

information report



pioneer valley

proposal to prepare an

amending draft water resource plan



June 2003

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Prepared by
Water Planning Group
Department of Natural Resources and Mines

This report has been prepared to provide information on the proposed amendment to the Water Resource (Pioneer Valley) Plan. The processes referred to are bound by the requirements of the *Water Act 2000*. The information contained in this report should, therefore, be interpreted in that context.

This report has been prepared with all due care and diligence, using the best information available at the time of publication; however, the Department holds no responsibility for any errors or omissions. Any decisions made by other parties on the basis of this report are solely the responsibility of those parties. The information contained in this report does not necessarily represent government policy.

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This Information Report, a statutory requirement under the *Water Act 2000*, has been prepared to initiate amendment of the Pioneer Valley Water Resource Plan to address the management of the valley's groundwater resources and extend the Plan into the Alligator and Sandringham creek catchments.

The Pioneer Valley and the alluvial aquifers associated with its rivers and creeks have played an important part in the region's development. Groundwater provides much of the river system's dry-season baseflow, which is important for maintaining the natural health of riparian habitat and particular environmental icons such as Eungella National Park and Finch Hatton Gorge.

Groundwater is intrinsic to the region's social fabric, its economy, natural heritage and biodiversity. Balanced management of these resources will play an essential part in protecting the wellbeing of these interlocking interests.

While sustainable management of water resources is essential for all parts of Queensland, addressing the needs of the Pioneer Valley's groundwater resources and their relationship to surface supplies will present special challenges. With management of the region's surface water at an advanced stage through implementation of the Pioneer Valley Water Resource Plan, integration of groundwater allocation, management and use into the Plan can only enhance the Plan's effectiveness and the benefits it will bring.

Driven by private and public investment, groundwater use has grown significantly in the valley over the past two decades, with much of the increase associated with sugarcane irrigation. Now, the groundwater systems are showing varying signs of stress at times when water is most needed, a factor that has again been graphically underscored by drought. Growing demand for water and increasing competition for these limited resources are only expected to exacerbate the situation.

There is a pressing need to ensure that groundwater allocation and management strategies are implemented to protect the region's prosperity and its natural heritage and biodiversity values.

I have, therefore, announced my intention to amend the existing Pioneer Valley Water Resource Plan to include groundwater and the surface water of the Sandringham and Alligator creek catchments. This report provides the background information necessary for the community to understand and participate in

the planning process. It also provides an initial opportunity for members of the community to participate in the process by letting me know of their views and concerns through the formal submissions process. I encourage everyone with an interest in these important resources to avail themselves of this opportunity to have their say in the planning process.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Robertson', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Stephen Robertson MP
Minister for Natural Resources and Minister for Mines

How to make a Submission

Written submissions are invited from interested parties about relevant groundwater allocation and sustainable management issues and about the proposed arrangements for amending the Pioneer Valley Water Resource Plan by extending it to include the groundwater resources. The Plan will also be extended to the surface water resources of the Alligator and Sandringham creek catchments.

Submissions may be made by any person (including a representative of an interest group). Submissions must be made in writing and include the name, address and signature of the person or persons making the submission. Submissions may be mailed to the address shown below or faxed to the number shown below.

A submission form is attached in Appendix B.

In making a submission, respondents should state the key issue(s) that their submission is about, their views or position on the issue, and any facts or circumstances that support their views.

The closing date for submissions is 5 pm, 15 August 2003 and should be addressed to:

Postal Address:

The Chief Executive
(Attention: Mr Bob Sorensen)
Department of Natural Resources and Mines
PO Box 63
MACKAY QLD 4740

Street Address:

The Chief Executive
(Attention: Mr Bob Sorensen)
Department of Natural Resources and Mines
32 Wood St
MACKAY QLD 4740

Submissions can also be submitted via:

Fax to: Department of Natural Resources and Mines,
Attention: Mr. Bob Sorensen 49574005
Enquiries to: Mr. Bob Sorensen 4967 0874
Email: pioneer.wrp@nrm.qld.gov.au
Web: www.nrm.qld.gov.au/wrp/pioneer.html

All submissions will be treated with sensitivity and wherever possible in confidence. However, submissions may be viewed by other parties under the provisions of the *Freedom of Information Act 1992*.

The Department will continue in the immediate future to undertake the necessary technical studies that will be needed to underpin any analysis of issues and management approaches that arise from community response to this report. arise from community response to this report.