



The Coalition's Policy

Key Commitments

Water infrastructure is essential to population growth, sustainable communities, jobs, productivity, and stronger economic outcomes.

Every community and industry requires water security to grow and prosper. Many regional and remote communities depend on quality water infrastructure for their livelihood and jobs.

The Coalition has a strong record supporting investment in water infrastructure. We are delivering more than half a billion dollars in grants to support the construction of nationally significant water infrastructure. We are also providing \$2 billion in concessional loans to fast-track the construction of water infrastructure throughout the country.

Our investment in water infrastructure is supporting jobs and regional communities.

We will do more to support jobs and growth through greater investment in Queensland's water infrastructure. The Coalition will invest \$20 million to support the development or finalisation of feasibility assessments and business cases for 14 water infrastructure projects across Queensland. These water infrastructure projects in Queensland include:

- development of a works programme for construction and upgrade of major water infrastructure for Clermont, as well as augmentation and remediation works on the Theresa Creek Dam
- funding business case development for the construction of the Rookwood Weir
- development of feasibility studies for new dams near Collinsville, Hell's Gate, and Emu Swamp
- raising the height of the Burdekin Falls Dam by approximately two metres
- feasibility studies for new water storage and irrigation infrastructure options to help Isis Central Sugar Mill Company Limited cultivate 6,800 hectares for sugarcane in the Gayndah Region of the Burnett River catchment
- investigating three dam storages on the upper and middle reaches of the Herbert River and the Millstream
- assessment of additional water storage for Mount Isa and Cloncurry
- assessment into the utilisation of South-East Queensland's treated effluent for agricultural production

We will also fund half the cost of Rookwood Weir – up to \$130 million – if the business case meets all the necessary requirements and it acquires the required environmental approval.

Our Plan to Invest in Queensland's Water Infrastructure

The Coalition will support jobs and growth through greater investment in Queensland's water infrastructure.

The Queensland Government acknowledges the critical importance of water infrastructure:

“Water plays a vital role in supporting households, agriculture, business and industry. Infrastructure that delivers a clean, secure and accessible water supply is a key enabler of population growth and maximises Queensland's economic development potential. It also provides essential environmental stewardship by managing catchments, dams, stormwater and sewerage releases.

Communities across Queensland are reliant on the availability of a secure water supply. The security of water supplies is not only required for urban, agricultural and industrial needs, but also the construction, operation and maintenance of their support systems. These needs are regularly threatened in Queensland—particularly for agricultural use—as evidenced by the current Queensland drought covering more than 86 per cent of the state—the largest on record—and droughts occurring on average once every 18 years. Water infrastructure is therefore a critical foundation on which all other infrastructure depends.”¹

The Coalition is committed to supporting the detailed planning and construction of new and augmented water infrastructure, including dams, pipelines and managed aquifer recharge projects.

While water management is primarily the responsibility of state and territory governments, there has been significant under-investment in new water infrastructure in recent decades. In 1980, for example, there was 5.5 megalitres of water infrastructure capacity for every Australian. Due to increases in population, this is expected to fall to 3.3 megalitres by 2030.

Infrastructure development is complex and water infrastructure has its own unique challenges. Water infrastructure development has long lead times, requires substantial up-front capital investment, and has high ongoing operation and maintenance costs. Water infrastructure must be built at the right scale, at the appropriate time to meet growing demand. It often involves associated infrastructure such as roads.

Australia needs to do more now, to ensure adequate investment in our water infrastructure.

¹ Queensland Government (2016) *State Infrastructure Plan: Part B*, p.58.

The Coalition will invest \$20 million to support the development or finalisation of feasibility assessments and business cases for 14 water infrastructure projects across Queensland.

We will provide \$225,000 for the development of a works programme for the construction and upgrade of major water infrastructure for Clermont, including augmentation and remediation works on the Theresa Creek Dam. Groundwater options will also be considered.

We will provide \$2 million for the development the Rookwood Weir business case. The Rookwood Weir will address water and supply security for the City of Rockhampton, the Gladstone region, the Stanwell-Gracemere Industrial Corridor, and an expanded irrigation based agricultural industry. The project is significant, with the potential to enable a yield of 76,000 megalitres of high priority water, as allowed under the Fitzroy Resource Operations Plan.

The business case will address long-term demand projections, engineering considerations, and final environmental approvals. If the business case demonstrates the Rookwood Weir is economically viable, the Coalition will provide half of the funding – up to \$130 million – for its construction.

The Coalition will invest \$3 million in a feasibility study for a new dam along the Bowen River near Collinsville. The study will consider a staged development with:

- stage 1: storage capacity 863,000 megalitres to yield 146,000 megalitres per annum
- stage 2: storage capacity 1,500,000 megalitres to yield 176,900 megalitres per annum

A new dam near Collinsville could facilitate the development of 30,000 hectares of irrigated agriculture along the Bowen River and ensure water supply for agriculture, mining, and future urban needs.

We will provide \$400,000 to complete a demand and environmental impact assessment of the proposal to raise Burdekin Falls Dam by approximately two metres. The Burdekin Falls Dam has a current storage capacity of 1,860,000 megalitres. In raising the dam, an additional 150,000 megalitres per annum of additional water entitlements would be introduced into the system. This addition would provide security for Townsville's urban water supply, provide additional water for mining activities in the Bowen and Galilee coal basins. It will also provide water for the Abbot Point State Development Area, irrigation expansion and hydropower.

