

Water Legislation Amendment Bill 2022

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Resourcing Queensland's future

10 November 2022

Committee Secretary
State Development and Regional Industries Committee
Parliament House
George Street
Brisbane Qld 4000
via email sdric@parliament.qld.gov.au

Dear Ms Galbraith

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission on behalf of the Queensland Resources Council (QRC) to the Parliamentary Inquiry into the *Water Legislation Amendment Bill 2022*.

As you would be aware, the Queensland Resources Council (QRC) is a not-for-profit industry association representing the commercial developers of Queensland's minerals and energy resources. QRC is Queensland's peak body for the explorers, producers, and suppliers of resources including coal, metals, gas, minerals processors and electricity generators.

The role of the QRC is to work to secure a policy environment conducive to the long-term sustainability of the minerals and energy sectors in Queensland.

Thanks to the support of resource communities and the diligence of our people, the resource industry has not missed a beat during the ongoing challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. QRC's [economic contribution](#) data details industry's ubiquitous spending across Queensland down to the postcode level. The 2020-21 data shows that Queensland's resource industry collectively¹:

- supported one in six Queensland jobs,
- contributed one in every five dollars to the State economy,
- generates around 80% of the value of Queensland exports;
- supports more than 15,000 local Queensland businesses;
- contributes to more than 1,400 charities and local sports clubs; and
- all from just 0.1 percent of Queensland's land.

In short, Queensland's resource sector is a world-class engine of regional prosperity.

¹ Please note that QRC's 2021-22 economic contribution data will be launched at the [QRC annual lunch](#) on 23 November 2022. QRC would be delighted for all Committee members to attend industry's premier showcase.

As the Premier said in her enthusiastic introduction to the [Queensland Resource Industry Development Plan](#) (June 2022):

"The world is transitioning to a low-carbon economy— and Queensland can fuel this future. We have the mineral and energy resources below the ground, the renewable energy above the ground, and the skilled and innovative people to bring the world what it needs.

QRC [supports the Paris Agreement](#) and its emissions reductions goals and supports action to achieve those goals. The challenge is to reduce emissions at the least cost to society and the economy. Queensland's resources sector can continue to grow under a low emissions economy and has a clear role to play in facilitating global emissions reductions ambitions.

Queensland's resource industry supplies the world with a broad range of elements, energy, minerals, and metals. Fundamentally, Queensland is in the business of supplying the resources needed for the world's economic development. Our resource exports are either energy fuels like thermal coal and gas, or the building blocks of development including copper, zinc, aluminium, and metallurgical coal for making steel. Electricity generated in Queensland is also "exported" into the national electricity market through two transmission connections into NSW. Queensland gas is also piped South to NSW and Victorian domestic markets.

Background

Queensland's resource industry relies on water to operate but also understands that it is a valuable commodity for the community and must be used sparingly and wisely. Water for the resource sector comes from a range of sources, including surface water pumped from rivers, groundwater bores, rainfall and runoff, groundwater inflows from extraction of the geological profile interacting with aquifers, potable water and recycled water from all these sources collected on site.

Water is extracted, managed and closely monitored during operations to ensure efficient and safe production; that a reliable supply is maintained on site and to minimise environmental impacts on the surrounding environment. Prior to taking any water from the natural system, all resource developments must undergo a environmental impact assessment processes, both at a State and Commonwealth level, (where there is a potential impact on Matters of National Environmental Significance) and hold the relevant approvals.

Attached to this submission is a copy of a project assessment approval map for how the resource industry's access to water is regulated. We thought this context would be useful as some of the amendments in this Bill propose small refinement to some of the processes described in this flowchart.

Water Legislation Amendment Bill 2022

QRC supports the objectives of the *Water Legislation Amendment Bill 2022*. We understand the primary objective of the Bill is to give effect to Queensland's measurement policy for non-urban water measurement (September 2022). The new policy reflects the lessons from the compliance audits of the Murray-Darling Basin (2018) and also the management of non-urban water (2018). Both reports found a number of

shortcomings in the regulatory framework for the measurement and compliance of water policy.

QRC was one of the stakeholders who has been consulted by the Department of Regional Development, Manufacturing and Water since these reports were released. We believe that the resulting policy reflects the feedback that we've heard, both from our members, and from other industry stakeholders. While some of the issues around metering standards, verification and telemetry have been controversial at times – we believe that the Bill generally strikes a fair balance in establishing principles for reform and a measured transition mechanism to implement the new policies.

QRC suggests that it's difficult to take issue with the Minister's speech in tabling the Bill (Hansard, 12 October, page 2606), when the Hon GJ Butcher said:

"Having accurate information about how much water is taken from our river catchments and aquifers is critical to sustainable water resource management. This ensures that everyone can access their fair share of this precious resource."

QRC has been a long-standing member of the Department's Water Engagement Forum (WEF) and believes that through these consultative processes, stakeholders have been given ample opportunities to be briefed on the direction of these reforms. QRC commends the Department for their commitment to engaging with all stakeholders through the WEF – it's an excellent model of consultation. QRC appreciates the opportunity to hear the views of other key industries and stakeholder groups – many of whom are likely to also be making submissions.

QRC supports the primary amendments in the Bill which are designed to:

- Increase the coverage and standard of metering and water measurement;
- Provide for farm-scale measurement of overland flow;
- Modernise the compliance and enforcement provisions around water measurement; and
- Improve the timely and accurate reporting of water use.

