

South East Queensland Resilient Rivers Initiative

Regional Strategy
2015-2025



The Resilient Rivers Initiative is a collaboration between local and state government, water utilities and key non-government organisations to improve the health and resilience of South East Queensland's catchments, rivers and Moreton Bay.



By 2045, the catchments of South East Queensland will support a resilient, productive, liveable and growing region.

Foreword

The Resilient Rivers Initiative recognises that a collaborative approach to managing the catchments of South East Queensland is vital to ensuring the future economic, social and environmental health of the region. Working together will also result in more efficient and effective management and funding arrangements. As we move forward into this exciting next step in the development of waterways management in South East Queensland, I wish to acknowledge the significant foundation work carried out over the years by many individuals and organisations.

To set the direction for the Resilient Rivers Initiative, we have agreed to a 30 year vision. The vision for the Resilient Rivers Initiative is:

‘By 2045, the catchments of South East Queensland will support a resilient, productive, liveable and growing region.’

This vision is supported by the four goals:

- Keep soil on our land and out of our waterways to support agricultural productivity and improve water quality.
- Help protect our region’s water security so it can support the current and future population of South East Queensland.
- Improve the climate resilience of our region.
- Promote partnerships with strong leadership to deliver a coordinated approach to catchment management in South East Queensland.

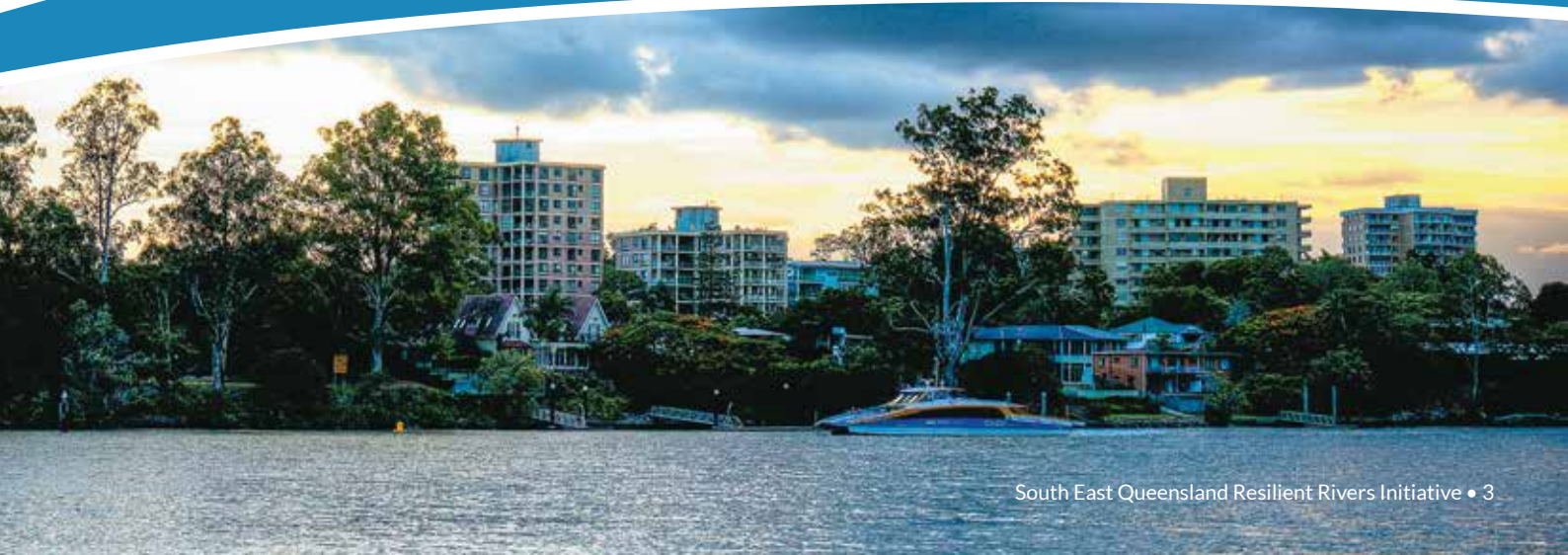
I am pleased on behalf of the collaborating organisations to release this Regional Strategy 2015–25. It identifies the direction for regional decision-making and investment in on-ground action over the next 10 years that is needed to achieve the vision and meet our goals.

The initial focus will be on a small number of priority investments. These have been informed by our existing understanding of the key risks to the waterways of South East Queensland and the experience gained from on-ground works. Funding and resources to support these projects will be drawn from a number of sources, demonstrating our commitment to working collaboratively and with a shared vision.



Cr Graham Quirk

Chairman, Council of Mayors (SEQ)
Chairman, Resilient Rivers Initiative Taskforce
Lord Mayor of Brisbane





Background to the Regional Strategy

Further work will progress under the Resilient Rivers Initiative to identify how we can invest more strategically, efficiently and effectively in South East Queensland's waterways over the long term. This Regional Strategy provides the blueprint for this to occur.

Various organisations in the South East Queensland region are working to protect our waterways to support our lifestyle and economy. We have already tackled some of the region's biggest water quality challenges head on. We significantly upgraded our wastewater treatment plants at a cost of millions of dollars. The result was a substantial reduction in nutrients entering our waterways and far fewer algal blooms than we once saw in Moreton Bay. Over many years, kilometres of creek banks have been restored and devices installed to improve stormwater runoff and this has all contributed to healthier waterways.

In recent years, severe flooding and water supply issues have again placed the spotlight on the management of waterways in the region. Stopping 'mud' entering the waterways is our priority and we are implementing processes for this that are supported by the best available science.

South East Queensland's population continues to grow. It is home to one in seven Australians and has a gross regional product of \$1.7 billion, half that of Queensland. The region's leaders are supporting improvements in catchment resilience – resilience to climatic events and pressures from an increasing population – to support our lifestyle and economy.

The business case for better managing waterways in the region is clear:

- Governments, water utilities and corporations build and maintain valuable infrastructure (such as roads, pipes, dams, weirs, treatment plants and port facilities) in or near waterways and the continued operation of these valuable assets underpins the region's economy.
- Protecting the region's water supply security is fundamental to the economy of a growing South East Queensland.
- Agriculture is a valuable industry for South East Queensland and maintaining soil and its nutrients on-farm is essential to the industry's ongoing viability.
- New development supports our region's economy and can contribute to positive outcomes for our waterways.
- Moreton Bay and the region's beaches are key tourism and recreational resources, with the Bay containing designated Ramsar sites that protect migratory species.

Looking ahead, our collective vision is to ensure that the catchments of South East Queensland support a resilient,

productive, liveable and growing region. This is no easy task and requires better coordination of investment over time. It requires a clear focus on keeping soil on the land to protect agricultural productivity, to improve the quality of water in waterways, and to ensure the continued operation of waterways associated with infrastructure.

The Resilient Rivers Initiative aims to set the direction needed to establish an enduring approach to the investment and management of the waterways of South East Queensland. It builds on the efforts achieved so far while recognising that some change is needed. It acknowledges that a high level of collaboration between the key investing organisations is critical for prioritising on-ground action.

The Resilient Rivers Initiative is a collaborative effort between the Council of Mayors (SEQ), Queensland Government, Seqwater, Queensland Urban Utilities, Unitywater, Healthy Waterways Ltd, and SEQ Catchments Ltd. It will deliver better-coordinated catchment management that protects our region's water supply security, keeps soil on the land and out of our creeks, and increases the long-term resilience of our waterways. Resilient Rivers recognises that we can deliver more collectively than individually.

Preventing soil from moving off the land into the waterways whilst ensuring infrastructure and industry continue to operate is a more challenging and complex task than stopping pollution from a pipe. It involves a good understanding of the movement of water in the landscape, clearly identifying and agreeing on high risk areas, incorporating the values of the local community and coordinating on-ground action. It requires managing each catchment of South East Queensland.

