

Environmental Protection (Water and Wetland Biodiversity) Policy 2019

# **Mitchell River Basin (part) and Walsh River sub-basin**

Environmental Values and  
Water Quality Objectives

Part of Basin 919, including surface waters of the Mitchell River basin (part) and  
Walsh River sub-basin

Prepared by: Environmental Policy and Planning Division, Department of Environment and Science

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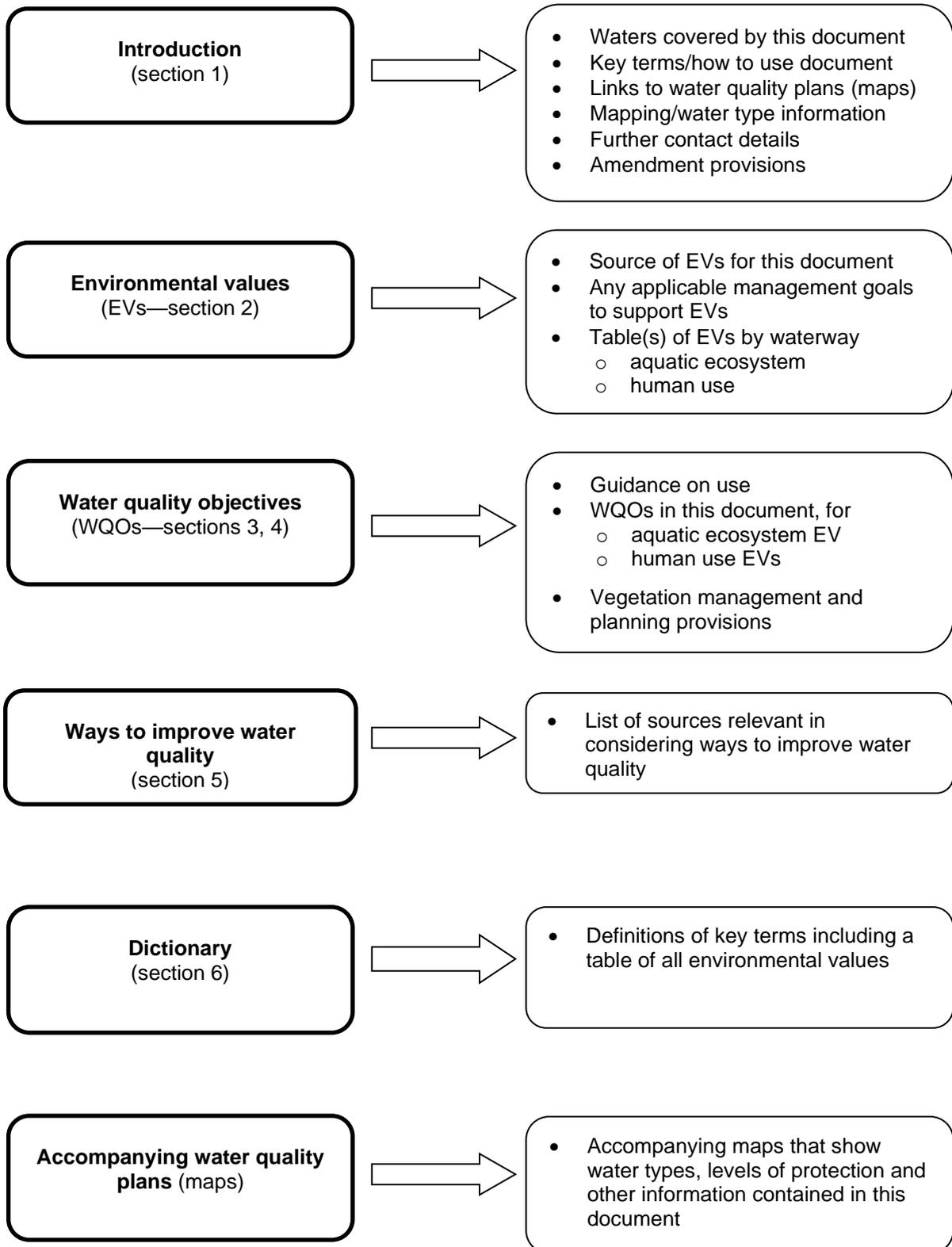
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October 2020

# Main parts of this document and what they contain



## Contents

Main parts of this document and what they contain .....	ii
Contents.....	iii
List of tables.....	iii
1 Introduction .....	5
1.1 Purpose .....	5
1.2 Queensland waters to which this document applies .....	5
1.3 Guidance on using this document.....	5
1.3.1 Key terms (refer to dictionary for additional terms) .....	5
1.3.2 Use of this document .....	7
1.4 Information about mapped areas and boundaries .....	7
1.5 Water types and basis for boundaries .....	7
1.5.1 Water types .....	7
1.5.2 Water type boundaries .....	7
1.6 Matters for amendment.....	8
2 Environmental values .....	10
2.1 Environmental values.....	10
2.2 Management intent for waters .....	12
3 Water quality objectives to protect aquatic ecosystem environmental values .....	14
3.1 Aquatic ecosystem water quality objectives.....	14
3.1.1 Comparison of test data with water quality objectives .....	14
3.2 Vegetation management and planning provisions.....	18
3.2.1 Riparian vegetation .....	18
3.2.2 Waterways providing for fish passage .....	18
4 Human use EVs water quality objectives .....	21
4.1 Drinking water EV water quality objectives .....	24
4.2 Aquaculture EV water quality objectives.....	25
4.3 Irrigation EV water quality objectives .....	28
4.4 Stock watering EV water quality objectives .....	30
4.5 Recreation EV water quality objectives - cyanobacteria.....	32
5 Ways to improve water quality .....	33
6 Dictionary.....	34

## List of tables

<b>Table 1 Environmental values: Mitchell River Basin (Part) and Walsh River sub-basin surface waters .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Table 2 Aquatic ecosystem water quality objectives - Mitchell River basin (part) and Walsh River sub-basin .....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Table 3 ANZG 2018 – Copper Water Quality Objectives (as amended) .....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Table 4 Human use EVs water quality objectives .....</b>	<b>21</b>

<b>Table 5 Drinking water EV: Priority water quality objectives for drinking water supply in the vicinity of off-takes, before treatment.....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Table 6 Aquaculture EV: Water quality objectives for optimal growth of particular freshwater species.....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Table 7 Aquaculture EV: General WQOs for a range of tropical freshwater aquaculture species .....</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Table 8 Aquaculture EV: Water quality objectives for optimal growth of particular marine species .....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Table 9 Irrigation EV: Water quality objectives for thermotolerant (faecal) coliforms in irrigation waters used for food and non-food crops<sup>1</sup> .....</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Table 10 Irrigation EV: Water quality objectives for heavy metals and metalloids in agricultural irrigation water— soil cumulative contamination loading limit (CCL), long-term trigger value (LTV) and short-term trigger value (STV)<sup>1</sup> .....</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Table 11 Stock watering EV: Water quality objectives for tolerances of livestock to salinity, as total dissolved solids, in drinking water<sup>1</sup> .....</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Table 12 Stock watering EV: Water quality objectives (low risk trigger values) for heavy metals and metalloids in livestock drinking water .....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Table 13 Recreational waters: Alert levels and corresponding actions for management of cyanobacteria ..</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>Table 14 Environmental values that can be identified for protection .....</b>	<b>35</b>

# 1 Introduction

This document is made pursuant to the provisions of the Environmental Protection (Water and Wetland Biodiversity) Policy 2019 (EPP [*Water and Wetland Biodiversity*]), which is subordinate legislation under the *Environmental Protection Act 1994*. The EPP (Water and Wetland Biodiversity) provides a framework for:

- identifying environmental values (EVs) for Queensland waters and wetlands
- stating water quality objectives (WQOs) to protect or enhance EVs for waters (WQOs are long-term goals for receiving waters, not individual point source emission objectives.)
- including the identified EVs and WQOs for waters under Schedule 1 of the EPP (Water and Wetland Biodiversity).

This document contains EVs and WQOs for surface waters of the Mitchell River Basin (Part) and Walsh River sub-basin and is listed under schedule 1 of the EPP (Water and Wetland Biodiversity). For information on wetland EVs, refer to Section 7 of the EPP (Water and Wetland Biodiversity).

## 1.1 Purpose

The purpose of this document is to identify locally relevant environmental values (EVs) and water quality objectives (WQOs) for surface waters in the Mitchell River Basin (Part). EVs and WQOs are used to help set development conditions, influence local government planning schemes, and underpin report card grades for ecosystem health monitoring programs. Aquatic ecosystem water quality objectives have, where possible, been established using local data, and present a truer picture of the values and water quality of local waterways than national and state water quality guidelines. This ensures the values the community holds for its waterways can be maintained and improved, without imposing unrealistic standards from national guidelines that may be inappropriate for local conditions.

