

SOUTH EAST QUEENSLAND REGIONAL WATER SUPPLY STRATEGY



securing the future of
South East Queensland's
water supply

SEQRWSS CONSULTATIVE WORKSHOP REPORT

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SETTING THE SCENE

Stage 2 of the South East Queensland Regional Water Supply Strategy (SEQRWSS) has been progressing since February 2005. The Strategy — when finalised — will secure the future of water supplies to all users across SEQ for the next five decades. The Strategy is being developed by the State Government, and the 18 Local Councils and water service providers in the SEQ region. Together, these groups make up the Partners for the Strategy.

Population Growth

The current population of SEQ is about 2.8 million. Projections suggest that by 2056 the population of SEQ, the fastest growing region in Australia, may grow to 4.8 million.

Of course it is impossible to predict the future totally accurately. Growth may be smaller (or greater) than this figure. The Strategy needs to be sufficiently flexible to cater for whatever growth actually occurs — so it will include triggers at which specified actions (such as commencement of new infrastructure) need to be undertaken.

Water Demand Targets

Water demands will be affected not only by population growth but by the effectiveness of demand management measures. At present domestic water use in the region is around 300 litres per person per day — in many other regions of the world it is higher.

Under the SEQ Regional Plan it has been agreed that SEQ achieve significant reductions in demand:

- 270 litres per person per day by 2010
- 230 litres per person per day by 2020.

This will make SEQ one of the most water efficient regions in the developed world.

The SEQRWSS is required to adopt these targets for planning purposes. A key objective of the Strategy is to determine how to achieve these targets, and outline the measures needed to implement them.

Water Sources

Based on the current projections of demand, it has been estimated that demands on the:

- Wivenhoe/Somerset/North Pine dams system will reach the level of yield of this system by around 2016
- Gold Coast demands will reach the yield of Hinze Dam by around 2012
- Toowoomba's demands have already matched the yield of this city's currently available water supplies (which is why the city is already on severe restrictions).

Augmentation of supplies and more efficient use of water is necessary if SEQ is to have a secure water supply in the short to medium term.

These figures make no allowance for climate variation and climate change. This means that it is possible that droughts worse than any that have occurred during the hundred years of available records could occur. The Strategy will need to develop contingency plans for managing such droughts.

As well as examining a range of possible demand management options, the Strategy will consider a variety of sources of additional supply. Even if the demand targets are achieved, by 2056 the region will need to provide almost as much water again as can be drawn from Wivenhoe/Somerset and will need to be able to provide significant contingency supplies.

Sources being considered include:

- rainwater tanks
- stormwater harvesting
- recycling
- new or raised dams and weirs
- aquifers and aquifer storage
- desalination.

New delivery infrastructure to supply water to all the sub-regions will also be analysed. The Strategy has commissioned a number of consultancies to examine the options and to determine the availability and costs of all the sources. The volumes that can be supplied by various supply options are still to be determined.

Assessing Options

Integral to the Strategy is the triple bottom line assessment of:

- options for supplying new water and improving the efficiency of water use
- timing and sequencing scenarios.

Such assessments will be against a number of criteria regarding positives and negatives concerning financial costs, the environment, the economy, social impacts, reliability of supply, ease of implementation, equity, climate change, and many others.

Achieving a diversity of supply will also be an aim of the Strategy to minimize the risk of failure of any one source.

AIM OF THE INAUGURAL WORKSHOP

The inaugural workshop was held on 14 December in Room 1, 80 George St. This workshop aimed to open discussion about the size and scope of the water supply issues in South East Queensland and how they were being considered under the SEQRWSS planning process.

Attendees came from over 14 different groups all representing a diverse range of interests across SEQ including:

- recreational fishing
- cultural heritage
- urban development
- preservation of the environment
- development bodies
- industrial water users
- river catchment representatives
- regional bodies.

It is anticipated that these representatives will provide the Strategy Management Support Team with a wide range of informed views for consideration in development of the Strategy.

THE WORKSHOP'S OUTCOMES

The workshop provided participants with an introduction to the SEQRWSS, including its aims, its management arrangements, and the constraints it is being developed under. The Workshop highlighted that the SEQRWSS is looking beyond the immediate drought to more long term (50 years) solutions to our water supply needs.

