

Far North Queensland Regional Water Capability Plan

2024 to 2034



Foreword

I am pleased to introduce the FNQROC Regional Water Capability Plan. This comprehensive, long-term plan, supported by Jobs Queensland and Queensland Water, identifies opportunities for our member councils to improve capability in the key areas of people, systems, data, and processes. By focusing on both individual and collaborative efforts, the plan aims to enhance the operational capacity of councils and foster regional partnerships.

The plan's purpose is to guide policy reform, align regional strategies, and inform investment decisions that reflect local needs and priorities. It outlines a series of scalable, strategic initiatives and actions across short-, medium-, and long-term timeframes, providing a clear roadmap for sustained capability building.

This is an exciting opportunity for stakeholders to work together to implement the plan, strengthening the existing capability and capacity of our region and I encourage everyone to support this important initiative.



Cr Angela Toppin AM

Mayor of Mareeba Shire Council
FNQROC Chair



Executive Summary

The water and wastewater sector in regional areas, particularly in **Far North Queensland (FNQ)**, is currently grappling with significant capability challenges that hinder the effective delivery of safe and reliable services. These challenges stem from a complex interplay of internal and external factors, which restrict the operational efficiency of service providers and their ability to meet the needs of the community.

The **Regional Water Capability Plan**, developed for the **Far North Regional Organisation of Councils (FNQROC)**, is aimed at addressing the pressing capability challenges faced by water and wastewater service providers across FNQ. The region's unique geographical diversity, coupled with aging infrastructure and rapid population growth, exacerbates the difficulties in service delivery. As demands evolve due to regulatory changes and heightened customer expectations, it becomes increasingly critical to enhance the operational effectiveness of these services.

Covering an expansive area of **252,542 square kilometres** and serving a population of over **289,000**, FNQ's vastness presents unique challenges in managing and delivering water and wastewater services. The existing systems are under significant pressure, necessitating a strategic approach to improve operational efficiency and ensure the safe and reliable provision of these essential services.

The **Regional Water Capability Plan** serves as a vital strategic framework for the region, designed to enhance the operational capacity of service providers. It aims to foster collaboration among member councils, drive regional partnerships, align strategies, guide policy reform, and inform investment decisions that reflect local needs and priorities. The outcomes of the Plan consist of a series of scalable and achievable strategic initiatives and actions, categorised into short, medium, and long-term horizons. While the Plan does not provide immediate solutions, it serves as a comprehensive guide for sustained capability building across FNQ.

Recognising the diverse capacities and contexts of FNQROC member councils, the strategic initiatives have been crafted to be both scalable and achievable, ensuring that they deliver holistic value to the region. The development of the Regional Water Capability Plan involved a thorough, multi-step process aimed at addressing capability challenges through four key steps:

1. **Understanding On-the-Ground Issues:** Engaging with local stakeholders to identify specific challenges faced in service delivery.
2. **Conducting Workshops to Socialise Key Findings:** Facilitating discussions to validate findings and gather insights from various stakeholders.
3. **Performing Options Analysis:** Evaluating potential solutions to address identified capability gaps.
4. **Defining Implementation of Agreed Solutions:** Outlining a clear path for executing the selected initiatives.

The **Queensland Treasury Corporation (QTC)** played a crucial role in the initial phases, contextualising the capability challenges faced by FNQROC member councils. The current phase (development of this Plan) focuses on options analysis and stakeholder engagement, which will inform the final steps necessary to plan, resource, and implement the agreed strategic initiatives.

Extensive engagement with FNQROC member councils was integral to the development of the Regional Water Capability Plan, ensuring that it reflects their unique needs and priorities. This collaborative approach fosters a sense of ownership and commitment to the proposed initiatives. Key stakeholder engagements conducted during the development process included:

- **Future State Definition Workshop:** Aimed at validating current state findings, collectively defining the desired future state, identifying barriers, and exploring opportunities for regional collaboration.
- **Optioneering Workshop:** Focused on refining developed options for collaboration, assessing their feasibility, relevance, and scalability.

A systematic approach was employed to identify the capability gaps between the current and desired future states of water and wastewater service delivery in the region. The QTC's current state assessment provided a baseline, highlighting the existing service delivery landscape in FNQ. The Future State Definition workshop validated these findings and helped define the desired future state, while also identifying barriers to capability building.

Informed by the gap analysis, an initial set of **eighteen options** was developed to address the identified capability gaps. Feedback from the FNQ Water Alliance during the Optioneering workshop was instrumental in refining these options, leading to the consolidation of related initiatives and the transformation of some into specific implementation actions under broader initiatives. This process ensured alignment with the operational contexts and capacities of FNQROC member councils.

Following the incorporation of workshop insights and broader industry analysis, the initial eighteen options were distilled into a final set of **eleven strategic initiatives**, each accompanied by corresponding implementation actions. These initiatives are designed to effectively guide member councils in executing the overall strategy.

The proposed strategic initiatives to enhance the capability of service delivery across FNQ include:

1**Establish Common Operating Systems, Platforms, and Tools**

Standardising processes to improve efficiency.

2**Regional Water Data Sharing**

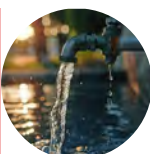
Facilitating collaboration through shared data resources.

3**Standardized SOPs, Work Instructions, Templates, and Processes**

Creating uniformity in operations.

4**Standardized Water and Wastewater Asset Design and Specification**

Ensuring consistency in infrastructure development.

5**Strategic Awareness of Water and Wastewater Service Delivery**

Enhancing understanding of service delivery dynamics.



6



Prudent and Efficient Water and Wastewater Services in FNQ

Promoting sustainable practices.

7



Establishing Regional Market Buying Power for FNQ

Leveraging collective purchasing to reduce costs.

8



Driving Change in Water and Wastewater Grant Funding

Advocating for improved funding mechanisms.

9



Building Capability in Risk-Based Decision Making Across FNQ

Enhancing decision-making frameworks.

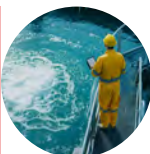
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Building Maturity in Asset Management and Planning Across FNQ

Strengthening asset management practices.

11



Building and Sustaining a Strong Water Workforce for FNQ

Fostering workforce development and retention.

The Regional Water Capability Plan underscores that sustainable capability improvements will emerge from enhanced regional collaboration among FNQROC member councils. By sharing resources, learning from one another, and working collectively, the councils can uplift their capabilities, advocate for broader policy change and investments where they add value and ensure the reliable delivery of water and wastewater services, with support and enablement from Government, key industry bodies and the broader market.



Douglas Shire Council

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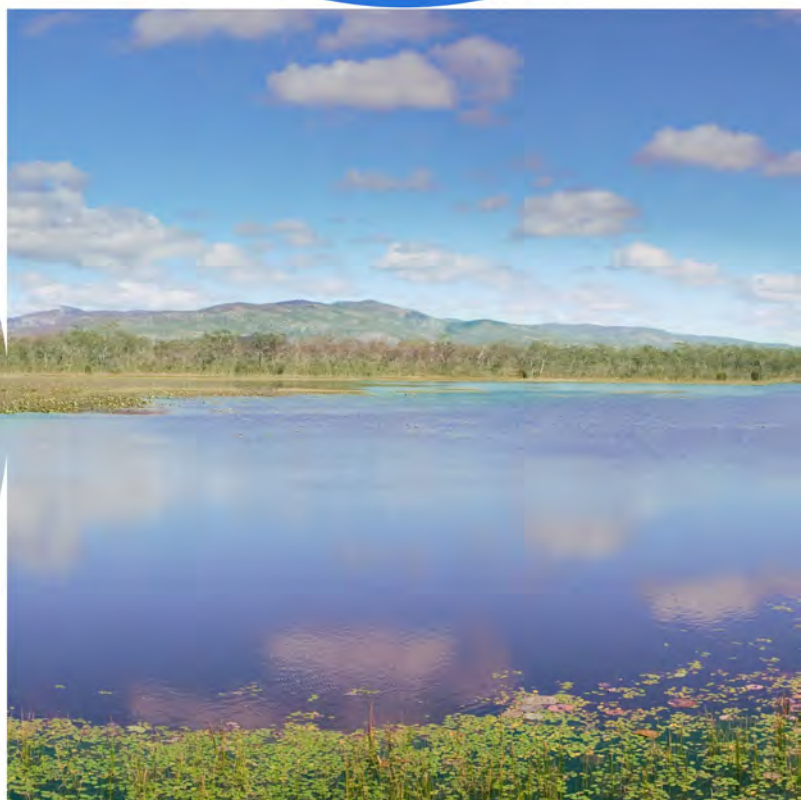
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Appendix A: FNQROC Council Water and Wastewater Profiles

Appendix B: Capability Gap Causal Factors

Appendix C: Barriers and Limitations (Future State Definition Workshop Outcomes)

Appendix D: Opportunities for Collaboration (Future State Definition Workshop Outcomes)



Regional Water Capability Plan Overview



Mareeba Shire Council

1 Introduction

Background

The water and wastewater sector, particularly in regional areas such as Far North Queensland (FNQ), is grappling with a multitude of complex challenges that are impacting the ability of businesses to deliver safe and reliable services and to plan for future growth. As a result, regional service providers' ability to efficiently and reliably deliver services to their customers and communities is constrained and limited. These challenges are multifaceted and stem from both internal and external factors.

Internally, service providers are contending with ageing infrastructure, which requires significant investment to upgrade or replace. This is compounded by the external pressures of population growth, which not only increases demand for services but also places additional strain on existing infrastructure. Furthermore, there is an expectation for improved service reliability, which necessitates ongoing maintenance and modernisation efforts.

The legislative and regulatory environment is also evolving. This means service providers are required to stay abreast of changes and ensure compliance, often necessitating updates to processes and systems. Additionally, customers are increasingly expecting higher levels of service while also demanding that the cost to serve be minimised, creating a challenging balancing act for providers.

These challenges as outlined in Figure 1-1 are further intensified when accounting for the geographical context for some of the service providers. Geographically, the wide service areas in regional locations like FNQ adds another layer of complexity, as the provision of services across vast and sometimes remote areas can be logistically challenging and costly. Additionally, the availability and retention of a skilled workforce and ability to get input from the market are limited, which can hinder the ability of service providers to maintain and improve service levels.

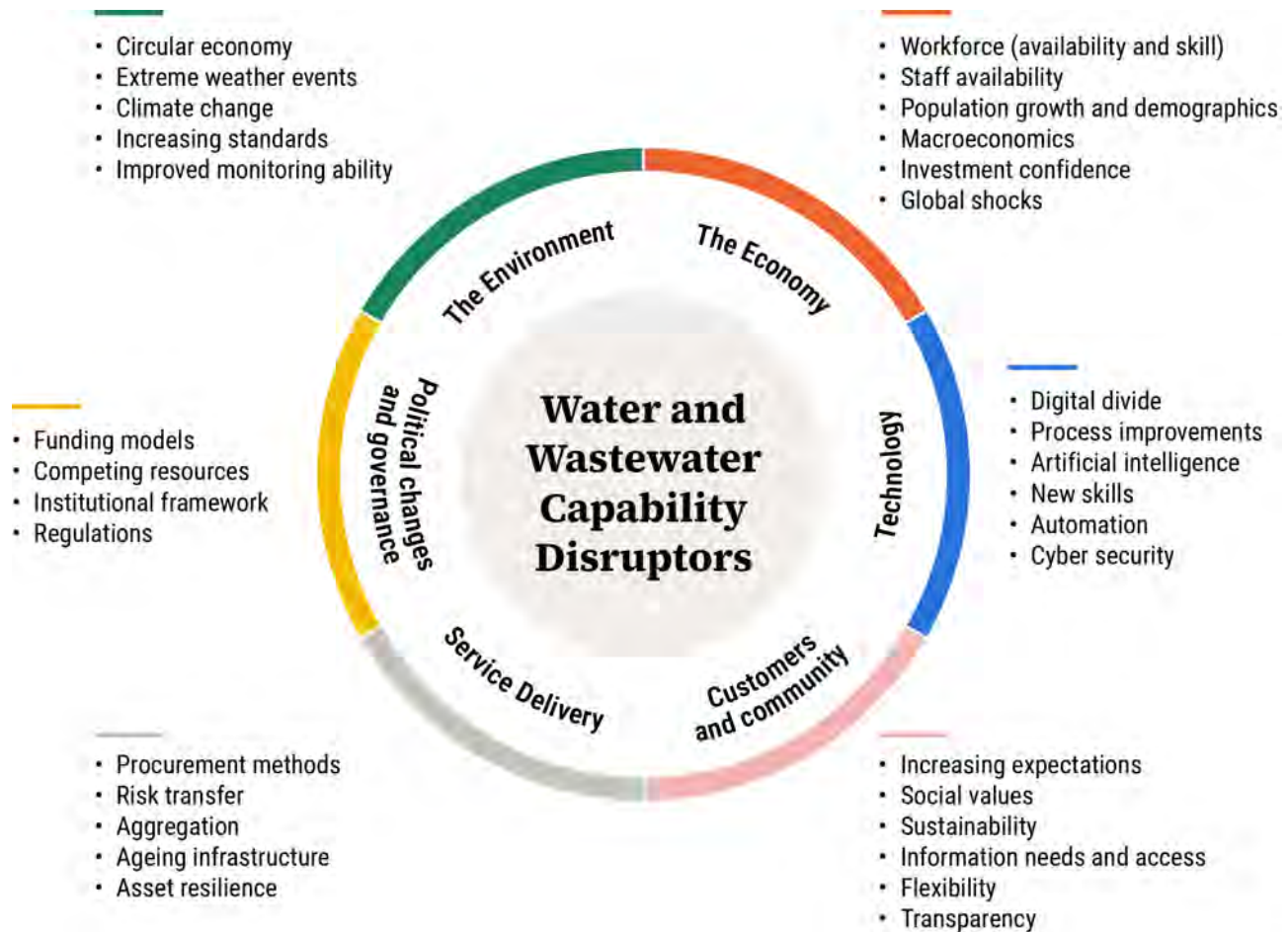


Figure 1-1: Water and wastewater capability disruptors

In response to these challenges, the Far North Queensland Regional Organisation of Councils (FNQROC) has taken proactive steps by commissioning the development of this Regional Water Capability Plan. This plan aims to identify capability gaps within the water business sector. The plan also assesses potential options for member councils, prioritising actions that can be taken in the short, medium, and long term to enhance capabilities across FNQ.

The Regional Water Capability Plan is focused on tangible improvements that can be undertaken to improve the internal capability, competency and performance of Council water and wastewater service providers and explores various options for enhancing the capabilities of these service providers across FNQ. Given the diverse capacities and requirements of FNQROC member councils, this Plan intends on providing holistic value for the region through prescribing a list of regional strategic initiatives and actions that are scalable and adaptable to the specific contexts of each council to align with local capacities, needs, and priorities.