The Coalition will provide \$1.9 million for a feasibility study into upgrading the capacity of the Burdekin Haughton Channel. The study will investigate works such as channel desilting, siphon pipe duplications, channel widening, channel bank raising, channel lining, weed management, improving on farm efficiencies and water trading. The upgrade could provide access to an additional 153,000 megalitres of medium priority water, which is currently not able to be supplied due to operational constraints.

We will invest \$1.2 million for a feasibility study for new water storage and irrigation infrastructure options to help Isis Central Sugar Mill Company Limited develop 6,800 hectares for sugarcane in the Gayndah Region of the Burnett River catchment. Such new water storage and irrigation infrastructure could provide up to 28,650 megalitres from new or under-utilised water sources and enable additional cane production of around 498,000 tonnes. These outcomes will support more than 90 additional jobs and deliver a \$60 million per annum boost to the regional economy.

We will provide \$750,000 to investigate the most effective options for channel upgrades, improved water security and augmentation of the Bundaberg Water Supply Scheme, with the possibility of 100,000 megalitres of additional water available for use. The study will also look at the potential of the additional water to supply new and existing customers within the scheme or in new areas outside the scheme.

A further \$750,000 will be provided to investigate three dam storages on the upper and middle reaches of the Herbert River and the Millstream. The feasibility study will examine multi-purpose dams providing irrigation supply, hydro-electricity power, and flood mitigation in the lower Herbert River reaches.

We will provide nearly \$1.8 million to investigate additional water storage for Mount Isa and Cloncurry. Additional water storage could open opportunities for broad-acre cropping, as well as new agriculture (such as cotton farming and the intensification of cattle production). It could support year-round irrigated grass fodder crops and large-scale finishing properties for meat processing of up to 250,000 cattle per year.

The Coalition will invest \$2.2 million for a feasibility study into a new dam at Hell's Gate, on the Upper Burdekin River. A dam at Hell's Gate may allow a gravity fed supply of water to Townsville. A dam at Hell's Gate would also allow agricultural development in the Upper Burdekin and may allow the diversion of water to the Charters Towers region, where it could be used for high value agriculture.

We will provide \$825,000 for a feasibility assessment of an improved water supply for the Lakeland Basin region. The study will address water resource assessment and supply options, land suitability, economic viability, and cost benefit analysis. The Lakeland region has rich soils, reliable rainfall, all weather access to market and a strong grower presence.

We will invest \$4 million for a final feasibility assessment on the Emu Swamp Dam. Emu Swamp could provide secondary secure potable water supply to the people of Stanthorpe, as well as irrigation water to primary producers and horticulturalists in the region. The dam will create regional growth and employment opportunities through increased horticulture production, food processing and manufacturing.

We will provide \$120,000 for a feasibility assessment into aquifer recharge for agricultural productivity and sustainability in the Lockyer catchment.

We will also invest \$650,000 for a feasibility assessment into utilising South-East Queensland's treated effluent for agricultural production. Treated effluent for agricultural production has the potential to provide 100,000 megalitres per annum in irrigation water, which would reduce the amount of water treated and released into Moreton Bay. Utilising treated effluent for agricultural production could increase on-farm production by more than \$100 million per annum.

All projects must meet rigorous state and federal environmental requirements before securing Commonwealth capital funding.

Our investment in water infrastructure will support jobs and regional communities in Queensland and will make Australia's agricultural sector stronger.

The Choice

The Coalition has a strong record supporting investment in water infrastructure.

We are delivering more than half a billion dollars in grants to support the construction of nationally significant water infrastructure.

We are also providing \$2 billion in concessional loans to fast-track the construction of water infrastructure throughout the country.

The Coalition started and completed the augmentation of Chaffey Dam. The augmentation of Chaffey Dam was recently completed on time and on budget, through a successful partnership between the Commonwealth Government, the NSW Government, WaterNSW and the Tamworth Regional Council.

The \$117 million Tasmanian Irrigation Scheme Tranche II is currently being rolled out, due to a \$60 million contribution from the Coalition. The Tasmanian Irrigation Scheme will deliver more than 150 direct full-time jobs and will deliver approximately an additional 40,000 megalitres of water to landholders and communities throughout Tasmania.

We will continue to deliver our \$2.5 million per day investment in infrastructure in the Murray-Darling Basin – an investment with positive outcomes for the environment, jobs, and regional economies.

Labor's thoughtless and non-strategic water buybacks policy hurt Murray Darling Basin communities.

Labor invested in the wrong infrastructure. Federal and State Labor governments made poor investment decisions, investing billions in desalination plants of questionable viability. These desalination plants have cost taxpayers billions and continue to cost billions, even while sitting idle.

Labor failed to do any long-term planning for Australia's future water supplies.

Labor delayed the release of the Murray Darling Basin Plan on six separate occasions in less than six years. Under Labor, it took 18 months just to establish the board of the Murray-Darling Basin Authority.

When in government, Labor short-changed Australia's agricultural sector, costing jobs and investment opportunities.

Labor cut funding to Australian agriculture by \$2.1 billion.

Labor's carbon tax cost a mid-sized dairy farm thousands of dollars a year in extra costs.

Costs

The Coalition will invest \$20 million to support the development or finalisation of feasibility assessments and business cases for 14 water infrastructure projects across Queensland.

We will also invest up to \$130 million for the construction of Rookwood Weir, provided the business case demonstrates that the project is economically viable and it acquires the required environmental approval.

Our funding is in addition to the \$10 million for the Nullinga Dam feasibility study and the Mitchell River catchment water resource assessment already announced by the Coalition.



THE NATIONALS
for Regional Australia

For further details of the Coalition's plan go to
www.liberal.org.au/our-plan
nationals.org.au/our-plan/