

Projects

Socioeconomic Assessment of Water Plan Areas in Queensland

Providing evidence-based insights to support sustainable water planning, regional development and long-term water security outcomes.



LOCATION

Queensland

CLIENT

Queensland Department of Regional Manufacturing and Water

POLICY EVALUATION

VISUALISATION & ANALYSIS

Background

The former Queensland Department of Regional Manufacturing and Water (RDMW, now Department of Local Government, Water, and Volunteers) implements and periodically reviews water supply management plans across the State. A key part of the review process is to assess the social and economic outcomes of water management plans. This considers changes in the social, demographic, economic, and water demand and supply data relevant to each Water Plan Area, along with potential pressures and threats affecting these outcomes. NineSquared was engaged by RDMW to complete six discrete socio-economic assessments to inform the review of plans for six Water Plan Areas across Queensland. The six areas considered were Logan, Gold Coast, Condamine-Balonne, Border Rivers-Moonie, Moreton, and the Great Artesian Basin and Other Regional Aquifers (GABORA). Two of these areas are part of the Murray-Darling Basin, Australia's most important water catchment, which provides water to 2.3 million people, countless native habitats and thousands of farms.

Our Role

NineSquared developed a detailed evidence base covering the social, demographic and economic characteristics of the Water Plan Areas, including analysis of population growth, labour market trends, housing, education, agricultural production, tourism, employment and land-use change. This examined how urban/rural expansion, shifting economic activity and changing patterns of water consumption may influence future water requirements and regional development outcomes. In doing so, the project integrated a broad range of datasets and planning information to provide a clear understanding of the drivers of water demand and the communities and industries that depend on water resources across the different regions.

A key component of the work involved assessing the effectiveness of existing water plan outcomes and identifying emerging values, pressures and risks that should be considered in future water planning. This included analysis of urban growth pressures, water security requirements, water entitlement arrangements, agricultural and environmental water needs, climate variability, Indigenous interests, tourism and regional economic development. NineSquared evaluated the interaction between water availability, economic growth and community wellbeing, providing practical insights into how future water planning could support sustainable development while maintaining water security and environmental outcomes.

Economic conditions were assessed through land use classification and industry analysis (including agriculture, aquaculture, resources and tourism) to understand changes over time and implications for water demand. Workshops with subject matter experts informed evaluation of socio-economic outcomes, risks and uncertainties, with clearly defined indicators to monitor emerging issues.

The work also considered future values, threats and opportunities across diverse water users, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. A collaborative, transparent approach - underpinned by NineSquared's proprietary datastore - enabled high-quality regional insights, enhanced mapping and robust socio-economic baselines aligned to the Department's framework.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

For more information, find one of our experts at ninesquared.com.au/people