



**AGRICULTURE, RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE**  
**Inquiry into reducing regulatory burdens for Queensland's Agriculture and Resource Sector**

Submission To:

The Research Director - Agriculture, Resources and Environment Committee  
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We apologise for the late submission, however we were not aware of the close date until we received the email yesterday. We would appreciate the committee's consideration in the matters we raise. This submission is presented by the Chief Executive Officer, Kym Jerome, on behalf of the ROCCY. We are a regional body that supports communities in Cape York to sustainably manage their natural resource assets.

**Submission: Cape York – South Cape area**

We support the need to reduce existing and future statutory regulation where that reduction results in regulation that provides a high level of protection for consistent viable business and regional planning while meeting the needs of industry. We in particular understand that viable sustainable business and industry depends on the health of the natural resources and commits to best practice management. We are mind full of the regional impacts of all sectors.

**Current impacts**

We welcome the inquiry as we have been long astounded and shocked by the attitude of the departments involved in the fiasco facing agriculture organisations in the lower Cape. The issues are a prime example of the regulatory burdens impeding the growth of business and industry that have existed for more than 15 years. Business and industry are working hard to meet the policy of government to create economic development and employment while managing the environment. We believe that the present situation flies directly in the face of COAG regulatory processes:

In 2007, COAG agreed that all governments will ensure that regulatory processes in their jurisdiction are consistent with the following principles:

COAG principles of best-practice regulation

1. Establishing a case for action before addressing a problem
2. A range of feasible policy options must be considered, including self-regulatory, co-regulatory and non-regulatory approaches, and their benefits and costs assessed
3. Adopting the option that generates the greatest net benefit for the community



4. In accordance with the Competition Principles Agreement, legislation should not restrict competition unless it can be demonstrated that:-
  - a. The benefits of the restrictions to the community as a whole outweigh the costs, and
  - b. The objectives of the regulation can only be achieved by restricting competition
5. Providing effective guidance to relevant regulators and regulated parties in order to ensure that the policy intent and expected compliance requirements of the regulation are clear
6. Ensuring that regulation remains relevant and effective over time
7. Consulting effectively with affected key stake-holders at all stages of the regulatory cycle, and
8. Government action should be effective and proportional to the issue being addressed.

Source: Council of Australian Government 2007, Best Practice Regulation – A Guide for Ministerial Councils and National Standard Setting Bodies, Department of Finance: Canberra.

Business and industry in the area have created a measurable economy; particularly here we focus on the Lakeland and Cooktown areas. This economic windfall is appreciated 10 fold by struggling businesses, in that, if the Lakeland Downs operations were to cease tomorrow there would be massive losses in rent, spend at supermarkets, recreational activity and at a raft of other small business in the area. The angst that has been created through departmental officer's lack of knowledge and understanding of eco systems and their ability to apply regulation in a suitable manner is astounding. The evidence that industry is working harmoniously with the environment while being battered via bureaucratic bungling that has caused many setbacks is unthinkable.

For the previous government of the day to spend millions of tax payer dollars on strategies for job creation while continuously bombarding an organisation with issues that have reports and science that is irrefutable is absolutely irresponsible. The attitude to the development of agriculture in Far North Queensland has been abhorrent to say the least. These families have been in the area for over 25 years working hard to improve the capacity of the region while being mindful of the environment. Yes, the big picture is to create wealth not only for them, but for the development and economic sustainability of the region. To grow food for export around the country from such a remote area as Cape York and to generate employment and pay their fair share of taxes sets a precedent second to none. One such business has weathered the frustration, stress and pressure and grown from 2 employees to over 130 and have created a huge responsibility while employing both local and overseas personnel, while others have closed up and gone away.