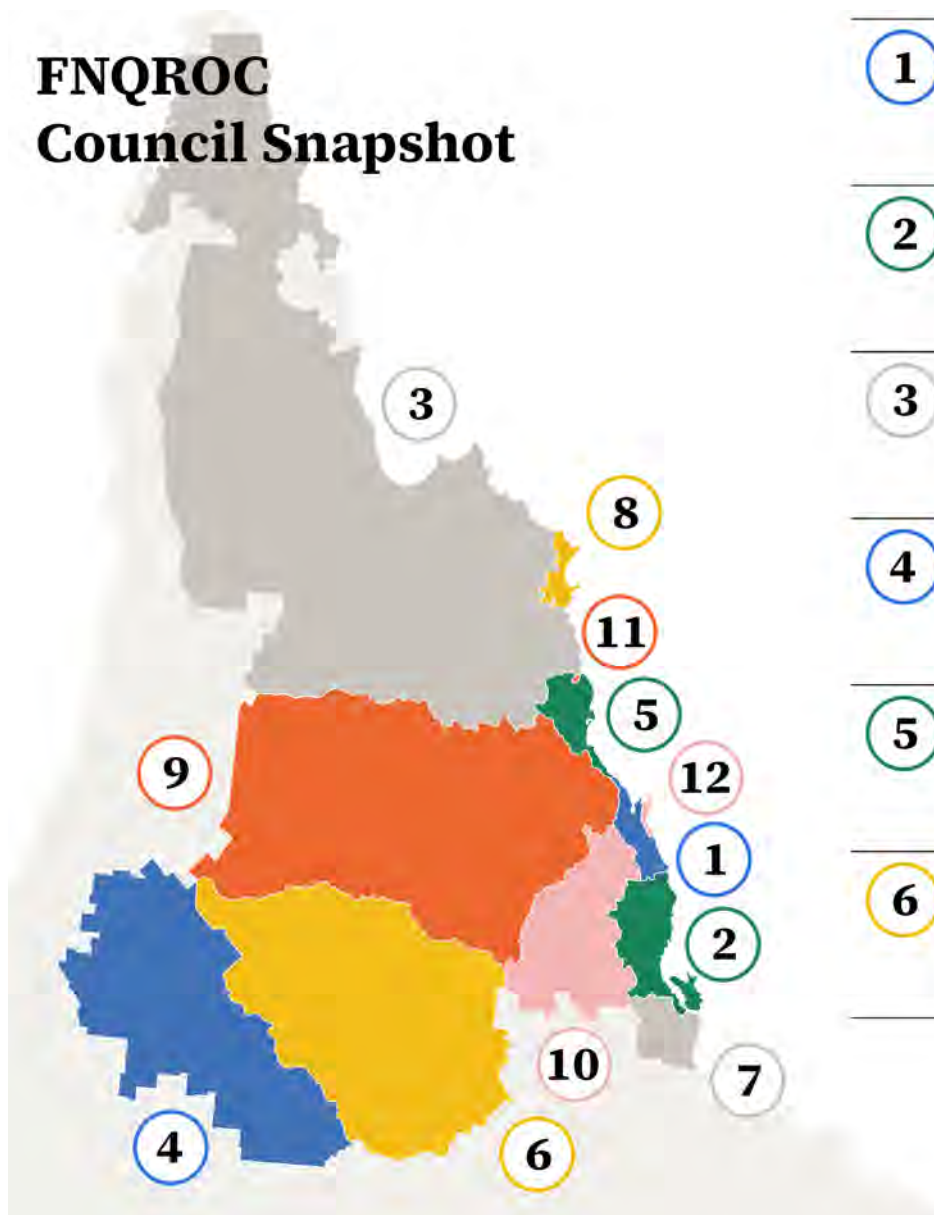
This Plan is indicative of a wider recognition of the need for strategic planning and collaboration among regional councils to address the pressing challenges faced by the water and wastewater sector. By identifying gaps and exploring options for improvement, the Plan aims to ensure that regional service providers can continue to deliver efficient and reliable services to their communities, despite the constraints and limitations currently faced. The success of the Regional Water Capability Plan will be critical in supporting the sustainable development and improvement of capability of regional areas like FNQ.

The Regional Water Capability Plan covers the following twelve (12) member councils:

1. Cairns Regional Council (CRC)
2. Cassowary Coast Regional Council (CCRC)
3. Cook Shire Council (CSC)
4. Croydon Shire Council (Croydon SC)
5. Douglas Shire Council (DSC)
6. Etheridge Shire Council (ESC)
7. Hinchinbrook Shire Council (HSC)
8. Hope Vale Aboriginal Shire Council (HVASC)
9. Mareeba Shire Council (MSC)
10. Tablelands Regional Council (TRC)
11. Wujal Wujal Aboriginal Shire Council (WWASC)
12. Yarrabah Aboriginal Shire Council (YASC)

Figure 1-2 provides a snapshot of the FNQROC member councils covered in this Plan.

FNQROC Council Snapshot



1	Cairns Regional Council Population: 165,525 Area: 1,692 km ² W&WW FTE: 288 Connection size: Large
2	Cassowary Coast Regional Council Population: 29,689 Area: 4,680 km ² W&WW FTE: 78 Connection size: Medium
3	Cook Shire Council Population: 4,445 Area: 105,622 km ² W&WW FTE: 20 Connection size: Small
4	Croydon Shire Council Population: 288 Area: 29,504 km ² W&WW FTE: 2 Connection size: Very small
5	Douglas Shire Council Population: 12,257 Area: 2,419 km ² W&WW FTE: 25 Connection size: Small
6	Etheridge Shire Council Population: 804 Area: 39,228 km ² W&WW FTE: 4 Connection size: Very small

7	Hinchinbrook Shire Council Population: 10,805 Area: 2,796 km ² W&WW FTE: 17 Connection size: Small
8	Hope Valley Aboriginal Shire Council Population: 1,081 Area: 1,110 km ² W&WW FTE: 4 Connection size: Very small
9	Mareeba Shire Council Population: 22,517 Area: 53,368 km ² W&WW FTE: 22 Connection size: Small
10	Tablelands Regional Council Population: 25,541 Area: 11,382 km ² W&WW FTE: 37 Connection size: Small
11	Wujal Wujal Aboriginal Shire Council Population: 306 Area: 12 km ² W&WW FTE: 5 Connection size: Very small
12	Yarrabah Aboriginal Shire Council Population: 2,848 Area: 156 km ² W&WW FTE: 5 Connection size: Very small

Map legend

Connection size: Very large ($\geq 100,000$) Large (25,000 - (100,000)
 Medium (10,000 - 25,000) Small (1,000 - 10,000) Very small ($< 1,000$)
W&WW Water and wastewater **FTE** Full time equivalent

Figure 1-2: FNQROC council snapshot



Purpose

This Regional Water Capability Plan is a crucial strategic plan for FNQROC, serving as a strategic guide to enhance the delivery of services across the region. Its importance lies in addressing key capability challenges faced by member councils through fostering council collaboration and driving regional partnerships, providing strategic alignment across the region, guiding policy reform and improvement, leading investment decisions through contextualising the region's specific needs and priorities, and highlighting any funding and resourcing support required from the Government to reach the desired future state of service capability.

It is acknowledged that the FNQROC member councils are diverse in capacities, operating contexts and needs. It is therefore a criterion in the development of this Regional Water Capability Plan to provide holistic value for the region by allowing for adaptability to the specific context of each individual council.

Outcomes

The Regional Water Capability Plan provides a list of scalable and achievable short, medium, and long-term strategic initiatives and actions that enable councils to address capability challenges in the delivery of services and deliver transformative outcomes for FNQROC.

While recognising the intended outcomes of this Regional Water Capability Plan, it is important to acknowledge what this Plan does not aim to provide an immediate fix for capability challenges faced by FNQROC councils. Instead, the Plan is developed to guide capability improvement efforts, and as such, set out strategic initiatives and actions that require time, resourcing and support, and sustained commitment by member councils to fully implement. As such, the outcomes of the Plan are not 'fit-for-all' solutions to improve capability.

This Regional Water Capability Plan is intended to form a key part of FNQROC's broader advocacy strategy to engage with the State and Federal Governments and industry representative groups to deliver on regional water and wastewater service outcomes. As an outcome, it is expected that the Plan will provide a path forward for FNQROC and council members to improve capability within their water and wastewater service providers and drive efficient, viable and reliable water and wastewater services for the communities of FNQ.

Development approach

Background

The process of developing the Regional Water Capability Plan for FNQROC is a comprehensive, multi-step process designed to enhance their ability of councils to deliver water and wastewater services effectively and efficiently. This structured approach addresses capability challenges through the following four (4) key steps, also outlined in Figure 1-3 below:

- Understanding on-the-ground issues
- Conducting workshops to socialize key findings and themes
- Performing options analysis
- Defining implementing agreed solutions.

The Queensland Treasury Corporation (QTC) has been instrumental in laying the groundwork for this plan by executing essential tasks related to the first two steps. QTC's efforts have been crucial in contextualising the capability challenges faced by FNQROC member councils in the current landscape, and the outputs from these initial steps have provided the foundational direction and focus for this plan.

The current phase, which involves the development of this Regional Water Capability Plan along with the necessary processes and stakeholder engagement, constitutes the third step of FNQROC's overall project (Options Analysis). The fourth and final step will involve the resourcing, planning, and implementation of the initiatives and actions identified in this plan, ensuring a robust and sustainable approach to water and wastewater service delivery (note, this will be the subsequent work from this report).

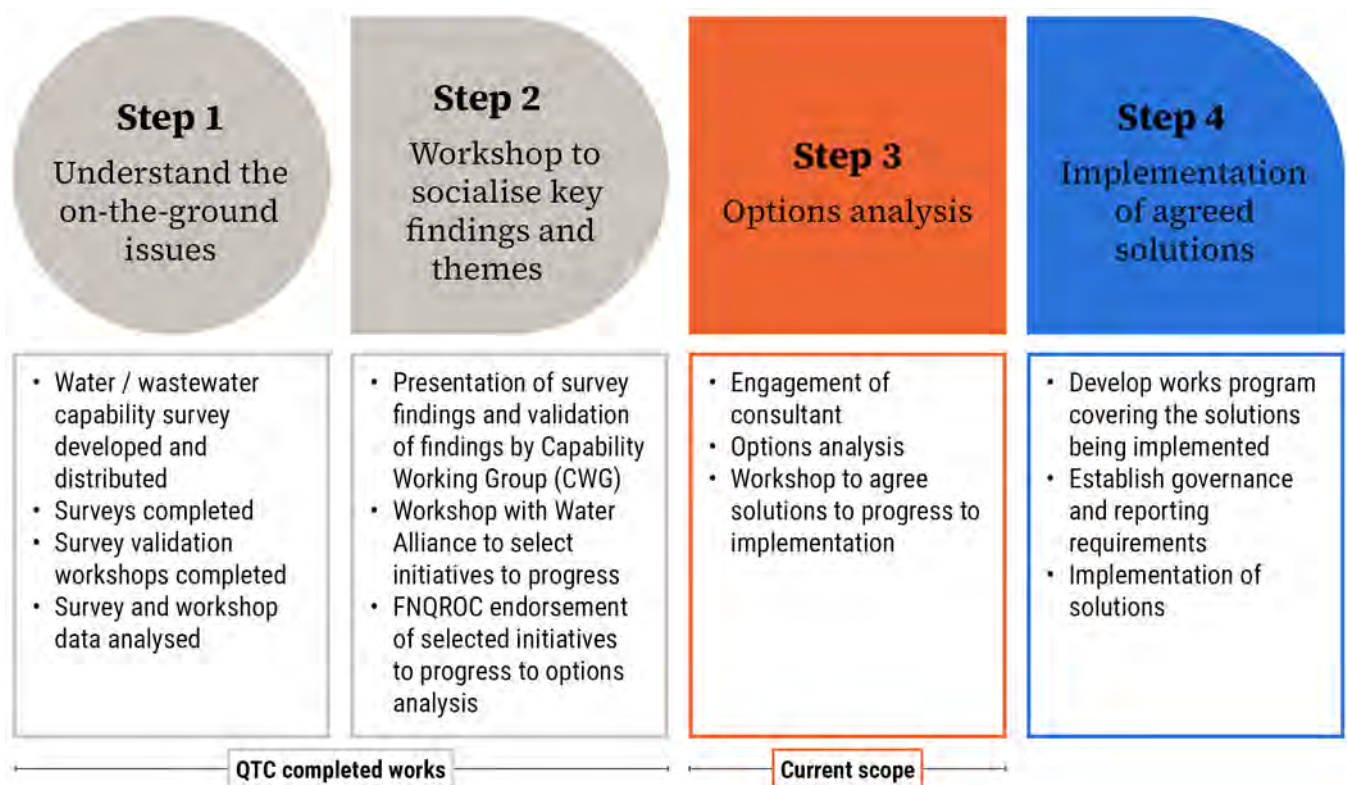


Figure 1-3: FNQROC Project Overview

Engagement process

The development of this Regional Water Capability Plan was characterised by extensive engagement with FNQROC member councils, ensuring that the content of this Plan is well-informed by the unique needs and priorities of member councils and consequently, thus fostering a sense of ownership and commitment to the developed strategic initiative and actions. As part of the process, a comprehensive stakeholder engagement process in the form of meetings and a series of workshops with FNQROC member councils was adopted. This process provided buy-in on the proposed Plan and the subsequent strategic initiatives and actions, and ensured the outcomes are contextualised to the specific needs and priorities of FNQ councils.

The main face-to-face workshops that underpinned the development of the Regional Water Capability Plan and involved FNQROC member councils are outlined in the Table 1-1 Workshops Summary Table below. A summary of the workshop purpose and outcomes are outlined below.

Table 1-1: Workshops Summary Table

Workshops	Purpose	Outcomes
Future State Definition workshop (19 March 2024)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Validate current state findings from previous work conducted by QTC • Collectively define and envision the future state of service delivery and capability in FNQ. • Identify challenges and barriers to achieving efficient business operations, and opportunities for regional collaboration and partnerships. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contribute to shaping the future state of service delivery in FNQ. • Ensure that the strategic initiatives and actions developed in this Plan accurately reflect on-the-ground insights.
Optioneering workshop (18 June 2024)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and refine options to collaboration options and check their feasibility, relevance, and scalability. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a final set of agreed strategic initiatives and actions for capability building across the region.



In addition to extensive engagement with member councils, the development of this Plan was guided by a structured and methodical approach ensuring a clear pathway from current state analysis and findings to the delivery of an implementation roadmap. Figure 1-4 below schematically illustrates the development process of this Regional Water Capability Plan.



Figure 1-4: Regional Water Capability Plan development process overview



Stakeholders, key roles and governance

The development of the Regional Water Capability Plan has been significantly influenced by the active participation, engagement, and contributions of FNQROC and all twelve (12) Councils. This process has been facilitated through the FNQ Water Alliance and demonstrated the instrumental efforts to enhancing organisational capabilities across the FNQ region.

The key roles and governance responsibilities outlined in Table 1-2 are not only crucial to the development of this Regional Water Capability Plan but also play a vital role in its ongoing implementation and resourcing. This structured approach ensures that the plan remains dynamic and responsive to the evolving needs of the region, fostering continuous improvement and sustainable water management practices.

Table 1-2: FNQROC Regional Water Capability Plan Governance Structure

Stakeholder	Responsibility
FNQROC Board	The governing and decision-making body for the Regional Water Capability Plan consisting of member council Mayors and administratively managed by the FNQROC.
FNQ Water Alliance	The technical working group for the Regional Water Capability Plan consisting of technical officers and senior leaders from the member councils. The FNQ Water Alliance is the key source of information relating to council water and wastewater operations.
FNQROC Regional Strategic Infrastructure Coordinator	The project manager for the development and implementation of this Regional Water Capability Plan is the FNQROC Regional Strategic Infrastructure Coordinator, and they are the point of contact for the delivery of this project.



Regional Context



Tablelands Regional Council

2 Regional context

FNQROC overview

FNQ is a geographically vast and diverse region covering 1,235 km of the eastern seaboard with a land area of 252,542 square km. The region is home to a population of over 289,000 across a highly dispersed and diverse region with a population density of 1.15 persons per square km. The region is recognised as the largest and fastest growing region in Northern Australia; therefore, the reliable delivery of water and wastewater services is crucial for population growth, economic resilience, and agricultural expansion across the region.

The FNQROC stands as an alliance for twelve (12) member councils within FNQ. The alliance focuses on fostering collaborative resource and knowledge sharing opportunities as well as alignment in strategy and processes to help address distinctive challenges and identify opportunities faced across the region. The member councils within FNQROC represent a diverse array of communities, each varying significantly in terms of land area, population, and economic profile.