## 1.2 Queensland waters to which this document applies

This document applies to fresh surface waters draining part of the Mitchell River Basin and Walsh River sub-basin (part of basin 919<sup>1</sup>) as indicated in the accompanying plan (WQ9190—Upper Walsh and Mitchell Rivers)<sup>2</sup>.

Queensland waters covered by this document include:

- Mitchell River Basin and Walsh River sub-basin fresh surface waters in WQ9190
- wetlands, lakes and reservoirs

## 1.3 Guidance on using this document

### 1.3.1 Key terms (refer to dictionary for additional terms)

**ADWG** means the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines (2011, as amended), available on the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) website.

**ANZG** (Previously ANZECC) means the Australian and New Zealand Guidelines for Fresh and Marine Water Quality (2018, as amended), available from the Australian Government's Water Quality Australia website.

**Environmental values (EVs) for water** means the EVs specified in EVs tables of this document for the corresponding water. EVs for water are the qualities of water that make it suitable for supporting aquatic ecosystems and human water uses. These EVs need to be protected from the effects of habitat alteration, waste releases, contaminated runoff and changed flows to ensure healthy aquatic ecosystems and waterways that are safe for community use. Particular waters may have different EVs. A range of EVs that can potentially apply to all surface waters are listed below, and further details are provided in the dictionary.

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<sup>1</sup> Australia's River Basins 1997—Product User Guide. Published by Geoscience Australia. Canberra, ACT (3rd edition, 2004).

<sup>2</sup> This document and the accompanying plan are available from the department's [website](#). The boundaries in the accompanying plan WQ9190 are indicative only. EVs, water types and aquatic ecosystem management intent (level of protection) depicted in the accompanying plans are stored in electronic form as part of the Queensland Environmental Values Schedule 1 Geodatabase, and held at the department's offices at 400 George Street Brisbane. Spatial (GIS) datasets can be downloaded free of charge from the Queensland Spatial Catalogue (QSpatial) at <http://qldspatial.information.qld.gov.au/catalogue/custom/index.page>. For further information, email the department at [epa.ev@des.qld.gov.au](mailto:epa.ev@des.qld.gov.au).

## List of EVs

Environmental value (EV)
<p><b>Protection of aquatic ecosystems (aquatic ecosystem EV)</b></p> <p>Protection or enhancement of aquatic ecosystem values, under four possible levels of ecosystem conditions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• high ecological value (effectively unmodified) waters</li> <li>• slightly disturbed waters</li> <li>• moderately disturbed waters</li> <li>• highly disturbed waters.</li> </ul> <p>(Suitability for wildlife habitat has also been specifically identified for some Queensland waters as a component of this EV).</p>
<p><b>EVs other than aquatic ecosystem EV (called human use EVs)</b></p> <p>Suitability for drinking water supplies</p> <p>Suitability for primary contact recreation (e.g. swimming)</p> <p>Suitability for secondary contact recreation (e.g. boating)</p> <p>Suitability for visual (no contact) recreation</p> <p>Suitability for human consumers of wild or stocked fish, shellfish or crustaceans (suitability for oystering has also been specifically identified for some Queensland waters)</p> <p>Protection of cultural and spiritual values, including Traditional Owner values of water</p> <p>Suitability for industrial use (including mining, minerals refining/processing)</p> <p>Suitability for aquaculture (e.g. red claw, barramundi)</p> <p>Suitability for crop irrigation</p> <p>Suitability for stock watering</p> <p>Suitability for farm supply/use</p>

**Level of protection for a water (aquatic ecosystem EV)** means the level of aquatic ecosystem condition specified for waters in the Aquatic Ecosystem water quality objectives tables of this document that the corresponding WQOs for that water are intended to achieve (refer to management intent definition below for further information).

**Management goal** means the goal/s (if any) stated in this document to support the EVs for waters identified in the EVs tables.

**Management intent for a water (aquatic ecosystem EV)** is defined in s.15 of the EPP (Water and Wetland Biodiversity). It is the management intent for the waters that the decision to release wastewater or contaminant to waters must ensure that:

- for high ecological value (HEV) waters—the measures for the indicators are maintained;
- for slightly disturbed (SD) waters—the measures for the slightly modified physical or chemical indicators are progressively improved to achieve the water quality objectives for high ecological value water;
- for moderately disturbed (MD) waters:
  - if the measures for indicators of the EVs achieve the water quality objectives for the water—the measures for the indicators are maintained at levels that achieve the water quality objectives for the water, or
  - if the measures for indicators of the EVs do not achieve the water quality objectives for the water—the measures for indicators are improved to achieve the water quality objectives for the water;
- for highly disturbed (HD) waters—the measures for the indicators of all environmental values are progressively improved to achieve the water quality objectives for the water.

**QWQG** means the Queensland Water Quality Guidelines.

**Water quality guidelines (defined in the EPP (Water and Wetland Biodiversity))** are numerical concentration levels or statements for indicators that protect a stated environmental value. Under the EVs setting process

contained in the EPP (Water and Wetland Biodiversity), water quality guidelines are used as an input to the development of WQOs.

**Water quality indicator (for an EV)** means a property that is able to be measured or decided in a quantitative way. Examples of water quality indicators include physical indicators (e.g. temperature), chemical indicators (e.g. nitrogen, phosphorus, metals), and biological indicators (e.g. macroinvertebrates, seagrass, fish).

**Water quality objectives (WQOs)** means the WQOs specified in Table 2 of this document to support the corresponding EVs for waters identified in Table 1.

WQOs are long-term goals for water quality management. They are numerical concentration levels or narrative statements of indicators established for receiving waters to support and protect the designated EVs for those waters. Water quality objectives are not individual point source emission objectives, but the receiving water quality objectives.

They are based on scientific criteria or water quality guidelines but may be modified by other inputs (e.g. social, cultural, economic).

Examples of WQOs for the aquatic ecosystem EV include:

- total phosphorus concentration less than 70 micrograms per litre ( $\mu\text{g/L}$ )
- chlorophyll *a* concentration less than 9  $\mu\text{g/L}$
- dissolved oxygen between 60 per cent and 110 per cent saturation

**Water type** means groupings of waters with similar characteristics, as shown in the accompanying plans. Water types can include fresh waters, lakes/reservoirs, wetlands and groundwaters. WQOs applying to different water types are outlined in this document.

### 1.3.2 Use of this document

Section 2 lists the identified EVs for protection for particular waters. The aquatic ecosystem EV is a default applying to all Queensland waters. Reference to tables in sections 3–4 provides the corresponding WQOs to protect the aquatic ecosystem EV, and human use EVs.

Where more than one EV applies to a given water, the adoption of the most stringent WQO for the identified EVs applies to each water quality indicator in order to protect all identified EVs.

This document also refers to a number of guidelines, codes and other reference sources on water quality. In particular, the QWQG also provide more detailed information on water types, water quality indicators, derivation of local water quality guidelines, application during flood events, monitoring, and other matters.

## 1.4 Information about mapped areas and boundaries

The boundaries in the accompanying plan WQ9190 is indicative only. EVs, water types and aquatic ecosystem management intent (level of protection) depicted in the accompanying plan are stored in electronic form as part of the Queensland Environmental Values Schedule 1 Geodatabase, and held at the department's offices at 400 George Street Brisbane. Spatial (GIS) datasets can be downloaded free of charge from the Queensland Spatial Catalogue (QSpatial) at <http://qldspatial.information.qld.gov.au/catalogue/custom/index.page>. For further information, email the department at [epa.ev@des.qld.gov.au](mailto:epa.ev@des.qld.gov.au).

## 1.5 Water types and basis for boundaries

### 1.5.1 Water types

The water types for the Mitchell River Basin (Part) and Walsh River sub-basin are displayed in plan WQ9190 and Table 1 below and include:

- freshwater streams and rivers
- freshwater lakes/reservoirs

### 1.5.2 Water type boundaries

The boundaries of water types have been mapped using a variety of attributes, including:

- geographic coordinates

- catchment or subcatchment boundaries
- altitude

Boundaries are shown on the accompanying plan. The boundaries of water types may be confirmed or revised by site investigations.