**Water:** Queensland Government aims to double food production by 2050. How does the department hope to achieve this without allowing the development of water harvesting? We believe that the staff at Mareeba water resources are focused on making progress and development as difficult as possible and have been doing this since cropping started at Lakeland Downs 27 years ago. Instead of asking 'How can we help to create an economy, the officers at the department have made progress as difficult as possible by delaying/ignoring and stalling applications. The unfortunate part of this whole situation is that they are so far disconnected from reality that it is



embarrassing. These businesses work at National and International levels and when they see what is being done to deliberately block progress they are embarrassed for such backward practice. Millions of dollars of personal funds and heavily borrowed capital have been accessed to build irrigation infrastructure to secure the future of the region. These operations are being treated so poorly and unprofessionally that they are advised that when the volume of water remaining in a dam is below 500 mm they must stop pumping. For one property the approved impoundment license for 3,300 megalitres with is much greater capacity was approved and then this road block on a reduction in storage was produced to impede progress and it is irresponsible and offensive. We believe it would appear that these decisions are based largely on some misguided misunderstanding of the area with a blanket attitude to regulation being implemented. It should be noted that most organisations has behaved very responsibly and have monitored updates on environmental issues regularly, one has employed many environmentally friendly practices and diversified to include the manufacture of organic compost at massive expense to manage every litre of the available water and are reusing water where possible. Every opportunity to reduce chemical fertiliser use has resulted in a reduction to 60% and this has been implemented so that there is no opportunity for any runoff impact to the reef.

The decisions of the government departments fail to support this industry and focus predominantly on over assessed regulation and the 'required' environmental flows from the area and give little consideration to the actuals, practicalities and investments made to advance farming in the region. As mentioned earlier, these families have been in the area for a very long time and in the past, due to a lack of support and understanding from the previous Queensland Government agencies, have had peanut, sorghum and other cropping shut down due to the overabundance of feral pigs, wallabies, cockatoo's, magpie geese, brolga's and galas that have massively increased in population directly due to the cropping. This is a very serious threat and survival of business has required the farmers to move to more permanent crops to be sustainable. This problem has not abated and yet hundreds of thousands of dollars have been provided to government departments who never discuss the issues or impacts at the local level. Due to state regulation, the shire council have been unable to provide support with the consideration of culling these feral animals and they remain rampant and uncontrolled in the area.

The amount of water to be held back in a dam is insignificant to the total Normanby catchment outflow (attached report shows this to be 2500,000 megalitres of which the required take for 1 property is 3,300 ml – a negligible 0.00123%) The gullies below the dam have always been dry post the wet season. Prior to the construction of one dam, the spring flow into that gully disappeared approximately 80 meters downstream of the present location of the dam wall. Even with the water being pumped from the dam over many years it has remained with an overflow most years and some years has gone over the spill way 70 meters wide and 1.5 metres deep. The spill way shows evidence of this occurring and the lack of decision making on behalf of the agency has been unprofessional and uncaring of the facts. Officers of the department have suggested that the Sharrock Dam is too large. Practically speaking, it is important to have a large dam to maximise efficiency and to capture large rain events. The size of the dam allows 2 years supply and provides some water security whilst maximising productivity in light of climate change and unpredictable wet seasons. NB: None of the area we speak of is directly near the



coastline by a considerable distance which would allow for natural filtering of runoff given the low level of chemical fertiliser use.

We are informed that the requirements for environmental flow fail are not met and this is not accurate as the Water Resources Report (attached) alludes to. There are millions of mega litres of water in the total system and we have no doubt that numerous similarly small dams, like Sharrock would have little to no detrimental impact on the environment. It is also considered to be an ideal place for a dam, positioned close to good agricultural soil with limited population downstream of the dam and no suitably productive agricultural land. Below the dam there is predominantly dry and desolate country unsuitable for agriculture (or the productive use of irrigation water).

It is well documented that the volume of water that Sharrock Dam is holding back is a small fraction of the 2500000 megalitres that is assessed for the total Normanby basin catchment and the impacts would be insignificant. We would challenge any hollow responses by the department. A good example of the understanding of the volume of water that flows during the wet season is the new Laura River Bridge. The bridge is situated many metres above the river bed which shows that the flow is of massive significance and to apply a misconceived assessment process to the dams in the area is unthinkable. A dam application that was placed 9 years ago has not been progressed despite many calls and trips to Mareeba on numerous occasions to ask if there was anything that was required to progress the matter and no response was received. Approx. 3 months ago advice was received that due to the 1993 resumption of land by Transport and Main Roads for the new Cooktown Road a new application would be required. This will require the expense and time of re-advertising to the public and waiting a further lengthy and expensive process to attempt to obtain the approval.

