

# Lower Burdekin Water Futures

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**Newsletter**

**Issue 3 – March 2009**

### **The LBWF 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*

### **Welcome by Chair**

The start of 2009 has certainly been a wet one for North Queensland with above-average rainfall causing flash flooding and widespread road closures. Farms, homes and businesses have also been affected by the extended wet with Ayr already having recorded more than 1400 mm, well above the district's annual average of 930 mm.

The Burdekin Falls Dam peaked at 6.63 m above the spillway on the 5<sup>th</sup> of February, indicating that the upper catchment has also experienced very good wet season rains. Photos of the region under flood can be viewed at the Burdekin Shire Council website at

<http://www.burdekin.qld.gov.au/gallery/index.aspx#FLOODS2009>



**Burdekin Falls Dam**  
(Photo courtesy of SBWB)

The LBWF continues its work on the development of a Groundwater Science Plan to improve understanding of our groundwater resources. By combining good science and good management, we can prevent some of the salinity and water problems being experienced in the Murray-Darling basin. We are working together with local stakeholders to maintain the Burdekin's status as one of Australia's premier agricultural regions.

*Cr Lyn McLaughlin, LBWF Chair*

### **Burdekin Dam Overflows**

SunWater has provided the following statistics on the Burdekin Falls Dam for the February 2009 rain event:

- The river peaked at 6.63m above full supply level on February 5. This was 5cm below the record of 6.68m, set in February 1991.
- In the 24-hour period after the river peaked last month, about 1.57-million ML flowed over the dam wall.
- The dam started overflowing on January 5 and, by February 17, almost 20-million ML had spilled over the wall.
- The full supply level of all SunWater storages, excluding the Burdekin Falls Dam, totals about 5.1-million ML. The water flowing over the dam from January 5 to February 17 would have filled these storages nearly four times.



**Burdekin Falls Dam Spillway**  
(Photo courtesy of SunWater)

## **Lower Burdekin Irrigation Modernisation**

In order to maintain a long-term strategic approach to managing the Burdekin's water resources, it is vital to review current irrigation practices.

### **Furrow Irrigation**



Lower Burdekin Water (a joint venture between the North Burdekin and South Burdekin Water Boards) has engaged a consultant, GHD, to investigate the long-term impacts of such issues as:

- Water availability
- Irrigation technology advances
- Regional crop demand
- Climate change
- Unmanaged water losses and accumulations, and
- Groundwater quality and quantity

Irrigators, regulators, industry groups, environmental groups and other stakeholders are being consulted throughout this process. The results of the study will be brought together in an Irrigation Modernisation Plan. The overall aim of this plan to improve the efficiency of the area's irrigation systems.

### **Centre for Groundwater Research & Training**

A new \$30 million *Centre for Groundwater Research and Training* will tap the knowledge and experience of the country's leading water experts in 12 universities, CSIRO, Geoscience Australia, State and Federal Government agencies, and numerous other water industry bodies. The centre is led by Flinders University and funded by the Australian Research Council and National Water Commission for the next five years. Additional direct funding is being provided by the SA and NSW State Governments and other partners. For more details visit <http://www.flinders.edu.au/groundwater/>

### **Member Profile – Andrew Kelly**

Andrew Kelly is the executive officer of Lower Burdekin Water, a joint venture between the South and North Burdekin Water Boards.

Andrew has a wealth of experience in irrigation and water management. His 25-year career in the water industry includes a pivotal role with the Ord Irrigation Cooperative in Kununurra, Western Australia.



The self-confessed larrikin is also no stranger to the banks of the mighty Burdekin River. He was a member of the Lower Burdekin Initiative Reference Group from 2000 to 2003 and the sugar region made a sweet first impression. "I went back home after my first trip and said to Carmel (his wife), 'If we ever get a chance to come to the Burdekin we'll take it!' The Burdekin is a part of Australia that has still got water and will always have it, plus it's a good climate and an hour from everywhere." When the opportunity came in 2007 to move to the Burdekin and take up the executive role with the water boards, Andrew jumped at the chance.

Lower Burdekin Water supports the mission of the LBWF, in particular the whole-of-system approach to the management of groundwater. "Aquifer management is a priority for Lower Burdekin Water. We also want to work with the community to establish a groundwater model, which will support the management of the region's groundwater into the future," he said.

Whether he's meeting with ministers or having a beer with a local, Andrew's philosophy on life is the same. "Treat everyone as an equal; I put myself in their shoes and do not assume; never assume anything."

**For more information on the Lower Burdekin Water Futures please visit**  
<http://www.clw.csiro.au/naif/casestudies/lower-burdekin.html>