## **1.6 Matters for amendment**

Amendments of the following type may be made to this schedule 1 document (and accompanying plan) for the purposes of replacement under section 13(2)(b) of the EPP (Water and Wetland Biodiversity):

- changes to EVs
- changes to WQOs
- changes to management intent (level of protection) categories
- changes to waterway or water type boundaries/descriptions
- updates to information/data sources, websites and email contact details, agency/departmental names, other institutional names, references.

# **ENVIRONMENTAL VALUES**

## **2 Environmental values**

### **2.1 Environmental values**

Table 2 and the accompanying plan WQ9190 outline the EVs for waters in the Mitchell River Basin (Part) and Walsh River sub-basin.

The dictionary to this document provides further explanation of EVs (refer section 6)

**Table 1 Environmental values: Mitchell River Basin (Part) and Walsh River sub-basin surface waters**

Condamine River Basin	Environmental Values <sup>1-5</sup>											
	Aquatic ecosystems	Irrigation	Farm supply/use	Stock water	Aquaculture	Human consumer	Primary recreation	Secondary recreation	Visual recreation	Drinking water	Industrial use	Cultural, spiritual and ceremonial values
Water												
<b>SURFACE FRESH WATERS (rivers, creeks, streams) (refer to plan WQ4223)</b>												
Upper Mitchell River	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Upper Walsh River	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

**Notes:**

1. Refer to the accompanying plan WQ9190 for locations of EVs.
2. ✓ means the environmental value is selected for protection. Blank indicates that the environmental value is not selected for protection.
3. Refer to dictionary for further explanation of EVs.
4. Refer to Sections 3 and 4 for WQOs applying to the EVs in this table.
5. The selection of EVs for waters does not mean that these are currently free of toxicants (including bio accumulative toxicants). Information about contaminated land can be accessed by searching the [Environmental Management and Contaminated Land Registers](#). For information on per and poly-fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), including alert areas and links to further health advice on water use in such areas, refer to [PFAS in Queensland](#).

## 2.2 Management intent for waters

It is the management intent for Queensland waters that the decision to release wastewater or contaminant to waters must ensure the following:

- for high ecological value (HEV) waters—the measures for the indicators are maintained
- for slightly disturbed (SD) waters—the measures for the slightly modified physical or chemical indicators are progressively improved to achieve the water quality objectives for high ecological value water
- for moderately disturbed (MD) waters:
  - if the measures for indicators of the EVs achieve the water quality objectives for the water—the measures for the indicators are maintained at levels that achieve the water quality objectives for the water, or
  - if the measures for indicators of the EVs do not achieve the water quality objectives for the water—the measures for indicators are improved to achieve the water quality objectives for the water
- for highly disturbed (HD) waters—the measures for the indicators of all environmental values are progressively improved to achieve the water quality objectives for the water.

Note 1 — refer to accompanying plan for locations of waters and level of protection/management intent

Note 2 — see the Environmental Protection Regulation 2019, section 35.

Note 3 — see the EPP (Water and Wetland Biodiversity), section 15.

# **WATER QUALITY OBJECTIVES TO PROTECT ENVIRONMENTAL VALUES**

### 3 Water quality objectives to protect aquatic ecosystem environmental values

Water quality objectives (WQOs) are long-term goals for water quality management. They are numerical concentration levels or narrative statements of indicators established for receiving waters to support and protect the designated EVs for those waters. Water quality objectives are not individual point source emission objectives, but the receiving water quality objectives.

Where more than one EV applies to a given water (for example aquatic ecosystem and recreational use), the most stringent WQO for each water quality indicator applies, which will then protect all identified EVs. Refer to the following example on selection of most stringent WQOs.

**Example:** (Note that this is an example only and should not be directly adopted for use)

For freshwater streams with aquatic ecosystem and aquaculture EVs, the respective Sulfate WQOs are:

- aquatic ecosystem freshwater stream: less than 25 mg/L
- drinking water: less than 250 mg/L.

In this case the aquatic ecosystem WQO for Sulfate (less than 25 mg/L) is the more stringent, and its adoption therefore supports both the aquatic ecosystem and drinking water EVs.

#### 3.1 Aquatic ecosystem water quality objectives

This section provides physical, chemical and where available, biological water quality objectives (WQOs) to support and protect the aquatic ecosystem EV. (Human use EVs, including recreation, stock watering etc., are addressed in section 4).

The aquatic ecosystem EV is a default applying to all Queensland waters, and therefore the WQOs for aquatic ecosystems form the minimum WQOs for all waters. Where no human use EVs are identified, the WQOs identified for aquatic ecosystem protection remain applicable.

WQOs for specified indicators are listed in the following tables by basin, water type/catchment, management intent, and flow regime/season where indicated.

- **Table 2:** Mitchell River Basin (Part) and Walsh River sub-basin Surface Waters Water Quality Objectives: Physicochemical (nutrients, water clarity)
- **Table 3:** ANZG 2018 – Copper Water Quality Objectives (as amended)

Details on management intent are included in the tables and notes supporting tables. Links to wetland, riparian and State Planning Policy (state interest – water quality) mechanisms are provided in and after the tables. Sources used in deriving WQOs are provided in and after the tables. WQOs for metals and other toxicants, where not stated in this document, are referred to in the ANZG guidelines (2018, as amended).

##### 3.1.1 Comparison of test data with water quality objectives

The following protocols are recommended when comparing fresh, estuarine or coastal/marine water quality (at a 'test' site) with the corresponding aquatic ecosystem water quality objective (WQO). For concentration-based indicators (e.g. nutrients) and turbidity (NTU), the intent is for test site water quality value to be equal to or less than the corresponding WQO. For WQO indicators where a range is specified (e.g. pH, DO), the intent is that the test site water quality median value falls within the specified WQO range. For Secchi measurements (typically used in estuarine, coastal and marine waters), the intent is for the test site water quality value to be equal to or greater than the stated WQO. Further detail is provided in the QWQG.

For HEV and SD waters:

- Where the WQO is expressed as a 20<sup>th</sup>–50<sup>th</sup>–80<sup>th</sup> percentile range of values (e.g. Total N: 65–100–125 ug/L), the 20<sup>th</sup>–50<sup>th</sup>–80<sup>th</sup> percentile distributions of the test data should meet the specified range of values. The sample number is a minimum of 24 test values over the relevant period (12 months if a continuous activity or alternatively a shorter period for activities where discharge occurs for only part of the year).

- For DO and pH, the median value of preferably five or more independent samples at a monitoring (test) site are compared against, and should fall within, the specified percentile range.
- Where a single WQO value is provided, the median value of preferably five or more independent samples at a monitoring (test) site should be compared against the corresponding aquatic ecosystem WQO.

For MD and HD waters:

- The median value (e.g. concentration) of preferably five or more independent samples at a monitoring (test) site should be compared against the corresponding aquatic ecosystem WQO (WQOs in these waters are typically expressed as a single figure).
- For DO and pH, the median value of preferably five or more independent samples at a monitoring (test) site are compared against, and should fall within, the specified percentile range.

For toxicants in water: unless otherwise stated, WQOs for toxicants are derived from the Australian and New Zealand Guidelines for Fresh and Marine Water Quality (ANZG 2018) default guideline values for the corresponding level of species protection. The ANZG (2018) recommends that the 95<sup>th</sup> percentile of test data is compared against the default guideline value. As the proportion of test values that is required to be less than the default guideline value is high, the ANZG indicates that a single observation greater than the default guideline value is considered an exceedance.

For comparisons of toxicants in sediments, refer to ANZG (2018).

Further information: Refer to the QWQG, the Queensland Monitoring and Sampling Manual (2018), and the ANZG (2018) for more details.

**AQUATIC ECOSYSTEM WATER  
QUALITY OBJECTIVES**

**MITCHELL RIVER BASIN (PART) AND  
WALSH RIVER SUB-BASIN**

**Table 2 Aquatic ecosystem water quality objectives - Mitchell River basin (part) and Walsh River sub-basin**

Water type	Management intent / Level of protection	Mitchell River basin (part) and Walsh River sub-basin SURFACE WATERS Aquatic ecosystem water quality objectives												
		Note: WQOs for indicators are shown as a range of 20 <sup>th</sup> , 50 <sup>th</sup> and 80 <sup>th</sup> percentiles to be maintained or achieved (e.g. 3–4–5), lower and upper limits (e.g. pH: 7.2–8.2), or as a single value (e.g. <15). For single value WQOs, medians of test data are compared against the draft WQO (refer to section 3 for more details). ID: Insufficient data, HEV: high ecological value; SD: slightly disturbed; MD: moderately disturbed. Sources: S1: Local Data												
		Amm N	Oxid N	Total N	FRP	Total P	Chl-a	DO	Turb	SS	pH	Conductivity	Sulfate	Hardness
(µg/L)	(µg/L)	(µg/L)	(µg/L)	(µg/L)	(µg/L)	(% sat)	(NTU)	(mg/L)		(µS/cm)	(mg/L)	(mg/L)		
<b>MITCHELL RIVER BASIN (PART) AND WALSH RIVER SUB-BASIN (REFER PLAN WQ9190)</b>														
HEV and SD Waters	HEV & SD	The WQOs for HEV waters are to maintain/achieve effectively unmodified water quality (20th, 50th and 80th percentiles), habitat, biota, flow and riparian areas. Further sampling in HEV waters is required to confirm the water quality objectives listed for this level of protection. Refer to QWQG for details on how to establish a minimum water quality data set for deriving local 20th, 50th and 80th percentiles.												
UPLAND FRESH WATERS (s1)	MD	<b>BASE FLOW</b>												
		6	1	274	1	20	ID	90-100%	ID	ID	6–7.5	100	1.09	23

**Abbreviations:** ID – insufficient data.

**Indicators:** FRP – filterable reactive phosphorus; DO – dissolved oxygen; Chl-a – chlorophyll-a; SS – total suspended solids.

**Units:** % saturation – percent saturation; µg/L – micrograms per litre; NTU – nephelometric turbidity units; m – metres; mg/L – milligrams per litre; µS/cm – microsiemens/centimetre.

**Table 3 ANZG 2018 – Copper Water Quality Objectives (as amended)**

Species Protection (All fresh waters)	Copper ug/l
99%	1
95%	1.4

**Source:** ANZG, 2018 (trigger values for freshwater ug/L) for copper at alternate levels of aquatic ecosystem protection (as amended).

## 3.2 Vegetation management and planning provisions

This following is provided for information on habitat management and planning matters. While it is current at time of publication, readers should refer to relevant Queensland websites and legislation to ensure they are referring to current materials.

### 3.2.1 Riparian vegetation

The clearing of native vegetation in Queensland is regulated by the *Vegetation Management Act 1999*, the *Planning Act 2016* and associated policies and codes. This includes the regulation of clearing within a defined distance of watercourses and drainage features.

For vegetation management relating to waterways, reference should be made to:

- State Development Assessment Provisions (SDAP) State code 16: Native vegetation clearing (DSDMIP, 2019, as amended). This code requires clearing of native vegetation to meet performance outcomes relating to the protection of wetlands, watercourses and drainage features. The code outlines buffer areas where clearing cannot occur within a specified distance of watercourses or drainage features. If clearing within these buffers cannot be reasonably avoided, an offset must be provided to counterbalance any significant residual impact to a wetland, watercourse or drainage feature. For more information on SDAP State code 16, refer to the 'Queensland's Planning System' website <https://planning.dsdmip.qld.gov.au/planning/better-development/the-development-assessment-process/the-states-role/state-development-assessment-provisions>
- The relevant Accepted Development Vegetation Clearing Codes (ADVCC) under the *Vegetation Management Act 1999*. These codes allow self-assessable clearing for certain purposes in particular land tenures and regional ecosystems. It is a requirement across all codes for landholders to use best practice methods when clearing vegetation to prevent soil erosion and instability and to prevent increased sediment run-off entering a wetland, watercourse or drainage feature. The codes also contain riparian protection zones to prevent clearing within a defined distance of a wetland, a stream ordered watercourse or a drainage feature. Where a code permits clearing within these areas, there are additional requirements to rehabilitate the area or (for clearing of regulated regrowth vegetation) to legally secure an exchange area to counterbalance the impact. For more information on the ADVCCs and guidance material, refer to the Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy website <https://www.dnrme.qld.gov.au/>.

Clearing of native vegetation in a watercourse may also require a riverine protection permit under the *Water Act 2000*. Further information is available at [www.business.qld.gov.au](http://www.business.qld.gov.au).

Local Government Planning schemes under the *Planning Act 2016* may also specify riparian buffers (for example under catchment protection or waterway codes). Refer to the Department of State Development, Manufacturing, Infrastructure and Planning website and relevant local government websites for further information about planning schemes.

### 3.2.2 Waterways providing for fish passage

Waterway barrier works may inhibit the free movement of fish along waterways and onto floodplains, injure fish or affect fish health and habitat. Many native fish need to access a range of habitats for food, breeding and refuge and move or migrate to complete their lifecycle.

Adequate fish passage must be provided at any proposed waterway barrier. Operational work that is to construct or raise a waterway barrier is assessable development for which a development approval is required under the *Planning Act 2016*, or is accepted development under the *Fisheries (General) Regulation 2019*. Work types that are described as accepted development must comply with the relevant Accepted Development Requirements in all respects. If all requirements are not met, then the development is assessable and must be applied for. The State assesses development applications that may have impacts to fish passage using the State Development Assessment Provisions (SDAP) State code 18: Constructing or raising waterway barrier works in fish habitats. For more information on SDAP State codes, refer to the 'Queensland's Planning System' website <https://planning.dsdmip.qld.gov.au/planning/better-development/the-development-assessment-process/the-states-role/state-development-assessment-provisions>.)

Performance outcomes for all development include (but are not limited to):

- development does not increase the risk of mortality, disease or injury, or compromise the health, productivity, marketability or suitability for human consumption of fisheries resources, having regard to (but not limited to)
  - biotic and abiotic conditions, such as water and sediment quality

- substances that are toxic to plants or toxic to or cumulative within fish
- sufficient water exchange and flow is maintained and provided to sustain and where necessary restore, water quality and the health and condition of fisheries resources, ecological functions and fish passage
- development likely to cause drainage or disturbance to acid sulfate soils, prevents the release of contaminants and impacts on fisheries resources and fish habitats.

A waterway providing for fish passage is a matter of state environmental significance under the *Environmental Offsets Act 2014* and an environmental offset may be required for any significant residual impact that is approved.

The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries website contains further information on approvals, accepted development requirements and other aspects relating to waterway barrier works and fish passage. Refer to the link below for more details. <https://www.daf.qld.gov.au/fisheries/habitats/fisheries-development/approvals-required>

**WATER QUALITY OBJECTIVES  
for  
HUMAN USE ENVIRONMENTAL VALUES**

## 4 Human use EVs water quality objectives

This section outlines water quality objectives (WQOs) to protect human use environmental values (EVs), which comprise those EVs (e.g. recreation, stock watering, aquaculture and crop irrigation) other than the aquatic ecosystem EV. The tables in section 2 of this document outline the EVs that have been identified for different waters. Where a human use EV has been identified, the following tables can be used to identify the WQOs to support that EV. Where more than one EV applies to a given water (for example aquatic ecosystem and recreational use), the adoption of the most stringent WQO for each water quality indicator will then protect all identified EVs.

WQOs in this section are, unless otherwise specified, based on relevant national water quality guidelines including ANZG (2018, as amended) and the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines (ADWG). Where national guidelines or other codes remain the primary source for WQOs, reference to those national guidelines or codes is necessary to obtain comprehensive listings of all indicators and corresponding WQOs.

The following table summarises WQOs for human use EVs. More details are provided in subsequent sections by human use EV.

**Table 4 Human use EVs water quality objectives**

Environmental value	Water quality objectives to protect EV (refer to specified codes and guidelines for full details)
Suitability for drinking water supply	<p>The Australian Drinking Water Guidelines (NHMRC, 2011, as amended) provides a framework for catchment management and source water protection for drinking water supplies.</p> <p>Quality of raw water (prior to treatment) should consider the requirements of water supply operators, and their capacity to treat the water to make it safe for human consumption. Also refer to Table 5.</p> <p>Note: For water quality after treatment or at point of use refer to legislation and guidelines, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Public Health Act 2005</i> and Regulation</li> <li>• <i>Water Supply (Safety and Reliability) Act 2008</i>, including any approved drinking water quality management plan under the Act</li> <li>• <i>Water Fluoridation Act 2008</i> and Regulation</li> <li>• <i>Australian Drinking Water Guidelines (ADWG, 2011, as amended)</i>.</li> <li>• <a href="#">Safe Water on Rural Properties guideline (Queensland Health, 2015)</a></li> </ul> <p>Whether water is drawn from surface catchments or underground sources, it is important that the local catchment or aquifer is understood, and that the activities that could lead to water contamination are identified and managed. Effective catchment management and source water protection include development of a catchment management plan, with the commitment of land use planning authorities to prevent inappropriate development and to enforce relevant planning regulations.</p>
Protection of the human consumer	As per ANZG and Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code, Food Standards Australia New Zealand, as amended.
Protection of cultural and spiritual values	Protect or restore indigenous and non-indigenous cultural heritage consistent with relevant policies and plans.
Suitability for industrial use	None provided. Water quality requirements for industry vary within and between industries. The ANZG do not provide guidelines to protect industries, and indicate that industrial water quality requirements need to be considered on a case-by-case basis. This EV is usually protected by other values, such as the aquatic ecosystem EV.
Suitability for aquaculture	<p>As per:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tables 6-8</li> <li>• ANZG and Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code, Food Standards Australia New Zealand, as amended</li> </ul>
Suitability for irrigation	Pathogens and metal WQOs are provided in Tables 9 and 10 (based on ANZG). For all other indicators, such as salinity, sodicity, sodium adsorption ratio (SAR), and herbicides, refer ANZG.
Suitability for stock watering	<p>As per ANZG, including median faecal coliforms &lt;100 organisms per 100 mL.</p> <p>For total dissolved solids and metals, refer Tables 11 and 12, based on ANZG.</p> <p>For other indicators, such as cyanobacteria and pathogens, see ANZG.</p>

Environmental value	Water quality objectives to protect EV (refer to specified codes and guidelines for full details)
Suitability for farm supply/use	As per ANZG.
Suitability for primary contact recreation	<p>Note: at time of publication the NHMRC guidelines for recreational water quality were under review, and updates may supersede the following. Refer to NHMRC website for latest information and updated guidelines.</p> <p>As per NHMRC (2008 – refer NHMRC website) including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• water free of physical (floating and submerged) hazards. Where permanent hazards exist (e.g. rips and sandbars), appropriate warning signs should be clearly displayed.</li> <li>• temperature range: 16–34°C</li> <li>• pH range: 6.5–8.5</li> <li>• DO: &gt;80%</li> <li>• faecal contamination: designated recreational waters are protected against direct contamination with fresh faecal material, particularly of human or domesticated animal origin. Two principal components are required for assessing faecal contamination:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- assessment of evidence for the likely influence of faecal material</li> <li>- counts of suitable faecal indicator bacteria (usually <i>enterococci</i>)</li> </ul>                             These two components are combined to produce an overall microbial classification of the recreational water body.                         </li> <li>• direct contact with venomous or dangerous aquatic organisms should be avoided. Recreational water bodies should be reasonably free of, or protected from, venomous organisms (e.g. box jellyfish and bluebottles)</li> <li>• waters contaminated with chemicals that are either toxic or irritating to the skin or mucous membranes are unsuitable for recreational purposes.</li> </ul>
Suitability for primary contact recreation	<p>Note: at time of publication the NHMRC guidelines for recreational water quality were under review, and updates may supersede the following. Refer to NHMRC website for latest information and updated guidelines.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• cyanobacteria/algae: Recreational water bodies should not contain:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- level 1<sup>1</sup>: ≥ 10 µg/L total microcystins; or ≥ 50 000 cells/mL toxic <i>Microcystis aeruginosa</i>; or biovolume equivalent of ≥ 4 mm<sup>3</sup>/L for the combined total of all cyanobacteria where a known toxin producer is dominant in the total biovolume or</li> <li>- level 2<sup>1</sup>: ≥ 10 mm<sup>3</sup>/L for total biovolume of all cyanobacterial material where known toxins are not present</li> <li>- where <i>Cylindrospermopsis caciborskii</i> is the dominant species present, advice should be sought for an appropriate guideline for cylindrospermopsin or</li> <li>- cyanobacterial scums consistently present. Further details are contained in NHMRC (2008) and Table 16.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Suitability for secondary contact recreation	<p>As per NHMRC (2008), including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• intestinal enterococci: refer primary recreation above</li> <li>• cyanobacteria/algae—refer primary recreation, NHMRC (2008) and Table 13.</li> </ul>
Suitability for visual recreation	<p>As per NHMRC (2008), including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• recreational water bodies should be aesthetically acceptable to recreational users. The water should be free from visible materials that may settle to form objectionable deposits; floating debris, oil, scum and other matter; substances producing objectionable colour, odour, taste or turbidity; and substances and conditions that produce undesirable aquatic life.</li> <li>• cyanobacteria/algae—see, NHMRC (2008) and Table 13.</li> </ul>

**Notes:**

1. Level 1 recognises the probability of adverse health effects from ingestion of known toxins, in this case based on the toxicity of microcystins. Level 2 covers circumstances in which there are very high cell densities of cyanobacterial material, irrespective of the presence of toxicity or known toxins. Increased cyanobacterial densities increase the likelihood of non-specific adverse health outcomes, principally respiratory, irritation and allergy symptoms. (NHMRC, 2008; 8).

**Sources:**

The WQOs were determined from a combination of sources, including:

- Australian Drinking Water Guidelines (NHMRC, 2011 as updated 2016), available from NHMRC website
- Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code (Australian Government: Food Standards Australia New Zealand), available from Food Standards Australia New Zealand website
- [Australian and New Zealand Guidelines for Fresh and Marine Water Quality](#) (ANZG, 2018, as amended)
- Guidelines for Managing Risks in Recreational Water (NHMRC, 2008), available from NHMRC website. At time of publication the NHMRC guidelines were under review. Refer to NHMRC website for latest information and updated guidelines.
- [Safe Water on Rural Properties Guideline](#) (Queensland Health, 2015)
- Technical review and advice from Queensland Health and Department of Natural Resources Mines and Energy (2020)

## 4.1 Drinking water EV water quality objectives

**Table 5 Drinking water EV: Priority water quality objectives for drinking water supply in the vicinity of off-takes, before treatment**

Indicator	Water quality objective <sup>1</sup>
<i>Giardia</i>	No guideline value set (ADWG) If <i>Giardia</i> is detected in drinking water then the Water Supply Regulator, DNRME and Queensland Health should be notified immediately and an investigation of the likely source of contamination undertaken.
<i>Cryptosporidium</i>	No guideline value set (ADWG) If <i>Cryptosporidium</i> is detected in treated drinking water then the Water Supply Regulator, DNRME and Queensland Health should be notified immediately and an investigation of the likely source of contamination undertaken.
<i>E. coli</i>	Well designed treatment plants with effective treatment barriers and disinfection are designed to address faecal contamination. <i>E. coli</i> or thermotolerant coliforms should not be present in any 100 mL sample of (treated) drinking water (ADWG). <1 cfu/100ml (Public Health Regulation 2018) and upstream sewage effluent discharges need to be known (catchment management).
Algal toxin	<1.3 µg/L Microcystin (ADWG)
pH	6.5–8.5 (ADWG)
Total dissolved solids (TDS)	<600mg/L The concentration of total dissolved solids in treated drinking water should not exceed 600 mg/L (ADWG, based on taste considerations).
Sodium	General <sup>2</sup> : The concentration of sodium in reticulated drinking water supplies should not exceed 180 mg/L (ADWG, based on threshold at which taste becomes appreciable). At-risk groups (medical) <sup>2</sup> : The concentration of sodium in water supplies for at-risk groups should not exceed 20 mg/L (ADWG).
Sulfate	The concentration of sulfate in drinking water should not exceed 250 mg/L (ADWG 2011, based on taste/aesthetic considerations). ADWG 2011 health guideline: <500mg/L
Dissolved oxygen	>85% saturation (ADWG)
Pesticides	Raw supplies: Below detectable limits. Treated drinking water: Refer to ADWG.
Other indicators (including physico-chemical indicators) e.g. turbidity	Refer to ADWG.  <1 NTU is the target to facilitate for effective disinfection of drinking water (as turbidity of ≥ 1 NTU inhibits the performance of chlorination (ADWG))

### Notes:

1. This table outlines WQOs for water **before treatment**, unless otherwise stated (e.g. ADWG). For water quality after treatment or at the point of use, refer to relevant legislation and guidelines, including *Public Health Act 2005* and Regulation, *Water Supply (Safety and Reliability) Act 2008 and Regulation*, including any approved drinking water management plan under the Act, *Water Fluoridation Act 2008*, the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines (ADWG, 2011 updated December 2013), and the Safe Water on Rural Properties guideline (Queensland Health, 2015).
2. The ADWG notes that 50 mg/L is a 'typical value' in reticulated supplies. The ADWG value for sodium is 180 mg/L (based on level at which taste become appreciable) however 'sodium salts cannot be easily removed from drinking water' and 'any steps to reduce sodium concentrations are encouraged'. It further notes that 'medical practitioners treating people with severe hypertension or congestive heart failure should be aware if the sodium concentration in the patient's drinking water exceeds 20 mg/L' (ADWG; sodium factsheet).

**Source:** Australian Drinking Water Guidelines (NHMRC, 2011 as updated 2018). Technical review and advice from Queensland Health and Department of Natural Resources Mines and Energy (2020).

## 4.2 Aquaculture EV water quality objectives

The following table outlines WQOs for aquaculture, depending on species.

**Table 6 Aquaculture EV: Water quality objectives for optimal growth of particular freshwater species**

WATER QUALITY OBJECTIVES VALUES FOR AQUACULTURE						
Water parameter	Barramundi	Eel	Silver perch	Jade perch	Sleepy cod	Redclaw
Dissolved oxygen	4–9 mg/L	>3 mg/L	>4 mg/L	>3 mg/L	>4.0 mg/L	>4.0 mg/L
Temperature	26–32°C	23–28°C	23–28°C	23–28°C	22–31°C	23–31°C
pH	7.5–8.5	7.0–8.5	6.5–8.5	6.5–8.5	7.0–8.5	7.0–8.5
Ammonia (TAN, Total ammonia–nitrogen)	ID	<1.0 mg/L	ID	ID	<1.0 mg/L	<1.0 mg/L
Ammonia (NH <sub>3</sub> , un-ionised form)	<0.46 mg/L	<0.1 mg/L	<0.1 mg/L	<0.1 mg/L	<0.1 mg/L	<0.1 mg/L
Nitrate (NO <sub>3</sub> )	ID	ID	<100 mg/L	ID	ID	ID
Nitrite (NO <sub>2</sub> )	<1.5 mg/L	<1.0 mg/L	<0.1 mg/L	ID	<1.0 mg/L	<1.0 mg/L
Salinity (extended periods)	0–35 psu	ID	<5 psu	<5 psu	ID	<4 psu
Salinity bath (short term treatment)	0–35 psu	ID	5–10 psu for 1 hour	ID	max. 20 psu for 1 hour	ID
Hardness (CaCO <sub>3</sub> )	50–100 mg/L	ID	>50 mg/L	>50 mg/L	>40 mg/L	>40 mg/L
Alkalinity	>50 mg/L	ID	100–400 mg/L	100–400mg/L	>40 mg/L	>40 mg/L
Chlorine	<0.04 mg/L	ID	ID	ID	<0.04 mg/L	ID
Hydrogen sulphide	<0.3 mg/L	ID	ID	ID	<0.3 mg/L	ID
Iron	<0.1 mg/L	ID	<0.5 mg/L	<0.5 mg/L	<0.1 mg/L	<0.1 mg/L
Spawning temperature	marine	ID	23–28	23–28	>24 for more than 3 days	ID

**Indicator:** psu – practical salinity unit, ID – Insufficient data

**Note:** The table provides indicative water requirements for a range of aquaculture species (fresh and/or marine), recognising that not all listed species will occur in a given area, and that potential exists for changes in species under culture.

**Source:** Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries—Water Quality in Aquaculture—DPI Notes April 2004 (as amended) and DAF 2019–2020 technical review and advice.

Table 7 Aquaculture EV: General WQOs for a range of tropical freshwater aquaculture species

Water parameter	Recommended range		Water parameter	Recommended range
	Fresh water	Marine		General aquatic
Dissolved oxygen	>4 mg/L	>4 mg/L	Arsenic	<0.05 mg/L
Temperature	21–32°C	24–33°C	Cadmium	<0.003 mg/L
pH	6.8–9.5	7–9.0	Calcium/Magnesium	10–160 mg/L
Ammonia (TAN, total ammonia-nitrogen)	<1.0 mg/L	<1.0 mg/L	Chromium	<0.1 mg/L
Ammonia (NH <sub>3</sub> , un-ionised form)	<0.1 mg/L	<0.1 mg/L	Copper	<0.006 mg/L in soft water
Nitrate (NO <sub>3</sub> )	1–100 mg/L	1–100 mg/L	Cyanide	<0.005 mg/L
Nitrite (NO <sub>2</sub> )	<0.1 mg/L	<1.0 mg/L	Iron	<0.5 mg/L
Salinity	0–5 psu	15–35 psu	Lead	<0.03 mg/L
Hardness	20–450 mg/L	ID	Manganese	<0.01 mg/L
Alkalinity	20–400 mg/L	>100 mg/L	Mercury	<0.00005 mg/L
Turbidity	<80 NTU	ID	Nickel	<0.01 mg/L in soft water <0.04 mg/L in hard water
Chlorine	<0.003 mg/L	ID	Tin	<0.001 mg/L
Hydrogen sulphide	<0.002 mg/L	ID	Zinc	0.03–0.06 mg/L in soft water 1–2 mg/L in hard water

**Indicator:** psu – practical salinity unit, NTU - nephelometric turbidity units, ID – Insufficient data

**Note:** The table provides indicative water requirements for a range of aquaculture species (fresh and/or marine), recognising that not all listed species will occur in a given area, and that potential exists for changes in species under culture.

**Source:** Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries—Water Quality in Aquaculture—DPI Notes April 2004 (as amended) and DAF 2019-2020 technical review and advice.

**Table 8 Aquaculture EV: Water quality objectives for optimal growth of particular marine species**

Water parameter	Barramundi		Giant Tiger prawn ( <i>Penaeus monodon</i> )	
	Hatchery	Grow out	Hatchery	Grow out
Dissolved oxygen	saturation	>4 mg/L	>4 mg/L	>3.5 mg/L
Temperature	28–30°C optimum 25–31°C range	28–30°C optimum	28–30°C	26–32°C
pH	approx. 8	approx. 8	7.8–8.2	7.5–8.5
Ammonia (TAN, total ammonia-nitrogen)	ID	0.1–0.5 mg/L	ID	<3 mg/L
Ammonia (NH <sub>3</sub> , un-ionised form)	<0.1 mg/L	<0.1 mg/L	<0.1 mg/L	<0.1 mg/L
Nitrate (NO <sub>3</sub> )	<1.0 mg/L	<1.0 mg/L	<1.0 mg/L	<1.0 mg/L
Nitrite (NO <sub>2</sub> )	<0.2 mg/L	<1.0 mg/L	<0.2 mg/L	<0.2 mg/L
Salinity	28–31psu	0–35psu	30–35psu	10–25 psu optimum
Alkalinity	ID	105–125 mg/L CaCO <sub>3</sub>	ID	>80 mg/L
Clarity	ID	<10mg/L	ID	30–40cm secchi disk
Hydrogen sulphide	ID	<0.3 mg/L	<0.1 mg/L	<0.1 mg/L
Iron	ID	<0.02 mg/L	<1 mg/L	<1.0 mg/L
Spawning temperature	ID	28–32°C	ID	27–32°C

**Indicator:** psu – practical salinity unit, ID – Insufficient data

**Note:** The table provides indicative water requirements for a range of aquaculture species (fresh and/or marine), recognising that not all listed species will occur in a given area, and that potential exists for changes in species under culture.

**Source:** Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries—Water Quality in Aquaculture—DPI Notes April 2004 (as amended) and DAF 2019-2020 technical review and advice.

### 4.3 Irrigation EV water quality objectives

The following tables outline WQOs for irrigation, based on relevant national guidelines.

**Table 9 Irrigation EV: Water quality objectives for thermotolerant (faecal) coliforms in irrigation waters used for food and non-food crops<sup>1</sup>**

Intended use	Median values of thermotolerant coliforms (colony forming units—cfu) <sup>2</sup>
Raw human food crops in direct contact with irrigation water (e.g. via sprays, irrigation of salad vegetables)	<10 cfu/100 mL
Raw human food crops not in direct contact with irrigation water (edible product separated from contact with water, e.g. by peel, use of trickle irrigation); or crops sold to consumers cooked or processed	<1000 cfu/100 mL
Pasture and fodder for dairy animals (without withholding period)	<100 cfu/100 mL
Pasture and fodder for dairy animals (with withholding period of five days)	<1000 cfu/100 mL
Pasture and fodder (for grazing animals except pigs and dairy animals, such as cattle, sheep and goats)	<1000 cfu/100 mL
Silviculture, turf, cotton, etc. (restricted public access)	<10 000 cfu/100 mL

**Notes:**

1. Adapted from ARMCANZ, ANZECC and NHMRC (1999).
2. Refer to AWQG, Volume 1, Section 4.2.3.3 for advice on testing protocols. Source: AWQG, Volume 1, Section 4.2.3.3, Table 4.2.2.

**Table 10 Irrigation EV: Water quality objectives for heavy metals and metalloids in agricultural irrigation water— soil cumulative contamination loading limit (CCL), long-term trigger value (LTV) and short-term trigger value (STV)<sup>1</sup>**

Element	Soil cumulative contaminant loading limit (CCL) <sup>2</sup> (kg/ha)	Long-term trigger value (LTV) in irrigation water (up to 100 years) (mg/L)	Short-term trigger value (STV) in irrigation water (up to 20 years) (mg/L)
Aluminium	ND <sup>2</sup>	5	20
Arsenic	20	0.1	2.0
Beryllium	ND	0.1	0.5
Boron	ND	0.5	Refer to AWQG, Vol 3, Table 9.2.18
Cadmium	2	0.01	0.05
Chromium	ND	0.1	1
Cobalt	ND	0.05	0.1
Copper	140	0.2	5
Fluoride	ND	1	2
Iron	ND	0.2	10
Lead	260	2	5
Lithium	ND	2.5 (0.075 for citrus crops)	2.5 (0.075 for citrus crops)
Manganese	ND	0.2	10
Mercury	2	0.002	0.002
Molybdenum	ND	0.01	0.05
Nickel	85	0.2	2
Selenium	10	0.02	0.05
Uranium	ND	0.01	0.1
Vanadium	ND	0.1	0.5
Zinc	300	2	5

**Notes:**

1. Concentrations in irrigation water should be less than the trigger values. Trigger values should only be used in conjunction with information on each individual element and the potential for off-site transport of contaminants (refer AWQG, Volume 3, Section 9.2.5).

2. ND = Not determined; insufficient background data to calculate CCL.

**Source:** AWQG, Volume 1, Section 4.2.6, Table 4.2.10.

## 4.4 Stock watering EV water quality objectives

The following tables outline WQOs for stock watering, according to stock type (cattle, sheep etc.).

**Table 11 Stock watering EV: Water quality objectives for tolerances of livestock to salinity, as total dissolved solids, in drinking water<sup>1</sup>**

Livestock	Total dissolved solids (TDS) (mg/L)		
	No adverse effects on animals expected.	Animals may have initial reluctance to drink or there may be some scouring, but stock should adapt without loss of production	Loss of production and decline in animal condition and health would be expected. Stock may tolerate these levels for short periods if introduced gradually
Beef cattle	0–4000	4000–5000	5000–10 000
Dairy cattle	0–2500	2500–4000	4000–7000
Sheep	0–5000	5000–10 000	10 000–13 000 <sup>2</sup>
Horses	0–4000	4000–6000	6000–7000
Pigs	0–4000	4000–6000	6000–8000
Poultry	0–2000	2000–3000	3000–4000

**Notes:**

1. From ANZECC (1992), adapted to incorporate more recent information.
2. Sheep on lush green feed may tolerate up to 13 000 mg/L TDS without loss of condition or production.

**Source:** ANZECC, ARMCANZ (2000), Volume 1, Section 4.3.3.5, Table 4.3.1. Note that a review of stock watering tolerances under the ANZG (2018) may lead to revised values from those in this table. Refer to ANZG (2018) for further details.

**Table 12 Stock watering EV: Water quality objectives (low risk trigger values) for heavy metals and metalloids in livestock drinking water**

Metal or metalloid	Trigger value (low risk) <sup>1,2</sup> (mg/L)
Aluminium	5
Arsenic	0.5 (up to 5 <sup>3</sup> )
Beryllium	ND
Boron	5
Cadmium	0.01
Chromium	1
Cobalt	1
Copper	0.4 (sheep), 1 (cattle), 5 (pigs), 5 (poultry)
Fluoride	2
Iron	not sufficiently toxic
Lead	0.1
Manganese	not sufficiently toxic
Mercury	0.002
Molybdenum	0.15
Nickel	1
Selenium	0.02
Uranium	0.2
Vanadium	ND
Zinc	20

**Notes:**

1. Higher concentrations may be tolerated in some situations (further details provided in ANZECC, ARMCANZ (2000), Volume 3, Section 9.3.5).
2. ND = not determined, insufficient background data to calculate.
3. May be tolerated if not provided as a food additive and natural levels in the diet are low.

**Source:** ANZECC, ARMCANZ (2000), Volume 1, Section 4.3.4, Table 4.3.2. Note that a review of stock watering tolerances under the ANZG (2018) may lead to revised values from those in this table. Refer to ANZG (2018) for further details.

## 4.5 Recreation EV water quality objectives - cyanobacteria

When cyanobacteria are present in large numbers, they can present a significant hazard, particularly to primary contact users of waters. Water quality guidelines for cyanobacteria in recreational waters are provided below. Monitoring and action requirements relative to cyanobacteria 'alert' levels are summarised below and are explained more fully in the Guidelines for Managing Risks in Recreational Water (NHMRC, 2008). Further details on the process to determine suitability of waters for recreation, relative to historical cyanobacterial levels and susceptibility to cyanobacterial contamination, are contained in sections 6 and 7 of the NHMRC guidelines.

Note: at time of publication the NHMRC guidelines for recreational water quality were under review, and updates may supersede the following. Refer to NHMRC website for latest information and updated guidelines.

**Table 13 Recreational waters: Alert levels and corresponding actions for management of cyanobacteria**

Green level surveillance mode <sup>1</sup>	Amber level alert mode <sup>1</sup>	Red level action mode <sup>1</sup>
<b>Fresh waters</b>		
≥ 500 to <5000 cells/mL <i>M. aeruginosa</i> or biovolume equivalent of >0.04 to <0.4 mm <sup>3</sup> /L for the combined total of all cyanobacteria.	≥ 5000 to <50 000 cells/mL <i>M. aeruginosa</i> or biovolume equivalent of ≥ 0.4 to <4 mm <sup>3</sup> /L for the combined total of all cyanobacteria where a known toxin producer is dominant in the total biovolume <sup>2</sup> . or <sup>3</sup> ≥ 0.4 to <10 mm <sup>3</sup> /L for the combined total of all cyanobacteria where known toxin producers are not present.	Level 1 guideline <sup>4</sup> : ≥ 10 µg/L total microcystins or ≥ 50 000 cells/mL toxic <i>M. aeruginosa</i> or biovolume equivalent of ≥ 4 mm <sup>3</sup> /L for the combined total of all cyanobacteria where a known toxin producer is dominant in the total biovolume. or <sup>3</sup> Level 2 guideline <sup>4</sup> : ≥ 10 mm <sup>3</sup> /L for total biovolume of all cyanobacterial material where known toxins are not present. or cyanobacterial scums are consistently present <sup>5</sup> .

### Notes:

- Recommended actions at different alert levels are outlined below (based on NHMRC, 2008, Table 6.6—fresh waters. Similar actions are outlined for coastal/estuarine waters in NHMRC Table 7.6):
  - Green:** Regular monitoring. Weekly sampling and cell counts at representative locations in the water body where known toxigenic species are present (i.e. *Microcystis aeruginosa*, *Anabaena circinalis*, *Cylindrospermopsis raciborskii*, *Aphanizomenon ovalisporum*, *Nodularia spumigena*); or fortnightly for other types including regular visual inspection of water surface for scums.
  - Amber:** Notify agencies as appropriate. Increase sampling frequency to twice weekly at representative locations in the water body where toxigenic species (above) are dominant within the alert level definition (i.e. total biovolume) to establish population growth and spatial variability in the water body. Monitor weekly or fortnightly where other types are dominant. Make regular visual inspections of water surface for scums. Decide on requirement for toxicity assessment or toxin monitoring.
  - Red:** Continue monitoring as for (amber) alert mode. Immediately notify health authorities for advice on health risk. ('In action mode the local authority and health authorities warn the public of the existence of potential health risks; for example, through the media and the erection of signs by the local authority.' NHMRC, 2008; 114). Make toxicity assessment or toxin measurement of water if this has not already been done. Health authorities warn of risk to public health (i.e. the authorities make a health risk assessment considering toxin monitoring data, sample type and variability).
- The definition of 'dominant' is where the known toxin producer comprises 75 per cent or more of the total biovolume of cyanobacteria in a representative sample.
- This applies where high cell densities or scums of 'non toxic' cyanobacteria are present i.e. where the cyanobacterial population has been tested and shown not to contain known toxins (microcystins, nodularian, cylindrospermopsin or saxitoxin).
- Health risks and levels: Level 1 is developed to protect against short-term health effects of exposure to cyanobacterial toxins ingested during recreational activity, whereas the Level 2 applies to the circumstance where there is a probability of increased likelihood of non-specific adverse health outcomes, principally respiratory, irritation and allergy symptoms, from exposure to very high cell densities of cyanobacterial material irrespective of the presence of toxicity or known toxins (NHMRC, 2008;114).
- This refers to the situation where scums occur at the recreation site each day when conditions are calm, particularly in the morning. Note that it is not likely that scums are always present and visible when there is a high population as the cells may mix down with wind and turbulence and then reform later when conditions become stable.

**Source:** Based on NHMRC (2008) Guideline for Managing Risks in Recreational Water (tables 6.2, 6.6, 7.3).

## 5 Ways to improve water quality

The following sources are relevant in considering ways to improve water quality. The list below is additional to the plans, guidelines and other sources referred to in previous sections, **and is provided for information only.**

### Local plans, studies

- Council planning scheme and supporting codes, policies, available from DSDMIP website and council websites

### State plans, policies, guidelines, agreements

- State Planning Policy (state interest – water quality), including SPP code – water quality, and supporting SPP guidelines, available from the DSDMIP website
- *Water Act 2000* – Water Plan (Mitchell) 2007

### Water quality guidelines

- *Australian and New Zealand Guidelines for Fresh and Marine Water Quality (ANZG, 2018)*
- Monitoring and Sampling Manual, available from the department's website
- Queensland Water Quality Guidelines (QWQG), available from the department's website

### Other supporting technical information – riparian management

- Fisheries Guidelines for Fish Habitat Buffer Zones, FHG003, available from the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries
- Healthy Waterways Incorporated – Water by Design: resources and information available on the Water by Design website
- Information on [PFAS in Queensland](#), including access to PFAS national environmental management plan

## 6 Dictionary

**ANZECC** means the Australian and New Zealand Environment and Conservation Council.

**ANZECC Guidelines** mean the Australian and New Zealand Guidelines for Fresh and Marine Water Quality (recently updated to become ANZG, 2018), prepared by the Australian and New Zealand Environment and Conservation Council (ANZECC) and the Agriculture and Resource Management Council of Australia and New Zealand (ARMCANZ).

**Aquatic ecosystem** (defined in the ANZG) any watery environment from small to large, from pond to ocean, in which plants and animals interact with the chemical and physical features of the environment.

**Aquatic ecosystem** (defined in the EPP (Water and Wetland Biodiversity)) means a community of organisms living within or adjacent to water, including riparian or foreshore areas.

**Basin** means the basin name and number provided by Geoscience Australia, Canberra (3rd edition, 2004).

**Basin Plan** means the *Basin Plan 2012*, prepared under the Commonwealth *Water Act 2007*.

**Biological Integrity** (defined in the EPP (Water and Wetland Biodiversity)) for water or a wetland, means the ability of the water or wetland to support and maintain a balanced, integrative, adaptive community of organisms having a species composition, diversity and functional organisation comparable to that of the natural habitat of the locality in which the water or wetland is situated.

**Catchment** means the total area draining into a river, creek, reservoir or other body of water. The limits of a given catchment are the heights of land (such as hills or mountains) separating it from neighbouring catchments. Catchments can be made up of smaller sub-catchments.

**Ecological integrity (health)** (defined in the ANZG) means the 'health' or 'condition' of an ecosystem. The ability of an ecosystem to support and maintain key ecological processes and organisms so that their species compositions, diversity and functional organisations are as comparable as possible to those occurring in natural habitats within a region.

**Environmental value (EV)** means:

- (a) a quality or physical characteristic of the environment that is conducive to ecological health or public amenity or safety; or
- (b) another quality of the environment identified and declared to be an environmental value under an Environmental Protection Policy or Regulation (e.g. water suitable for swimming in or drinking).

The EVs for water that can be identified for protection are outlined in the accompanying table.

**Queensland waters** (as defined in *Acts Interpretation Act 1954*): means all waters that are a) within the limits of the state; or b) coastal waters of the state.

**Sub-basin** means part of a basin.

**Sub-catchment** means part of a catchment.

**Toxicant** (defined in the ANZG): means a substance capable of producing an adverse response (effect) in a biological system, which may seriously injure structure or function or produce death at sufficiently high concentration.

**Table 14 Environmental values that can be identified for protection**

Environmental values and definitions	ICON (as shown on plans)
<p><b>Aquatic ecosystem</b>                      'A community of organisms living within or adjacent to water, including riparian or foreshore area.' (EPP (Water and Wetland Biodiversity), schedule 2 - Dictionary)                      The intrinsic value of aquatic ecosystems, habitat and wildlife in waterways and riparian areas, for example, biodiversity, ecological interactions, plants, animals, key species (such as turtles, platypus, seagrass and dugongs) and their habitat, food and drinking water.                      Waterways include perennial and intermittent surface waters, groundwaters, tidal and non-tidal waters, lakes, storages, reservoirs, dams, wetlands, swamps, marshes, lagoons, canals, natural and artificial channels and the bed and banks of waterways.                      (This EV incorporates the 'wildlife habitat' EV used in the South East Queensland Regional Water Quality Management Strategy). See below for more details on aquatic ecosystems, based on the EPP (Water and Wetland Biodiversity).</p>	
<p><b>High ecological/conservation value waters</b>                      'Waters in which the biological integrity of the water is effectively unmodified or highly valued.' (EPP (Water and Wetland Biodiversity), schedule 2).</p>	None
<p><b>Slightly disturbed waters</b>                      'Waters that have the biological integrity of high ecological value waters with slightly modified physical or chemical indicators but effectively unmodified biological indicators.' (EPP (Water and Wetland Biodiversity), schedule 2).</p>	None
<p><b>Moderately disturbed waters</b>                      'Waters in which the biological integrity of the water is adversely affected by human activity to a relatively small but measurable degree.' (EPP (Water and Wetland Biodiversity), schedule 2).</p>	None
<p><b>Highly disturbed waters</b>                      'Waters that are significantly degraded by human activity and have lower ecological value than high ecological value waters or slightly or moderately disturbed waters.' (EPP (Water and Wetland Biodiversity), schedule 2).</p>	None

Environmental values and definitions	ICON (as shown on plans)
<p><b>Irrigation</b> Suitability of water supply for irrigation, for example, irrigation of crops, pastures, parks, gardens and recreational areas.</p>	
<p><b>Farm water supply/use</b> Suitability of domestic farm water supply, other than drinking water. For example, water used for laundry and produce preparation.</p>	
<p><b>Stock watering</b> Suitability of water supply for production of healthy livestock.</p>	
<p><b>Aquaculture</b> Health of aquaculture species and humans consuming aquatic foods (such as fish, molluscs and crustaceans) from commercial ventures.</p>	
<p><b>Human consumers of aquatic foods</b> The suitability of the water for producing aquatic foods for human consumption such as fish, crustaceans and shellfish from natural waterways.</p>	
<p><b>Primary recreation</b> Means a use that involves the following types of contact with the water—full body contact, frequent immersion by the face and trunk, frequent contact with spray by the face where it is likely some water will be swallowed or inhaled, or come into contact with ears, nasal passages, mucous membranes or cuts in the skin. Examples—diving, swimming, surfing (EPP (Water and Wetland Biodiversity), section 6).</p>	
<p><b>Secondary recreation</b> Means a use that involves the following types of contact with the water—contact in which only the limbs are regularly wet, and other contact, including the swallowing of water, is unusual (examples—boating, fishing, wading) or occasional inadvertent immersion resulting from slipping or being swept into the water by a wave. (EPP (Water and Wetland Biodiversity), section 6).</p>	
<p><b>Visual recreation</b> Means a use that does not ordinarily involve any contact with the water—for example angling from the shore, sunbathing near water (EPP (Water and Wetland Biodiversity), section 6).</p>	
<p><b>Drinking water supply</b> Suitability of the water for supply as drinking water having regard to the level of treatment of the water.</p>	

Environmental values and definitions	ICON (as shown on plans)
<p><b>Industrial use</b>                      Suitability of water supply for industrial purposes, for example, food, beverage, paper, petroleum and power industries, mining and minerals refining/processing. Industries usually treat water supplies to meet their needs.</p>	
<p><b>Cultural and spiritual values</b>                      Means scientific, social or other significance to the present generation or past or future generations, including Aboriginal people or Torres Strait Islanders (EPP (Water and Wetland Biodiversity)), section 6), for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• custodial, spiritual, cultural and traditional heritage, hunting, gathering and ritual responsibilities</li> <li>• symbols, landmarks and icons (such as waterways, turtles and frogs)</li> <li>• lifestyles (such as agriculture and fishing).</li> </ul>	