The issue of temporary bores causes a further frustration in that the wait for any reply to approvals has been greater than 3 months. There is now one operation in the area that is in full negotiation to sell and leave. Once again the slow action of the department in these matters has resulted in a lost opportunity. It beggars belief that the department has issued other licenses of suitable size with no hesitation or delay, yet has found fit to delay and stall particular applications.

It is insulting that a government department could do this to curtail the progress of business and industry, the very business and industry that pays the revenue and taxes that employs these people. As noted, through departmental incompetence there has been a wait of over 10 years for a decision on some applications. If there is no reason why these applications cannot be signed off on then it needs to be attended to immediately so that the construction can begin and local agriculturalists can move forward. This frustration has caused unnecessary situations and stress and pressure on many.

Australian farmers have always produced food in excess of the nation's needs so the importance of the farmers is not in the forefront of people minds, however; this mindset needs to change due to the rapid increase of population and limited stored resources before the resultant outcome is less food being available than is required.



The next generation of Australians is not as resilient as this generation and if we continue to put bureaucratic uninformed road blocks in the pathway, farmers will no doubt give up. The end result will be that Australia will become a net importer of food and the skills of the Australian farmer will be lost. The Australian Government has supported an employment program with the Pacific Islands and this has been taken on board as a first in the Lakeland area. One organisation is employing approx. 50 Tongans to provide the opportunity to earn money as they don't have access to social security and must work to exist. While this work has been offered in Australia it has not been largely taken up by local people.

We welcome discussion directly with the farmers in this instance and would be happy to provide their details so that the matters in this submission can be substantiated.

END Document

Vibrant Communities: Let's Work Together

# Australian Natural Resources Atlas

## Natural Resource Topics

You are here: [ANRA home](#) » [Natural resource topics](#) » [Water](#) » [Availability](#) » Queensland

### This web site is no longer being updated

In this section you will find detailed information, including national overviews and state and regional level assessments, from the 2000-2002 National Land and Water Resources Audit theme assessments.

## Water resources - Availability - Queensland

Specify a region:

Location map of SWMA Normanby River

### Basin & Surface Water Management Area: Normanby River

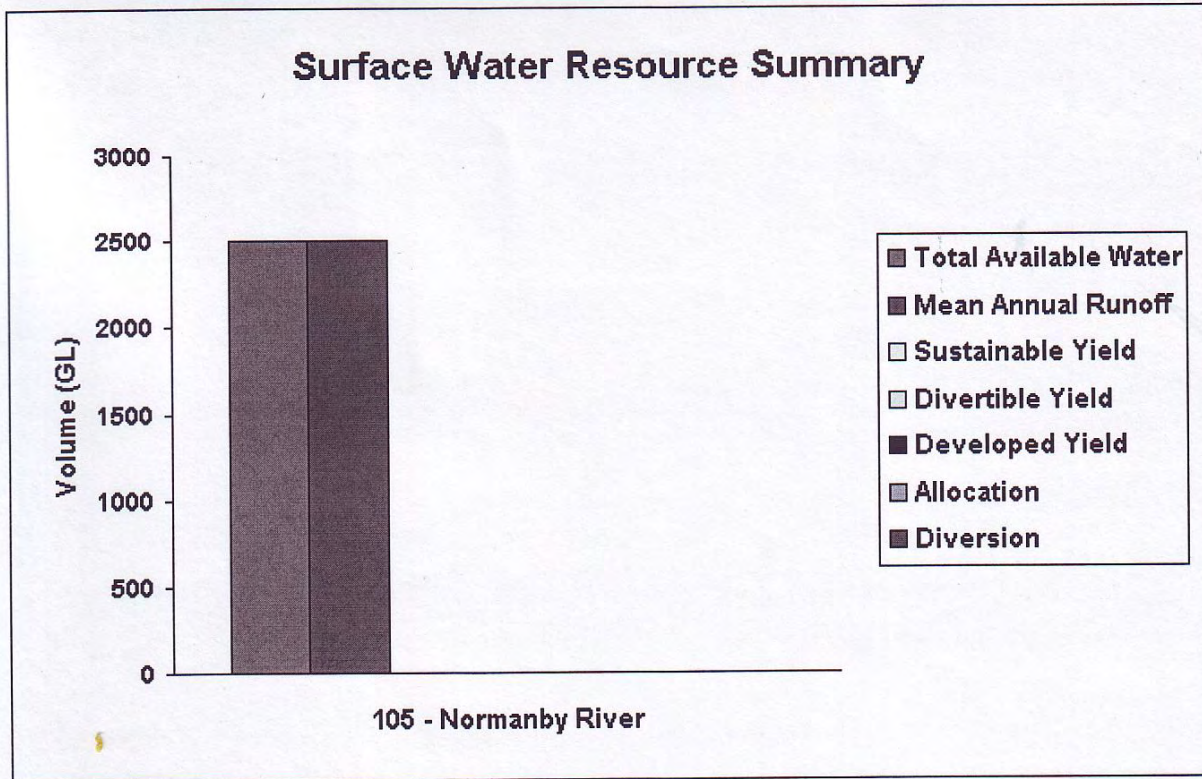
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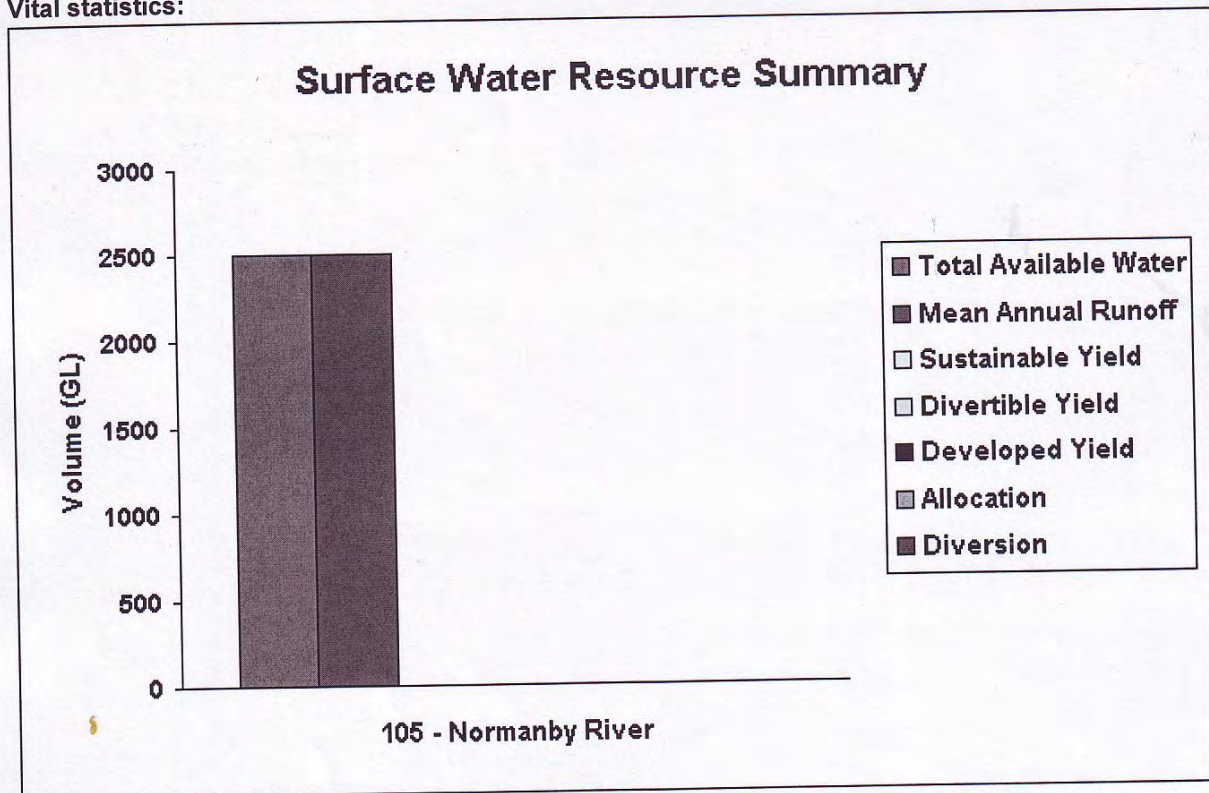
#### Introduction



This section presents information about surface water quantity and sustainability. For simplicity of communication, sustainability measures are based on assessing the level of water use and/or allocation with the quantity of water required to fulfil a sustainable flow regime (environmental water provision) - this has been expressed as a sustainable yield.