Presentations regarding the Strategy's aims and structure were presented by:

- Dr Mark Carden, SEQRWSS Project Manager
- Mr Ian Pullar, SEQRWSS Technical Manager.
- Integrated Urban Water Management and Accounting
- Rural Water
- Water Balance
- Information, Implementation, Communication and Coordination.

Participants had several opportunities to provide feedback on the development of the Strategy, and the conduct of this and future workshops.

All comments received have been recorded and processes designed for their consideration. Over 300 issues were raised. The main themes are discussed in the section *Primary Issues of Concern* below.

Work within the Strategy is being overseen by six Task Groups:

- Water Availability and Entitlements
- Bulk Supply Infrastructure

PRIMARY ISSUES OF CONCERN

Participants of Workshop One raised many issues concerning:

- demand management- options and efficiency targets
- supply options
- wider communication issues.

Workshop Two will focus on demand management issues and expectations for water supply, so these matters will not be discussed in extensive detail here. However, several matters raised at the workshop are addressed below.

OUM Demand and Efficiency Targets

The Office of Urban Management (OUM) has:

- set water consumption targets for SEQ
- established a footprint for urban development in SEQ until 2026.

Together this will determine the likely volumes and locations for future water demand in SEQ.

The SEQRWSS is:

- investigating how the OUM targets might be achieved
- determining if these targets are achievable, and if not what targets might be feasible.

The OUM water consumption targets are a guiding principle in the development of the water supply strategy. This will be discussed in detail at Workshop Two.

Determining the Need for New Supplies

An audit of current water use SEQ is a key of Strategy project.

Stage One of the Strategy attempted to characterise water use in SEQ. However, this work encountered a number of problems, necessitating further investigations.

The Stage Two water audit will determine current domestic, commercial and industrial water consumption in SEQ. Together with the requirements of the SEQ Regional Plan, the results of

the audit will serve as basis for estimating future water demands in the region. These estimates will provide an indication of :

- when new water sources will be needed
- how much extra water will need to be sourced
- where extra water will be required.

Communication

A Strategy Communications Plan has been developed. A Communications Sub-task group has also been established to manage communication between Strategy Partners, other institutional stakeholders, and the broader community on the Strategy. The sub-task group has representatives from:

- SEQWater
- Department of Natural Resources and Mines
- Office of Urban Management
- Council of Mayors
- Healthy Waterways.

The SEQRWSS Consultative Workshop series is the starting point for further consultation with the stakeholders and the wider community. The Strategy Partners — Local Governments and water service providers — are already providing input into the Strategy through the SEQRWSS Steering Committee and numerous sub committees. Consequently, they are not participating in the workshop series.

Rural stakeholders are being consulted through the Strategy's Rural Water Task group.

Water Resource Planning (within NR&M) also has consultation mechanisms that include community meetings; sector representative groups; and a Community Reference Panel for ongoing consultation throughout the WRP process. The Strategy is working closely with the WRP to ensure that stakeholders are able to obtain pertinent information through WRP consultative processes.

UPDATE ON COMMUNICATION

The SEQRWSS Interim Report has been printed (week of January 9, 2006). The Report looks at the immediate need to secure water supplies in the region, predominantly over the next three to five years. The findings within this report support the broader SEQRWSS strategy.

The Interim Report is being distributed to Partner Councils in January and will also be made available to interest groups and the public.

STATUS REPORT ON WRPS

The Moreton and Gold Coast Water Resource Plans (WRP) are in the early stages of development. The Community Reference Panels have been formed and environmental, social and economic investigations have commenced. For further information and updates see the WRP newsletters on:

http://www.nrm.qld.gov.au/wrp/pdf/moreton/moreton_newsletter_aug05.pdf

http://www.nrm.qld.gov.au/wrp/pdf/gold_coast/gc_newsletter_issue_2.pdf

The Draft Logan Basin Water Resource Plan is in the final stages of development and it is envisaged the Draft Plan will be sent to Cabinet early in 2006.

The Mary Basin Draft Water Resource Plan has been released and submissions have been invited. Community meetings were held in November and all views expressed throughout the process are treated as submissions and have been recorded as such. Written submissions can also be submitted before February 10. For more information see:

<http://www.nrm.qld.gov.au/wrp/mary.html>

FUTURE WORKSHOPS

The next workshop will be held at 1.30 pm Wednesday 15 February at Room 1, 80 George Street, Brisbane. The Team will aim to distribute any information that will assist attendees to participate more fully at least 7 days prior to the workshop.