

Resource operations plans

The water resource planning process in Queensland utilises two key mechanisms. Firstly, water resource plans aim to achieve a sustainable balance between meeting human needs and those of the environment. Secondly, resource operations plans are concerned with the day-to-day management of water resources, in a way that meets the water resource plan goals.

A resource operations plan outlines how a water resource plan will be implemented in specified areas. The resource operations plan puts into effect strategies which support the water resource plan's general and ecological outcomes.

The resource operations plan's provisions ensure that water in the plan area is managed for consistency with the water resource plan's overall goals for water entitlement security and ecological health.

A resource operations plan sets out:

- the process under which water allocations can be traded and the areas where trading can occur. Rules will ensure that water allocation security objectives and environmental flow objectives specified in the water resource plan are protected from the effects of trading
- the process for making available any unallocated water identified in the water resource plan
- rules for accessing water in areas where entitlements do not convert to water allocations in a way that recognises local flow variability patterns. In some plans, rules may be set out for limited trading of water taken under licences
- detailed operating rules for infrastructure operators to ensure the management of dams and weirs complies with the water resource plan
- monitoring and reporting requirements as specified in the water resource plan. Monitoring and regular reporting ensure that emerging issues can be identified and addressed and will also contribute to the plan's renewal at the end of its 10-year life.

Consultation process

Before a resource operations plan is finalised a draft plan is released for public consultation. This provides an opportunity for interested parties to have their say.

All relevant issues raised in public submissions received by the Department of Environment and Resource Management (the department) following the release of a draft resource operations plan will be considered before a resource operations plan is finalised.

An independent referral panel may be established to provide advice to the department's chief executive on issues arising from submissions on the draft plan.

The chief executive considers all properly made submissions and the referral panel's recommendations when finalising the plan.

Water trading

For water users in many areas, conversion of existing entitlements to tradeable water allocations will be a key benefit of a resource operations plan. Tradeability will create a market for water to be bought and sold in much the same way as land. Tradeability can be expected to promote higher water use efficiency and a move to higher-value uses because water users can receive the benefits of their own management innovation.

Existing water entitlements that may be converted to water allocations are:

- supplemented water entitlements held by water service providers, such as SunWater, and their customers
- unsupplemented entitlements such as water harvesting licences.

Where this occurs, water users will be provided with secure, tradeable water allocations that have specified performance criteria. Entitlements will be protected against the effects of infrastructure operational changes and other factors such as the construction of new infrastructure or the allocation of more water.

Further information

For more information, visit the water resource planning area of the department's website at:
<www.derm.qld.gov.au>.

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Queensland Government call centre 13 13 04
or visit www.derm.qld.gov.au