



Department of  
**Natural Resources,  
Mines and Energy**

Dr Wendy Craik and Mr Greg Claydon

Independent Panel

NSW First Flush Assessment

[independentpanel.firstflush@dpie.nsw.gov.au](mailto:independentpanel.firstflush@dpie.nsw.gov.au)

Dear Panel Members

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission on the draft report 'Independent Panel Assessment of the Management of the 2020 Northern Basin First Flush Event'.

The widespread rain across large parts of Queensland and northern New South Wales earlier this year was a welcomed event after many years of drought. As noted in your report the rain delivered much-needed water supplies to rural communities and provided significant environmental benefits.

The Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy has reviewed the draft report and submits the following information for consideration in finalising the report.

Regarding the statement that there is no structured communication or coordinated approach between the states.

The Northern Basin Environmental Watering Group (NBEWG), which includes members from Queensland, provides a high-level consultative forum at the senior executive level. From mid-January to the end of February 2020 (during the first flush flow event) NBEWG met on four occasions to discuss operational matters and share information and data. The NBEWG members were also encouraged to share information on any management actions and responses as they occurred. Throughout the event, Queensland provided a range of information to the group including daily flow event announcements and advice on the progression of the flow events and their management. Attachment 1 is an example of information provided by Queensland to the NBEWG.

Informal communication also occurred with WaterNSW, as a number of staff were included in a distribution list that received frequent and sometimes daily emails notifying of flow event announcements and opportunities to water harvest. Attachment 2 is an example of information emailed to WaterNSW. This information could have been used to inform the likely volume of extractions in Queensland and estimate flows crossing the border. Regarding lack of access to Queensland's information and data.

Queensland consulted directly with affected councils and New South Wales Government agencies on the draft planning instruments.

Queensland also engaged with the Murray–Darling Basin Authority, the Commonwealth Environmental Water Office and the Commonwealth Department of Agriculture and Water Resources throughout the drafting of planning instruments during 2017-2018. This ensured that the proposed water plan and its implementation through the water management protocol and water entitlement notice would meet the requirements of the Basin Plan 2012 and support the Australian Government water recovery program outcomes.

Cross border consultation addressed risk assessment and specifically water quality, water sharing and operations, trading and zones, Aboriginal interests and uses and water plan development and timeframes. The scope for water plan review and reform as well as impacts on users was also subject to regular consultation between all levels of government.

Moreover, Queensland's water planning instruments are publically available on the Queensland Business website. The Condamine and Balonne protocol contains flow event management rules for the Lower Balonne water management area and water sharing rules including announced periods for waterharvesting entitlements. The [website](#) also provides a link to previous flow event reports.

Recommendation six in the draft report states Queensland has a website to provide daily updates on changes to water access. This is not accurate, while this being investigated it has not been implemented at this stage.

It should be noted that the restructure of water agencies in New South Wales has disrupted effective cross-border networks that previously existed. Queensland would welcome the reestablishment of these networks for operational staff. This would also be the appropriate forum to develop a protocol to assist in the timely exchange of relevant information during future flow events.

If you have any questions, please contact me on [REDACTED].

Yours sincerely



David Wiskar

Executive Director Water Policy

Attachment 1: Lower Balonne Flow Update

Attachment 2: Lower Balonne water management area, notification email



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## Lower Balonne Flow Update Saturday 15 February 2020

<b>Inflow details</b>	12-Feb-2020 – 1,650 ML
Inflows to Beardmore Dam from upstream Condamine and Balonne catchment have led to the filling of the dam today. The continuing inflows will be sufficient to announce waterharvesting in the next day or two.	13-Feb-2020 – 1,790 ML
	14-Feb-2020 – 1,820 ML
	15-Feb-2020 (up to midday) — 1,020 ML

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### ESD water - currently being released

Releases (from Jack Taylor Weir) of water stored for environmental, stock and domestic purposes (ESD water) commenced last Tuesday at target release rates of 1,500 megalitres per day (ML/day).

This release rate was maintained when the increased upstream flows indicated the Dam would fill and spill.

### ESD water - release volumes

As of this morning the ESD water was several kilometres upstream of Bifurcation No1.

The initial balance of stored ESD water on Tuesday was about 4,300 ML with 730 ML of inflow being added to the ESD account each day.

Estimated daily volume of ESD released -

11-Feb-2020 – 1,150 ML

The remaining volume of about 850 ML of the ESD water will be released during the rest of the day.

### Compliance with releases of ESD water

Under the flow event management rules for the Lower Balonne water management area, water may only be taken from the environmental release for stock or domestic purposes and licensees of weirs must ensure the ESD water is allowed to pass downstream unless storing for stock and domestic use.

### Further updates

Further flow updates will be provided after the end of the announced periods for waterharvesting.

## Attachment 2: Lower Balonne water management area, notification email



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### Notification of Announced Period for Waterharvesting

<b>To:</b>	Holders of Water Entitlements	<b>Email:</b>	BROADCAST / Undisclosed Recipients
<b>Subject:</b>	Announced Period for Waterharvesting - Lower Balonne Water Management Area		
<b>Reference:</b>	Water Year 2019/2020 - Flow Event No 1 - Announced Period No.3		
<b>From:</b>	Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy		
<b>Phone:</b>	07 4625 3299	<b>Fax:</b>	07 4625 3892
<b>Email:</b>	<a href="mailto:Waterservices.Siggeorge@dnrme.qld.gov.au">Waterservices.Siggeorge@dnrme.qld.gov.au</a>		
<b>Date:</b>	Tuesday 18 February 2020	<b>Pages (inc. cover):</b>	2

Dear Sir/Madam,

- This notification is given to holders of water entitlements in the Lower Balonne Water Management Area in accordance with the water sharing rules under section 79 of the Condamine and Balonne water management protocol 2019 (the "Protocol").
- This notification applies to unsupplemented water allocations, water licences to take overland flow water and waterharvesting water licences that authorise the take of water subject to an announced period and state a passing flow condition referenced to the St George Weir of up to and including:
  - 14,000 megalitres per day
- The announced period for waterharvesting –
  - starts at 6:00 PM Tuesday 18 February 2020 and
  - ends after a duration of 24 hours
- The announced periods for waterharvesting made during this flow event are subject to the flow event management rules for the Lower Balonne Water Management Area under chapter 9 of the Protocol.
  - A reduction is NOT applied to water taken during this 24 hour announced period.

Regards,

Mark Bartlem  
Senior Project Officer  
Delegate of the Chief Executive

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#### Schedule of Lower Balonne water management area waterharvesting announced periods for Water Year 2019/2020 - Flow Event No 1

Announced Period	Start of Announced Period	Duration of Announced Period	Passing Flow Condition
Environmental, stock and domestic release (commenced Tuesday 11 February 2020)			
Announced Period No 1	Sun 16 Feb 2020 6:00 PM	24 hours	12,000 ML/day
Announced Period No 2	Mon 17 Feb 2020 6:00 PM	24 hours	14,000 ML/day
Announced Period No 3	Tue 18 Feb 2020 6:00 PM	24 hours	(Up to and including) 14,000 ML/day
Announced Period No 4		hours	To be announced
Announced Period No 5		hours	To be announced
Announced Period No 6		hours	To be announced