

WATER QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PLANS

Water of adequate quality and quantity is central to the integrity of the environment. It is essential to our agricultural enterprises, even to our ability to ensure we have sufficient drinking water to supply our needs.

Through the application of the National Water Quality Management Strategy (NWQMS) the Australian Government is working in collaboration with States and Territories to develop Water Quality Improvement Plans (WQIP) to reduce pollution being released into aquatic ecosystems with high ecological, social and/or recreational values across the country.

There are a range of projects designed to provide scientific underpinning to a Water Quality Improvement Plan. These projects allow the compilation of information and data to enhance the knowledge and tools for science-based planning. They are varied in their nature reflecting the broad nature of factors impacting on water quality.



Adelaide & Mount Lofty Ranges NRM region

What is a Water Quality Improvement Plan?

Water Quality Improvement Plans (WQIPs), prepared consistent with the Framework for Marine and Estuarine Water Quality Protection, amongst other matters identify the most cost-effective and timely projects for investment by all parties including the Australian Government, State and Local Governments, and community and environment groups.

WQIPs seek to deliver significant reductions in the discharge of pollutants to agreed hotspots through:

- identification of the *environmental* values of water;
- determination of *water quality objectives* and load targets for pollutants of concern;
- development of *environmental flow objectives* and environmental water provisions
- implementation of *catchment based management actions*, including control of point and diffuse sources, market-based instruments and adaptive management; and
- the application of *predictive models* and *ambient monitoring* programs.

A WQIP provides an ecosystem based approach to integrated water cycle management, supported by science. It is designed to:

- engage state, local government, NRM groups and cooperatively prepare a WQIP and implement interim projects;
- resolve major impediments to Water Quality planning and management through a catchment management based approach;
- address the key priority threats to water quality and environmental flows, and establishing methods to continuously improve management knowledge and systems; and
- establish governance arrangements that ensure all relevant stakeholders are party to WQIP implementation.

Elements of a water quality improvement plan can include:

- The identification of Environmental Values and Water Quality Objectives
- Water quality monitoring
- Predictive modeling
- Decision Support Systems/tools
- Water Sensitive Urban Design
- Market Based Instruments
- Agricultural Best Management Practice
- Ramsar wetland Ecological Character Description
- Acid Sulfate Soils Mapping

Source: <https://www.environment.gov.au/water/quality/improvement>