



Burdekin Water Forum Declaration

This declaration presents summary findings and action points that address the need for an integrated, whole-of-system approach to water resources management in the Burdekin catchment. The findings came out of the Burdekin Water Forum, held in Ayr, North Queensland, on the 15th and 16th of February 2010. More than 70 stakeholders participated on each of the two days, including community members, farmers, water service providers, resource managers, scientists and government representatives. International guests included groundwater specialist Dr Ken Knox (URS Corporation USA) and Professor Shahbaz Khan (UNESCO, Paris), an expert in irrigation and integrated water resources management.

Key findings include an urgent need to:

1. Address the adverse impacts of rising groundwater levels and salinity in the surface irrigation dominated area known as the Burdekin Haughton Water Supply Scheme
2. Improve understanding and management of saltwater intrusion along the land-ocean interface.
3. Improve understanding of the accumulation and potential movement of pollutants from groundwater into high-value downstream ecosystems, including Ramsar-listed wetlands and the Great Barrier Reef lagoon. Of particular concern is nitrogen, but pollutants also include phosphorus and other potentially-harmful agrochemicals.
4. Review and upgrade the groundwater monitoring network and increase the regularity of sampling for key groundwater attributes such as water levels, salinity and nitrates.
5. Establish an agreed conceptual model of how the groundwater and associated systems work.
6. Develop and apply a suite of groundwater flow and solute transport models at appropriate scales. These would:
 - (i) support amendments to the Burdekin Basin Water Resource Plan so that surface and groundwater are managed as one system;
 - (ii) enhance understanding of groundwater contaminant stores, fluxes and loads to downstream Ramsar-listed wetlands and the Great Barrier Reef lagoon;
 - (iii) improve land and water management practices.

7. Actively engage all stakeholders. Managing such a large and significant resource involves all potentially-affected parties and relevant stakeholders and considers the full range of social, industrial and environmental needs

The Burdekin Water Forum was hosted by Burdekin Water Futures. The group has members and extensive contacts with diverse technical expertise and site-specific knowledge of water quantity and quality issues; data availability and integrity; modelling, monitoring and evaluation; and a broad range of land and water management practices.

The BWF is committed to working in a collaborative and transparent manner with the community, industry, governments and other key decision makers to apply this expertise to help ensure a resilient and prosperous region.

BWF Mission: To support a long-term, strategic, whole-of-system approach to understanding and managing the Lower Burdekin water resources and associated systems, and thereby deliver long-term economic, social and environmental outcomes that ensure the region's sustainability