The Regional Strategy 2015–2025 sets a clear vision with supporting goals and measures of success for the region. It refers to the development of Catchment Action Plans for each of our major catchments to guide our aligned investment.

The Regional Strategy includes region-wide programs such as the roll-out of industry-led 'best practice' management programs in agriculture and construction. Flexible regulatory solutions form part of the Regional Strategy; for example, exploring mechanisms to accelerate voluntary nutrient trading by water utilities to control sediment. The Strategy also includes assistance for communities to help them achieve the priority on-ground works identified in Catchment Action Plans.

Notably, the Strategy builds on the strong foundation provided by the many projects already underway which aim to keep the soil on the land and out of the waterways, protect our region's water security and make our waterways resilient to destructive weather events.



The Resilient Rivers Taskforce

The Resilient Rivers Taskforce will oversee the delivery of the Regional Strategy. It comprises the Mayors of South East Queensland and ministerial representatives from the Queensland Government. The Taskforce has endorsed a 30-year vision and goals for the region.

This Regional Strategy contains medium-term (10-year) outcomes, measures of success and strategic actions to guide effort toward achieving the vision and goals.

Vision

By 2045, the catchments of South East Queensland will support a resilient, productive, liveable and growing region.

Goals

The goals of the Regional Strategy are:

- Keep soil on our land and out of our waterways to support agricultural productivity and improve water quality.
- Help protect our region's water security so it can support the current and future population of South East Queensland.
- Improve the climate resilience of our region.
- Promote partnerships with strong leadership to deliver a coordinated approach to catchment management in South East Queensland.

The Resilient Rivers Initiative aims to set the direction needed to establish an enduring approach to the investment and management of the waterways of South East Queensland.



2025 Outcomes

As a result of implementing this Strategy, by 2025 we will have:

- Water supply catchments that provide fit-for-purpose raw water
- A measurable reduction in sediment load into creeks
- Infrastructure and industry that is able to withstand extreme climatic events
- Coordinated on-ground stream and waterway works and management.

Catchment Action Plans

The 2025 Outcomes will be achieved through the progressive development of Catchment Action Plans across the region and by implementing the high priority works in the Plans. Agreed targets and priority areas for investment will be established for each Catchment Action Plan which will be underpinned by the best available science and assessment of the known risks. The actions needed in each catchment to deliver on the vision and goals will be developed with catchment stakeholders. The Catchment Action Plans will inform the regional medium-term catchment investment program and will assist collaborators to prioritise on-ground works which may span local government boundaries.

In the short term (to 2018), we have identified and resourced priority projects for immediate implementation.

Measures of Success

We will monitor critical success factors annually to measure our success towards achieving the 2025 outcomes outlined in this Strategy. This monitoring and a three-year reporting cycle will ensure the Strategy remains on track.

Critical measures of success:

2015–2018

- Six Catchment Action Plans developed in priority catchments.
- Eight on-ground works completed in priority catchments.
- Fifteen industry 'best practice' management projects which keep soil on the land will be implemented in priority catchments.

2019–2021

- Review of FY 2015–18 critical success factors completed.
- A further six Catchment Action Plans developed in priority catchments.
- Ongoing works and activities implemented in accordance with the catchment investment program.

2021–2025

- Review of FY 2019–21 critical success factors completed.
- Ongoing works and activities implemented in accordance with the catchment investment program.
- Review the Return on Investment of the Regional Strategy.

Strategic Actions

To implement the Strategy, the Resilient Rivers Taskforce will:

- Agree on a consistent scope for the Catchment Action Plans
- Agree on priority catchments for developing Catchment Action Plans
- Identify regulatory and institutional barriers to on-ground implementation
- Develop a business operating model
- Develop a catchment investment program with agreed implementation targets
- Agree on a reporting framework.



SEQ's Waterways and Catchments

