

Question on Notice

No. 712

Asked on Tuesday, 11 June 2024

MR P WEIR ASKED THE MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND THE GREAT BARRIER REEF AND MINISTER FOR SCIENCE AND INNOVATION (HON L LINARD)—

QUESTION:

With reference to the Baseline Assessment Guideline ESR/2016/1999 which outlines the minimum requirements for undertaking a baseline assessment on a water bore—

Will the Minister advise the percentage of baseline assessments carried out within the Condamine Alluvium that have each of the following minimum requirements recorded (a) standing water level measurement and (b) water quality assessment results which has all the minimum water quality analytes recorded as per section 3.6.4 of the Guideline?

ANSWER:

The Department of Environment, Science and Innovation is responsible for the administration of Chapter 3 of the *Water Act 2000*.

Chapter 3 of the Water Act requires resource tenure holders to undertake baseline assessments of landholder bores. The baseline assessments are provided to the individual bore owners and to the independent Office of Groundwater Impact Assessment. The Department of Environment, Science and Innovation does not receive the baseline assessments; however, may request data from the Office of Groundwater Impact Assessment to investigate a landholder complaint.

The intent of a baseline assessment is to obtain information about a bore ahead of any potential groundwater impact from resource development, and to assist in future negotiations around make good.

The Office of Groundwater Impact Assessment maintains a database of groundwater data which includes the submitted baseline assessment data. This data is used in groundwater assessment and modelling activities which inform the Underground Water Impact Reports for the Surat Cumulative Management Area.

If the bore is predicted to be impaired, the resource tenure holder must undertake a bore assessment and enter into a make good agreement with the bore owner. The baseline assessment benchmarks data prior to the bore experiencing any impact from resource activities and assists in the negotiation of make good agreements.

Under the provisions of the Water Act, the department has developed a baseline assessment guideline that must be complied with by resource tenure holders.

The Office of Groundwater Impact Assessment has advised it currently holds 1,109 baseline assessment records for bores which are interpreted to be screened in the Condamine Alluvium. Of these records a standing water level or water quality sample was unable to be obtained for 461 bores as they were abandoned, destroyed, or landholder access was refused.

Of the remaining 648 bores, 459 bores (71 per cent) included a standing water level measurement, and 405 (63 per cent) included water quality measurements. The guideline identifies over 30 water quality parameters to be sampled as part of each baseline assessment, with approximately 34 per cent of the bores recorded with a full suite of water quality parameters.

The collection of a standing water level or water quality sample may not always be practical. The guideline states that this outcome is acceptable where the bore was either dry, pumping infrastructure was damaged or it was not practicable for the bore owner to cease pumping.

Should a bore owner not be satisfied with the baseline assessment they can request further investigation. The department may issue a compliance notice under the Water Act where the tenure holder has not complied with the baseline assessment guideline.