Reflecting the region's rich diversity, the member councils exhibit vast contrasts in their water and wastewater service delivery profiles. Whilst Council benefit from alliances and collaboration at a macro-scale, the individual councils face unique economic market, geographic and infrastructure challenges related to scale, size and community expectations. For instance:

- **Asset base size:** larger member councils manage multiple water and wastewater treatment plants and oversee extensive water and wastewater networks, and in contrast, smaller and more regional councils operate fewer treatment facilities and service vast areas with limited infrastructure.
- **Revenue streams:** Larger councils constituting a stronger revenue base maintain better financial support and resourcing for reinvestment into delivering efficient and reliable water and wastewater services. Councils in more rural and less populated regions are bounded by limited financial support and resourcing, creating challenges for these smaller councils to fund investments to improve efficiency, effectiveness, and reliability of service delivery.

These disparities between the FNQ councils not only highlight the opportunities and challenges for delivering holistic value and outcomes in terms of providing capability improvement solutions for the region, but also emphasising the ultimate need for tailored strategies and collaborative efforts within FNQ to better the delivery of water and wastewater services across the region.

A summary of the water and wastewater profiles for the twelve FNQROC member councils is provided in **Appendix A**.



Regional collaboration

FNQ councils focus on collaboration across the region. With a long successful track record, the region fostered collaborative arrangements through the FNQROC and Technical Advisory Committees such as the FNQ Water Alliance. Through these arrangements, councils have been able to work together to address common issues affecting water and wastewater outcomes and services across the region – a central and integral tenant to the success and efficacy of this Regional Water Capability Plan.

Whilst collaboration is core to the success of capability uplift across the region, it is acknowledged that collaborative works can only influence and deliver sustained change up to a certain point. That is; collaboration will need to be supported by further engagement and investment by Government (State and/or Federal), industry bodies and the private sector in order to enable the capability improvements and uplift actions to come to life.

Therefore, this Regional Water Capability Plan seeks to highlight the opportunities for self-sustained collaboration across FNQ whilst accentuating and creating the need for partnership and engagement with, and investment by, government and industry to ensure the continued viability and sustainability of critical and essential water and wastewater service delivery across the region.

Queensland Water Regional Alliance Program

The Queensland Water Regional Alliance Program (QWRAP) is an initiative that facilitates partnership between the Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ), the Queensland Water Directorate (qldwater), and the Queensland Government through the Department of Regional Development Manufacturing and Water (RDMW). The program engages with nine (9) Water Alliances, including the FNQ Water Alliance, to deliver the following strategic priorities (QWRAP, 2023):

- Enable regional scale delivery of sustainable services
- Build capacity and capability
- Drive regional partnerships services and initiatives

The QWRAP and qldwater continue to be an integral and valued partner in the development of this Regional Water Capability Plan not only through grant funding for this project and Plan, but as an integrated part of the FNQ Water Alliance.

Jobs Queensland

Acting as an independent advisor to government, Jobs Queensland (JQ) serves as a vital conduit for communication and a catalyst for change in Queensland by supporting the maintenance and development of a highly skilled and resilient workforce in the state.

Working in collaboration with its partners, JQ play a pivotal role in FNQ to help the region attract, develop, and retain a strong workforce to achieve broader strategic goals and objectives. They support this by executing the following activities related to their Works Program (Jobs Queensland, 2024):

- Workforce planning for regions to build workforce capability and resilience through supporting the Regional Jobs Committees and the Region Workforce Planning Guide.
- Supporting the Queensland Workforce Strategy (QWS) delivered by the Queensland Government by implementing three key deliverables within the strategy; Grow your own regional workforce program, Health and community sector workforce development project, and higher-level apprenticeships and traineeships.

JQ remain essential and valued partners throughout this project, and their contributions extend beyond grant funding for the development of this Regional Water Capability Plan. Their involvement supporting the QWS, and the implementation of activities in their Works Program is integral for developing and maintaining a strong workforce in FNQ.



Queensland's water industry

Queensland's water industry is large and diverse, with a diverse range of service delivery models and approaches. Urban water and wastewater services are provided by:

- **Three (3) bulk water entities** ([Seqwater](#), [Gladstone Area Water Board](#) and [Mount Isa Water Board](#))
- **Two (2) distributor-retailers** ([Unitywater](#) and [Urban Utilities](#)) and three local governments ([Gold Coast City Council](#), [Logan City Council](#) and [Redland City Council](#)) in South-East Queensland
- **Sixty-seven (67) local governments** outside South-East Queensland (twelve of which within FNQ)

Despite the large number of urban water and wastewater service providers in Queensland, 95% of connected properties receive water and sewerage services from the 20 largest service providers in Queensland. Of which, only 2 or the 20 largest service providers in Queensland are within FNQ (Cairns Regional Council and Cassowary Coast Regional Council).

The remaining 5% of connected properties across Queensland receive urban water services from 52 small and very small service providers. In general, the communities these providers service are very small and often geographically isolated. This is the case for 83% of water and wastewater service providers in FNQ.

This variation in scale means that there are significant differences, challenges and complexity in capacity and capability across the FNQ Region in the delivery of water and wastewater services within a regulatory context that is agnostic to these challenges and treats all service providers outside of South-East Queensland equally – regardless of size, viability, capacity, or capability.

However, it should be noted that the majority of capability challenges and improvement opportunities outlined in this Regional Water Capability Plan are relevant and applicable to most Councils across the FNQ Region, regardless of size, serviceable population, asset base or level of self-sufficiency.

Alignment to the Queensland Water Strategy and Urban Water Risk Assessment

A number of initiatives have been established to guide the State Government's approach to managing water resources and ensuring the provision of safe, reliable, and sustainable water and wastewater services. These initiatives are particularly relevant for regions like FNQ, where unique environmental challenges and population pressures require tailored strategies. Two key initiatives include:

- The **Queensland Water Strategy** outlines the state's long-term vision for water management, focusing on sustainable water use, protecting water quality, and ensuring the resilience of water supplies in the face of climate change and population growth. It emphasises the importance of integrating water planning across different levels of government, industries, and communities to achieve a coordinated approach to water management.
- The **Queensland Urban Water Risk Assessment** complements this strategy by identifying potential risks to urban water supplies, such as aging infrastructure, extreme weather events, and the variability of water sources. It provides a framework for assessing and mitigating these risks, helping Government to prioritise investments and improvements that enhance the security and reliability of water services. The development of this Regional Water Capability Plan for FNQ and Queensland Urban Water Risk Assessment Process are concurrent.

The two initiatives are aligned in processes and have the ability to drive significant change and improvement in the delivery of safe, reliable and sustainable water and wastewater services to FNQ communities by capable, competent and sustainable water and wastewater service providers.

In the context of FNQ, the Urban Water Risk Assessment aims to build resilience and address risk in relation to the delivery of infrastructure to sustain reliable service delivery. The Risk Assessment enables risk mitigation and drives increased performance to the supply of safe drinking water, and secure water supply for the future in the context of ever-evolving environmental and climate scenarios. The Risk Assessment also considers the broad extent of organisational capability challenges and risks faced across the Queensland Urban Water Sector in sustaining critical water and wastewater services to communities. Therefore, there are strong synergies and interrelationships between the Urban Water Risk Assessment outcomes and the observations and initiatives identified in this Regional Water Capability Plan.



Water reform in Far North Queensland

It is recognised that FNQ's unique environmental and demographic challenges demand robust and reliable water and wastewater service delivery. This however is challenged by the current stretched capabilities and capacity of local Councils resulting in inefficiencies, service disruptions and difficulties in meeting the community's growing needs. While comprehensive water reform is one pathway to addressing these challenges, the current political appetite for such significant institutional reform remains limited, necessitating the need to explore alternate approaches and solutions to the region's capability challenges.

To ensure viable and sustainable service delivery, the approach to the development of this plan, its enabling initiatives and actions are focused on collaborative and specific approaches to provide enhanced operational and organisational capabilities and are not reliant on significant policy and institutional reform to realise and achieve.

Moreover, the true success of this plan is predicated on the need to build strong collaborative partnerships both regionally, and across the State and National landscape. The plan provides a collaborative foundation built on incremental and sustainable improvements for FNQROC member councils to explore new models of governance, funding, ways of working and service delivery approaches to deliver long-term, sustainable improvement in capability to enable water and wastewater service provision to communities across FNQ. By taking this proactive approach to strengthen local and regional capacity and capability, FNQ water and wastewater service providers can better navigate their water and wastewater service delivery challenges, thus improving the delivery of essential services, even in the absence of broader political or institutional reform.



Understanding Current State Capability Challenges



Douglas Shire Council

3 Validating the current state



Current state analysis and key themes

The FNQ Water Alliance, in collaboration with the Queensland Treasury Corporation (QTC), has undertaken a comprehensive process to identify and map the current state capability gaps, challenges, and opportunities in the delivery of water and wastewater services across FNQ.

This foundational analysis is critical to the development of the Regional Water Capability Plan. The QTC's in-depth assessment provided a detailed evaluation of capability gaps across the entire spectrum of water and wastewater service delivery, focusing on core services such as water supply, distribution, wastewater treatment, and maintenance.

The current works builds on the QTC analysis and ensure there is a level of alignment and consistency. The QTC findings were built on and further developed using a methodical approach that ensures the plan's scope, and outcomes address the core capability challenges and gaps. This approach maintains full visibility and traceability of outcomes.

The QTC's current state gap analysis identified the following four (4) key capability themes, as outlined in Figure 3-1 below:

- **People:** availability, skills, and experience of staff, contractors, and specialists.
- **Processes:** standardisation of templates, known tasks, and clear accountabilities and responsibilities.
- **Integration:** integration throughout the business, including alignment with other key organisational plans.
- **Systems and Data:** supporting software, applications, or tools, and the capturing, quality, and reliability of data.

These themes inform the capability gap areas and drive effective delivery of water and wastewater services in the region.

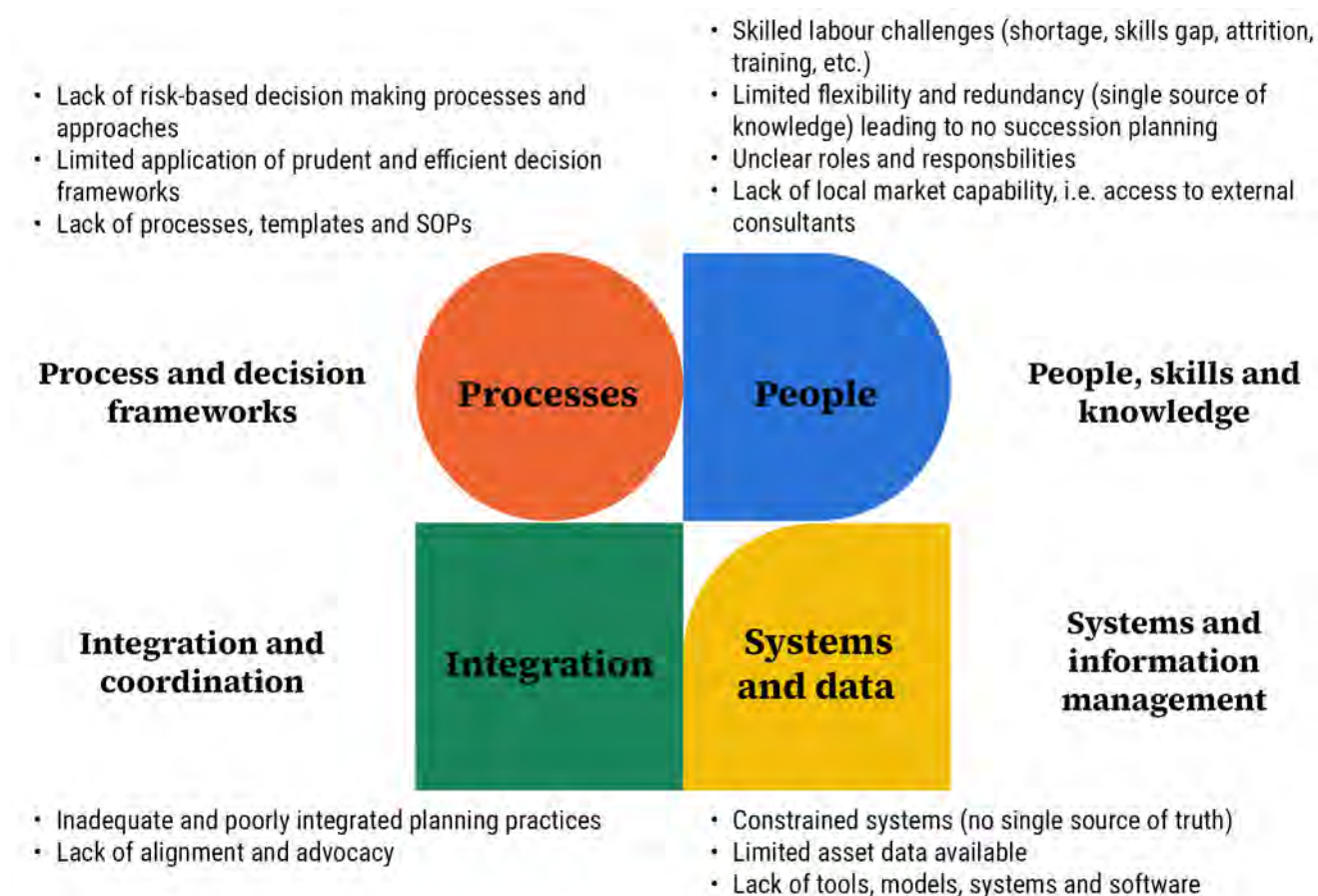


Figure 3-1: QTC Capability Areas

Further details on the capability gap causal factors related to the key areas are provided in Appendix B.

The current state QTC assessment identified a distribution of the primary causal factors contributing to the capability gaps within the four key areas. The main factors identified are related to People, Systems and Data as summarised in Table 3-1 below

Table 3-1: QTC Current State Aggregated Causal Factors

<p>46%</p> <p>People related capability causal factors</p> <p>Lack of available staff, contractors, consultants and skills gaps</p>	<p>29%</p> <p>Systems and data related capability causal factors</p> <p>Reliable to inform decision making, having the right tools and models, data accuracy and legacy systems</p>	<p>19%</p> <p>Processes related capability causal factors</p> <p>Lack of defined processes, standard operating procedures, unclear accountabilities, and critical templates</p>
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A framework to align capability growth opportunities for FNQ

The QTC capability findings were instrumental in highlighting the diverse challenges and opportunities that Councils in FNQ encounter in their provision of essential water and wastewater services.

This comprehensive analysis identified the need to establish a service and product-agnostic approach to building the Regional Water Capability Plan – a plan that recognises organisational capability and improvements beyond specific, vertical services and functions and one that encompass an end-to-end, holistic view of operations, maintenance, and asset management. An end-to-end approach that ensures critical service delivery is efficient, safe, and effective, particularly in resource-constrained environments like FNQ.

Therefore, the plan introduces the 'Water Service Delivery Model'. The delivery approach is based on strategic model that responds to the QTC theme areas and aims to harmonise improvement efforts in an aligned manner that is relevant to 'typical' water utility service delivery models and best practices in water and wastewater management. The model outlined in Figure 3-2 was used as a blueprint for aligning initiatives with the overarching goal of enhancing service delivery capabilities throughout the region. It emphasises the importance of an end-to-end perspective on capability development, and advocates for a consistent framework that builds upon the current state as revealed by the QTC's analysis.

The model also brings to life the key theme areas or core services covering infrastructure planning, design and delivery, asset management and operations, maintenance and ongoing asset renewal and replacement. This integrated approach provided better definition of current gaps and defined key outcomes required to guide the definition of a desired future state. In other words, the model ensured that any identified improvement initiatives are in sync with the typical core services and enable functional services of water and wastewater service providers.

The unified and simple structure of the model also acknowledges the importance of aligning planning, operations, maintenance, and asset management functions which are typically service agnostic. The use of this standardised and unified model reflects the operational reality of most Australian water and wastewater service providers, which tend to avoid running multiple, disparate processes.