## Vital statistics:



Mean Annual Run-Off (Natural) (ML/yr)	2,500,000
Mean Annual Outflow (Natural) (ML/yr)	2,500,000
In-stream commitment (Total available flow - imported water - sustainable yield) (ML)	no data
Sustainable Yield - Developed Yield (ML)	
Divertible Yield (ML/yr)	no data
Developed Yield (ML/yr)	no data
Sustainable Yeild (ML/yr)	no data
<b>Yield, Security of Supply</b>	
There are currently no specific environmental allowances made in this SWMA. Development in the area is low and actual flows are near to natural flows	
<b>Current Development Category</b>	LOW DEVELOPMENT
<b>Diversion (ML/yr)</b>	1,596
<b>Total Available Water</b>	2,500,000

## PLEASE NOTE:

## Mean Annual Flow:

The Mean Annual Flow of 2500000 ML/yr was calculated from a calibrated daily Sacramento Model. Initially, a Sacramento model was calibrated for an appropriate stream gauge (105001) using recorded flow data and mean daily rainfall for the gauged catchment. The parameters determined from this calibration were then applied to a Sacramento Model of the SWMA and mean daily catchment rainfall for the period 1900 1999 used to calculate mean annual flow.

## Mean Annual Outflow:

The flow for this SWMA is greatest at the mouth of the area. Hence, the Mean Annual Outflow is equal to the Mean Annual Flow.



**Developed Yield:**

No yield studies have been carried out for this SWMA. There are currently no significant storages in the catchment.

**Divertible Yield:**

No divertible yield studies are available for this SWMA.

**How has flow regime changed in Normanby River?**

**Change in Flow Regimes:**

There are no storages in this catchment and very little (or no) development. The catchment is in its natural condition.

**Trade and Transfer - a bit of give and take:**

Water use efficiency and optimisation strategies within existing infrastructure (eg. water supply efficiency, precision irrigation and scheduling, water recycling, trading and pricing) are part of the modern water resource development planning tool kit. Recognising that water is a finite resource, the States and Territories have developed water allocation systems where security and reliability are assigned to entitlement, trading is provided so water can be moved to high value uses and the choices of individuals are maximised.

**Measurement Stations in Normanby River**

Summary surface water measurement station statistics

Name	Stream gauge ID	Mean annual flow (ML/yr)	Mean annual flow (mm)
<u>Normanby R @ Battle Camp Crossing @ AMTD 173.5 km</u>	105101	902,954	392
<u>Laura R @ Coalseam Ck @ AMTD 54.0 km</u>	105102	354,107	269
<u>Kennedy R @ Fairlight @ AMTD 96.1km</u>	105103	no data	no data
<u>East Nopormanby R @ Development road @ AMTD 19.8 km</u>	105105	no data	no data
<u>Hann R @ Sandy Ck @ AMTD 73.2km</u>	105001	161,650	164
<u>Jungle Ck @ Kalinga Station @ AMTD 9.8 km</u>	105002	no data	no data
<u>Deighton R @ Deighton @ AMTD 16.1km</u>	105104	no data	no data
<u>West Normanby R @ Mount Sellheim @ AMTD 244.5 km</u>	105106	no data	no data

**Modelled unimpaired stream-flow sites in Normanby River**

Over 300 sites across Australia were modelled to predict the unimpaired (natural) stream-flow. The long time series of stream-flow data are important for both research and management of Australia's hydrological and ecological systems. A simple conceptual daily rainfall-runoff model was used to extend the stream-flow data.

The model estimates stream flow from daily runoff and potential evapotranspiration data. The parameters of the model are first calibrated against the available stream-flow data. The optimised parameter values are then used to estimate monthly stream flow from 1901 - 1998.

For further information please refer to : [Project Report - Stream Flow Study](#)

There are no stream flow sites for this region.

**Further information**

- [Queensland Water Resources Assessment 2000 Technical Report](#)
- [report from the study of streamflow data and modelled streamflow](#)
- Link to data available for download on the: