

# Queensland Wetlands Program

Synopsis of Phase 2

May 2013



Prepared by: Biodiversity Strategy Unit, Department of Environment and Heritage Protection

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## Executive summary

The Queensland Wetlands Program (Program) was established by the Queensland and Australian governments in 2003 to support programs and projects that will result in long-term benefits for the sustainable use, management, conservation and protection of Queensland wetlands.

The Program has been running for nearly 10 years and has delivered more than 70 projects. There have been three phases of the Program: Phase 1 (2003-2008), the Transitional Phase (2009-2010) and Phase 2 (2010-2013).

An evaluation of Phase 1 was undertaken in 2009 by a non-government agency, while for Phase 2, a smaller synopsis has been undertaken by the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection (EHP) by a person<sup>1</sup> not associated with the Program. Those findings are presented here.

The Program has demonstrated sound performance across most assessment areas. The strengths of the Program include:

- strong governance structure that brings together state and commonwealth agencies working on wetlands
- effective project management discipline as demonstrated by implementing (or in the process of implementing) nine of the 10 recommendations from Phase 1. A valid reason exists for not implementing the remaining recommendation
- clear objectives
- flexibility enabling alignment with changes to Queensland Government's strategic directions during Phase 2
- broad scope that includes all types of wetlands across Queensland, from marine to ephemeral lakes, and encompassing wetland specific issues to entire wetland ecosystems
- a breadth of projects to meet the needs of an array of interest groups
- effective use of information technologies to improve the knowledge base and capacity of wetland managers through the department's WetlandInfo website.

The concerns for the Program are:

- continuing the partnership with the Federal Government to ensure the continuation of the Program
- maintaining funding to ensure products developed continue to be adopted for better wetland management.

Strategic recommendations for the Program are to:

1. ensure that any future phase of the Program has a primary focus on the adoption of the products and tools developed. This will ensure that investment in wetland management is targeted to ensure the best return on investment.
2. ensure that new projects look at whole wetland systems and the broader landscape and deliver products that benefit the State
3. consider expanding funding sources and inviting additional representatives onto the Governance Group to create awareness with new clients (e.g. alignment with the 'four pillar economy')
4. avoid splitting project milestones across government jurisdictions.

The views and opinions expressed in this publication are those of the author and do not reflect those of the Australian or Queensland governments.

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<sup>1</sup> At time of writing this report the person undertaking the review was employed in a separate area of EHP. However, the person has since been employed by the Program.

# 1 Background on the Program

The Program was established by the Queensland and Australian governments in 2003 to support programs and projects that result in long-term benefits for the sustainable use, management, conservation and protection of Queensland wetlands.

The Program has been running for almost 10 years and has delivered more than 70 projects (see Table 1). There have been three phases of the Program:

- Phase 1 (establishing 38 projects)
- Transitional Phase (additional milestones to 9 projects in Phase 1, as well as another 15 new projects)
- Phase 2 (establishing 19 projects, expansion on Phase 1 projects).

**Table 1: Funding details for the Program**

Funding body	Number of projects	Allocated funding
Phase 1 (2003–08)		
Natural Heritage Trust Bilateral Agreement (Australian Government)	28	\$7,500,000
Great Barrier Reef Coastal Wetlands Protection Program	10	\$8,000,000
In-kind from the Queensland Government (support above projects)		\$8,000,000
Transitional Phase (2009–10)		
Reef Rescue Caring for our Country (Australian Government)	3*	\$ 500,000
Q2 Coasts and Country Program (Queensland Government)	6*	\$ 600,000
Australian Government (2008–09)	7	\$1,065,000
Q2 Coasts and Country Critical Project Program (2009–10)	8	\$1,000,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>\$26,665,000</b>

\*additional milestones to Phase 1 projects, not new projects

Funding body	Number of projects	Original funding agreement	Final funding expensed
Phase 2 (2010–13)			
Australian Government 2010–13 (contracted externally)	6	\$ 624,000	\$ 151,000
Australian Government 2010–13 (contracted to Queensland Government)	5	\$ 651,000	\$ 396,000
Q2 Coasts and Country Critical Project Program Queensland Regional Natural Resource Management Investment Program (Queensland Government) 2010–13	8	\$1,418,000	\$1,500,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>\$2,693,000</b>	<b>\$2,047,000</b>

In 2009, an independent evaluation of Phase 1 of the Program was conducted. The evaluation was performed by Halcrow Pacific Pty Ltd and the Institute of Sustainable Futures, University of Technology, Sydney. The key findings were:

*‘Overall, the QWP [Queensland Wetlands Program] has been largely effective and it has supported and enabled a range of quality projects and programs to enhance the sustainable use, management, conservation and protection of Queensland wetlands. Other Australian jurisdictions lack such a comprehensive Programme with similar levels of mapping, inventory, information and guidance to support effective wetlands management.’*

As Phase 2 is nearing completion, a smaller synopsis of the Program has been undertaken by an independent person in EHP.

## 2 Aim, objectives and methodology of the synopsis

### 2.1 Aim and objectives

The aim of the independent synopsis is to detail what Program delivered in Phase 2, highlighting the Programs' strengths and weaknesses, and drawing attention to particular issues to consider for the future of wetlands management.

The objectives of the synopsis are to:

- document the contributions and relevance (appropriateness) of the Program to improve the knowledge base and capacity of resource managers in relation to wetland management in Queensland
- evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of the Program projects in:
  - meeting their stated objectives
  - their overall contribution to the Program strategic goal
- document key Program experiences that can be used to ensure the success of any future collaboration in wetland management.

As illustrated in Figure 1, the synopsis involves assessing the Program's:

- governance
- appropriateness
- projects (their effectiveness and efficiency)
- funding level.

Recommendations on the future direction of the Program will also be made.

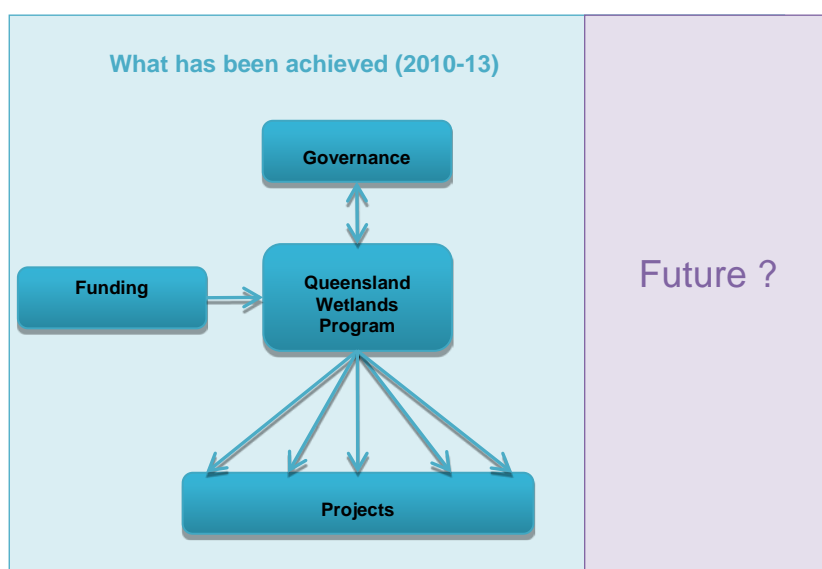


Figure 1: Structure of the synopsis

## 2.2 Methodology

To ensure an independent assessment has been provided, a desktop analysis and interviews with a range of stakeholders were conducted by an officer not associated with the Program. In addition, an email was sent to selected end-users for feedback on products. A full consultation list is provided in Appendix 9.1.

### Governance

The governance arrangement was assessed by:

- reviewing the terms of reference, governance structure flow chart, agendas and minutes
- conducting interviews with six members of the governance group from EHP (Queensland Government), Natural Resources and Mines (DNRM, Queensland Government), National Parks, Recreation, Sports and Racing (NPRSR, Queensland Government), Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF, Queensland Government) and Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA, Australian Government). Unfortunately, members representing the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities (SEWPaC) were unavailable for interviewing.

### Program appropriateness

The appropriateness of the Program has been assessed by reviewing:

- progress on recommendations made in the evaluation report on Phase 1 against the 10 recommendations
- how the strategic objective of the Program is met through a desktop assessment and discussion with governance group members and a Natural Resource Management funding representative
- how the Program aligns with the direction of Queensland Government by reviewing the vision, goals and strategic plans for the different agencies
- the Program coverage and scope via a desktop assessment
- how the Program has been communicated by considering the Program's communications strategy, individual communications project plans, project fact sheets, as well as discussions with the communications officer and EHP corporate communications.

### Effectiveness and efficiency of projects

As many of the projects are not due for completion until June 2013, effectiveness and efficiency of projects under the Program were assessed by reviewing:

- the breadth of projects
- the progress towards expected completion dates and budgets
- six project plans
- four six-monthly reports
- feedback on products received via email from potential end-users (e.g. natural resource management (NRM) bodies, EHP officers, scientists, local governments, conservation groups).

### Funding

Funding was assessed by interviewing Program's officers, members from the governance group and a funding body representative.



### 3 Governance of the Program

The Program is overseen by the Queensland Wetland Program Governance Group. The objective of this group is to provide oversight for the administration of projects under the Program and make recommendations to funding bodies on milestones and payments.

The governance group comprises of approximately 10 members from:

- Environment and Heritage Protection (EHP, Queensland Government)
- Natural Resources and Mines (DNRM, Queensland Government)
- National Parks, Recreation, Sports and Racing (NPRSR, Queensland Government)
- Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF, Queensland Government)
- Science, Information Technology, Innovation and the Arts (DSITIA, Queensland Government)
- Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities (SEWPaC, Australian Government)
- Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA, Australian Government).

Though the Program is managed through EHP, it is a whole-of-government program.

The governance group meets quarterly and has a strategic focus to review, make recommendations on Program performance reports and provide advice on impediments to progress. Performance reports include: milestone reports (quarterly reports), narrative or project reports (half yearly and at the completion of project) and financial reports.

The governance arrangement was assessed by:

- reviewing the terms of reference, governance structure flow chart, agendas and minutes
- conducting interviews with six members of the governance group representing EHP, NRM, NPRSR, DAFF and GBRMPA.

It was found (see Appendix 9.2) that the current governance structure is effective for a number of reasons:

- linkages between the governance group and its funding bodies (state and federal) are provided in a simple-to-read flow chart, with roles and project commitments summarised
- concise and relevant information is provided in the terms of reference so all members know what is expected of them
- membership across government departments (state and commonwealth) ensures:
  - all agencies involved in wetland management are included
  - there are no project duplications by any other government programs or projects
  - gaps in knowledge at state and national levels are identified
- member participation, is in general, collaborative and supportive
- standard procedures for meetings and reporting templates have been developed to ensure consistency across the Program regardless of agency or staff turn-around
- the Joint Strategic Investment Panel (Queensland funding) receives reports that are delivered on time.

A disadvantage of this governance arrangement is the different procurement, contractual and reporting requirements (e.g. different reporting programs, timeframes and templates) between the Queensland and Australian governments. Programs considering using this model need to be aware of these administrative and legal requirements associated with cross jurisdictional programs.

There were concerns associated with a final payment for one specific project. This issue was managed appropriately with discussions at a governance group meeting, then further discussions with senior officers and subsequent follow-up by formal correspondence. The issue was resolved. However, future contracts need to include formal escalation protocols.

***The governance structure supports cross-agency collaborative relationships, and brings all of the agencies together that work on wetlands.***

## 4 Appropriateness of the Program

Incorporating the natural expansion of the Program and addressing changes in government direction has been achieved through effective project management discipline.

Phase 1 of the Program largely concentrated on identifying where wetlands were located and the key management methods to support their effective management (e.g. AquaBAMM for conservation value assessments, buffer guidelines, rehabilitation guidelines etc.). Phase 2 expanded the focus by looking at wetlands at a landscape level (e.g. wetlands connectivity, directions for wetland assessment and monitoring in Queensland, wetland management in agricultural production systems).

To assess the appropriateness of the Program the following components were reviewed:

- progress on the recommendations from the evaluation of Phase 1
- how the strategic objective of the Program has been met
- alignment with the Queensland Government policies and directions
- Program scope and coverage
- how the knowledge base and capacity of wetland managers has been improved
- Program communications.

### 4.1 Progress on the recommendations from evaluation of Phase 1

In the evaluation report of Phase 1 (Queensland Wetlands Programme Evaluation: Final report, 2009), particular mention was made to the legislative aspect of the Program:

*'The significant challenge for the Programme to date has been progressing the development of a wetland regulatory regime under Focus Area 2. A series of projects on wetland planning arrangements was undertaken through the Programme to support the development of a regulatory regime to conserve and protect Queensland wetlands. However, the regulatory regime has yet to be established and uncertainty over changes in the regulatory regime is preventing some projects from being completed.'*

During the Transitional Phase and Phase 2, the regulatory aspect (recommendation 3 in the evaluation report) has been fulfilled with the protection of wetlands incorporated into the State Planning Policy with direct reference to the wetland buffer guideline and underpinned by many of other tools developed through the Program (e.g. wetland mapping, wetlands assessments through AquaBAMM, Definition and Delineation guideline).

Further, of the 10 recommendations made in the evaluation report, nine have been or are being undertaken (see Appendix 3). The only recommendation (developing a Queensland Wetlands Strategy) that was not actioned should not be considered as a potential project until national and state policy drivers are completed (e.g. a national policy statement for wetlands, Queensland Water Strategy and Queensland Conservation Strategy). It should also be noted that this objective is beyond the scope of any program as it requires a government commitment.

***Nine of the 10 recommendations from the evaluation of Phase 1 have been or are being undertaken.***

## 4.2 Strategic objective of the Program

The objective of the Program is to support projects that provide long-term benefits to the sustainable use, management, conservation and protection of Queensland wetlands. This is achieved through designing the Program around five focus areas and ensuring international commitments are met.

### Program focus areas

There are five focus areas of the Program (see Table 2).

In Phase 1 the greatest emphasis was placed on Focus Area 1 (improving the wetland information base). In the evaluation of Phase 1, concern was raised about the lack of progress in Focus Area 2 (planning and legislation arrangements). The evaluation also recommended that Phase 2 should concentrate on Focus Area 4 (monitoring and stakeholder engagement).

In Phase 2, projects spanned across all five focus areas (see Table 2). There has been continued strong attention on Focus Area 1. However, as recommended in the evaluation, effort was directed towards Focus Area 4 and concerns on Focus Area 2 have now been addressed. A few projects addressed evaluation (Focus Area 5) and one project involved on-ground activities (Focus Area 3).

The emphasis for any future work of the Program should be on Focus Areas 4 and 5.

**Table 2: Number of projects in Phase 2, for each of the Program focus areas**

Focus Area	Number of projects	
1	Improving the wetland information base	11.5
2	Wetlands policy planning and legislation arrangements	1.5
3	On-ground activities to protect and rehabilitate wetlands	1
4	Communication, education and capacity building	3
5	Monitoring, evaluation, reporting and improvement (MERI)	2

Note—some projects covered two focus areas, so 0.5 was allocated to each area.

### International commitments

The Convention on Wetlands of International Importance (*Ramsar Convention 1971*), is an intergovernmental treaty that provides the framework for national action and international cooperation for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources. The Ramsar Contracting Parties, or Member States, have committed themselves to implementing the 'three pillars' of the Convention to:

1. work towards the wise use of all their wetlands through national land-use planning, appropriate policies and legislation, management actions and public education
2. identify and designate suitable wetlands for the List of Wetlands of International Importance ('Ramsar List') and ensure their effective management
3. cooperate internationally concerning trans-boundary wetlands, shared wetland systems, shared species, and development projects that may affect wetlands.

The Program helps Australia meet its international obligations primarily through its alignment with the second pillar. It assisted in incorporating Ramsar principles and wetland tools into park management planning and enhances management of Ramsar wetlands.

*The Program clearly meets its objectives and international commitments.*

## 4.3 Alignment with the Queensland Government policies and directions

### Queensland Government

The Program aligns with the Queensland Governments' 'four pillar economy' (e.g. wetland management in agricultural production systems, grazing guidelines, management planning guidelines). Future work of the Program should ensure continued alignment and consider expansion into the tourism, construction and mining pillars, as this provides new stakeholder awareness opportunities.

### Department of Environment and Heritage Protection

EHP's vision is that the department 'will be the environment and heritage protection agency against which other Australian states benchmark themselves'. The Program demonstrates this leadership in a number of ways:

- many aspects of the Program are now being used by other government departments (e.g. the Aquatic Ecosystems Toolkit is a national program that uses many Program tools—wetland classification, wetland assessment, buffers, mapping)
- WetlandInfo has set a benchmark for the delivery of information and is becoming nationally and internationally recognised (e.g. national report to the Ramsar secretariat recognising WetlandInfo).

The Program is consistent with EHP's strategic direction. In the EHP Strategic Plan 2012-2016, not including strategies related to heritage protection or workforce management, there are 28 strategies listed under four headings:

- avoiding, minimising or mitigating impacts to the environment
- protecting the integrity of Queensland ecosystems
- building relationships with government, business, industry and community
- innovative, evidence-based policies, programs and services.

Products from the Program (see Appendix 4) contribute to 25 of the 28 strategies (89%) and partly for another two strategies.

### Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Products from the Program (e.g. farm management systems wetlands handbook with associated case studies and economic assessment tools, and grazing for healthy coastal wetlands guidelines with associated case studies) assists DAFF in meeting two of the three goals outlined in the DAFF Strategic Statement. That is:

- ensuring the sustainable use of natural resources
- improving the competitiveness of portfolio industries.

### Department of National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing

Products from the Program (e.g. incorporating Ramsar principles and wetland tools into park management planning and the enhanced management of Ramsar wetlands) assist NPRSR in meeting two of their strategies:

- make National Park management a priority, focusing on biodiversity, weed and pest management and ensuring a Good Neighbours approach to management
- deliver genuine environment and conservation outcomes and seek to open National Parks for the enjoyment of all Queenslanders.

### **Department of Science, Information Technology, Innovation and the Arts**

Products from the Program (e.g. groundwater dependant ecosystem mapping, conceptual models, and wetland conditions and risk assessments) helps DSITIA to meet all four strategies, outlined in objective 1 (enhanced economic, environmental and social outcomes for Queensland through science) of the DSITIA Strategic plan 2012-2016:

- ensure that the Queensland Government is provided with or has access to the best possible scientific information for decision making
- rebuild the State's practical and applied scientific and technology capability
- provide strategic oversight, planning and evaluation of the Government investment in scientific capability
- facilitate and support science sector partnerships and collaborations locally, nationally and internationally.

### **Department of Natural Resources and Mines**

The Program meets two of the four strategies, outlined in objective 3 (sustainable and productive use of land and water resources) of the NRM Strategic plan 2012-2016:

- increase the productive use of our land and water resources
- account for and monitor the quality, availability and condition of our land and water resources.

*The Program is leading the way in wetland management. It also clearly aligns with the Queensland Government's strategic direction.*

## 4.4 Program coverage

The Program covers all wetland types such as rivers and creeks, estuaries, lacustrine systems (e.g. lakes and artificial wetlands such as dams), subterranean systems (e.g. aquifers), palustrine systems (e.g. swamps and marshes), and marine areas. These wetlands can be natural or artificial, periodically or continuously contain water, small or large in size and can even be underground.

The scope and coverage of the Program is broad and extends across the entire state. All wetlands in Queensland have been mapped and projects have been conducted across many different regions. Furthermore, many of the principles and tools created from the Program have been developed so that they can be applied nationally (e.g. planning templates, buffer guidelines).

There has been a significant expansion of the Program from Phase 1 to Phase 2. Phase 1 concentrated on identifying where wetlands were located and the key methods to support their effective management (e.g. AquaBAMM for conservation value assessments, buffer guidelines, rehabilitation guidelines etc.). Phase 2 expanded to include a greater ecosystems approach—such as aquatic ecosystem connectivity. It also diverged into providing materials to suit the Queensland education curriculum. This resulted in some new projects.

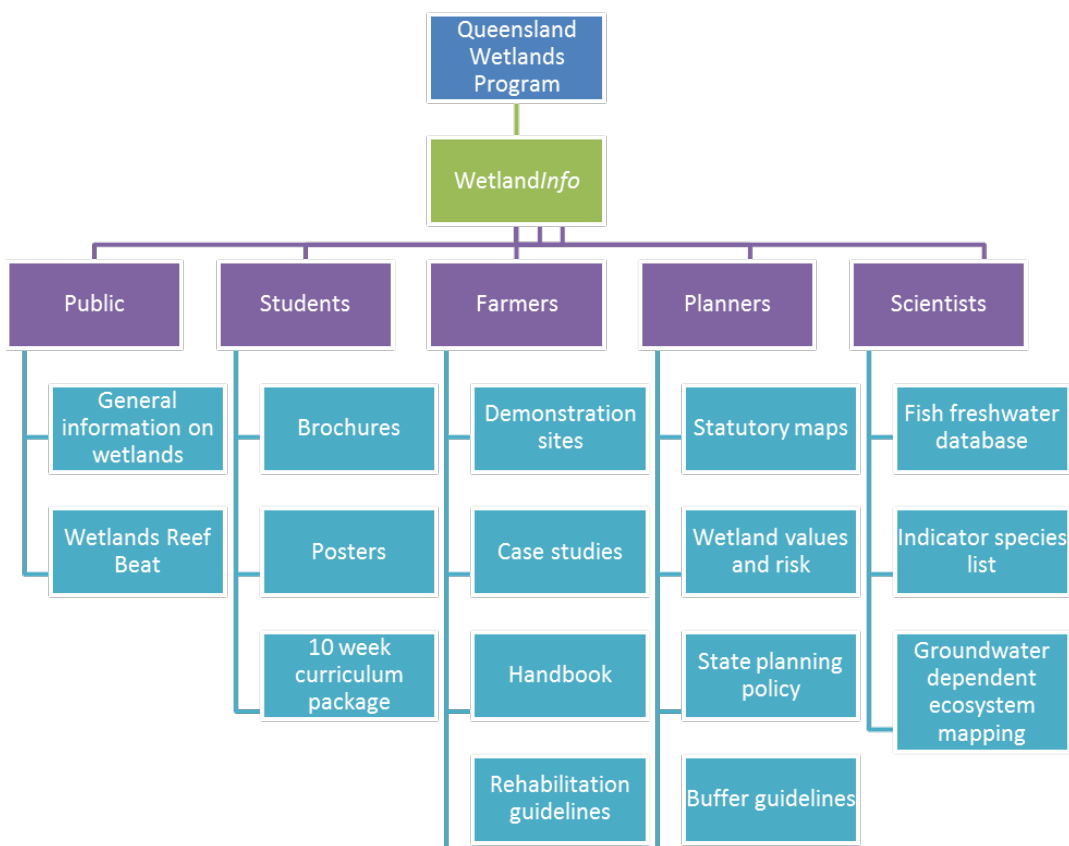
In addition to the representative types of wetlands and state-wide coverage, the Program involves a diverse set of interest groups. This includes scientists, government bodies (national, state and local), landholders, NRM bodies, teachers/students, natural resource groups and the public. The Program has created tools in a number of mediums such as databases, maps, guidelines, reports, case studies, demonstration sites—all relevant to a targeted user group.

*The Program has an extremely broad coverage. It encompasses all types of wetlands, across the whole of Queensland, describes different functional scales from wetland components to landscape systems and involves a set of stakeholders.*

## 4.5 Improving knowledge base and capacity

The knowledge base and capacity of wetland managers has been improved. The pivotal mechanism (see Figure 2) has been delivery of information and tools in an integrated way through *WetlandInfo*. *WetlandInfo* is a website (a 'first-stop-shop') that provides comprehensive and diverse information about managing, protecting and conserving wetlands. It contains wetland definitions, maps of wetlands, a central data collection point for scientific purposes, planning guidelines, and case studies, among other products. The website has been designed for multiple users from those learning about or studying wetlands (e.g. students) to those requiring practical management options (e.g. farmers) as well as for development assessment (e.g. local government).

The site was significantly redesigned during Phase 2 of the Program based on extensive user consultation and feedback and this constituted a major deliverable for the second phase of the Program. There are approximately 500 hits a day on this website. This is expected to increase due to an upgrade of the website to improve accessibility of information. This website is a useful model for providing information on natural ecosystems and their values.



**Figure 2: *WetlandInfo* provides information to a number of different user groups and with a range of materials to suit their needs.**

*WetlandInfo is the pivotal instrument that has improved the knowledge base and capacity of wetland managers. This informative website should be presented as a model for capturing other biological information.*

## 4.6 Program communication

Communication is seen as a critical component of the Program. There is a communications budget built into the Program and this ensures products are appropriately delivered.

The Program has an over-arching communications strategy. In addition, for each project there are fact sheets that relate to the project proposals and a communications plan for each project.