Figure 3-2: Water service delivery model

Capability themes

The Regional Water Capability Plan is intended to provide a platform to enhance and enable the efficacy and sustainability of water and wastewater service delivery. By adopting a thematic approach, the Regional Water Capability Plan ensures a holistic and end-to-end approach to the development and improvement of capability across all facets of water and wastewater service provision.

Whilst each of the core services focuses on specific elements of water and wastewater infrastructure lifecycle, there are a number of fundamental enabling functions (or capability themes) that underpin all core services and are often 'service agnostic'. These include:

1. **Reliable Data, Information, and Fit-For-Purpose Systems:** underscores the importance of accurate data collection and analysis, which is crucial for informed decision-making and system optimisation.
2. **Service Quality, Processes, and Compliance:** focuses on maintaining high standards of water quality, efficient processes, and adherence to regulatory requirements, ensuring that services meet customer expectations and legal mandates.
3. **Customer, Community, and Stakeholder:** emphasises the significance of engaging with the stakeholders, understanding their needs, and fostering strong relationships to inform or aid in decision-making. This engagement is vital for ensuring that services are customer-centric and community-focused.
4. **Financial and Commercial:** addresses the economic sustainability of water and wastewater service providers, ensuring that they operate on sound financial principles and explore commercial opportunities to support their activities.
5. **Policy, Governance, Legal and Risk:** relates to establishment of robust policies, effective governance structures, legal compliance, and comprehensive risk management strategies. These elements are essential for creating a stable and predictable operating environment.

6. **Strategy, ESG, and Performance:** focuses on long-term strategic planning, environmental, social, and governance (ESG) considerations, and the continuous improvement of service performance.
7. **People, Capability, and Culture:** highlights the role of human resources in achieving organisational goals. Investing in the development of staff capabilities and nurturing positive organisational cultures are key to driving innovation and excellence in service delivery.

The supporting and enabling functions along with the core services and activities establishes a comprehensive framework that provides regional alignment on capability growth as outlined in Figure 3-3.

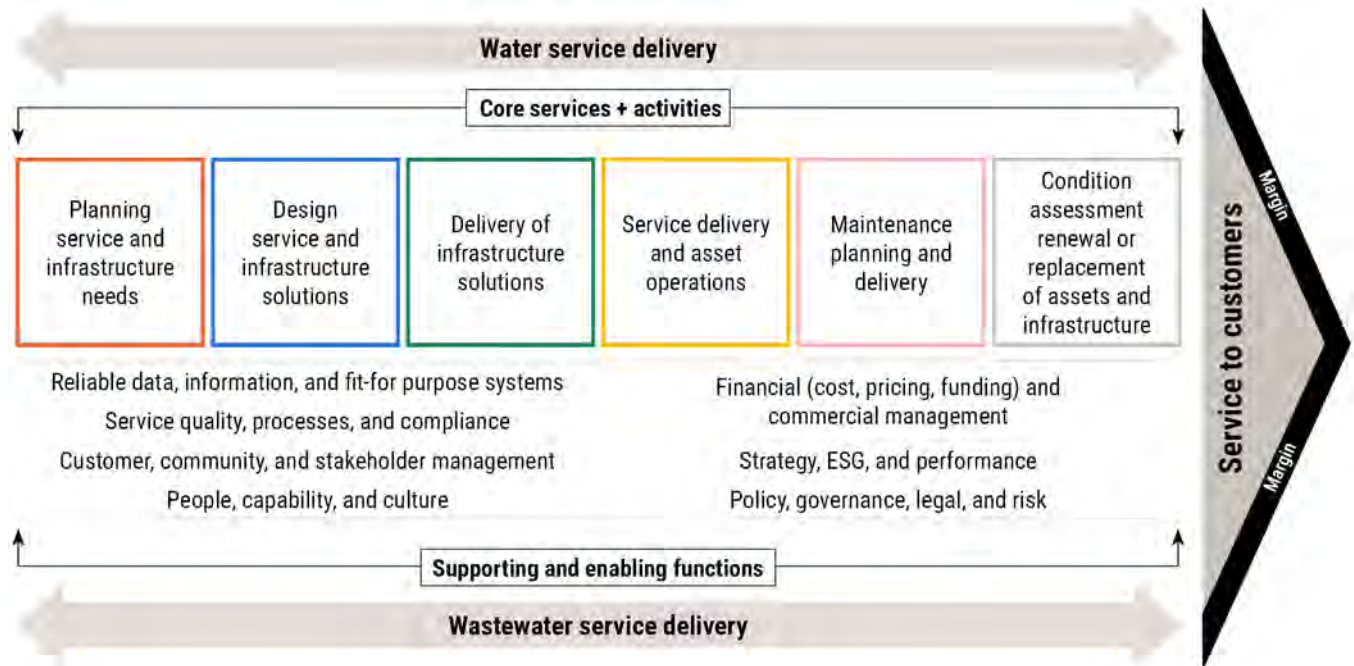


Figure 3-3: Water and wastewater service delivery model

Together, these capability themes form the pillars of this Regional Water Capability Plan, guiding the assessment of capability challenges and providing the framework water and wastewater service providers towards a future where they can effectively meet the challenges of service delivery in an ever-evolving landscape.

What this meant for FNQROC

Building on the foundation work from the QTC's current state assessment, an initial desktop assessment was conducted to gauge the extent to which capabilities align with the Water and Wastewater Service Delivery Model. This provided a good understanding of current capabilities to inform future planning and investment, ensuring that resources are allocated effectively to areas where they will have the most impact. Therefore, contributing to the ultimate goal of fostering resilient water business performance across FNQ, whilst ensuring the initiatives are robust and adaptable to economic, social and customer considerations.

The outcomes from the QTC current state assessment were mapped to the Service Delivery model to ensure assessment continuity during the development of the Regional Water Capability Plan as illustrated in Figure 3-4.

The mapping highlighted the extent of capability improvement opportunities to be unlocked in the end-to-end model for water and wastewater service delivery and across the FNQ region. It was evident in the figure that an integrated and end-to-end approach to addressing capability gaps was required to avoid siloed and unintegrated solutions development. This was later used as a foundation to identify capability improvement opportunities across the core water and wastewater services and activities for the regional as a whole.

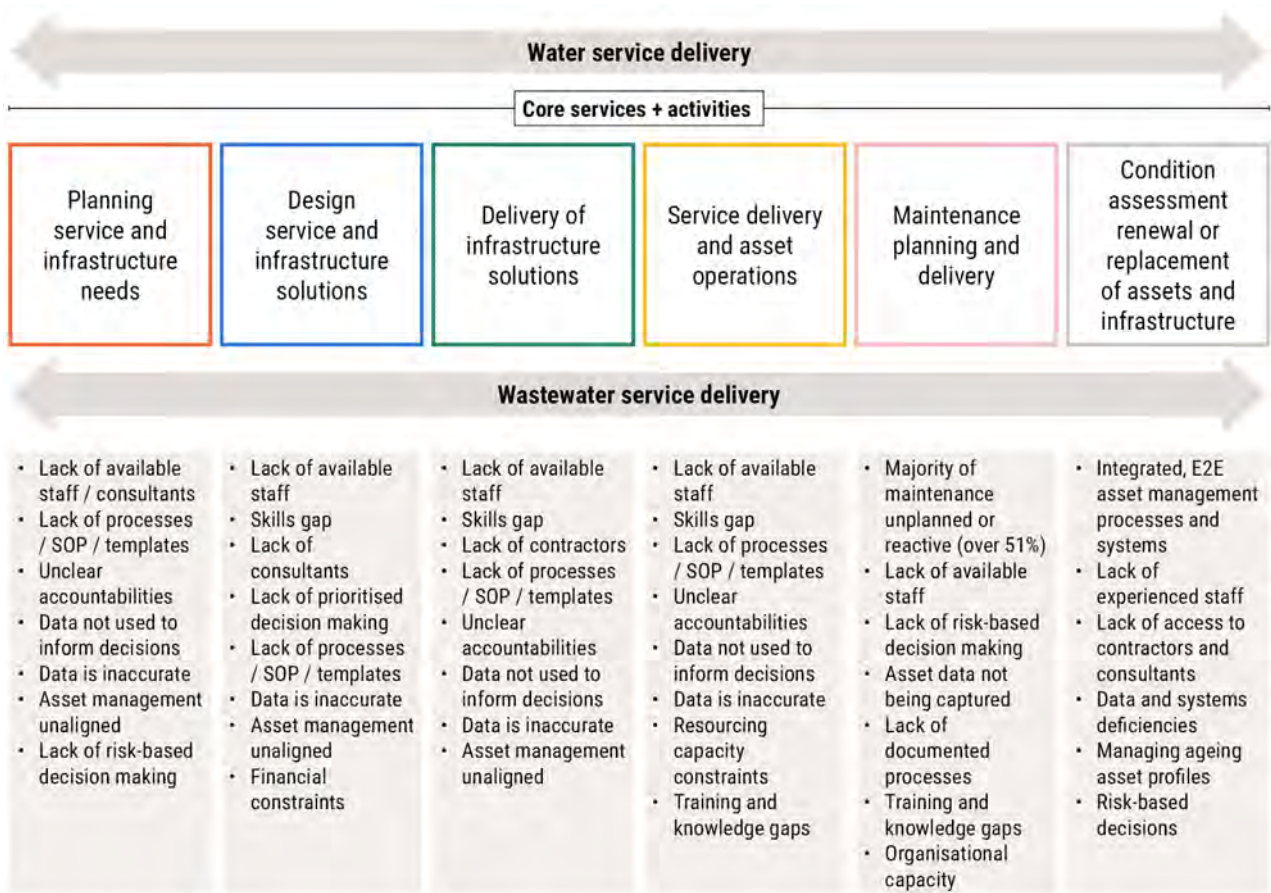


Figure 3-4: Current state mapping of QTC findings

The assessment highlighted the variation in maturity level for the capability themes (or enabling functions) across the FNQ regional councils as a whole. The theme covering customer, community and stakeholder management was recognised as the most mature capability theme for FNQ regional council as denoted in green (●) in Figure 3-5. Other themes focused on finance, strategy and policy were of moderate level of maturity as denoted in amber (▲) which generally cover the basic 'Business and Usual' functions in most council. Similarly, some capability themes that focused on data, systems, and people were the least mature, as denoted in red (■).

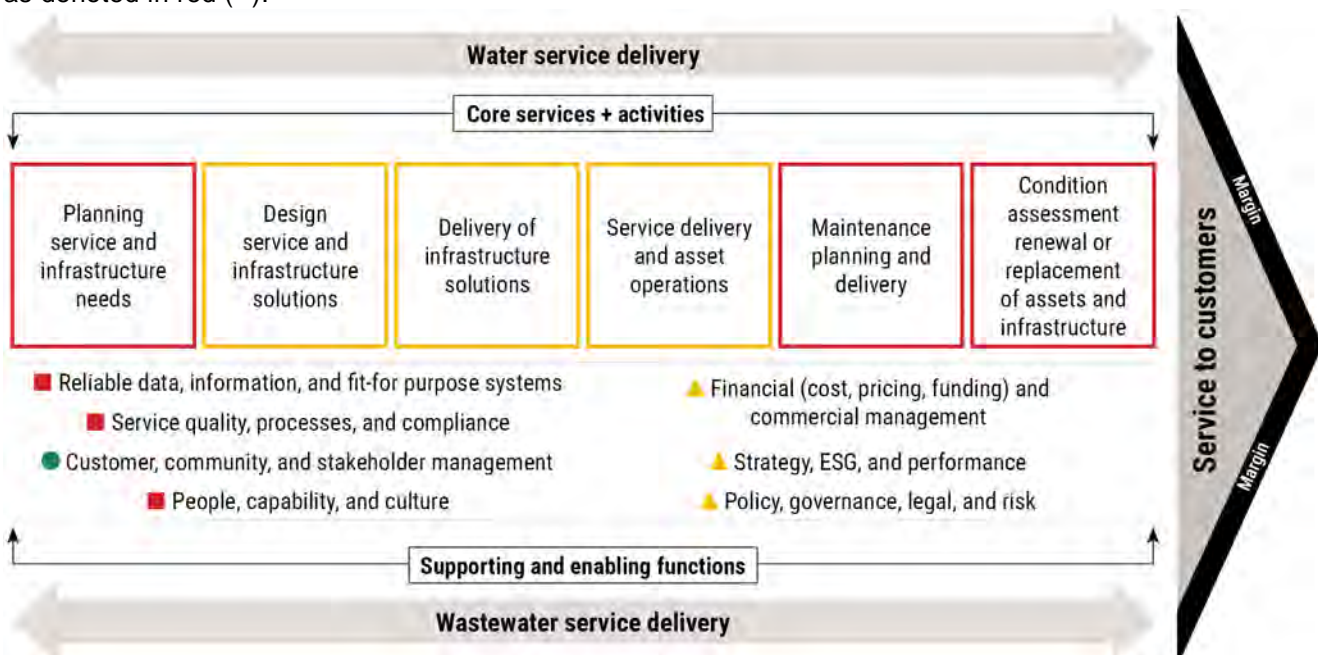
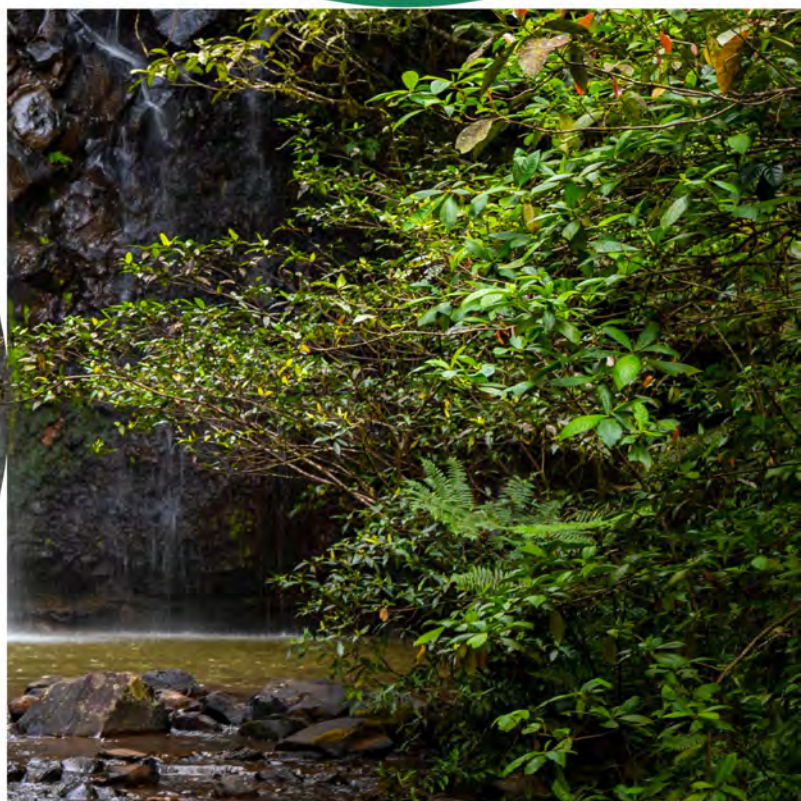


Figure 3-5: Overall maturity of the capability themes based on QTC findings



With an intentional focus on the enabling and supporting functions of FNQ Water Service Providers, the Regional Water Capability Plan through the foundational elements of the Water Service Delivery Model targeted mainly soft or non-infrastructure improvement opportunities that are instrumental in driving improved capability performance and outcomes.

The emphasis on non-infrastructure improvements is particularly noteworthy as it recognises the value of soft infrastructure - the processes, practices, and human capital - that underpin the physical aspects of water service delivery. By enhancing these elements, FNQ water and wastewater service providers can achieve a level of operational excellence that not only meets but exceeds the expectations of their stakeholders. This strategic focus is indicative of a forward-thinking approach that prioritises long-term sustainability and efficiency in water resource management.



