



Australian Government



Inspector-General of Water Compliance



Audit snapshot

June 2023

Audit of the management of overland flow harvesting in the Lower Balonne

To determine whether the Queensland Department of Regional Development, Manufacturing and Water (DRDMW) is compliant with the Condamine-Balonne Water Resource Plan, by;

- meeting requirements in relation to overland flow licensing and authorisation.
- meeting rules for monitoring, measuring and managing flow events during an announced period.
- adequately monitoring entitlement holder compliance with their obligations in relation to licence conditions and rules for taking water during an announced period.



Why we did this audit

- The Inspector-General of Water Compliance is the enforcement agency for Water Resource Plans.
- The Lower Balonne catchment has had full volumetric licensing of overland flow water since 2010 and is the model for similar licensing being rolled out in other catchments of the Basin in Queensland.
- The regulation and licensing of overland flow water is critical to verifying that the take of this water is within legal and sustainable limits and by licence holders only.
- Water measurement and accounting of overland flow is highly complex, and a relatively new area of water take measurement.



What we found

- DRDMW are meeting requirements of the Condamine-Balonne Water Resource Plan in relation to overland flow licensing and the management of flow events during an announced period.
- While the audit confirmed there was compliance with requirements of the Water Resource Plan, a number of recommendations have been made to improve the effectiveness of systems and processes that were reviewed.



Key areas for improvement

- DRDMW should commit to a minimum number of on-site audits pre and post a flow event.
- DRDMW should consider remote monitoring approaches to ensure timely oversight where onsite audits are not feasible or are delayed.
- DRDMW should consider developing a capacity for licence holders to transfer measured take data without the risk of tampering.
- The level of information provided to entitlement holders should be reviewed to reinforce notification requirements in the Water Management Protocol.
- DRDMW should ensure that the requirement to report measured take within a specified period is one that is consistent and enforceable.
- The risk of losing knowledge through staff turnover and the inconsistent application of rules could be reduced by developing documented guidance for key compliance activity.



Key facts

- There are 19 water licences that authorise the take of overland flow water from the Lower Balonne floodplain.
- The take of water under the authority of an overland flow licence is permitted only during an announced period.
- The audit covered three flow events between February 2020 and January 2022.

37

The number of storages audited prior to the flow event February to March 2020

4

The number of critical times where audits were not conducted for flow events in March to April 2021 and November 2021 to January 2022

0

There were no new storages, or changes to an existing storage notified to DRDMW during the audit period