

DEVELOPED BY

# WBBROC

Wide Bay Burnett Regional Organisation of Councils



# Regional Water Position Paper

## Executive Summary -2019

The purpose of this document is to provide a foundation for water advocacy by local government and align strategic water planning, management and use across the WBB region.

## 1. Background

ABS and other agencies suggest that by 2036, under a scenario of moderate population and economic growth, water demand could increase by 30%. This would reduce the current average storage volume to less than two years of average consumption challenging the region's water security.

Despite this challenge, there are opportunities for economic development, industrial diversification and employment growth that could be enabled by better utilisation of the significant volume water currently available in the region.

WBBROC sees an opportunity to address these challenges proactively rather than react to a water crisis.

## 2. Supply

The region has around 2100GL of accessible water resources and CSIRO estimates average regional runoff at around 6500GL/year with 79% discharged to the ocean.

An additional 24GL of wastewater is also available in the region for beneficial re-use.

Total capacity of all sources is therefore around 2317GL with 1000GL held in strategic reserve. Supply reliability is fundamental to water security and ranges from 30% to 100% reducing water security in some areas.

## 3. Consumption

The direct enabling value of water to the regional economy is estimated at roughly \$3.0bn annually.

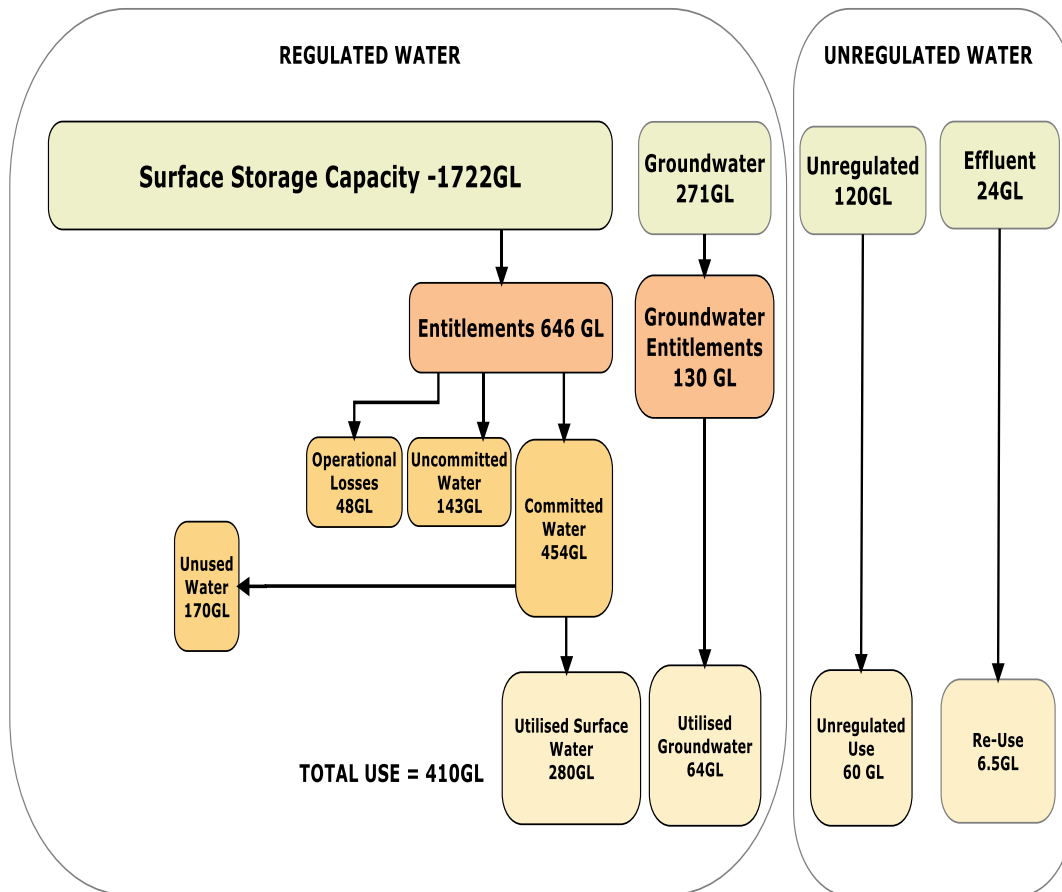
The Wide Bay Burnett is the second largest irrigation region in Queensland and uses 280GL applied to 77,000 hectares. The region leads in high-value irrigation production with \$775m or 21% of the State's gross irrigated production.

In 2016-17, total consumption approximated 410GL and the agricultural sector used 80% of total consumption. Urban and industrial uses totalled around 65GL or 20% of total regional consumption.

Consumption is projected to increase in line with population and economic growth as well as a significant reduction in rainfall and effective runoff with associated increases in the frequency, severity and duration of drought and flood events is projected by 2050.

## 4. Utilisation

Utilisation of available water ranges between 35% and 75% and averages around 50%. Around half of Qld's un-committed water reserves are in the WBB. In 2015-16, the region utilised 67% of available water against a QCA recommended target of 51%.



## 5. Pricing

High priority supply prices for urban schemes average \$260/ML close to the state average of \$255/ML however average medium priority irrigation water prices are \$58/ML compared to the state average of \$36/ML due to the large component of pumped irrigation supply in Bundaberg.