Envisioning Future Capability for FNQ



Tablelands Regional Council

4 Defining the future of capability in FNQ



The future state of water and wastewater in the region

Defining the desired future state of service delivery is a critical step in the development of strategic initiatives aimed at enhancing the overall capabilities of water and wastewater service providers across FNQ. Establishing a clear and shared vision for the future state is essential to ensure that all efforts by the FNQROC councils are aligned, whether in the short, medium, or long term. This vision serves as the foundation for crafting a comprehensive set of initiatives and actions that will guide the region towards its desired outcomes.

To chart a strategic course for future service delivery, the FNQ Water Alliance engaged in an intensive, face-to-face Future State Definition workshop. The purpose of this workshop was to collaboratively define what success would look like for water and wastewater service delivery by 2034. This exercise focused on developing a shared vision that aligns with the capability themes outlined in the Service Delivery Model. Importantly, the workshop provided a platform for all member councils, regardless of their current capacities, sizes, or limitations, to contribute to the definition of future success across the region.

By fostering this collaborative approach, the FNQ Water Alliance ensured that the vision for the future state is not only ambitious and forward-looking but also inclusive and representative of the diverse needs and perspectives of all councils involved. This alignment is crucial for driving cohesive and effective action towards the long-term sustainability and resilience of water and wastewater services in FNQ.

Reliable data, information, and fit-for-purpose systems

Focusing on workshop insights from a reliable data, information, and fit-for-purpose systems perspective, there is an emphasis on the employment of proactive strategies for infrastructure condition assessment, with condition data linked to long-term planning, and the incorporation of lifecycle triggers for action. A shared asset information platform with updated and accessible models, alongside a centralised database for knowledge and document template sharing, standardised design practices (SDPs), were highlighted as essential for success across the region. Additionally, there is a strong focus on improving as-built drawings, plans, GIS systems, and asset registers for water and wastewater infrastructure across the region.



Service quality, processes, and compliance

The member councils have outlined a unified vision for the future state of service quality, processes, and compliance in the delivery of water and wastewater services. Their vision includes standardised condition assessment procedures, a common approach to valuations, annual reports, and Drinking Water Quality Management Plans (DWQMPs). The sharing of designs and standardised specifications were highlighted as crucial, along with planning and design horizons and incorporate extreme events. The future state of this capability theme also includes a robust emergency support system, open procurement services, and a fully integrated operating model.

Customer, community, and stakeholder

A well-informed customer base and community were central to the desired future state, along with service standards being achieved sustainably. The inclusion of customer, community, and stakeholder input into policy design was emphasised, and improved willingness to pay from customers and fostering communities of practice and shared services solutions were envisioned for the future state. Collaborative forums were also seen as essential for continued engagement and improvement.

Financial and commercial

Councils sought improved accessibility to financial data, with improved transparency related to cost and revenue information, along with known short, medium, and long-term regional goals. The need for improved distribution between capital and operating expenditure was also highlighted. There was a strong emphasis on achieving greater confidence and assurance in grant funding. The councils desire to establish a collaborative delivery model for capital projects across the region, have access to a diverse range of consultants, suppliers, and contractors with well-maintained long-term relationships.

Policy, governance, legal, and risk

Member Councils have recognised the critical need for genuine, well-defined, and structured collaboration across the region to establish a solid foundation for technical and subject-specific communities of practice. These communities would enable Council leaders and subject matter experts to come together, share knowledge and information, and develop common solutions to challenges faced within a resource-constrained environment. To achieve sustained improvements in the capability of water and wastewater service providers across FNQ, it was identified that fostering genuine and positive relationships and engagement with the State Government is essential. This requires a strong and targeted advocacy approach through the FNQROC. Additionally, Councils must enhance their ability to effectively map and manage water and wastewater service delivery and business risks. This will enable more informed, risk-based decision-making and prioritisation of resources and efforts.

Strategy, ESG, and performance

Achieving greater alignment and integration in strategy and direction was identified as a crucial enabler for enhancing regional capability by member councils. This includes shared access to key performance information, encompassing both day-to-day operations and the capital pipeline, across the region. Such access is expected to unlock further opportunities for resource sharing, standardisation, collaboration, and efficiency among water and wastewater service providers in FNQ. Furthermore, establishing a common and agreed set of regional priorities is considered valuable for informing advocacy and policy discussions with various levels of government. This proactive approach is also seen as beneficial for contributing to State policy and planning outcomes and objectives related to water and wastewater services in FNQ, including the Regional Plan and Water Strategy.

People, capability, and culture

The desired future state of the capability them people, capability, and culture include building a strong workforce with a fit-for-purpose award structure that is reflective of current requirements. Councils accentuated the need for strong workforce planning through targeted training and development initiatives, robust succession planning, along with the importance of retaining skilled staff. In addition, establishing onboarding processes that ensure early engagement with planning and operations, and accessible training



with verification of competency. Available and accessible apprenticeships and graduate programs across the region where also highlighted as crucial to reach the desired future state.

Barriers and limitations

FNQ councils are currently facing significant internal and external barriers and limitations that hinder the capability of water and wastewater service providers to deliver services effectively and reliably across the region. Understanding these challenges is crucial for building the capability of water and wastewater service providers, and thus, this understanding played a foundational role in the development of the Regional Water Capability Plan. This plan ensures that the initiatives and actions outlined are specifically targeted to guide the region in overcoming these current barriers and limitations.

During the Future State Definition workshop, FNQROC member councils collaboratively identified the barriers and limitations they face in service delivery, particularly in relation to the capability themes of the Service Delivery Model. The insights gained from this workshop directly informed the development of initiatives, ensuring that the proposed actions are well-aligned with overcoming the highlighted barriers and limitations identified by the member councils. The outcomes from the Future State Definition workshop, which highlight these barriers and limitations, have been summarised in **Appendix C**.

Opportunities for collaborative delivery

Given the diversity among FNQROC member councils, where individual councils face different but interconnected challenges in delivering water and wastewater services, enhanced collaboration and improved partnership maturity are crucial for building the capability of these water and wastewater service providers to achieve more reliable and sustainable service delivery in the future.

Through a series of collaborative discussions facilitated during the Future State Definition workshop, FNQROC councils identified and articulated specific opportunities for regional collaboration, focusing on strengthening collective efforts across the capability themes of the Service Delivery Model. Insights from the workshop highlighted opportunities to address key challenges faced by individual councils through coordinated efforts and the sharing of resources regionally.

The outcomes from the Future State Definition workshop, which identify opportunities for regional collaboration, have been summarised in **Appendix D**.



**Solutions
to Address
Capability
Needs & Gaps**



Etheridge Shire Council

5 Analysing the solutions



Strategic gap analysis

Systematic approach

A systematic approach was employed to identify and address capability gaps between the current state and the desired future state of water and wastewater service delivery across the region. This methodical process was fundamental in the development of strategic initiatives and actions that directly address capability gaps related to critical service delivery functions.

Insights from the QTC current state analysis were utilised as a baseline to define the current state of water and wastewater service providers in FNQ in relation to four key capability themes. The survey results highlighted capability gaps and causation factors related to the themes of people, processes, integration, and systems and data. The face-to-face Future State Definition workshop enabled engagement with the FNQ Water Alliance to validate the QTC current state survey findings and outline the desired future state for service delivery across the region in addition, barriers and limitations bounding current businesses in achieving the desired future state, in relation to the capability themes of the Service Delivery Model, were also identified. This extensive process provided a lens for Stantec to clearly identify capability gaps within the water and wastewater service providers and was critical to contextualising the foundation for developing strategic initiative and actions.

Figure 5-1 schematically illustrates the systematic approach adopted for the capability gap analysis.



Figure 5-1: Capability gap analysis approach

Investment logic mapping

A fundamental piece related to the development of strategic initiatives and actions to improve regional capability was the employment of Investment Logic Mapping (ILM) principals to guide the narrative behind methodically shaping capability improvement initiatives and actions through:

8. Articulating capability gaps and opportunities underpinning the need for capability building in the region.
9. Defining the keys benefits and outcomes sought to reach the desired future state of service delivery.
10. Developing strategic responses and implementation solutions required to be achieved regionally.

The *Business Case Development Framework released by the Department of State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government, and Planning* (2021) defines investment logic mapping as:

... an early stage technique that assists in developing and documenting the logic that underpins a potential investment decision, before specific solutions are identified, and before a decision is made.

Integrating ILM principals as a way of thinking in the development of strategic initiatives and actions proved to form a structured and logical framework to ensure interconnectivity between capability gap identification, defining keys benefits sought for the region, and developing logical and relevant strategic responses.

The process undertaken for developing strategic initiatives and actions have been outlined in Figure 5-2 and key steps are discussed below.

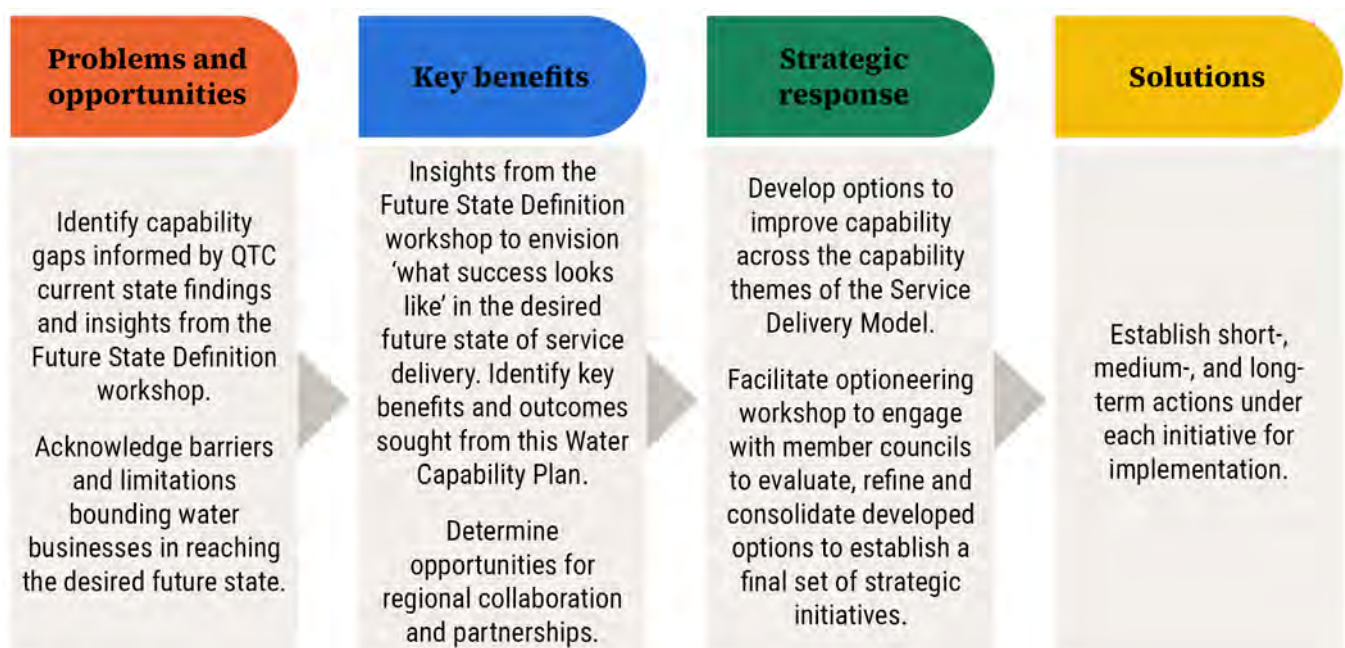


Figure 5-2: Strategic Initiatives and Actions Development Process

Identifying capability gaps and opportunities for improvement

To clearly identify and articulate the capability gaps and opportunities, an extensive capability gap analysis was conducted to systematically pinpoint capability gaps and causation factors in relation to the capability themes of the Service Delivery Model, drawing from insights from QTC current state findings and outputs from the Future State Definition workshop. In addition, opportunities for improvement in terms of water and wastewater service delivery businesses were also identified. The articulation of capability gaps and opportunities formed a foundation for the development of strategic initiatives and actions and were crucial in ensuring close alignment to the needs of individual councils in an operational setting.

Barriers and limitations preventing water business from reaching the desired future state were identified, ensuring that the developed strategic initiatives and actions assist FNQROC councils to overcome these challenges.

Defining key benefits sought

A significant step in improving capability in water and wastewater service delivery businesses across FNQ is defining the key benefits and desired improvements sought for the region in terms of operational efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of essential water and wastewater services.

Key benefits sought were identified during the face-to-face Future State Definition workshop, where the FNQ Water Alliance collaboratively envisioned the desired outcomes for the region's water and wastewater service providers. This process was instrumental in shaping a shared vision for the future state of service delivery and setting clear objectives for this Regional Water Capability Plan.

Through this collaborative process, council representatives were also able to recognise opportunities for greater regional collaboration and partnerships in the delivery of services to ensure alignment of efforts and the development of strategic initiatives and actions would leverage the strengths of individual councils to achieve shared goals.

Developing strategic initiatives and actions

Building on the identified capability gaps and the desired future state of water and wastewater service delivery in FNQ, eighteen (18) options were developed as a strategic response to address specific capability gaps and achieve the key benefits sought for the region. Each presented option was tailored to address one or more specific capability gaps and were targeted to improve capability of service delivery related to the capability themes of the Service Delivery Model.

Optioneering workshop

In developing strategic initiatives and actions to build the capability of water and wastewater service providers across the region, a collaborative approach was adopted to ensure engagement with the FNQ Water Alliance through a face-to-face Optioneering workshop where 18 developed options were evaluated, refined, and consolidated to build towards an agreed set of strategic initiatives and actions.

The workshop commenced with 18 options which were developed to address the identified capability gaps across the capability themes. During this workshop, in-depth discussions were facilitated with the member council representatives to gather detailed feedback on the suitability and relevance of each initiative, define an indicative timeframe for delivery, and facilitate discussions regarding required support and resourcing to achieve and implement each initiative. The optioneering workshop provided a valuable platform in determining the feasibility of the strategic initiatives in terms of operational context and identification of initiatives which require adjustment and reconsideration.

Refining the initiatives

To provide an optimised set of strategic initiatives, feedback and input provided by the FNQ Water Alliance during the optioneering workshop were utilised to refine the first issue initiatives. This feedback-drive refinement processes enabled the consolidation of certain strategic initiatives that were closely related and transform certain initiatives into specific implementation actions under each initiative, to develop a set of agreed capability improvement solutions that align to member council's operational context and capacities.

The first issue initiatives consisted of 18 strategic initiatives aimed at improving and addressing capability gaps identified during the gap analysis process. After taking insights from the optioneering workshop into account, the initiatives were optimised for better suitability and relevance to produce a final set of 11 strategic initiatives with a list of specific implementation actions for the member councils to achieve to deliver the overall strategy.

Prioritisation approach

For the purpose of prioritising the developed capability initiatives, the business value and implementation complexity matrix was adopted to serve as a crucial tool in evaluating each initiative based on two key dimensions: the potential business value the initiative provides for the region and the complexity or effort required for implementation of the initiative.

Four quadrants embedded within the matrix enables the identification of initiatives that the region can prioritise for immediate implementation (low implementation complexity, high business value), initiatives that are major projects to implement over a long-term planning horizon (high implementation complexity, high business value), initiatives that can be deprioritised (low implementation complexity, low business value), and initiatives that require reconsideration (high implementation complexity, low business value).

The use of the business value and implementation complexity matrix ensures the delivery of a balanced and prioritised approach to improving capability in water and wastewater service delivery businesses across the region and provides a lens for member councils and FNQROC to acknowledge short-term, medium-term, and long-term strategy.

