



Hon Glenn Butcher MP
Minister for Regional Development and Manufacturing
Minister for Water

Our ref: CTS 11227/21

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Mr John Connell
Head Burdekin Basin Sub-Committee
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Email: coordinator@nqcc.org.au

John

Dear ~~Mr~~ Connell

Good to hear from you
John. Apologies for the
delay in getting this
response back to you.

Thank you for your letter of 26 May 2021 regarding the basin wide management of the Burdekin River, including your suggestions to modernise the irrigation systems in the Lower Burdekin to address risks associated with rising groundwater.

Since 2017, the then Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy and the present Department of Regional Development, Manufacturing and Water (DRDMW) have been working closely with Sunwater and growers in the Burdekin Haughton Water Supply Scheme to develop a coordinated response to rising groundwater. This work supported a socio-economic assessment of the risks associated with rising groundwater which concluded that actions both on-farm and off-farm are needed to mitigate the risks. In response, Sunwater has already undertaken mitigation works to address localised issues in Cassidy's Creek and is planning to invest a further \$12.5 million over the next four years into scheme infrastructure projects that will address rising groundwater in the most at-risk areas.

DRDMW has also been working with the Great Barrier Reef (GBR) Foundation which has set aside \$20.4 million in the Lower Burdekin to address the GBR water quality issues, part of which is for improving irrigation efficiencies. Funding through the Foundation recognises that addressing irrigation efficiencies will achieve outcomes for the GBR as well as addressing groundwater issues. DRDMW will continue to work with the Commonwealth as well as Sunwater and the growers to support this move to improve irrigation practices.

I note your correspondence also suggests the Department review the Burdekin Water Plan with a view to take further steps towards a basin-wide mechanism for water management.

While the Burdekin Water Plan identifies unallocated water reserves that could meet the requirements of several of the project proposals, this does not mean that the proposals have been approved. Through the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process administered by the Office of the Coordinator-General, a proposal must demonstrate compliance with any legislation. For the Burdekin Basin, this means the proposals must demonstrate that they meet the Burdekin Water Plan outcomes including providing a flow regime that maintains natural sedimentation processes to support beaches at Cape Bowling Green. In support of better understanding the sedimentation issues, DRDMW in collaboration with the Department of Environment and Science has commenced collating the available science which will be used to support future management decisions, including any future review of the Burdekin Water Plan. I have asked that officers of DRDMW speak with your Council as part of collating the available science.

DRDMW has also been working closely with the Office of Coordinator-General to ensure that each proposal considers the contribution that their project makes to the cumulative impact that may result from any combination of the proposals proceeding. The requirements of these assessments are detailed in the EIS final Terms of Reference for the raising Burdekin Falls Dam and Urranah Dam proposals and is currently part of the draft Terms of Reference for the Big Rocks Weir proposal. As with all EIS processes, stakeholders will have an opportunity to have their say during the EIS public notification period for each proposal. For more information about the EIS process visit www.qld.gov.au

If you have any questions, please contact John Ritchie, Director, Water Legislation and Policy, via email john.ritchie@rdmw.qld.gov.au or phone 0407 119 549.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ian Hutcheon', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

IAN HUTCHEON
Chief of Staff
Office of the Minister for Regional Development
and Manufacturing and Minister for Water