The residential charges ranged from \$1220 to \$1562 per connection to a state average of \$1279 per year. As a region, about 78.8% of full cost pricing is achieved reflecting an implicit CSO of 21.2%.

## 6. Quality

Higher rates of utilisation, land use practices and flood events combined with mildly saline soils have a pronounced effect on water quality and runoff to the Great Barrier Reef.

Potable urban water quality is well managed by local government water departments in line with guidelines and regulations.

## 7. Infrastructure

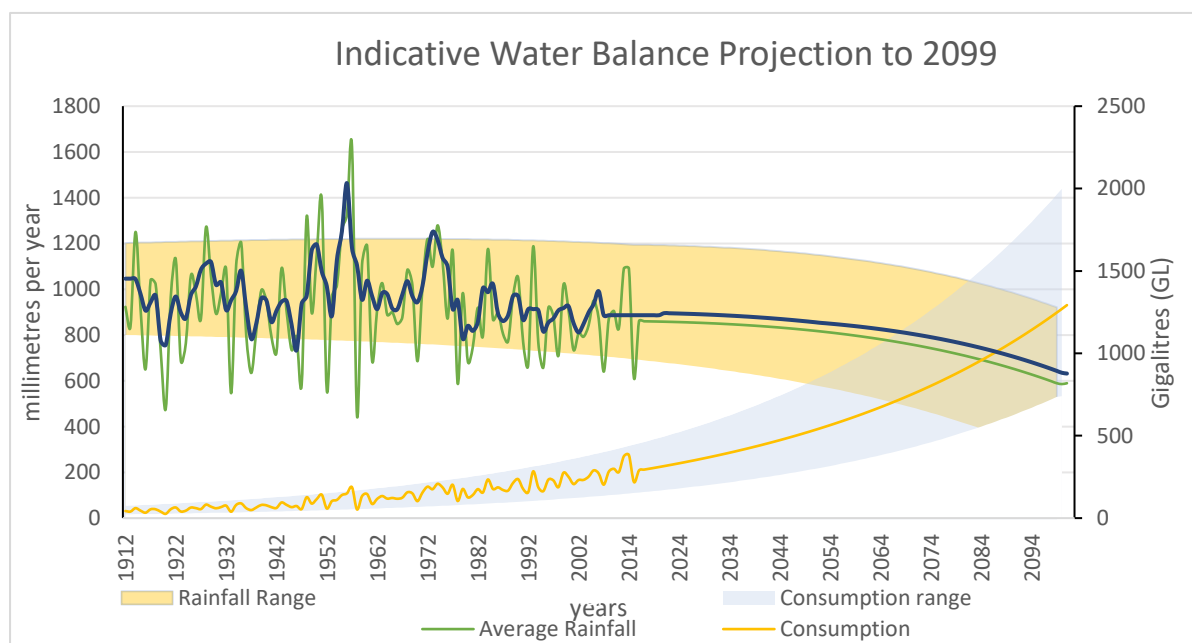
Local government owns and manages over \$1.4 billion or 61% of total publicly owned water infrastructure in the WBB.

Local government capital expenditure for water infrastructure may need to accelerate to maintain current standards of service delivery with maturing assets and increasing population. Under QGSO population growth projections, an extra \$2.9 billion could be required over the next 30 years to maintain the current level of investment.

Under current policy, any future investment in bulk water assets will need to align with the National Water Initiative principles for full cost recovery.

## 8. Conclusions

The future water security of the WBB will be largely dependent on the rate of irrigation demand and trends in effective rainfall. A projection of future supply and demand indicates a possible convergence around mid-century under decreasing rainfall and projected population growth.



## 9. ADVOCACY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. WBBROC will actively promote the importance of maintaining Paradise Dam at its current level through engagement with and advocacy to relevant stakeholders.
  - Follow up Expression of interest sent to Sunwater regarding its willingness to engage in the Paradise Dam Improvement Plan.
  - Request deferral of any decision pending completion of NWIDF feasibility studies in North and South Burnett from Minister Lynham
2. WBBROC and WBBROC Councils acknowledge the differing drivers of water security across the region but will highlight the linkage between urban and agricultural water users at local and regional scales including:
  - the linkages between Medium Priority with High Priority allocations across all sectors/users/areas.
  - highlight the importance of water security to enable economic development, employment growth and viability of communities.

3. WBBROC and WBBROC Councils will engage with the QCA in its Pricing Review process for current and future bulk water pricing reviews by developing and providing a regional submission in support of individual/industry submissions.
  - Endorse LGAQ submission on Dam Safety Upgrades to QCA.
4. WBBROC and WBBROC Councils will maintain an ongoing engagement with the LGAQ in representing WBBROC's position on Upper Bound Price Path discussions with Sunwater and SEQwater.
  - Position to be determined at further workshop informed by the NBRC/Sunwater investigation into Upper Bound Price paths.
5. WBBROC and WBBROC Councils will seek a meeting with DNRME/Minister to request that;
  - any review of the Burnett Basin Resource Operations Plan be deferred until after the outcome of the Paradise Dam Improvement Project and seek greater transparency of water regulation and management.
  - WBBROC be included in any subsequent revisions of regulations along with other key stakeholders.
6. WBBROC and WBBROC Councils will continue to engage with the LGAQ, government departments and ministers to develop channels of communication and better access to information and data sources.