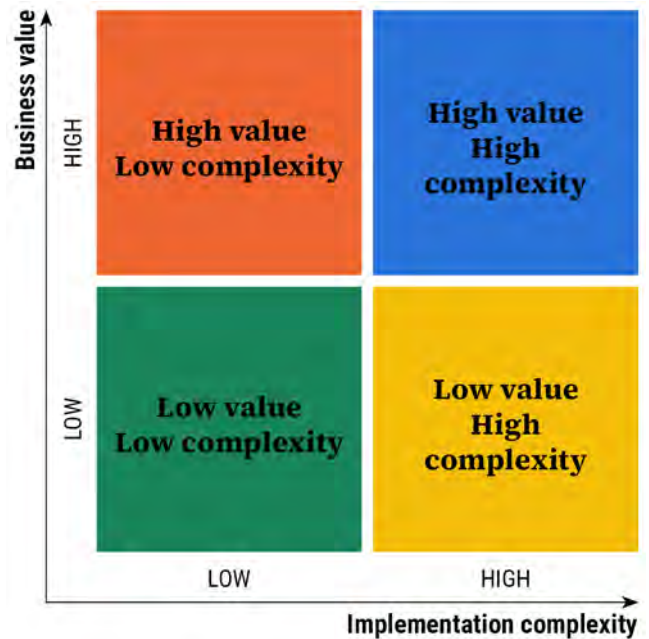


Figure 5-3: Business value and implementation complexity matrix

6 Strategic Response



Strategic initiatives

As a strategic response to addressing the capability challenges faced by FNQROC councils, it was important to establish a set of focused and relevant strategic initiatives and actions to address the capability gaps, desired capability end-state and have been established through the collaborative and structured approach taken for the development of this Regional Water Capability Plan.

Following extensive engagement and input from FNQROC and the FNQ Councils, a number of high-level options were developed as a starting point to address and resolve the water and wastewater capability challenges across the region. These initial 18 options provided a foundation for deep engagement, debate and input by the FNQ Water Alliance members to ensure that the initiatives and actions that form the basis of this Regional Water Capability Plan work to address capability improvement opportunities whilst remaining relevant to the current levels of maturity and capacity across FNQ.

The 18 initial options were then refined and refocussed into eleven (11) strategic initiatives and 54 enabling actions as the initial focal point for the FNQ Water Alliance to scope, plan, resource and deliver to support improved capability across water and wastewater service delivery in FNQ.

The eleven (11) strategic initiatives and actions outlined in this Plan demonstrate a commitment to collaboratively addressing key capability challenges faced by FNQROC councils, and they have been developed as a strategic response to not only address capability risks, but to also seize opportunities for addressing regional challenges in the delivery of services while demonstrating alignment to the desired future state of service delivery. By focusing on improving capability across the themes of the Service Delivery Model, the strategic initiatives and actions act as a guide for strengthening the operational capacity and efficiency of the region's water and wastewater service providers.

It is important to acknowledge that FNQROC councils cannot rely solely on external support from stakeholders to uplift capability across the region. While external support is valuable and beneficial to the region, sustainable 'shifting of the dial' will stem from continued and enhanced regional collaboration, driven by member councils working together, sharing resources, and learning and adapting from each other's success and challenges, to build and improve the capability of service delivery across the region.



Ensuring alignment to capability themes

To provide clarity to the focused and structured approach adopted for the development of initiatives and actions, a capability theme matrix was utilised to map each of the initiatives against the capability themes of the Service Delivery Model and the capability themes implemented by QTC during the current state analysis. This dual mapping matrix is crucial in validating the relevance of each initiative and demonstrates how each initiative aims to deliver capability uplift in multiple capability themes.

A matrix showing the strategic initiatives mapped against the capability themes is provided in Figure 6-1.

Capability Initiative	Reliable data, information & fit-for purpose systems	Service quality, processes and compliance	Customer, community and stakeholders	Financial and commercial	Policy, governance, legal and risk	Strategy, ESG and performance	People, capability and culture	QTC Capability gap themes			
								Systems and data	People	Processes	Integration
1. Establish common operating systems, platforms and tools	●	●		●				●			
2. Regional water data sharing	●	●				●		●			
3. Standardised SOPs, work instructions, templates and processes		●			●	●				●	●
4. Standardised water and wastewater asset design and specification		●		●	●		●			●	●
5. Strategic awareness of water and wastewater service delivery			●			●	●		●		●
6. Prudent and efficient water and wastewater services in FNQ				●	●	●		●		●	●
7. Establishing regional market buying power for FNQ				●	●	●		●		●	
8. Driving change in water and wastewater grant funding			●	●	●	●				●	●
9. Building capability in risk-based decision making across FNQ		●		●		●		●		●	
10. Building maturity in asset management and planning across FNQ	●	●	●	●	●		●	●		●	
11. Building and sustaining a strong water workforce for FNQ	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		●		

Figure 6-1: Initiative mapping to capability themes



Capability Initiatives & Actions



Douglas Shire Council

7 Capability initiatives and actions

Prioritising the initiatives

To guide implementation, each strategic initiative was prioritised by evaluating the business value provided to the region by the initiative, and the complexity of efforts required to achieve and deliver the outcomes.

By mapping each initiative against the two critical dimensions of business value and implementation complexity, initiatives that represent 'quick wins' for the region delivering capability improvements over the short-term horizon were highlighted, and high-impact initiatives which require substantial investment and effort to implement over a medium and long-term horizon were also identified. The prioritisation of initiatives proved to form the foundational framework guiding the development of the implementation roadmap, and provided clarity to the short, medium, and long-term capability building across the region.

Each initiative has been mapped against the business value and implementation complexity matrix and is illustrated in Figure 6-2.

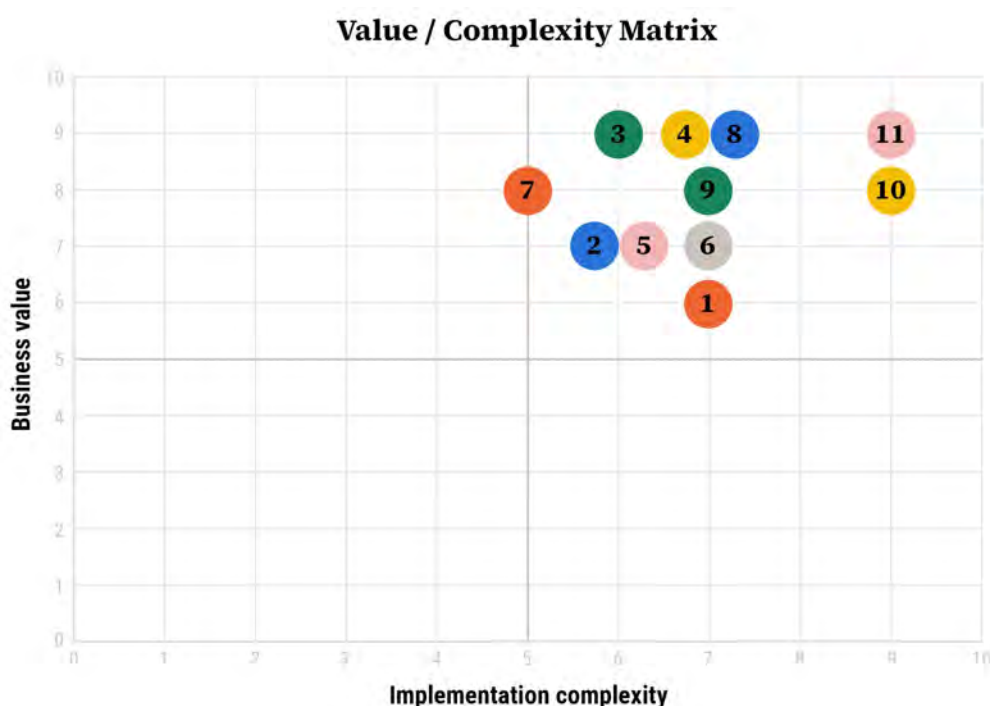


Figure 6-2: Business Value and Implementation Complexity Mapping

Preparing for delivery of initiatives and actions

As part of the development of the initiatives and actions that underpin this Regional Water Capability Plan, consideration has been given to the delivery and implementation of outcomes from a capability and capacity perspective. Whilst there is an underpinning necessity and assumption that a significant portion of the initiatives and actions can be achieved through regional collaboration between FNQROC member Councils, not all outcomes can be achieved and sustained without enablement or partnership from other key stakeholders.

Each individual action has been assessed as being wholly within the control and capability of the FNQ Water Alliance to plan, design, resource and deliver as an integrated, collaborative outcome, needing additional or specialist capability or capacity from the market to support (but driven and directed by the FNQ Water Alliance), or as being fully reliant on government or external market buy-in and enablement to deliver.



Can be achieved within FNQ



Can be achieved within FNQ but requires State Policy change or input.



Can be achieved within FNQ but requires State funding support.



Can be achieved with FNQ but requires assistance from specialist Subject-Matter Experts (SMEs).



Fully reliant on external market and/or government input.

This initial classification of actions in readiness for delivery planning and implementation are likely to shift and change throughout the detailed delivery planning process and deeper engagement with key stakeholders (within and external to FNQ).

Timeframe for delivery of initiatives and actions

This Regional Water Capability Plan sets out indicative timeframes for FNQROC and FNQROC Councils to deliver the initiatives and actions that are set out below, the timeframe for delivery has not considered Council or regional resourcing, financial or capacity considerations in detail as part of its development.

These timeframes for delivery will be considered by FNQROC member Councils as part of more detailed implementation and resource planning throughout the life of the Regional Water Capability Plan, resulting in the indicative timeframe for delivery shifting over time.

1

Initiative 1 - Establish common operating systems, platforms, and tools



Context

FNQROC Councils deliver critical water and wastewater services to customers and communities but are currently challenged and restricted in the efficacy and reliability of that service delivery due to a lack of fit-for-purpose information systems and dependable asset and service data and information to make timely and effective decisions relating to the end-to-end management of assets, service delivery, risk mitigation and resource utilisation and allocation.

Critical data, information, and systems to support delivery of water and wastewater services are common across Councils, regardless of size, asset base or maturity. There are various stages of digital platform maturity across FNQROC Councils, ranging from established and fit-for-purpose digital platforms to unintegrated management of asset and services data by spreadsheet.

Description

Through an agreed regional approach, establish common operating systems, platforms, and tools across FNQ to drive efficiencies in ICT procurement, licensing and operating costs, improve data and information standardisation and sharing, and provide a common operating environment for FNQROC Councils across common business functions and activities. This could include:








- Geospatial Information Systems
- SCADA and network telemetry
- Meter Reading and Billing Systems
- Asset Information Management Systems



Priority and complexity

High-Value, High Complexity

Actions and timeframe

#	Action	FY to Commence	Support & resourcing
1.1	Establish common business requirements for data and information management across water and wastewater services for FNQ (regional business requirements common to all FNQROC Councils).	FY25	
1.2	Prioritise regional and common business requirements to address specific asset and service risks and capability gaps.	FY25	
1.3	Map existing software tools and digital platforms across FNQROC Councils to the common business requirements (mapping functionality to requirements).	FY26	
1.4	Identify ICT network, governance and cybersecurity requirements, both regionally and specific to individual FNQROC Councils.	FY26	
1.5	Identify opportunities to leverage existing contractual or market arrangements with existing software vendors to meet and address common / regional business requirements.	FY27	
1.6	Utilising regional business requirements, undertake a market sounding exercise to determine opportunities for common operating system and platforms (including whole of life costs).	FY27	
1.7	Identify best value opportunities and outcomes for the application of common operating systems, digital platforms and tools (e.g. all FNQROC Council's, or a like sub-group of FNQROC Councils).	FY27	

2

Initiative 2 – Regional water data sharing



Context

There is currently inconsistent levels and maturity of data collection and service / performance reporting standards across FNQROC Councils to adequately assess service and asset performance, risks and improvement opportunities.

Description






Establish and implement a Regional Water Data Sharing solution and Data Management Improvement Plan that establishes consistency in data collection methods across the end-to-end spectrum of water and wastewater asset and service delivery, improves greater regional information sharing, drives greater visibility of asset and service performance for each Council and ensures various regulatory reporting obligations can be met (NPR / SWIMS) and also integrating a strategy to achieve regional maturity in asset data collection, storage, and auditing.



Priority and complexity

High-Value, High Complexity

Actions and timeframe

#	Action	FY to Commence	Support & resourcing
2.1	Define user needs and requirements for a regional water dashboard (FNQ and Individual needs and requirements).	FY25	
2.2	Design dashboard information requirements – align to internal, regulatory and regional reporting needs and requirements (regional data reporting may also support identification of further opportunities for collaboration or improvement).	FY25	
2.3	Develop common data and information extract tools for Council's to input data and information into as a feed into the regional water dashboard (leverage Qld Water Directorate tools and processes where relevant).	FY26	
2.4	Investigate options and functional requirements to include a regional water / wastewater knowledge bank into the Regional Water Dashboard (linked to Service Quality, Processes, and Compliance Initiatives).	FY26	
2.5	Establish an underlying data and information sharing agreement to outline data and information use, governance, roles and responsibilities (and potential cost / investment) for FNQROC Councils.	FY27	

3

Initiative 3 – Standardised SOPs, work instructions, templates and processes



Context

There are inconsistencies and gaps across FNQROC Council water and wastewater service providers as it relates to processes, standard operating procedures, work instructions and standard design templates for water and wastewater asset and service delivery. An opportunity to deliver efficiency through shared knowledge and process development, acknowledging the varied level of capacity across FNQROC Councils to dedicate resources to develop, manage and improve these critical documents.

Description

Through the FNQ Water Alliance, develop an agreed set of standard operating procedures, work instructions (WASH), templates (DWQMP, Environmental Management Plan etc.) and processes that can be applied across most (if not all) FNQ Councils to improve water and wastewater operating efficiency, capability and maturity.






It is recognised that not all SOPs can be developed in a way that is regionally applicable, consistent or in line with individual business requirements and needs. Where this is the case, continued collaboration and knowledge sharing of individual standards and templates will promote and enable learning and capability improvement outcomes across the region.



Priority and complexity

High-Value, High Complexity

Actions and timeframe

#	Action	FY to Commence	Support & resourcing
3.1	Identify, define and agree the extent of SOPs, Work Instructions, Templates and Processes to form part of a regional standardisation activity.	FY25	
3.2	Prioritise development of agreed templates to address regional and FNQ Council risks and needs.	FY25	
3.3	Implement program of template design and development.	FY26	
3.4	Ensure engagement and incorporation of FNQROC Council needs and requirements via FNQ Water Alliance.	FY27	
3.5	Establish online repository for regional water templates and ensure that regular review process is in place to align templates to industry best-practice and regulatory changes / needs.	FY27	

4

Initiative 4 – Standardised water and wastewater asset design and specification



Context

The balance between the need for ‘fit-for-place’ and bespoke water and wastewater infrastructure solutions, and ability to deliver efficient infrastructure solutions that are repeatable, cost efficient and scalable, can be achieved through the standardisation of water and wastewater asset design and specifications across FNQROC Councils.

Acknowledging that the FNQROC Regional Development Manual provides clarity regarding the standard and specification of third party and developer delivered assets and ensures reliability and assurance to the quality and standard of water and wastewater assets being delivered for Council water and wastewater service providers, there is still an opportunity to drive improvements across FNQROC Council water and wastewater service providers in relation to cost and resource efficiencies through standardised asset design and specification for common asset types.

Additionally, there may also be opportunities to refine and improve the standards and specifications within the FNQROC Regional Development Manual as part of the delivery and implementation of this initiative that drives efficiencies across the end-to-end life of third party delivered assets.

Description








Develop (and deliver) a strategy / plan to create common / standard asset design and specifications for water and wastewater assets across FNQROC Councils.