Once project proposals are approved, a fact sheet for *Wetland/Info* is created outlining the details of the project. As the fact sheet is publically available, it provides transparency of the Program functions. The communications plans (internal documents) are developed at the beginning of the project and ensure the right extension methodologies are employed and appropriate tools are developed for target end-users.

Many projects include a number of implementation stages, which may include official launches, online electronic newsletters, other web sites, media statements, art displays, publications and twitter posts.

The Program has a dedicated communications officer to ensure all these communication functions are completed. The officer is embedded as part of the team and is present at the governance group meetings. By having a dedicated officer, the officer gets to know the business of the Program and can engage at an early stage of projects where value can be added and essential advice provided. The dedicated officer also ensures that the end product is available for its target end-user (e.g. on *Wetland/Info*). Another advantage of this arrangement is that the officer is able to establish a strong relationship with the EHP Corporate Communications unit (as all publically available products must be approved by Corporate Communications before release).

*Appropriate communication methodologies instilled right from early project development provide valuable returns. This communication model should be considered by other large program areas who deliver products for external interest groups.*



## 5 Effectiveness and efficiency of projects

There were 19 projects to be undertaken as part of Phase 2 (see Table 3). As many of the projects are not due for completion until June 2013, effectiveness and efficiency of projects under the Program were assessed by reviewing:

- breadth of projects
- progress of projects towards expected completion dates and budgets
- quality of project plans and progress reports
- feedback on products delivered.

### 5.1 Breadth of projects

To ensure the Program meets its objectives and the needs of its interest groups, the governance group has prioritised and selected projects using a gap-analysis. The analysis takes into account a number of issues such as: wetland locations, values, threats, policy and legislation, assessment methods, how wetlands function, inventory status, management and rehabilitation, extent and condition, and systems for dissemination of information stakeholders/audiences). For each issue, information is provided on the spatial setting (e.g. across Queensland, for all wetlands), what information is currently available (e.g. assessment toolbox), identification of gaps and possible actions to fill these gaps. The analysis identifies topics in greatest need of attention. A key advantage of this process is that it takes any 'personality' issues out of selecting projects and provides an 'agency-blind' perspective.

Nineteen projects were committed to in Phase 2 (see Table 3). These projects ranged from data collection (e.g. freshwater fish database, list of indicator species), policy and planning (e.g. Ramsar principles into park management planning), on-ground activities (e.g. management in agricultural systems), education (e.g. update of *WetlandInfo*, field days) and evaluation (e.g. synopsis of Phase 2 of the Program, wetland field assessment toolkit, wetland monitoring framework).

### 5.2 Progress of projects towards completion and budgets

Of the 19 projects:

- five have already been completed
- five are on track for completion
- one was delayed by six months and is on track for completion in six months
- two are only partially completed
- two were partially completed and then the projects were ceased
- four projects did not commence.

The Project Coordinator ensures that the Queensland Project Managers keep within their budgets through regular financial reporting. However, there is some financial flexibility within the Program. For example, where projects have been re-scoped and required additional funding, any unspent funds from other projects were transferred to these projects (with approval from the relevant funding body).

**Table 3: Projects under Phase 2 of the Program.**

Project name	Focus Area	Products	Agency	Expected completion Jun 2013
<b>Australian Government (2010-13 contracted to external parties)</b>				
Sediment study in Currawinya	1		NA	Project not commenced
Knowledge gaps	1	Bird survey in Currawinya, Bird survey in Bowling Green Bay (BGB), Pattern fens in the Great Sandy Strait (GSS), Acid frogs, fish and water mouse	NA	In part (bird study in BGB and a some work on pattern fens)
Monitoring framework	5		NA	Project not commenced
Habitat mapping in GSS (Component 1)	1		NA	Project not commenced
Species habitat modelling of wetland indicator species (component 1)	1		NA	Project not commenced
QWP Phase 2 Stakeholder engagement (component 2)	4			In part
<b>Australian Government (2010-13 contracted to Queensland Government)</b>				
QWP Phase 2 - Stakeholder engagement (component 1)	4	Communications plan	EHP	On track
Improved Ramsar site management - GSS (marine and estuarine) habitat mapping and classification (component 2)	1	Collation of datasets	EHP	Part completed, then ceased
Incorporating Ramsar principles and wetland tools into park management planning and Ramsar boundary modifications	2	Survey Fact sheet/guidelines	NPRSR	On track
Species habitat modelling of wetland indicator species (component 2)	1	List of indicator species Create decision rules	EHP	Part completed then ceased
Enhanced management of Ramsar wetlands - GSS catchments	1/2	Inventory of in-stream structures Response action plan	DAFF	Completed
<b>Queensland Government (2010-13)</b>				
Coordination, monitoring, evaluation, review and improvement	5	Review of Phase 2 Program transparency	EHP	On track
Assessment of risk and condition monitoring	1	Literature review Conceptual framework	DSITIA	Delayed by 6 months but on track
Wetland connectivity – tools for decision making – stage 1	1	Literature review Report Conceptual models	EHP	Completed
QWP Phase 2 Stakeholder engagement (component 3)	4	Communications plan	EHP	On track
Freshwater fish database	1	Consolidate data in a central repository	DSITIA	Completed
Inland WATER (wetlands, agriculture, training, extension and resources)	1/3	Planning template Field days Case studies	DAFF	Completed
GDE mapping in the GBR	1	Mapping GDE	DSITIA	Completed

		Database Report Conceptual models		
Wetland management in agricultural systems	1/3	Training Demonstration sites	DAFF	On track

### 5.3 Project plans and progress reports

For all projects, project proposals are completed. A template is provided to ensure consistency and that relevant information is captured. In most of the proposals reviewed (see Appendix 9.5):

- the project objectives were clearly defined
- how the project aligned with the Program objectives were concisely stated
- project duration was provided
- well defined budget presented
- a simple, easy to read work plan outlined.

Overall, the quality of project proposals was high. A few general improvements for consideration include:

- shortening the introduction and separating out the methodology into a new section (in many proposals the introduction was unnecessarily long, and as methodology is a critical decision for endorsing a project it should have its own stand-alone section).
- defining the deliverable more clearly (however, with all project proposals, a fact sheet is created and presented on WetlandInfo, where the deliverable is clearly defined).
- providing a general risk assessment matrix (factoring in common risk elements such as staff changes, as this would help identify potential issues at an early stage, although, risk is addressed in the milestone and six monthly progress reporting).

For all projects, six-monthly progress reports are presented to the governance group. All reports use either the Queensland or Australian Government's template. The reports reviewed:

- provided a concise background
- reiterated their alignment to government priorities
- outlined progress in the preceding six months
- generally included a risk analysis and budget.

The progress reports were all concise, contained relevant information and were well written.

## 5.4 Feedback on products

Feedback on the type of products and how these tools met their needs was received from eight users, across four user groups (see Appendix 9.6).

In general there was a positive response towards the products. In most cases:

- a number of products were used
- the products were considered valuable
- the products met the needs of the user (i.e. assisted in delivering the users commitments).

One of the concerns was with the old *WetlandInfo* site, where users had problems with navigation and a number of broken links. This has now been rectified in the recent update of the website which required significant resources to upgrade.

Three responses from assessment officers, two from local government and one from a scientific group, were received. All of these responses were supportive. However, the responses from the two NRM groups were contrasting. One group was extremely supportive and positive, using an array of products and finding these products of value in their work. In contrast, the other group had used only a few products and found these to be of little benefit. This latter group did indicate that they knew there were lots of products that could potentially help them but they didn't know anything about them.

This highlights the importance of the next phase of the Program focussing on optimisation/adoption of products. It is essential that data is collected on the current level of use, then reassessed following the provision of training to key user groups to realise the full potential of this Program.

*Already many of the products are being used. In most cases, they are readily accessible, in a suitable format, contain appropriate level of information and are designed for a range of stakeholders.*

## 6 Funding

Approximately \$2,000,000 was provided for 19 projects for Phase 2 of the Program. This funding came from two major funding sources:

- \$547,000 from the Australian Government.
- \$1,500,000 from the Queensland Government (through the Q2 Coasts and Country Critical Project Program and the Queensland Regional Natural Resource Management Investment Program)

Funding and delivery of all the projects were managed by:

- contracts between the Australian Government and Queensland Government, as well as with the Australian Government and external parties
- memorandums of understandings (MoU) between the Queensland State agencies for each project.

The contracts and MoUs provided an outline on what was intended to be delivered and when (milestones), and clearly defined the funding for each project.

In general, funding was provided as agreed:

- The payments from the Australian Government to the Queensland Government were generally provided in a timely manner, upon execution of contract and then follow-up payments in relation to contractual milestones being met.
- All payments from the Queensland Government were provided in a timely manner, with the first three payments provided upon the MoU execution and the final payment on the performance report being endorsed by the Joint Strategic Investment Program.

No information was been provided regarding how payments were delivered from the Australian Government to external parties.

## 7 Future direction of the Program

### Continuation of the Program

It is vital that the Australian Government continues to be involved in the Program, as this will ensure 'wetlands' receive the best use of limited resources (i.e. financial and staffing). This will also guarantee that there is no overlapping of projects and only those projects considered a priority are committed to across state and federal government.

It is critical that the Program continues. Considerable data and information have been collected through the numerous projects with various methods and tools developed as a result. It is essential that these databases and tools are maintained to ensure open and timely access to foundation information that is critical for wetland management. As database maintenance is not a role of the Program, the maintenance needs to be handed over to State Government agencies and incorporated into their work programs. This process has started.

### Adoption of products

Over the past 10 years many products have been developed which provide a very good knowledge base for targeted wetland management. Now the emphasis needs to be on ensuring that the products are being used by the broad range of wetland managers (e.g. have tools been adopted and by whom, what are current adoption rates and can adoption rates be improved through activities like training).

It is recommended that Phase 3 of the Program concentrate efforts on focus areas 4 (communication, education and capacity building) and 5 (monitoring, evaluation, reporting and improvement). This will ensure that investment in wetland management, at the planning and on-ground levels, is targeted to ensure the best return on investment.

### Project selection

A gap analysis approach has been used in the Program to select projects. Within the analysis higher weighting should be given to those projects that investigate wetland systems rather than individual components. This will lead to the development of products that can be applied across the state, and potentially Australia.

Seeking funding from new sources could enable the expansion of the Program's initiatives and also provide an opportunity to improve awareness in other industry sectors. Some potential areas of expansion include stronger alignment with the four pillar economy (e.g. benefits of wetlands in housing communities, promoting wetlands for tourism, how wetlands and mining can co-exist).

## 8 Conclusion

The Program has performed well across most assessment areas.

The Program is a well governed program. Its success is as a result of:

- being well managed
- supporting multiagency collaboration (bringing agencies that work on wetlands together)
- providing appropriate membership that is inclusive
- ensuring the Program aligns with Program and government objectives
- submitting quality reporting requirements on time
- managing conflicts between departments appropriately.

The Program is highly relevant as shown by:

- completing nine of the 10 recommendations from the evaluation conducted in Phase 1 (with the remaining one unable to commence until higher level federal and state actions have been completed)
- clearly meeting the Program's strategic objectives
- aligning with government direction
- an expansive Program coverage
- improving the knowledge base and capacity of wetlands users, largely through WetlandInfo
- ensuring appropriate communication methods are employed at the early stage of project development through to product development.

Most projects undertaken as part of the Program have been considered to be effective and efficient as:

- a gap-analysis approach was used to select and prioritise projects
- a diverse array of projects were undertaken for a wide range of interest groups
- quality project proposal and progress reporting were submitted
- there is an indication that products are being used due to accessibility, quality and design.

The Program encountered a number of challenges. However, all of these were successfully managed due to the diligence and professionalism of the Program's officers.

The future direction of the Program needs to focus on the evaluation of the products developed and there also needs to be more emphasis in aligning future projects with the 'four pillar economy'.

The concerns of the Program for the future are:

- the limited involvement of the Australian Government (Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities) in the later stage of Phase 2
- maintaining user/client information
- ensuring products developed are used.

Strategic recommendations for the Program are to:

1. Ensure the next phase of the Program has a primary focus on the adoption of the products developed (concentrating on focus areas 4 and 5). This will ensure that investment in wetland management, at the planning and on-ground levels, is targeted to ensure the best return on investment.
2. Ensure that new projects look at wetland systems and deliver products that benefit the State.
3. Consider expanding funding sources and Governance Group representatives to create awareness with new clients (e.g. alignment with the 'four pillar economy').
4. Avoid splitting project milestones across government jurisdictions.

Operational recommendations for the Program are to:

1. Ensure the handover of products for maintenance (e.g. AquaBAMM) is well communicated to units/departments accepting responsibilities and to the end-users.
2. Use department/state reporting templates rather than the Program templates with the Program logos. This should ensure that the Program is still recognised but it is positioned within departmental core business and reduces the overhead of maintaining the Program templates.



## 9 Appendices

### 9.1 Consultation list

Name	Role	Agency
Mike Ronan	QWP Project Manager Governance Group	EHP
Simone Richards	QWP Project Coordinator	EHP
Silvia Scheibenbogen	QWP Communications Officer	EHP
Robert Hughes	Co-chair Governance Group, Director	EHP
Shauna Naron	Wetlands unit	EHP
Cathy Ellis	Wetlands unit	EHP
Tim Moore	Corporate Communications	EHP
Peter MacDonald	Governance Group	NRM
John Beumer	Governance Group	NPRSR
Jan Paff	Governance Group	DAFF
Donna-Marie Audas	Governance Group	GBRMPA (Commonwealth)
Phillip Maher	State funding representative	NRM
Jonathan Marshall	End-user	DSITIA
Melanie McSwiney	End-user	Reef Catchments
Peter Gibson	End-user	NQ Dry Tropics NRM
Donald Mackenzie	End-user	Logan City Council
Graham Webb	End-user	Sunshine Coast City Council
Renaë Cabrie	End-user	EHP
Michael Robinson	End-user	EHP
Gus Gonzo	End-user	EHP

## 9.2 Governance interview results

Question	Reponses
What are the strengths of the governance arrangements?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordination across lots of different divisions, departments and jurisdictions.</li> <li>• Well structured, whole of government approach.</li> <li>• Accountability, the right combination of projects to conduct, robustness of Program, transparency and quality control.</li> <li>• Positive and honest relationships.</li> <li>• Review of the design, detail and budget of projects from proposals through to development and delivery, ensuring project outcomes are applied.</li> <li>• Only undertaking projects that align with QWP objectives and reducing doubling up of projects.</li> </ul>
What are some weaknesses of the governance arrangements?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interaction with Australian Government adds an extra layer of bureaucracy as they have their own form of reporting and auditing.</li> <li>• Reports and publications too bureaucratic and onerous and therefore difficult to get out to the end-user.</li> <li>• No non-government representation.</li> <li>• Group only provides recommendations on project selection and reporting, not on approvals.</li> <li>• No connection with any senior organisational structure – rather the Program functions on its own.</li> <li>• Changes in Australian Government members (i.e. SEWPaC not GBRMPA).</li> <li>• Inconsistent support from Australian Government (i.e. SEWPaC not GBRMPA).</li> </ul>
What are some improvements that can be made to the governance arrangements?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need longer Program agreement (e.g. a commitment to 3 phases).</li> <li>• Better funding support (possibly use offset money from wetland development into the wetland Program).</li> <li>• Expand Governance Group to include NGOs, regional bodies or local government/LGAQ.</li> <li>• Assess membership across water related departments, as this area was split in the last State MOG.</li> <li>• Better support from Australian Government (SEWPaC not GBRMPA).</li> </ul>
Do you believe the governance group has met its role?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes, although changes in members (especially SEWPaC) means going over a lot of issues already discussed.</li> <li>• Absolutely, though promoting the Program and integrating tools into governance and policy outside of the Program is rather passive.</li> <li>• Yes, Program proceeds in an orderly manner.</li> <li>• Yes, the group provides justice to projects.</li> <li>• To a large extent yes.</li> </ul>

Question	Reponses
<p>Are there any conflicts between Australian and State government, or between State agencies, if so how are these conflicts addressed?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dedication of member ensures working together, but there have been a few challenges. The Australian and State government arrangements add an extra layer of bureaucracy, different administrative systems, particularly for funding resulting in additional timeframes. Expectations from the Australian Government (SEWPaC) are too high as a result of other states wanting funding for similar work therefore Queensland has to work on projects that can be applied nationally. State to State and State to GBRMPA arrangements are pretty good at officer to officer level, with some difficulties at the higher (DG) levels. The Program brings all wetland focused state projects together.</li> <li>• Very few conflicts, if conflicts arise they are resolved through discussion and assessing against the Program/project objectives. There is an issue now related to Australian Government (SEWPaC) funding and this is being addressed through documentation and correspondence.</li> <li>• Very little state to state (or state to GBRMPA) conflict because of the people, their knowledge and continuity with the Program. However there are some difficulties recently with the State and Australian Government (SEWPaC) interaction, largely due to change of officers and not meeting agreed funding commitments.</li> <li>• Only conflict is with the Australian Government (SEWPaC).</li> </ul>
<p>Questions based on findings from the Phase 1 review</p>	
<p>Are there still delays in obtaining project approvals, preparing contracts and commissioning individual projects?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Still an issue due to State and Australian government administrative differences. This is no different to any other program in this type of governance arrangement.</li> <li>• Yes there are, but projects are still delivered through good project management of the Program Manager.</li> <li>• It always takes time to start up projects.</li> <li>• There are often natural project delays (e.g. weather) that need to be considered.</li> <li>• There are delays, it is important to recognise set up timeframes and build these into projects. Most of these projects are expected to be completed.</li> <li>• Improvements made, still delays, but projects delivered on time.</li> </ul>
<p>Have projects requested extensions and if so have they been granted?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most projects requested extension. These have all been approved.</li> <li>• Good business approach taken, extensions were provided only when justified (MOG implications, redundancies, weather/flooding events).</li> <li>• Some projects were closed down as the Australian Government (SEWPaC) component could not be delivered.</li> <li>• Not like in the first phase.</li> </ul>
<p>Have project timeframes taken into account contractual timeframes?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most do but the problem is that some projects are overly ambitious, and have relied on other processes to be completed beforehand, and then there are issues such as staff changes that were accounted for (including Queensland redundancies).</li> <li>• Try to where possible, but forced to put dates and by the time projects endorsed, timelines out of date.</li> <li>• Most have through better scoping and more realistic timeframes.</li> <li>• Yes.</li> <li>• Most projects delivered on time, so no issue in the long term.</li> </ul>
<p>Do members read all reports before meetings?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No. An extra two weeks would help. Suggest staggering the documents over a month if possible. Need to read all documents to do your job effectively (need to look at the rigour in some studies).</li> </ul>

Question	Reponses
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No, prioritise which ones to read.</li> <li>• Compared to Phase 1, now a limited amount of reading material sent to members. Therefore not the same level of reading required and they are asked to comment on specific issues.</li> <li>• Yes, have to as it is an important requirement of the group, time is just set aside to do the reading.</li> </ul>
Has risk mitigation planning been incorporated into project planning?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For some elements. However, the onus is on the Project Manager to inform the Governance Group of issues as soon as possible. The progress reports achieve this. However, getting Project Managers to provide presentations to the Governance Group will allow detailed questioning and could address risks at an early stage.</li> <li>• Yes, risks are recorded in performance reporting.</li> <li>• Largely through the knowledge of the Program Manager. Good compared with many other programs.</li> <li>• Yes, though sometimes too much focus on risk (risk fear).</li> </ul>

Note: Members of the Governance Group representing SEWPaC were unavailable for interviewing.

### 9.3 Recommendations from the 'Queensland Wetlands Programme Evaluation'

Recommendation	Implemented
1: It is recommended that critical information systems, such as the wetland mapping and inventory, are actively funded and maintained on an on-going basis to ensure that the information is accurate and supports any regulatory regime and general wetlands planning and management.	Yes 2005 mapping was updated in 2009. Now considered core work of the herbarium, thus no longer under the Program.
2: It is recommended that an additional targeted on-ground works programme is explored but that more time is provided for individual projects and that long-term maintenance and monitoring is factored into these projects.	Yes Though on-ground work was not directly undertaken by QWP, as this 'space' was covered under the NRM Q2 coasts to country funding grants with wetlands one of the target areas.
3: It is recommended that priority is given to completing the regulatory regime projects with appropriate regulatory assessment and stakeholder engagement. It will be important that any regulatory regime is supported by a range of incentives, management tools and information to ensure appropriate incentives for wetlands management.  With time, attention will also need to be given to protecting and conserving wetlands outside of the GBR with development of an appropriate regulatory regime supported by other instruments.	Yes GBR wetlands State Planning Policy (SPP) released, this was then incorporated into Queensland's single SPP, with coverage greater than the previous SPP, with direct reference to protecting wetlands of high ecological significance guideline, Qld buffer guideline and <i>Wetland/Info</i> . Uptake in regional and local plans, with EHP guidelines on how to incorporate wetlands into regional and local plans.
4: It is recommended that a framework is funded and developed to enable long-term monitoring and reporting on wetland extent and condition covering the full range of wetland values.	Yes Comprehensive framework expected to be completed by June 2013 that allows monitoring of values and risk. Future mapping updates will be achieved through Herbarium (DSITIA), for wetlands in the GBR.
5: It is recommended that further communication on QWP products and outcomes is provided to the full range of Programme stakeholders, especially local government, land managers, peak bodies and Traditional Owners.	Yes Active stakeholder engagement program e.g. <i>Wetland/Info</i> established; training sessions presented. Evidence with >500 hits a day on the <i>Wetland/Info</i> site.
6: It is recommended that for any future Wetlands Programme, all project governance, administration, risk mitigation, quality assurance, and monitoring, evaluation and reporting processes are agreed at the start of such a Programme, and that these agreed processes are applied to all projects within such a Programme.	Yes Terms of reference (TOR), flow chart to show roles, templates for reporting milestones and financial audits have all been developed and are adhered to.
7: It is recommended that in the future the Programme focus on capacity building and extension to ensure that the range of products and information is fully communicated to key stakeholders responsible for wetland management and/or responsible for planning or managing activities that may affect wetlands.	Yes Covered in the stakeholder engagement strategy. Will continue into Phase 3 (e.g. <i>Wetland/Info</i> ).

Recommendation	Implemented
<p>8: It is recommended that further investment is made to support the Queensland Wetlands Programme with the primary focus being on maintenance and updating of critical information (e.g. mapping and inventory), capacity building, extension, and communication of the new wetland information and tools developed through the first five years.</p>	<p>Yes A major gap analysis was completed and projects were funded to fill priority gaps (e.g. total upgrade of <i>WetlandInfo</i>).</p>
<p>9. It is recommended that the Queensland Strategy for the Conservation and Management of Queensland's Wetlands (1999) is reviewed and that a new implementation plan is developed. This should occur as a priority given the results of the Queensland Wetlands Programme, and the ever changing policy and programme funding landscape, especially with the introduction of the Australian Government's Caring for our Country.</p>	<p>No A national policy statement for wetlands, Queensland Water Strategy and Queensland Conservation Strategy are all being developed, so it is not appropriate to start a wetlands strategy until these are completed.</p>
<p>10: It is recommended that the Queensland Wetlands Programme is reviewed in accordance with program logic, and that program logic is also used to inform subsequent investment in the Programme (or any successor).</p>	<p>Yes to the concept (however, different tool employed). Funded a program logic workshop. However it was found that due to the funding scale (small) and diversity of fund sources (2) of the QWP, a gap analysis tool was more appropriate to use as it was stronger and more flexible. This tool was then used to select future projects.</p>

## 9.4 How the Program meets EHP's strategic plan

EHP key performance indicators	EHP strategies	Program alignment	Program deliverable
Avoiding, minimising or mitigating impacts to the environment			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relevant and accessible environmental performance standards in place.</li> <li>• Greater customer understanding and ownership of their environmental impacts, obligations and standards of performance.</li> <li>• Greater industry compliance with environmental standards.</li> </ul>	Implement the department's regulatory strategy to establish ourselves as a firm but fair regulatory body.	Yes	Materials available on <i>WetlandInfo</i> (such as buffer and delineation guidelines, mapping), thus consistency across Qld is provided
	Lead and influence strategies and standards that protect Queensland from unacceptable environmental impacts.	Yes	QWP promotes 'wise' use and the multi-values of wetlands, integrating wetland management with agricultural activities
	Set clear expectations and communicate our environmental protection legislation.	Yes	Clearly identified wetlands, expectations on <i>WetlandInfo</i> , management guides, ensuring wetlands are matters of state significance, wetlands legislation toolbox, legislation fact sheets
	Outcome-based permitting of regulated activities where adequate management of environmental impacts is demonstrated.	Yes	Promote multi-values and various managements to achieve outcomes
	Increase our focus on targeted compliance activities particularly to those areas of highest risk.	Yes	Prioritising wetlands, so know where the highest values are, also risk assessment process for wetlands targeting where to put most effort
	Implement effective and proportionate measures where breaches to our legislation occur.	No	
	Develop performance management systems that drive improved performance in all assessments and decisions.	Yes	Provide information that others can use for assessment purposes
	Implement a whole-of-government Environmental Offsets Policy.	Yes	Tools from QWP have potential to be used in an offsets program
Protecting the integrity of Queensland's ecosystems			
	Implement programs and strategies to improve water quality for Queensland's coast, waterways, wetlands and the Great Barrier	Yes	AquaBAMM, assessment toolbox, understanding ecological and

EHP key performance indicators	EHP strategies	Program alignment	Program deliverable
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Departmental contribution to protecting and enhancing biodiversity.</li> <li>• Existing and emerging risks to native flora and fauna prioritised and managed.</li> <li>• Existing and emerging risks to environmental values of coastal zones and waterways managed.</li> </ul>	Reef.		biophysical processes, farm management systems wetland handbook
	Ensure appropriate planning processes and management arrangements for sustainable coastal development are implemented.	Yes	Wetlands mapping, buffer guideline, AquaBAMM, Wetland <i>Info</i> species information
	Implement efficient and focused strategies to support the sustainability of Queensland's native wildlife.	Yes	All tools, management profiles, mapping, links to regional ecosystems, conceptual models of stressors, more species information provided than most EHP mechanisms
	Implement effective disaster recovery plans when needed.	Yes	Flood resilience and mitigation, whole of landscape approach, role of natural assets
	Ensure iconic natural areas and areas of high conservation value are protected and balanced with appropriate economic development opportunities.	Yes	Identify wetlands using AquaBAMM, wetland definitions, delineation guidelines, wetland management profiles
	Minimise negative interactions between wildlife and communities.	In part	Rehabilitation guidelines
	Build knowledge of Queensland's ecosystems and biodiversity in the community to facilitate sustainable growth in tourism.	Yes	Qld wonderful wetlands, reef-beat series, education programs, wetlands near you
<b>Building relationships with government, business, industry and the community</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased customer satisfaction with the performance of the department.</li> <li>• Increased customer involvement in improving the environment of local</li> </ul>	Represent the government's environment and heritage interests on national and environment councils.	Yes	Wetlands and waterbirds taskforce
	Regularly communicate and consult with industry associations, peak bodies and community groups.	Yes	Grazing for healthy coastal wetlands guideline, Wetland <i>Info</i> , presentations
	Implement partnerships with industry to benefit business, government and the community.	Yes	Grazing for healthy coastal wetlands guideline, Wetland <i>Info</i> , presentations
	Implement programs to increase community and business	Yes	Works with DAFF to deliver farm



EHP key performance indicators	EHP strategies	Program alignment	Program deliverable
communities.	engagement in environmental and nature management and conservation.		management systems economic assessment tools, wetland management tools
	Establish effective working relationships at an interdepartmental and whole-of-government level.	Yes	Governance Group
	Build trust with our customers by providing greater access to policies, guidelines and other information resulting in greater transparency in decision-making.	Yes	WetlandInfo website where responses are handled within 1-3 days
	Implement ways of receiving customer feedback, such as through customer surveys.	Yes	WetlandInfo website has surveys, survey for education needs
	Use technologies and partnerships with government and industry to widen availability and efficiency of service delivery.	Yes	Wetland mapping and classification
Innovative, evidence-based policies, programs and services			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrated resource efficiencies for government and business while maintaining high environmental standards.</li> <li>• Timely and consistent delivery of project assessments and decisions.</li> </ul>	Improve regulatory practices and remove unnecessary obstacles to competition, innovation and growth.	Yes	Input into these activities, promote sustainable use of wetlands
	Implement new policies and amendments to legislation to cut green tape and streamline processes to support strong environmental outcomes.	Yes	Input into these activities such as Queensland's State Planning Policy
	Ensure decisions are based on the latest available science and consideration of community's expectations.	Yes	Mapping products such as wetland mapping, wetland topography
	Implement a national and global approach to best practice and continuous improvement.	Yes	WetlandInfo website, all tools are best practice and use benchmarking such as classification process, buffer guidelines, AquaBAMM
	Introduce alternative regulatory tools and approaches to provide customers with greater flexibility to meet their environmental obligations.	In part	Promote sustainable use of wetlands and provide management options

## 9.5 Assessment of project proposals and six monthly reports

**Table 4: Project proposal components that were considered at or above standard.**

<b>Assessment criteria</b>	<b>Proposals reviewed</b>					
Concise introduction	Y	N	Y	Y	N	N
Project objective clearly defined	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Project aligns with Queensland Wetland Program objectives	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Deliverable clearly identified	N	Y	N	N	Y	N
Duration of project provided	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Risks identified with possible solutions	N	N	N	N	N	N
Clear and achievable milestones provided	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N
Budget with sufficient information	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Work plan simple and easy to follow	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y

Y = presented at or above standard quality

N = not presented, or presented below standard quality

## 9.6 Direct written feedback from stakeholders on tools developed under the Program

Products used	Have products met your needs	Comments
NRM groups		
Stakeholder 1		
I use <i>WetlandInfo</i> quite often and have always been able to find and access the information I am looking for through the web portal. I find the website easy to navigate and have made use of many areas/QWP tools including: Maps, the assessment toolbox, monitoring information, conceptual diagrams, summary information, links to other resources and reports, plant and animal information (indicator species), definitions and no doubt more I have missed!	Yes, always meet needs in a diverse variety of ways from providing information and definitions to share with community members and other water resource stakeholders, to gathering information for funding applications, KML files for defining regional boundaries (i.e. basins), providing links to further information, assisting with research for university studies and just through the provision of an abundance of good quality information relevant both to my work and to my areas of personal interest.	I find the information to always be presented in a useful format and have not had any problems with usability, thus find the tools both effective and efficient to use.
Stakeholder 2		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>WetlandInfo</i></li> <li>- Wetlands management framework</li> <li>- Buffer guideline</li> <li>- Condition / assessment of values</li> </ul>	<p>1 – Used it a few times, but not that useful and several dead links</p> <p>2 – Template did not fit what was needed</p> <p>3 – Lack of interest from landholders as guideline width was seen as valuable for farming or turn-around of machinery</p> <p>4 – Don't get paid to do condition assessments, only to reduce threats such as weed control</p>	Basically we know there are lots of tools that could help us, but we don't know anything about them.
Scientific community		

Products used	Have products met your needs	Comments
Stakeholder 3		
We regularly use the wetland mapping information to identify wetland assets for Water Resource Plan environmental assessments. We have also utilised the landsat time series analysis methodology that was used for this wetland mapping to look at finer detail of filling and emptying behaviour of selected wetlands. We also regularly use RE mapping and RE descriptions as part of our process for identifying groundwater dependent ecosystems. We are actively collaborating with the QWP on joint needs for GDE mapping across the state. We have looked at using the hydrology tool, but have not yet applied it. We would like to explore this more in future, particularly in regard to using it to identify rainfall events that occur at times when there is no river flooding to help determine the watering characteristics of floodplain features. We were involved in the connectivity project and connectivity as conceptualised in the project is regularly a consideration in our work. We have been and hope to continue to be heavily involved in developing riverine conceptual models for presentation on <i>WetlandInfo</i> .	Yes for the wetland maps and RE maps/descriptions and connectivity.  The hydrology tool; not quite as it didn't have the gauge specific hydrology representation we require for WRP work.	We usually have GIS spatial analysts working with us and they use the tools without problems.
Local government		
Stakeholder 4		
We have used many tools, such as - many of the mapping tools, buffer guidelines, wetland mapping for developing planning schemes, <i>WetlandInfo</i> .	QWP delivers really good practical tools. <i>WetlandInfo</i> is very good as a guide, and there are great policy and practical products.	We have been involved with the QWP a lot and will continue to do so. They are very proactive - they come to us and ask us 'how can we help you'. Especially interested in continuing with the ground water dependant ecosystem work.
Stakeholder 5		
I have used the mapping products and buffer guidelines for developing local planning schemes. <i>WetlandInfo</i> for general browsing as well to find legislative requirements and types of wetlands.	All tools used have met our needs. The mapping is a great starting point but does need to be refined at the local scale.	We are involved with a project at present with QWP (GDE mapping) and it is a very positive process.
EHP (planning and environmental assessment)		

Products used	Have products met your needs	Comments
<p>Stakeholder 6</p> <p>I use <i>WetlandMaps</i> often as a point of truth for wetland and especially GDE data. I find this to be a fantastic product and the hyperlinks make it really easy to quickly obtain all info needed to interpret the data. I often refer to this as a tool for environmental services officers to use who do not have access to ArcGIS. I also refer to the wetland conceptual models for more detail on wetland types and function to gauge an understanding of potential threats and have recently discovered the Monitoring, extent, pressure and condition section and will find this really helpful in undertaking my wetlands assessments as well. I have found the catchment summaries very informative. I have referred to the Program, Policy and Legislation sections as well for various pieces of info. I have also referred to, and referred others to, the waterway monitoring portal as well which is very handy as a link. I know I have only just scraped the tip of the iceberg though! And am finding more and more really useful info all the time.</p>	<p>Yes, loads of information with great links to drill into as much detail as required.</p>	<p>A comment agreed on by a few environmental services officers was that <i>WetlandMaps</i> was too hard to navigate to from the home page but I think the new version has fixed this now and there may be a link directly from the home page. I did find the new version easy around in the trial.</p>
<p>Stakeholder 7</p> <p>Mapping products: (QLDWETLANDDATA_WETLANDS v3.0: GIS layer for Arcmap, WMA_WETLANDS: GIS layer for Arcmap, WPA_WETLANDS: GIS layer for Arcmap, Aquatic conservation assessment – Wide Bay – Burnett catchments, <i>WetlandMaps</i> interactive maps and wetlands data on <i>WetlandInfo</i>, PDF maps online, Wetland Mapping and Classification Methodology – v1.2 2005)</p> <p>Policy: (SPP4/11), Guidelines (SPP 4/11, Wetland Rehabilitation Guidelines for the GBR catchment 2008, Queensland Wetland Definition &amp; Delineation Guideline (Part A &amp; B) 2011, Queensland Wetland Buffer Guideline 2011, Soil indicators of Queensland wetlands 2010, Wetland management handbook 2009)</p> <p>Other:</p>	<p>Yes. There is an enormous amount of data and information accessible on Wetland info that can help in the mapping, assessment and analysis of wetlands. One issue is navigating (remembering where these things are...) to the tool/ information you are after (I tend to print out the ones I use most often). The revamp of the webpage should help with this.</p>	<p>I find the QWP wetlands mapping on my Arcmap template to be a very useful layer for providing information on the type of wetland for any particular parcel or region; whether there are any hydrological modifiers &amp; what regional ecosystem it is or is linked to. I use it in every assessment.</p> <p>The WPA mapping layer is useful for interrogating potential offsets associated with the QBOP and for regional plan and planning scheme state interest reviews.</p> <p>The other mapping products on the website I rarely use – I don't need to. But in some instances a large PDF map can be a useful addition in meetings or the summary</p>

Products used	Have products met your needs	Comments
(AquaBAMM, Wetland conceptual models, Wetland management profiles e.g. Saltmarsh wetlands; Mangrove wetlands; and Coastal Melaleuca swamp wetlands, Wetland summary information tool, Walking the landscape, Wetlands Field Assessment Tool)		<p>information tool gives me a good regional snapshot with the added bonus of hyperlinks to species records/ information.</p> <p>The guidelines have specific uses for detailed assessments. There is always a nexus between communicating good science and easily understood planning concepts – I feel the balance in these documents is generally right.</p>
Stakeholder 8		
Wetlands SPP and associated mapping and guidelines	Policy and mapping generally fine.	Would like a clearer process regarding resolution – where proponents question the value status or boundary of the wetlands (i.e. who should they contact, what do they need to do).

## 9.7 Interview responses for challenges, funding and the future of the Program

**Table 6: Interview responses associated with challenges**

What did you see as the greatest challenges faced by the Program, how were these challenges managed and what actions could be put in place to avoid future repeats?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expanding their stakeholder base (QWP tend to communicate with stakeholders already interested in protecting wetlands, rather than influencing behaviours of those causing destruction). Have added some new stakeholders to mailing lists and invited them to workshops. Need to attend forums already held by these stakeholders (e.g. AgForce, LGAQ).</li> <li>• QWP needs to 'sell' itself more across government. There is good recognition with natural resources but not with other key agencies (e.g. DTMR). Need to attend forums already held by these agencies.</li> <li>• QWP needs to have succession plans in place for Program Manager – serious potential for the Program to collapse if the Program Manager left. Needs to have a second in charge in place.</li> <li>• Data collection—QPW needs to be recognised as an integral part of State Government and plans and partnerships need to be created to ensure data is kept current.</li> <li>• Uncertainty with MOG changes for Queensland and the change in direction of the Australian Government. Therefore QWP has constantly put forward briefs/reports on program/projects to ensure momentum is maintained.</li> <li>• Significant changes in staff in the Australian Government (SEWPaC) have resulted in lack of consistency. Therefore the number of projects has been reduced.</li> <li>• Expectations on what should be delivered and the best delivery tool. This is managed by an annual gap analysis, where projects are ranked and provides justification.</li> <li>• State to SEWPaC arrangement, in particular the changes in membership with prior commitments of the previous members not recognised therefore funding commitment not provided. This was managed by discussions and formal letters involving senior management. This scenario could be addressed in the Terms of Reference.</li> <li>• Workforce reduction and the expectation of still delivering a large work plan. Officers were brought in from other areas to fill staffing gaps. This is a challenge that that will be faced more frequently, this needs to be a part of change management and acceptance in the workforce of changes to work projects.</li> <li>• Changes in wetlands legislative environment. Managed by whole of government approach—working together and this needs to continue.</li> <li>• Involvement of Australian Government (SEWPaC), with lack of financial and governance support.</li> </ul>

**Table 7: Interview responses associated with funding**

Do you believe the funding has been adequate and if there was more funding what projects or project areas would you direct the funding to?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not completely adequate. For example, projects where possible should be applicable at national levels, this may have been achieved for tropical and sub-tropics parts of Australia, but limited for temperate. The projects completed now need to be implemented and there is a question regarding who maintains data sets created.</li> <li>• Yes, for the projects delivered but no for on-ground implementation and research. More funding is required in extension to communicate tools to the community, local government areas and regional systems.</li> <li>• Yes for what was delivered. What areas to direct funding to, is dependent on where the funding comes from. Projects must meet funding body objectives.</li> <li>• Adequate funding has been provided considering capability and scope.</li> </ul>

- No as more funding needed in monitoring before and after (provide measureable outcomes).

**Table 8: Interview responses associated with the future of the QWP**

Has sufficient investment been made or work been achieved in the protection, management and sustainable use of wetlands? If the QWP continues to Phase 3, what should be the focus areas and if the QWP does not continue, how might 'gaps' be addressed?

- Difficult to answer until we know what the uptake of tools has been by its stakeholders and if the product influenced new behaviours. Need to assess if products have been implemented and taken up and if not how to achieve a better level of up-take (e.g. how effective have the buffer guidelines been). Could work with councils on how to implement many of the tools.
- QWP needs to consider more holistic projects with partners like universities, where different components of a wetlands system can be assessed and then an assessment is conducted on how these components inter-relate. This would require long-term investment and commitments.
- Not at all, though basic fundamentals have been completed. Now there is a need for implementation. A stronger focus on stakeholder engagement, on-ground works and whole of catchment studies. These build on tools already developed. QWP will need to seek other funding opportunities and here the role of the Project Coordinator and Communications Officer is paramount.
- Tools are in place but will they be used and will the systems support these tools, especially in the areas of state and local planning. Still hard to get people to talk about wetlands holistically, they talk about its components because these are linked to deliverables. There is capacity to do more. The real concern is if the Program does not continue – this will result in significant loss of data, knowledge and momentum. It is critical that the state maintains wetland capacity, in particular *WetlandInfo*.
- Yes, it is a well-funded program compared with many other programs.
- Essential that community engagement is continued—understanding our clients' needs and wants and delivering on this. Also what has worked and where they see gaps remaining.
- If the Program does not go to Phase 3, a core group of officers must remain in EHP to continue the systems support (e.g. *WetlandInfo*).
- A lot of work has been done to identify wetlands and now moving into managing them at a landscape level. Great outcomes have been achieved; now need to look into monitoring.

Note: Members of the governance group representing SEWPaC were unavailable for interviewing.