QRC notes that the explanatory notes (page 4) also identify a further eight areas of 'administrative improvements' to the legislative framework around water. While some of these changes are complex, to the best of our understanding, QRC supports:

- i. Postponing the expiry of delayed water resource plans;
- ii. Allowing the chief executive to decide specific water licence dealing applications;
- iii. Clarifying the commencement of a water licence or seasonal water assignment;
- iv. Confirming applications for seasonal water assignment notice;
- v. Implementing technical corrections to the operation of the underground water management;
- vi. Arrangements for water authority boards to be consistent with other government board;

- vii. Provide for replacing a water authority with water activity agreements; and
- viii. Clarify water related offences.

QRC has reviewed the Bill and believes that it is consistent with fundamental legislative principles as defined in section 4 of the *Legislative Standards Act 1992*. QRC believes that the Bill has sufficient regard for the institution of Parliament. QRC believes that the Bill has sufficient regard to the rights and liberties of individuals and does not impose obligations retrospectively.

In conclusion

Thank you again for the opportunity to make a submission on this Bill. Should you have any questions on any matter raised in this submission, the best contact at QRC is Andrew Barger on [REDACTED] or [REDACTED].

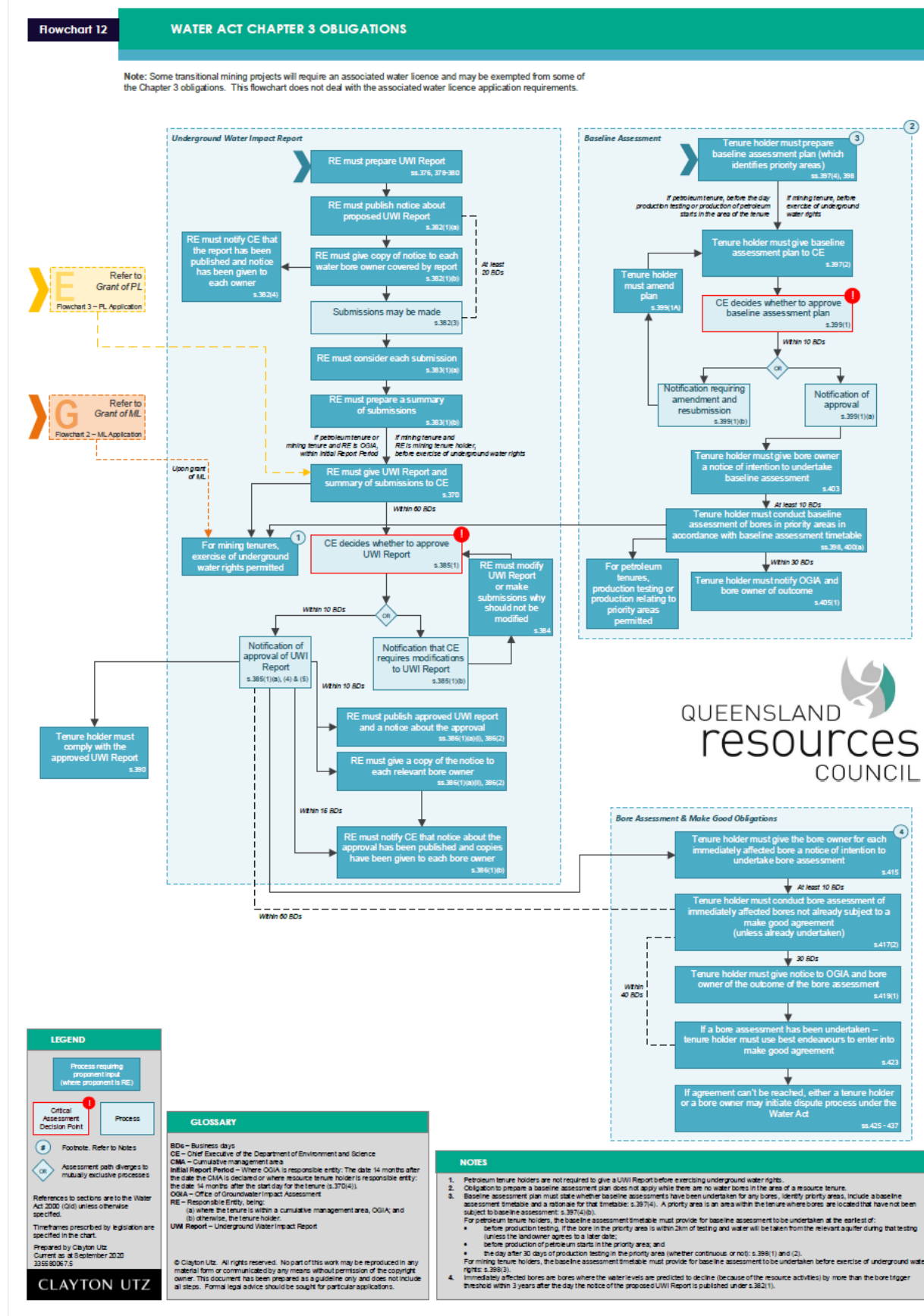
We would welcome any opportunity to appear before the Committee and answer any questions they might have about this submission. None of the content in this submission is confidential and the Committee is welcome to publish it on their website.

Yours sincerely

Ian Macfarlane
Chief Executive

Enclosed: [Flowchart](#) – Obligations under Queensland Water Act, Chapter Three

Flowchart – Obligations under Queensland Water Act, Chapter Three



Source: <https://www.qrc.org.au/water-act/>