Priority and complexity

High-Value, High Complexity

Actions and timeframe

#	Action	Timeframe	Support & resourcing
4.1	Through information gathering and assessment across FNQ, define common asset types for FNQROC Council water and wastewater service providers.	FY25	
4.2	Agree / determine common asset types and scenarios (pump stations, water mains, water meters, wastewater treatment process components etc.) where commonality in design, specification and pricing adds value across Councils	FY26	
4.3	Establish baseline design, standards and 'out of the box' price estimates for agreed common / standard assets.	FY26	
4.4	Literature / market review for industry best-practice design codes and standards for common water and wastewater assets.	FY27	
4.5	Baseline efficiency and cost outcomes (regionally and by individual Council).	FY28	
4.6	Link and align to regional / shared market buying power for FNQ Initiative (Initiative 7), building upon existing shared and regional procurement arrangements.	FY28	
4.7	Build and integrate outcomes and agreed standardised asset design and specifications into the FNQROC Regional Development Manual	FY28	

5

Initiative 5 – Strategic awareness of water and wastewater service delivery



Context

Many FNQROC Council water service providers operate as siloes within larger Council structures, and while water is being delivered safely and wastewater being treated sustainably, the visibility and awareness of the critical nature of essential 24/7 water and wastewater service delivery internally within Councils could be improved to support greater performance, capability and integration outcomes.

Description

Support strategic internal awareness and improved understanding of water and wastewater operations (cost, risk, performance, investment) that can drive:




- Improved internal awareness and understanding of water and wastewater service delivery risks, priorities, and performance to influence improved prioritisation of decisions and investments across Council/s.
- Improved Executive and Elected Representative advocacy of water and wastewater outcomes at both organisational and regional levels for water and wastewater services.
- Proactive investment outcomes (rather than passive or reactive) for water and wastewater infrastructure and services within Councils across FNQ.



Priority and Complexity

High-Value, High Complexity

Actions and timeframe

#	Action	Timeframe	Support & resourcing
5.1	<p>Establish a Regional State of Water and Wastewater Pack (report / presentation) for FNQ with inputs from FNQROC Councils that provides and overview of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Current asset / network overview• Performance of FNQROC Councils in the delivery of water and wastewater services (SWMS and BoM data)• Risks to sustainable and efficient service delivery (regional and individual Council level)• Regional priorities and challenges (growth, cost to serve, funding, resourcing, financial and service sustainability)• Public Health and Environmental Performance overview.• Identified opportunities for Elected Representative (local, state and/or federal) advocacy and policy. <p>*Opportunity to build off the work undertaken to date in the development of the Regional Water Capability Plan and leverage outcomes and findings.</p>	FY26	
5.2	<p>Work with FNQROC Councils to establish a custom State of Water and Wastewater Pack relevant to each individual Council (within the regional context) and support senior Water Leaders in the delivery of this message to Executive Leaders and Elected Representatives (aligned to Qld Water Directorate Annual Report for the Queensland Water Sector)</p>	FY27	
5.3	<p>Establish templates for the State of the Water and Wastewater approach so that this can be updated by FNQROC and FNQROC Councils at least annually.</p>	FY27	

6

Initiative 6 – Prudent and efficient water and wastewater services in FNQ



Context

There is significant variation across FNQROC Councils as it relates to financial sustainability, revenue and funding streams in enabling efficient and effective water and wastewater service delivery to communities across FNQ. Additionally, the TOTEX (Total Expenditure) approach to water and wastewater service delivery across FNQ is unbalanced and generally skewed towards CAPEX (Capital Expenditure), which has resulted in gaps and challenges in day-to-day delivery of services.

Description

Undertake a water and wastewater prudence, efficiency and vulnerability assessment across FNQROC Council water and wastewater service providers to:







- Determine financial viability of water and wastewater service delivery across FNQROC Councils (leverage outcomes as an advocacy outcome with the State for intervention if required)
- Identify prudence and efficiency of water and wastewater funding allocation and expenditure across FNQROC Councils
- Provide targeted, content-based improvement recommendations to balance financial resource allocation and expenditure across FNQ to deliver balanced service delivery, infrastructure investment and commercial return outcomes.



Priority and complexity

High-Value, High Complexity

Actions and timeframe

#	Action	FY to Commence	Support & resourcing
6.1	Establish and co-create a scope of works for agreement by FNQROC Councils (including commercial-in-confidence and non-disclosure scope and agreements to ensure that appropriate guarantees are in place reflecting the commercially sensitive nature of this work is protected and used for the benefit of FNQROC Councils in delivering efficient water and wastewater services)	FY25	
6.2	Integrate findings from the Queensland Government's Urban Water Risk Assessment into the scopes of work (where relevant to the intended outcomes of this initiative).	FY26	
6.3	Select and appoint an experienced and trusted advisory / consulting partner to design and deliver this prudency and efficiency assessment with FNQROC Councils.	FY27	
6.4	Deliver relevant findings to FNQ Water Alliance that support regional collaboration and improvement opportunities, and that enable strong, unified advocacy outcomes for the FNQ Region as it relates to improving the financial and commercial viability of essential service provision.	FY29	
6.5	Deliver individual Council findings to FNQROC Councils to enable and drive internal improvement outcomes and individual Council advocacy outcomes.	FY29	
6.6	Work with the State Government through the FNQROC Board, LGAQ and/or QLD Water Directorate to advocate for State Government support, intervention and/or consideration of alternate delivery models for FNQROC to ensure that Councils and the region are able to commercially and prudently sustain essential water and wastewater service delivery.	FY29	

7

Initiative 7 – Establishing regional market buying power for FNQ



Context

FNQ Council water and wastewater service providers are geographic monopolies, delivering regulated and critical water and wastewater infrastructure, services and outcomes to communities, but are often duplicating effort and cost in approaching the market for goods, materials, services and capability.

There are opportunities to improve and drive efficiencies across the FNQROC Council water and wastewater service providers in approaching the market for materials, spares, rotables, professional services and capability to support the delivery of efficient and effective water and wastewater services across the FNQ region.

Description

Develop a commercial framework and model (and supporting processes and approach) that enables FNQROC Council water and wastewater service providers to leverage collective purchasing power and economy of scale within the market for common services, goods and materials (utilising the existing FNQROC joint purchasing arrangements as a foundational starting point). This could include:

- Information Communications and Technology (ICT)
- Regional Water and Wastewater Infrastructure Design and Delivery Panel
- Regulatory planning and review services (DWQ, Asset Management)
- Pipes and Pumps
- Spares and Ancillary Supplies
- Consulting Panel



Priority and complexity

High-Value, Low Complexity

Actions and Timeframe

#	Action	FY to Commence	Support & resourcing
7.1	Work across the FNQ Water Alliance to identify priority procurement categories that are common across all (or most) FNQ Councils and that through a common procurement approach can deliver prudent and efficient outcomes for individual Council organisations.	FY25	
7.2	Utilising existing regional joint purchasing arrangements facilitated by FNQROC as a starting foundation, establish a commercial framework and model for further shared procurement across FNQROC Councils (FNQROC as the facilitator and administrator of the framework and model).	FY26	
7.3	Undertake market testing and sounding to establish the appetite of the market and suppliers under a regional and shared procurement model	FY27	
7.4	Subject to outcomes of Action 7.3, agree and negotiate commercial and cost sharing principles across FNQ Water Alliance to deliver proportional cost, risk and benefits under an agreed regional and shared procurement model.	FY28	
7.5	Identify a priority procurement category (aligned to individual Council and regional priorities) to validate and value and benefit of a regional and shared procurement model	FY29	

8

Initiative 8 – Driving change in water and wastewater grant funding



Context

There is a strong reliance on State Government Grant funding to deliver critical water and wastewater infrastructure and services across FNQ. Current State Government grant funding processes and structure does not provide medium or long-term certainty to Councils in the effect.

Description




- Advocate / work with the State Government to re-design and restructure the way in which grant funding is delivered for water and wastewater services across FNQ.
- Review of grant funding model to provide certainty beyond 1 year (impacts on Council's long-term financial and infrastructure planning outcomes)
- Any revised model considers a TOTEX approach (more than CAPEX - considers the whole-of-life / total cost of delivering, operating and maintaining the asset to service communities)
- Considers tiered / vulnerability-based allocation of funding to ensure that those the delivery of critical infrastructure and service outcomes does not materially impact Councils who are not as financially self-sustaining as other.



Priority and complexity

High-Value, High Complexity

Actions and timeframe

#	Action	Timeframe	Support & resourcing
8.1	Work with Councils who have medium to significant reliance on grant funding for annual infrastructure and service provision to establish an overall cost and risk profile (identifying the risk to sustainable infrastructure and service provision aligned to financial and service plans)	FY25	
8.2	Establish a 'no regrets' funding position and model that balances service levels, cost and risk of impacted Councils with minimum investment levels required via grant processes to enable core water and wastewater service delivery (considering whole of life cost to serve)	FY26	
8.3	Continue to grow and find opportunity to work collaboratively with LGAQ and the Qld Water Directorate and establish an advocacy strategy to influence the State Government to review and pursue alternate grant funding models and approaches in support of critical water and wastewater infrastructure in services.	FY27	

9

Initiative 9 – Building capability in risk-based decision making across FNQ



Context

There is an absence of risk-based decision-making and prioritisation across the end-to-end spectrum of water and wastewater infrastructure and service provision in FNQ, which has a material impact on the effective allocation of scarce resources across FNQROC Council water and wastewater service providers.

Similarly, the existent of well-defined and documented (and understood) risk tools, processes and planning are at various stages of maturity across FNQ.

Description





Establish a water and wastewater risk framework, appetite statement, risk tolerances, and assessment toolkit for FNQ that is specific to the delivery of water and wastewater services within a local government context, and ensure adjustment and consideration of unique risk considerations that face the FNQ region (severe weather, recovery, etc.) to provides a pro-forma approach to risk-based decision making across FNQ Council water and wastewater service providers (can be adjusted to individual organisation risk models and appetites where they exist).



Priority and complexity

High-Value, High Complexity

Actions and timeframe

#	Action	FY to Commence	Support & resourcing
9.1	Seek risk management subject matter expertise to assist in building a risk approach and framework that can be utilised and scaled across FNQ Councils but is specific to delivery of water and wastewater services, incorporating well-developed systems already in use across FNQROC Councils	FY26	
9.2	With input from the FNQ Water Alliance, establish a Water and Wastewater Risk Toolkit for FNQROC Councils that provides clarity in the identification and assessment of water supply and wastewater treatment risks (including commercial risks associated with those operations).	FY27	
9.3	Work across FNQROC Councils to establish initial risk assessments against agreed water, wastewater, service, commercial, regulatory and customer risk categories and agreed risk tolerances, including assessing impacts and changes to support implementation of and management to these risks.	FY28	
9.4	Support FNQ Water Leaders in growing their skills, knowledge and confidence in working with risk through capability uplift and interactive working sessions.	FY27	

10

Initiative 10 – Building maturity in asset management and planning across FNQ



Context

End-to-end and whole of life asset and services planning, resourcing, prioritisation and delivery for water and wastewater services are at low levels of maturity across FNQ, having a significant impact on the ability for Councils to deliver integrated, aligned, proactive (vs. reactive) and efficient services.

Councils are consciously aware of their current challenges and extent of maturity in asset management and planning and are focussed and driven to improve the current state but are restrained by resourcing and capability within individual organisations and regionally to make a real difference.

Description






- Design and deliver a regional asset management and planning maturity improvement program across FNQ water service provision to:
- Deliver organisational level insights and targeted improvement outcomes (aligned to individual organisational maturity, capacity and operating context).
- Drive targeted organisational level capability, system and process uplift as it relates to end-to-end planning and management of assets and services.
- Drive content-based capability improvement across FNQ in addressing known capability gap and challenge areas.
- Identify additional opportunities for regional collaboration and capability improvements (shared / common improvement opportunities across FNQ).



Priority and complexity

High-Value, High Complexity

Actions and timeframe

#	Action	FY to Commence	Support & resourcing
10.1	Identify common challenges and capability improvement areas across FNQ in delivering effective asset management and planning outcomes as a foundation for collaborative improvement opportunities.	FY25	
10.2	Utilising existing asset plans, establish a risk-based / prioritised approach to improvement of foundational asset management and planning capability across FNQ.	FY26	
10.3	Identify resourcing needs (ensuring the right resources from within FNQ and/or Subject Matter Experts to support) to assess, establish and/or develop clear improvement pathways for: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Water and wastewater asset registers (including financial asset registers)• Asset information and data improvement / cleansing• Water and Wastewater Asset Plans• Renewals and decision-making tools• Asset valuations	FY27	
10.4	Establish indicators and tools to measure effectiveness and improvement in asset management and planning maturity over time (aligned to industry best-practice and guidance).	FY28	
10.5	Complete a detailed asset planning and maturity assessment across FNQ water and wastewater service providers against industry tools and models such as Global Forum on Maintenance and Asset Management (GFMAM) and ISO55001.	FY29	

11

Initiative 11 – Building and sustaining a strong water workforce for FNQ



Context

Geographical, industry, market and economic factors are placing significant pressure on the ability for FNQROC Councils to attract, retain and grow the right people with the right skills and experience to support the delivery of essential water and wastewater services across the region.

The current capacity and capability challenges being faced across FNQ are placing significant strain on Council water business' ability to resource key functions across the asset and services lifecycle and constrain the ability to realise service delivery improvement opportunities.






Description

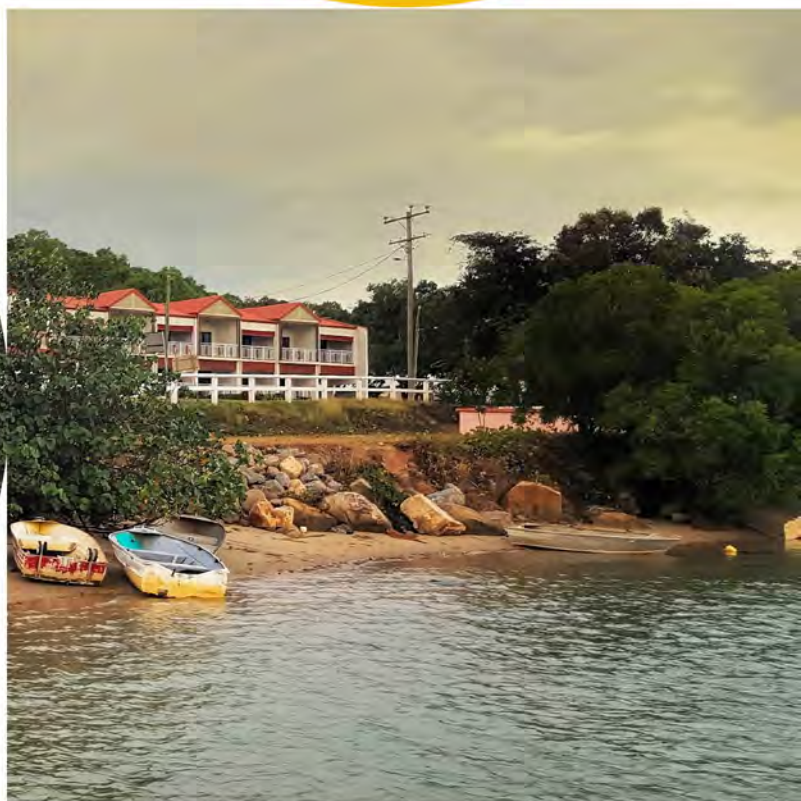
Develop and implement a Water Workforce Strategy that collaboratively improves the ability for the FNQROC Councils and FNQ Region to attract, retain, grow and develop a skilled, local and experienced workforce to increase local and regional capability and capacity in water and wastewater management, infrastructure and service delivery.

Priority and complexity

High-Value, High Complexity

Actions and timeframe

#	Action	FY to Commence	Support & resourcing
11.1	Through regional engagement, development of a regional workforce planning framework, tools and templates to deploy across FNQ water businesses, including consideration of expert capability to support deployment into Councils to build workforce bench strength, resiliency and capability across individual organisations and across the FNQ Region	FY25	
11.2	<p>Establish a shared resourcing / shared services model for water and wastewater services to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allow for shared resourcing across the FNQ region to support day-to-day water and wastewater operations and service delivery (operations, maintenance, planning etc.) Facilitate opportunities for FNQROC Councils to leverage capability and capacity strengths to deliver services across local government boundaries where resources and capacity constraints may exist. 	FY28	
11.3	<p>Through a defined advocacy and partnership approach with State Government and relevant industry bodies (AWA, JobsQLD, Qld Water Directorate), establish and implement a Water and Wastewater Attraction Strategy & Plan for FNQ that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Addresses and removes current barriers to attraction of skilled water workers and professionals to the region Responds to the immediate and future water workforce needs of the FNQ region Works with industry (water industry and private sector) to sustainably address critical resourcing challenges Improves higher education pathways into FNQ Water and Wastewater jobs 	FY27	
11.4	<p>Map water and wastewater technical and operational resourcing across FNQ to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify specific gaps in water and wastewater technical and operational resourcing at an individual organisation and regional level Develop and implement solutions to address resourcing gaps across each FNQ water business Identify technical water and wastewater capability and skills improvement opportunities and implement solutions / programs to improve skills and knowledge of current workforce (Qld Water Directorate training pathways for example) 	FY27	
11.5	Undertake a market analysis and benchmarking of water and wastewater roles, positions and remuneration across FNQ	FY26	



Strategic Roadmap for Delivery



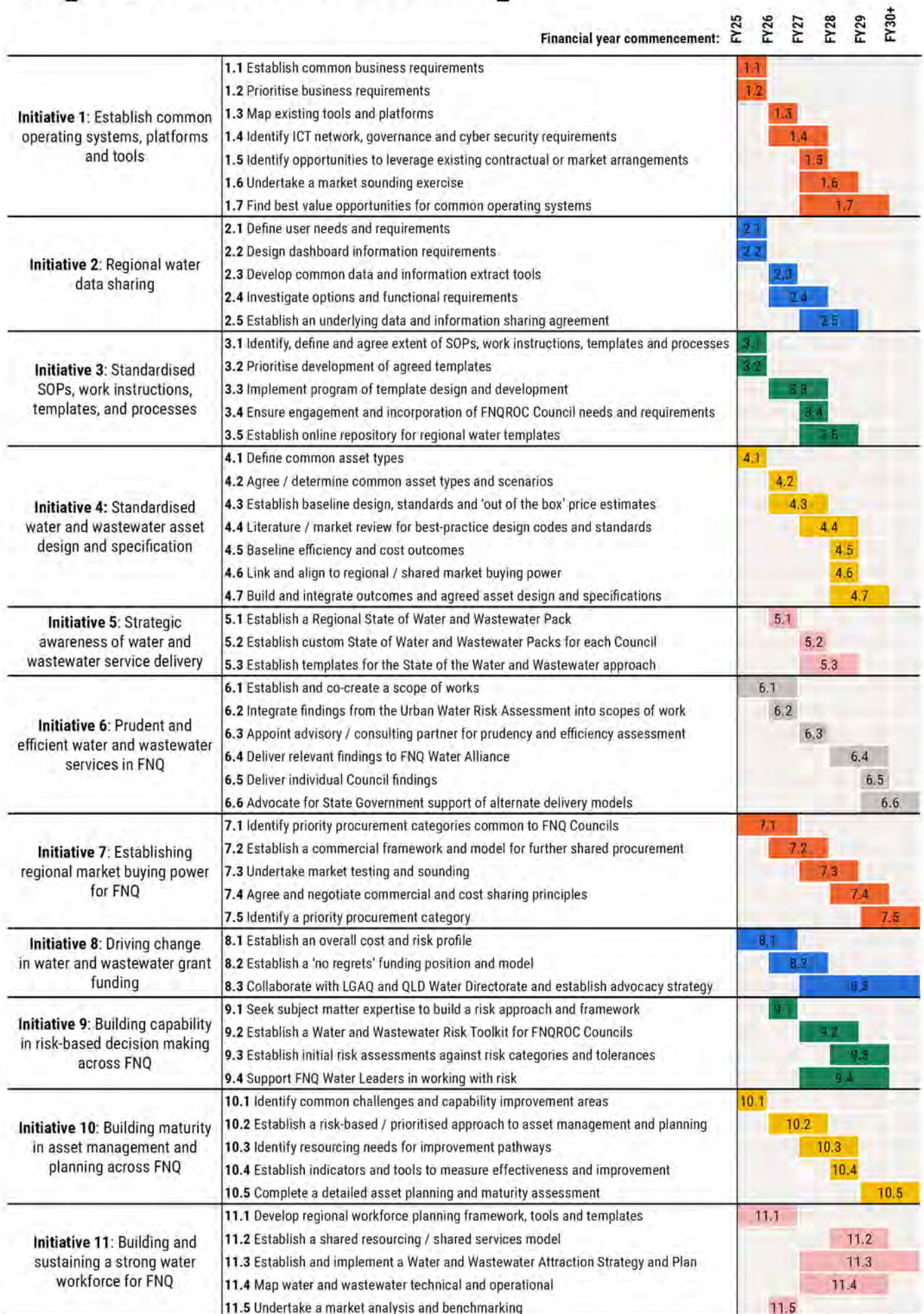
8 Strategic Delivery

Roadmap for delivering initiatives and implementation actions

The successful delivery and implementation of the initiatives and actions outlined in this Regional Water Capability Plan will necessitate a coordinated effort, resourcing, and investment from Councils, the State Government, and key stakeholders over time.

The implementation roadmap has been meticulously developed to guide the realisation of capability improvement outcomes, while acknowledging the varying complexity of individual initiatives and actions. This roadmap provides a structured approach to the enabling actions and timing under each initiative, serving as a critical tool for guiding the execution of strategic initiatives across short, medium, and long-term horizons. By following this roadmap, FNQROC and FNQ Councils can ensure sustained progress in building capability across the region, thereby enhancing the reliability and sustainability of water and wastewater service delivery.

Implementation Roadmap





9 References

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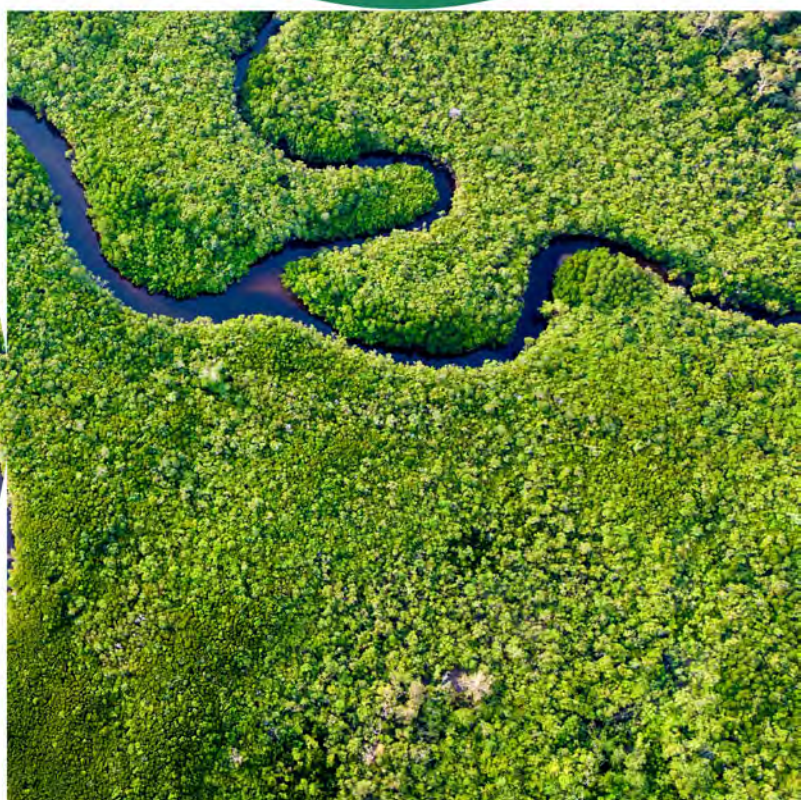
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Douglas Shire Council

10 Glossary

Term	Definition
CRC	Cairns Regional Council
CCRC	Cassowary Coast Regional Council
CSC	Cook Shire Council
Croydon SC	Croydon Shire Council
CWG	Capability Working Group
DSC	Douglas Shire Council
DWQMP	Drinking Water Quality Management Plan
ESC	Etheridge Shire Council
FNQ	Far North Queensland
FNQROC	Far North Queensland Regional Organisation of Councils
GFMAM	Global Forum on Maintenance and Asset Management
HSC	Hinchinbrook Shire Council
HVASC	Hope Vale Aboriginal Shire Council
ILM	Investment Logic Mapping
JQ	Jobs Queensland
LGAQ	Local Government Association of Queensland
MSC	Mareeba Shire Council
QLD	Queensland
QTC	Queensland Treasury Corporation
QWRAP	Queensland Water Regional Alliance Program
SEQ	South-East Queensland
TRC	Tablelands Regional Council
UWRAP	Urban Water Risk Assessment Project
WTP	Water Treatment Plant
WWASC	Wujal Wujal Aboriginal Shire Council
WWTP	Wastewater Treatment Plant
YASC	Yarrabah Aboriginal Shire Council



Appendices



Appendix A: FNQROC Council Water and Wastewater Profiles

Council	Water Supply	Wastewater Services
Cairns Regional Council	Water Treatment Plants: 1 Length of Water Mains: 2,275 km Revenue Generated: \$67,888,000 (2023)	Sewage Treatment Plants: 6 Length of Sewer Mains: 1,340 km Revenue Generated: \$87,581,000 (2023)
Cassowary Coast Regional Council	Water Treatment Plants: 1 Length of Water Mains: 827 km Revenue Generated: \$13,008,000 (2023)	Sewage Treatment Plants: 2 Length of Sewer Mains: 231 km Revenue Generated: \$11,065,000 (2023)
Cook Shire Council	Water Treatment Plants: 3 Length of Water Mains: 84 km Revenue Generated: \$2,010,000 (2023)	Sewage Treatment Plants: 3 Length of Sewer Mains: 69 km Revenue Generated: \$1,495,000 (2023)
Croydon Shire Council	Water Treatment Plants: 1 Length of Water Mains: 14 km Revenue Generated: \$252,000 (2023)	-
Douglas Shire Council	Water Treatment Plants: 3 Length of Water Mains: 282 km Revenue Generated: \$4,635,000 (2023)	Sewage Treatment Plants: 2 Length of Sewer Mains: 99 km Revenue Generated: \$8,078,000 (2023)
Etheridge Shire Council	Water Treatment Plants: 2 Length of Water Mains: 23 km Revenue Generated: \$125,000 (2023)	-
Hinchinbrook Shire Council	Water Treatment Plants: 4 Length of Water Mains: 277 km Revenue Generated: \$3,803,000 (2023)	Sewage Treatment Plants: 2 Length of Sewer Mains: 110 km Revenue Generated: \$2,750,000 (2023)
Hope Vale Aboriginal Shire Council	Water Treatment Plants: 1 Length of Water Mains: 37 km Revenue Generated: \$284,000 (2023)	Sewage Treatment Plants: 1 Length of Sewer Mains: 15 km
Mareeba Shire Council	Water Treatment Plants: 4 Length of Water Mains: 251 km Revenue Generated: \$11,175,000 (2023)	Sewage Treatment Plants: 2 Length of Sewer Mains: 141 km Revenue Generated: \$6,394,000 (2023)
Tablelands Regional Council	Water Treatment Plants: 6 Length of Water Mains: 433 km Revenue Generated: \$10,502,000 (2023)	Sewage Treatment Plants: 5 Length of Sewer Mains: 178 km Revenue Generated: \$7,912,000 (2023)
Wujal Wujal Aboriginal Shire Council	Water Treatment Plants: 1 Length of Water Mains: 5 km Revenue Generated: \$386,000 (2023)	Sewage Treatment Plants: 1 Length of Sewer Mains: 5 km Revenue Generated: \$433,000 (2023)
Yarrabah Aboriginal Shire Council	Water Treatment Plants: 1 Length of Water Mains: 42 km Revenue Generated: \$95,000 (2023)	Sewage Treatment Plants: 1 Length of Sewer Mains: 17 km Revenue Generated: \$83,000 (2023)

*Note: Adapted from Queensland's Urban Water Explorer (2023).



Appendix B: Capability Gap Causal Factors

Key area	Key causal factors
Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Inadequate planning undertaken at both the strategic and operational levels.• Existing plans are often ineffective due to a lack of alignment and integration.• Poor planning practices can be tracked back to the root of the majority of challenges experienced.
People	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Difficulty in attracting staff for skilled roles such as project managers, trades, and engineering.• Little to no redundancy and flexibility in workforce.• Significant key-man risk.• No succession planning.
Risk Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Projects and resourcing are generally not assessed under a risk-based framework.• Many councils do not take a risk-based approach to prioritise the allocation of resources
Advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Managers do not have the necessarily skills or information they need to effectively advocate for their businesses.• Water and wastewater concerns are adequately prioritised by leadership.
Systems and Information Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The majority of councils do not have a single source of truth.• Many councils have very limited information about their water and wastewater networks• Lack of quality information impedes the ability to adequately plan, support business cases, and support decision making.



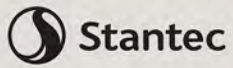
Appendix C: Barriers and Limitations (Future State Definition Workshop Outcomes)

Capability theme	Key barriers and limitations
Reliable Data, Information, and Fit-for-Purpose Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Limited network and data coverage.• Systems are considered from a whole council perspective without focus on water and wastewater business perspective.• Inconsistent technology solutions with exposure to cyber risk.
Service Quality, Processes, and Compliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Needs and risks are underappreciated.• Level of service requirements not fully understood.• Sunk costs and efforts in existing system.• Silos within the business.• Inefficient asset management practices to make informed financial models and plans.• Low effort to update systems and maintain accuracy.• Gap in understanding operational expenditure, and associated operation and maintenance during design.• Procurement processes don't facilitate information sharing.• Mix of internal and external resources.
Customer, Community, and Stakeholder	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Limited willingness to pay for services.• Lack of funder commitments and funding grants.
Financial and Commercial	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Unbalanced capital and operating expenditure.• Budgets and funding limited to 1 year visibility.• Poor council marketing.
Policy, Governance, Legal, and Risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Poor relationship with state government in policy making sphere.• Political interfaces and challenges.• Legal implications for sharing information.
Strategy, ESG, and Performance	
People, Capability, and Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Internal focus.• Culture and low willingness to share.• Low capability of staff and difficulty in staff retention.• Limited market attraction for staff.• Gap in recruiting core staff.• Councils can't meet required workload and requires staff resourcing and support.• Top-down business commitment.



Appendix D: Opportunities for Collaboration (Future State Definition Workshop Outcomes)

Capability theme	Key barriers and limitations
Reliable Data, Information, and Fit-for-Purpose Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consistent SCADA and support.• Collaborative data collection and status reporting.• Shared systems and platforms for asset management, SCADA, and meter reading.
Service Quality, Processes, and Compliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Documented plans, processes, and procedures.• Shared technical standards, DWQMP, and SOPs.• Resource mechanism for effective collaboration.• Common supply to the region.• Shared out of house pool.• Design for consistent water and wastewater infrastructure.
Customer, Community, and Stakeholder	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Communities of excellence.
Financial and Commercial	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Improved external funding.• Funding from submissions.• Funding agreement and standard for delivery method.
Policy, Governance, Legal, and Risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Procurement policy.• Consolidated advocacy approach.
Strategy, ESG, and Performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Agreed regional priorities.• Operational site visits.• Forward program of major projects listing milestones and progress
People, Capability, and Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Centralised pool of technical expertise.• Rotation of operational staff across councils.• Recruitment.• Opportunities for networking through events and regular meetings.• Implementation of formal and informal training.• Establish experts in key business areas.• Skills training with improved collaboration.• Accessibility to higher education pathways, graduate programs with regional rotation.



Stantec is a global leader in sustainable architecture, engineering, and environmental consulting. The diverse perspectives of our partners and interested parties drive us to think beyond what's previously been done on critical issues like climate change, digital transformation, and future-proofing our cities and infrastructure.

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