource regulatory functions

Sustainable water management

Protect water resources, users and ecosystems by:

- › monitoring water take to ensure that it is accurate and authorised
- › keeping the natural function and availability of water by ensuring that capture of water or interference with natural flow paths is authorised
- › ensuring sustainable allocation and extraction of riverine quarry materials
- › regulating activities undertaken within watercourses
- › overseeing the bore drilling industry to make sure drillers are appropriately licensed and qualified to protect the aquifer and maintain the quality and availability of groundwater supply
- › ensuring water security and reliability of drinking water supply.

Public health

Regulatory oversight of water service providers such as local governments and other bodies. Our regulations make sure these operators provide high quality drinking water that is safe and meets water security needs.

Safety

Making sure referable dams across the state are built to the required engineering standards and maintained by the dam owners. This includes ensuring that they are resilient to climate change and extreme weather.

Figure 1: DRDMW’s regulatory framework





Setting our areas of focus

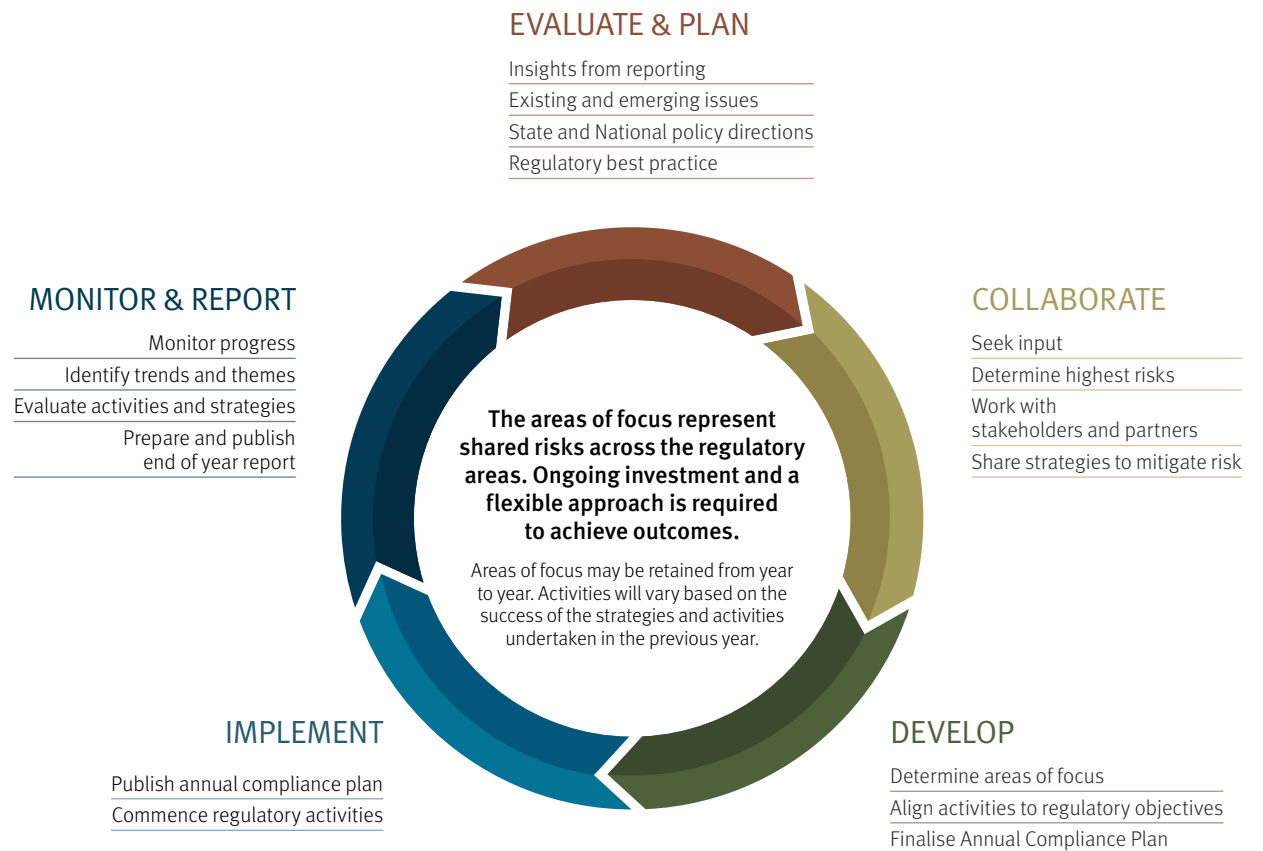
The department is data and intelligence led. We use this information to adopt a risk-based approach to our regulatory activities.

High risk behaviours are those that are most likely to have a negative impact on our regulatory functions and outcomes (refer to **Figure 1**). Every year, the highest risk behaviours inform our areas of focus.

For each area of focus, we identify regulatory activities that will be prioritised to manage risk and improve behaviour. This allows us to focus our resources where they are needed most.

An overview of the annual compliance plan development cycle is provided in **Figure 2**.

Figure 2: Overview of the Annual Compliance Plan cycle





FOCUS AREA 1

Focus on the quality and timeliness of required information to the department

Improving the return on compliance information.

The regulated community must provide correct and complete compliance information to the department within a specific timeframe. We use this information to monitor compliance and ensure they are following the laws. By receiving information that is correct and timely, we can focus on the protection of:

- › public health and safety
- › the environment
- › long-term management of Queensland's water resources.

We evaluated our progress towards achieving the planned regulatory outcomes. We still need to improve non-compliant behaviour associated with focus area 1. A longer-term investment on this focus area is required to achieve better regulatory outcomes.

This year, new policy and legislative changes will have an impact on the regulated community. Changes in expectations are relevant to this focus area. We have considered the learnings from the strategies and activities from 2023–24 to determine the regulatory activities that will be undertaken this year (refer to **Figure 3**).

Regulatory Strategy alignment



Figure 3: Overview of the regulatory activities that will be undertaken for focus area 1

	Objectives	2024–25 Activities
 INFORM	Ensure our regulated communities are informed and aware of their obligations and how we undertake our regulatory role. Ensure our regulatory activities and areas of concern are transparently communicated.	› Use various communication channels to present key regulatory messages. › Publish Annual Compliance Plan 2024–25 and end of year report 2024–25. Supported by focus area 2 activities
 GUIDE	Guide and educate the community helping them to understand their obligations including consequences of non-compliance and likely impacts on the wider community.	› Communicate to those impacted by new policy and legislation changes, and where improved outcomes are required. › Develop key messages to reach targeted geographical areas or regulated communities. › Set expectations and provide information on how to comply. Supported by focus area 2 activities
 MONITOR	Ensure compliance across our regulatory activities by monitoring risk and impacts to water resources, the environment, and communities.	Monitor: › on-time submission of measurement device certification documents › on-time and accurate submissions of meter readings › complete and accurate information provided on drill logs, particularly for high-risk areas and newly licensed drillers › documents required from dam owners for on-time, complete and accurate submissions › documents required from water service providers for on-time, complete and accurate submissions. Supported by focus area 3 activities
 RESPOND & ENFORCE	Address risks and issues to improve compliance and achieve water resource management outcomes. Ensure our responses are targeted and proportionate by making fair, transparent and evidence-based decisions.	Focus on addressing non-compliant behaviour and activities across: › high-risk regulated communities › intentional non-compliance, particularly providing false or misleading information › non-submission of required documentation › offences within high-risk areas. Supported by focus area 3 activities



FOCUS AREA 2

Improving our regulatory presence

Improve our regulatory presence by using proactive, targeted communication across a variety of channels.

Our focus this year will be to continue to improve our regulatory presence. Our regulatory messaging will be more effective when targeting particular geographic areas or regulated communities. We also need to improve the timing of the messages, to ensure that expectations are communicated early to promote voluntary compliance.

Key activities for this year will include:

- › engaging with high-risk regulated communities (including dam owners, water service providers, water users, water bore drillers and riverine quarry operators)
- › communicating the benefits of compliance, how we monitor compliance and our enforcement actions

- › using a range of communication channels to provide proactive and targeted compliance messages such as:
 - our websites
 - social media
 - media releases
 - newsletters
 - information/attendance at key industry events.
- › targeting regulatory messages to:
 - those impacted by new policy and legislative changes
 - areas of greater regulatory risk due to high rates of non-compliant activities.
- › those within catchments that have been determined to be a high-risk in the statewide water use risk assessment.

In 2023–24, we increased the use of communication channels. This included social media platforms which provided regulatory messaging to a wider audience.

Regulatory Strategy alignment



This aligns with the core principles of the Water Resource Management Regulatory Strategy of being an accountable, transparent, responsive and supportive regulator.

We have evaluated progress towards achieving regulatory outcomes. Information on progress and learnings from the 2023–24 Annual Compliance Plan will be published in the end of year report. The learnings from the strategies and activities from 2023–24 have been considered in determining the regulatory activities that will be undertaken this year (refer to **Figure 4**).

Figure 4: Overview of the regulatory activities that will be undertaken for focus area 2

	Objectives	2024 25 Activities
 INFORM	Ensure our regulated communities are informed and aware of their obligations and how we undertake our regulatory role. Ensure our regulatory activities and areas of concern are transparently communicated.	› Publish Annual Compliance Plan 2024–25 and end of year report 2024–25. › Communicate information, activities and outcomes across a variety of channels. Supported by focus area 1 activities
 GUIDE	Guide and educate the community helping them to understand their obligations including consequences of non-compliance and likely impacts on the wider community.	› Communicate to those impacted by policy and legislation changes, and where improved outcomes are required. › Proactively target key messages to specific areas or groups to set expectations and provide information on how to comply. Supported by focus area 1 activities



FOCUS AREA 3

Non-compliant behaviour and activity spotlights

Continue to support those doing the right thing by addressing those that don't.

We take a risk-based approach when investigating non-compliance behaviour and activities. This means we assess any non-compliance we have identified and then prioritise it for investigation and necessary action.

Compliance action must be effective, efficient and proportionate to the related risk. It must align with the principles of the Water Resource Management Regulatory Strategy. We aim to reduce non-compliant behaviour by promoting cases that demonstrate the consequences. This includes fines, reduced access, and legal action we have escalated for compliance action.

We are a data and intelligence led regulatory agency. We work to improve how we monitor compliance. This includes enhanced:

- › detection capabilities
- › data collection
- › intelligence gathering.

This helps us align regulatory strategies with outcomes by identifying:

- › trends
- › current and emerging risks
- › behavioural drivers for non-compliance.

We are also progressing policy, legislative and systems reforms, and working closely with stakeholders to take a modern, best practice approach to regulation.

In 2023–24, the department continued to meet its regulatory responsibilities and address non-compliance proportionately (refer to media release). Investigations and enforcement action is resource intensive and requires a long-term investment to achieve regulatory outcomes.

We have evaluated our progress and the learnings from the strategies and activities in 2023–24 have been considered in setting the activities for this year (refer to Figure 5). Information on progress and learnings from the 2023–24 Annual Compliance Plan will be published in the end of year report.

Regulatory Strategy alignment



MONITOR



RESPOND & ENFORCE

Media Release

9 October 2023

Quarry operator fined \$630,000 for breaches of the Water Act 2000

A western Queensland quarry operator pleaded guilty to various charges in the Queensland Magistrates Court in October 2023 and was fined \$630,000 in total and ordered to pay \$66,358.90 in royalties plus court costs.

The quarry operator breached the *Water Act 2000* with an unauthorised take of quarry materials, non-compliance with the conditions of a Quarry Material Allocation Notice (QMAN) and providing false and misleading information to the State regarding the volume of materials taken.

A QMAN allocates a volume of material that can be extracted by the holder within a defined geographical area, timeframe and subject to

various conditions to protect the resource and watercourse. Conditions often include buffer distances to be maintained from riparian vegetation and watercourse features, maximum extraction depths and rehabilitation requirements. In some instances, quarry operators are required to pay royalties to the State on the volume of the materials they remove.

The department monitors this type of work across the state to ensure operators are authorised to remove riverine quarry material and are compliant with the QMAN conditions. This includes a desktop and field-based auditing program and investment in new tools to remotely detect unauthorised quarrying activities.

Figure 5: Overview of the regulatory activities that will be undertaken for focus area 3

	Objectives	2024/25 Activities
 MONITOR	Ensure compliance across our regulatory activities by monitoring risk and impacts to water resources, the environment, and communities.	› Use a variety of audit and detection methods for intelligence purposes i.e. remote sensing, data analytics and desktop tools. › Improve systems and data quality. › Develop and maintain strategic partnerships. › Monitor and communicate legislative reform. Supported by focus area 1 activities
 RESPOND & ENFORCE	Address risks and issues to improve compliance and achieve water resource management outcomes. Ensure our responses are targeted and proportionate by making fair, transparent and evidence-based decisions.	We will continue to focus on: › high-risk regulated communities › alleged offences which involve providing false or misleading information to the department and/or financially motivated non-compliant behaviour › failure to submit of required documentation › unauthorised and non-compliant behaviour in high-risk areas › identifying and acting on non-compliance, in alignment with the regulatory strategy. Supported by focus area 1 activities





Ongoing activities

We have ongoing regulatory priorities and responsibilities to carry out, including:

- › responding to reports of alleged non-compliance
- › responding to non-compliance found incidentally through proactive monitoring (desktop review or field-based auditing) that falls outside of our focus areas
- › responding to incidents that have the potential to adversely impact upon public health and safety
- › delivering new systems, tools and projects that enhance data analysis and intelligence gathering (enhanced detection capabilities)
- › developing internal policies, guidelines, procedures and templates to promote consistency in approach
- › making sure we are accessible and responsive to our regulated community through our physical and digital presence
- › improving regulatory strategies and approaches to make sure we achieve our compliance outcomes
- › making sure our approach to natural resource management uses the best available data, science and is best practice.

Reporting

The Annual Compliance Plan 2024–25 end of year report will provide information on progress, outcomes and insights gained from regulatory strategies and activities. For further information on performance against last year's Annual Compliance Plan, refer to the report, published on our website.

www.rdmw.qld.gov.au



The department is responsible for ensuring Queensland's water resources are managed in a way that delivers sustainable, safe, secure and affordable water now and into the future.

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